

DUMAS ALEXANDRE

THE
COMPANIONS
OF JEHU

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The Companions of Jehu

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Дюма А.

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Alexandre Dumas

The Companions of Jehu

AN INTRODUCTORY WORD TO THE READER

Just about a year ago my old friend, Jules Simon, author of “Devoir,” came to me with a request that I write a novel for the “Journal pour Tous.” I gave him the outline of a novel which I had in mind. The subject pleased him, and the contract was signed on the spot.

The action occurred between 1791 and 1793, and the first chapter opened at Varennes the evening of the king’s arrest.

Only, impatient as was the “Journal pour Tous,” I demanded a fortnight of Jules Simon before beginning my novel. I wished to go to Varennes; I was not acquainted with the locality, and I confess there is one thing I cannot do; I am unable to write a novel or a drama about localities with which I am not familiar.

In order to write “Christine” I went to Fontainebleau; in writing “Henri III.” I went to Blois; for “Les Trois Mousquetaires” I went to Boulogne and Béthune; for “Monte-Cristo” I returned to the Catalans and the Château d’If; for “Isaac Laquedem” I revisited Rome; and I certainly spent more time studying Jerusalem and Corinth from a distance than if I had gone there.

This gives such a character of veracity to all that I write, that the personages whom I create become eventually such integral parts of the places in which I planted them that, as a consequence, many end by believing in their actual existence. There are even some people who claim to have known them.

In this connection, dear readers, I am going to tell you something in confidence – only do not repeat it. I do not wish to injure honest fathers of families who live by this little industry, but if you go to Marseilles you will be shown there the house of Morel on the Cours, the house of Mercédès at the Catalans, and the dungeons of Dantès and Faria at the Château d’If.

When I staged “Monte-Cristo” at the Théâtre-Historique, I wrote to Marseilles for a plan of the Château d’If, which was sent to me. This drawing was for the use of the scene painter. The artist to whom I had recourse forwarded me the desired plan. He even did better than I would have dared ask of him; he wrote beneath it: “View of the Château d’If, from the side where Dantès was thrown into the sea.”

I have learned since that a worthy man, a guide attached to the Château d’If, sells pens made of fish-bone by the Abbé Faria himself.

There is but one unfortunate circumstance concerning this; the fact is, Dantès and the Abbé Faria have never existed save in my imagination; consequently, Dantès could not have been precipitated from the top to the bottom of the Château d’If, nor could the Abbé Faria have made pens. But that is what comes from visiting these localities in person.

Therefore, I wished to visit Varennes before commencing my novel, because the first chapter was to open in that city. Besides, historically, Varennes worried me considerably; the more I perused the historical accounts of Varennes, the less I was able to understand, topographically, the king’s arrest.

I therefore proposed to my young friend, Paul Bocage, that he accompany me to Varennes. I was sure in advance that he would accept. To merely propose such a trip to his picturesque and charming mind was to make him bound from his chair to the tram. We took the railroad to Châlons. There we bargained with a livery-stable keeper, who agreed, for a consideration of ten francs a day, to furnish us with a horse and carriage. We were seven days on the trip, three days to go from Châlons

to Varennes, one day to make the requisite local researches in the city, and three days to return from Varennes to Châlons.

I recognized with a degree of satisfaction which you will easily comprehend, that not a single historian had been historical, and with still greater satisfaction that M. Thiers had been the least accurate of all these historians. I had already suspected this, but was not certain. The only one who had been accurate, with absolute accuracy, was Victor Hugo in his book called "The Rhine." It is true that Victor Hugo is a poet and not a historian. What historians these poets would make, if they would but consent to become historians!

One day Lamartine asked me to what I attributed the immense success of his "Histoire des Girondins."

"To this, because in it you rose to the level of a novel," I answered him. He reflected for a while and ended, I believe, by agreeing with me.

I spent a day, therefore, at Varennes and visited all the localities necessary for my novel, which was to be called "René d'Argonne." Then I returned. My son was staying in the country at Sainte-Assise, near Melun; my room awaited me, and I resolved to go there to write my novel.

I am acquainted with no two characters more dissimilar than Alexandre's and mine, which nevertheless harmonize so well. It is true we pass many enjoyable hours during our separations; but none I think pleasanter than those we spend together.

I had been installed there for three or four days endeavoring to begin my "René d'Argonne," taking up my pen, then laying it aside almost immediately. The thing would not go. I consoled myself by telling stories. Chance willed that I should relate one which Nodier had told me of four young men affiliated with the Company of Jehu, who had been executed at Bourg in Bresse amid the most dramatic circumstances. One of these four young men, he who had found the greatest difficulty in dying, or rather he whom they had the greatest difficulty in killing, was but nineteen and a half years old.

Alexandre listened to my story with much interest. When I had finished: "Do you know," said he, "what I should do in your place?"

"What?"

"I should lay aside 'René d'Argonne,' which refuses to materialize, and in its stead I should write 'The Companions of Jehu.'"

"But just think, I have had that other novel in mind for a year or two, and it is almost finished."

"It never will be since it is not finished now."

"Perhaps you are right, but I shall lose six months regaining my present vantage-ground."

"Good! In three days you will have written half a volume."

"Then you will help me."

"Yes, for I shall give you two characters."

"Is that all?"

"You are too exacting! The rest is your affair; I am busy with my 'Question d'Argent.'"

"Well, who are your two characters, then?"

"An English gentleman and a French captain."

"Introduce the Englishman first."

"Very well." And Alexandre drew Lord Tanlay's portrait for me.

"Your English gentleman pleases me," said I; "now let us see your French captain."

"My French captain is a mysterious character, who courts death with all his might, without being able to accomplish his desire; so that each time he rushes into mortal danger he performs some brilliant feat which secures him promotion."

"But why does he wish to get himself killed?"

"Because he is disgusted with life."

"Why is he disgusted with life?"

“Ah! That will be the secret of the book.”

“It must be told in the end.”

“On the contrary, I, in your place, would not tell it.”

“The readers will demand it.”

“You will reply that they have only to search for it; you must leave them something to do, these readers of yours.”

“Dear friend, I shall be overwhelmed with letters.”

“You need not answer them.”

“Yes, but for my personal gratification I, at least, must know why my hero longs to die.”

“Oh, I do not refuse to tell you.”

“Let me hear, then.”

“Well, suppose, instead of being professor of dialectics, Abelard had been a soldier.”

“Well?”

“Well, let us suppose that a bullet – ”

“Excellent!”

“You understand? Instead of withdrawing to Paraclet, he would have courted death at every possible opportunity.”

“Hum! That will be difficult.”

“Difficult! In what way?”

“To make the public swallow that.”

“But since you are not going to tell the public.”

“That is true. By my faith, I believe you are right. Wait.”

“I am waiting.”

“Have you Nodier’s ‘Souvenirs de la Révolution’? I believe he wrote one or two pages about Guyon, Leprêtre, Amiet and Hyvert.”

“They will say, then, that you have plagiarized from Nodier.”

“Oh! He loved me well enough during his life not to refuse me whatever I shall take from him after his death. Go fetch me the ‘Souvenirs de la Révolution.’”

Alexandre brought me the book. I opened it, turned over two or three pages, and at last discovered what I was looking for. A little of Nodier, dear readers, you will lose nothing by it. It is he who is speaking:

The highwaymen who attacked the diligences, as mentioned in the article on Amiet, which I quoted just now, were called Leprêtre, Hyvert, Guyon and Amiet.

Leprêtre was forty-eight years old. He was formerly a captain of dragoons, a knight of St. Louis, of a noble countenance, prepossessing carriage and much elegance of manner. Guyon and Amiet have never been known by their real names. They owe that to the accommodating spirit prevailing among the vendors of passports of those days. Let the reader picture to himself two dare-devils between twenty and thirty years of age, allied by some common responsibility, the sequence, perhaps of some misdeed, or, by a more delicate and generous interest, the fear of compromising their family name. Then you will know of Guyon and Amiet all that I can recall. The latter had a sinister countenance, to which, perhaps, he owes the bad reputation with which all his biographers have credited him. Hyvert was the son of a rich merchant of Lyons, who had offered the sub-officer charged with his deportation sixty thousand francs to permit his escape. He was at once the Achilles and the Paris of the band. He was of medium height but well formed, lithe, and of graceful and pleasing address. His eyes were never without animation nor his lips without a smile. His was one of those countenances which are never forgotten, and which present an inexpressible blending of sweetness and strength, tenderness and energy. When he yielded to the eloquent petulance of his inspirations he soared to enthusiasm. His conversation revealed the rudiments of an excellent early education and much natural intelligence. That which was so terrifying in him was his tone of heedless gayety, which contrasted so

horribly with his position. For the rest, he was unanimously conceded to be kind, generous, humane, lenient toward the weak, while with the strong he loved to display a vigor truly athletic which his somewhat effeminate features were far from indicating. He boasted that he had never been without money, and had no enemies. That was his sole reply to the charges of theft and assassination. He was twenty-two years old.

To these four men was intrusted the attack upon a diligence conveying forty thousand francs of government money. This deed was transacted in broad daylight, with an exchange of mutual courtesy almost; and the travellers, who were not disturbed by the attack, gave little heed to it. But a child of only ten years of age, with reckless bravado, seized the pistol of the conductor and fired it into the midst of the assailants. As this peaceful weapon, according to the custom, was only charged with powder, no one was injured; but the occupants of the coach quite naturally experienced a lively fear of reprisals. The little boy's mother fell into violent hysterics. This new disturbance created a general diversion which dominated all the preceding events and particularly attracted the attention of the robbers. One of them flew to the woman's side, reassuring her in the most affectionate manner, while complimenting her upon her son's precocious courage, and courteously pressed upon her the salts and perfumes with which these gentlemen were ordinarily provided for their own use. She regained consciousness. In the excitement of the moment her travelling companions noticed that the highwayman's mask had fallen off, but they did not see his face.

The police of those days, restricted to mere impotent supervision, were unable to cope with the depredations of these banditti, although they did not lack the means to follow them up. Appointments were made at the cafés, and narratives relating to deeds carrying with them the penalty of death circulated freely through all the billiard-halls in the land. Such was the importance which the culprits and the public attached to the police.

These men of blood and terror assembled in society in the evening, and discussed their nocturnal expeditions as if they had been mere pleasure-parties.

Leprêtre, Hyvert, Amiet and Guyon were arraigned before the tribunal of a neighboring department. No one save the Treasury had suffered from their attack, and there was no one to identify them save the lady who took very good care not to do so. They were therefore acquitted unanimously.

Nevertheless, the evidence against them so obviously called for conviction, that the Ministry was forced to appeal from this decision. The verdict was set aside; but such was the government's vacillation, that it hesitated to punish excesses that might on the morrow be regarded as virtues. The accused were cited before the tribunal of Ain, in the city of Bourg, where dwelt a majority of their friends, relatives, abettors and accomplices. The Ministry sought to propitiate the one party by the return of its victims, and the other by the almost inviolate safeguards with which it surrounded the prisoners. The return to prison indeed resembled nothing less than a triumph.

The trial recommenced. It was at first attended by the same results as the preceding one. The four accused were protected by an alibi, patently false, but attested by a hundred signatures, and for which they could easily have obtained ten thousand. All moral convictions must fail in the presence of such authoritative testimony. An acquittal seemed certain, when a question, perhaps involuntarily insidious, from the president, changed the aspect of the trial.

"Madam," said he to the lady who had been so kindly assisted by one of the highwaymen, "which of these men was it who tendered you such thoughtful attention?"

This unexpected form of interrogation confused her ideas. It is probable that she believed the facts to be known, and saw in this a means of modifying the fate of the man who interested her.

"It was that gentleman," said she, pointing to Leprêtre. The four accused, who were included in a common alibi, fell by this one admission under the executioner's axe. They rose and bowed to her with a smile.

"Faith!" said Hyvert, falling back upon his bench with a burst of laughter, "that, Captain, will teach you to play the gallant."

I have heard it said that the unhappy lady died shortly after of chagrin.

The customary appeal followed; but, this time, there was little hope. The Republican party, which Napoleon annihilated a month later, was in the ascendancy. That of the Counter-Revolution was compromised by its odious excesses. The people demanded examples, and matters were arranged accordingly, as is ordinarily the custom in strenuous times; for it is with governments as with men, the weakest are always the most cruel. Nor had the Companies of Jehu longer an organized existence. The heroes of these ferocious bands, Debeauce, Hastier, Bary, Le Coq, Dabri, Delbourbe and Storkenfeld, had either fallen on the scaffold or elsewhere. The condemned could look for no further assistance from the daring courage of these exhausted devotees, who, no longer capable of protecting their own lives, coolly sacrificed them, as did Piard, after a merry supper. Our brigands were doomed to die.

Their appeal was rejected, but the municipal authorities were not the first to learn of this. The condemned men were warned by three shots fired beneath the walls of their dungeon. The Commissioner of the Executive Directory, who had assumed the rôle of Public Prosecutor at the trial, alarmed at this obvious sign of connivance, requisitioned a squad of armed men of whom my uncle was then commander. At six o'clock in the morning sixty horsemen were drawn up before the iron gratings of the prison yard.

Although the jailers had observed all possible precautions in entering the dungeon where these four unfortunate men were confined, and whom they had left the preceding day tightly pinioned and heavily loaded with chains, they were unable to offer them a prolonged resistance. The prisoners were free and armed to the teeth. They came forth without difficulty, leaving their guardians under bolts and bars, and, supplied with the keys, they quickly traversed the space that separated them from the prison yard. Their appearance must have been terrifying to the populace awaiting them before the iron gates.

To assure perfect freedom of action, or perhaps to affect an appearance of security more menacing even than the renown for strength and intrepidity with which their names were associated, or possibly even to conceal the flow of blood which reveals itself so readily beneath white linen, and betrays the last agonies of a mortally wounded man, their breasts were bared. Their braces crossed upon the chest – their wide red belts bristling with arms – their cry of attack and rage, all that must have given a decidedly fantastic touch to the scene. Arrived in the square, they perceived the gendarmerie drawn up in motionless ranks, through which it would have been impossible to force a passage. They halted an instant and seemed to consult together. Leprêtre, who was, as I have said, their senior and their chief, saluted the guard with his hand, saying with that noble grace of manner peculiar to him:

“Very well, gentlemen of the gendarmerie!”

Then after a brief, energetic farewell to his comrades, he stepped in front of them and blew out his brains. Guyon, Amiet and Hyvert assumed a defensive position, their double-barrelled pistols levelled upon their armed opponents. They did not fire; but the latter, considering this demonstration as a sign of open hostility, fired upon them. Guyon fell dead upon Leprêtre's body, which had not moved. Amiet's hip was broken near the groin. The “*Biographie des Contemporains*” says that he was executed. I have often heard it said that he died at the foot of the scaffold. Hyvert was left alone, his determined brow, his terrible eye, the pistol in each practiced and vigorous hand threatening death to the spectators. Perhaps it was involuntary admiration, in his desperate plight, for this handsome young man with his waving locks, who was known never to have shed blood, and from whom the law now demanded the expiation of blood; or perhaps it was the sight of those three corpses over which he sprang like a wolf overtaken by his hunters, and the frightful novelty of the spectacle, which for an instant restrained the fury of the troop. He perceived this and temporized with them for a compromise.

“Gentlemen,” said he, “I go to my death! I die with all my heart! But let no one approach me or I shall shoot him – except this gentleman,” he continued, pointing to the executioner. “This is an affair that concerns us alone and merely needs a certain understanding between us.”

This concession was readily accorded, for there was no one present who was not suffering from the prolongation of this horrible tragedy, and anxious to see it finished. Perceiving their assent, he placed one of his pistols between his teeth, and drawing a dagger from his belt, plunged it in his breast up to the hilt. He still remained standing and seemed greatly surprised. There was a movement toward him.

“Very well, gentlemen!” cried he, covering the men who sought to surround him with his pistols, which he had seized again, while the blood spurted freely from the wound in which he had left his poniard. “You know our agreement; either I die alone or three of us will die together. Forward, march!” He walked straight to the guillotine, turning the knife in his breast as he did so.

“Faith,” said he, “my soul must be centred in my belly! I cannot die. See if you can fetch it out.”

This last was addressed to his executioner. An instant later his head fell. Be it accident or some peculiar phenomenon of the vitality, it rebounded and rolled beyond the circle of the scaffolding, and they will still tell you at Bourg, that Hyvert’s head spoke.

Before I had finished reading I had decided to abandon René d’Argonne for the Companions of Jehu. On the morrow I came down with my travelling bag under my arm.

“You are leaving?” said Alexandre to me.

“Yes.”

“Where are you going?”

“To Bourg, in Bresse.”

“What are you going to do there?”

“Study the neighborhood and consult with the inhabitants who saw Leprêtre, Amiet, Guyon and Hyvert executed.”

There are two roads to Bourg – from Paris, of course; one may leave the train at Mâcon, and take stage from Mâcon to Bourg, or, continuing as far as Lyons, take train again from Lyons to Bourg.

I was hesitating between these two roads when one of the travellers who was temporarily occupying my compartment decided me. He was going to Bourg, where he frequently had business. He was going by way of Lyons; therefore, Lyons was the better way.

I resolved to travel by the same route. I slept at Lyons, and on the morrow by ten in the morning I was at Bourg.

A paper published in the second capital of the kingdom met my eye. It contained a spiteful article about me. Lyons has never forgiven me since 1833, I believe, some twenty-four years ago, for asserting that it was not a literary city. Alas! I have in 1857 the same opinion of Lyons as I had in 1833. I do not easily change my opinion. There is another city in France that is almost as bitter against me as Lyons, that is Rouen. Rouen has hissed all my plays, including Count Hermann.

One day a Neapolitan boasted to me that he had hissed Rossini and Malibran, “The Barbieri” and “Desdemona.”

“That must be true,” I answered him, “for Rossini and Malibran on their side boast of having been hissed by Neapolitans.”

So I boast that the Rouenese have hissed me. Nevertheless, meeting a full-blooded Rouenese one day I resolved to discover why I had been hissed at Rouen. I like to understand these little things.

My Rouenese informed me: “We hiss you because we are down on you.”

Why not? Rouen was down on Joan of Arc. Nevertheless it could not be for the same reason. I asked my Rouenese why he and his compatriots were ill-disposed to me; I had never said anything evil of apple sugar, I had treated M. Barbet with respect during his entire term as mayor, and, when a delegate from the Society of Letters at the unveiling of the statue of the great Corneille, I was the

only one who thought to bow to him before beginning my speech. There was nothing in that which could have reasonably incurred the hatred of the Rouenese.

Therefore to this haughty reply, "We hiss you because we have a grudge against you," I asked humbly:

"But, great Heavens! why are you down on me?"

"Oh, you know very well," replied my Rouenese.

"I?" I exclaimed.

"Yes, you."

"Well, never mind; pretend I do not know."

"You remember the dinner the city gave you, in connection with that statue of Corneille?"

"Perfectly. Were they annoyed because I did not return it?"

"No, it is not that."

"What is it then?"

"Well, at that dinner they said to you: 'M. Dumas, you ought to write a play for Rouen based upon some subject taken from its own history.'"

"To which I replied: 'Nothing easier; I will come at your first summons and spend a fortnight in Rouen. You can suggest the subject, and during that fortnight I will write the play, the royalties of which I shall devote to the poor.'"

"That is true, you said that."

"I see nothing sufficiently insulting in that to incur the hatred of the Rouenese."

"Yes, but they added: 'Will you write it in prose?' To which you replied – Do you remember what you answered?"

"My faith! no."

"You replied: 'I will write it in verse; it is soonest done.'"

"That sounds like me. Well, what then?"

"Then! That was an insult to Corneille, M. Dumas; that is why the Rouenese are down on you, and will be for a long time."

Verbatim!

Oh, worthy Rouenese! I trust that you will never serve me so ill as to forgive and applaud me.

The aforesaid paper observed that M. Dumas had doubtless spent but one night in Lyons because a city of such slight literary standing was not worthy of his longer sojourn. M. Dumas had not thought about this at all. He had spent but one night at Lyons because he was in a hurry to reach Bourg. And no sooner had M. Dumas arrived at Bourg than he asked to be directed to the office of its leading newspaper.

I knew that it was under the management of a distinguished archeologist, who was also the editor of my friend Baux's work on the church of Brou.

I asked for M. Milliet. M. Milliet appeared. We shook hands and I explained the object of my visit.

"I can fix you perfectly," said he to me. "I will take you to one of our magistrates, who is at present engaged upon a history of the department."

"How far has he got in this history?"

"1822."

"Then that's all right. As the events I want to relate occurred in 1799, and my heroes were executed in 1800, he will have covered that epoch, and can furnish me with the desired information. Let us go to your magistrate."

On the road, M. Milliet told me that this same magisterial historian was also a noted gourmet. Since Brillat-Savarin it has been the fashion for magistrates to be epicures. Unfortunately, many are content to be gourmands, which is not at all the same thing.

We were ushered into the magistrate's study. I found a man with a shiny face and a sneering smile. He greeted me with that protecting air which historians deign to assume toward poets.

"Well, sir," he said to me, "so you have come to our poor country in search of material for your novel?"

"No, sir; I have my material already. I have come simply to consult your historical documents."

"Good! I did not know that it was necessary to give one's self so much trouble in order to write novels."

"There you are in error, sir; at least in my instance. I am in the habit of making exhaustive researches upon all the historical events of which I treat."

"You might at least have sent some one else."

"Any person whom I might send, sir, not being so completely absorbed in my subject, might have overlooked many important facts. Then, too, I make use of many localities which I cannot describe unless I see them."

"Oh, then this is a novel which you intend writing yourself?"

"Yes, certainly, sir. I allowed my valet to write my last; but he had such immense success that the rogue asked so exorbitant an increase of wages that, to my great regret, I was unable to keep him."

The magistrate bit his lips. Then, after a moment's silence, he said:

"Will you kindly tell me, sir, how I can assist you in this important work?"

"You can direct my researches, sir. As you have compiled the history of the department, none of the important event which have occurred in its capital can be unknown to you."

"Truly, sir, I believe that in this respect I am tolerably well informed."

"Then, sir, in the first place, your department was the centre of the operations of the Company of Jehu."

"Sir, I have heard speak of the Companions of Jesus," replied the magistrate with his jeering smile.

"The Jesuits, you mean? That is not what I am seeking, sir."

"Nor is it of them that I am speaking. I refer to the stage robbers who infested the highroads from 1797 to 1800."

"Then, sir, permit me to tell you they are precisely the ones I have come to Bourg about, and that they were called the Companions of Jehu, and not the Companions of Jesus."

"What is the meaning of this title 'Companions of Jehu'? I like to get at the bottom of everything."

"So do I, sir; that is why I did not wish to confound these highwaymen with the Apostles."

"Truly, that would not have been very orthodox."

"But it is what you would have done, nevertheless, sir, if I, a poet, had not come here expressly to correct the mistake you, as historian, have made."

"I await your explanation, sir," resumed the magistrate, pursing his lips.

"It is short and simple. Elisha consecrated Jehu, King of Israel, on condition that he exterminate the house of Ahab; Elisha was Louis XVIII.; Jehu was Cadoudal; the house of Ahab, the Revolution. That is why these pillagers of diligences, who filched the government money to support the war in the Vendée, were called the Companions of Jehu."

"Sir, I am happy to learn something at my age."

"Oh, sir! One can always learn, at all times and at all ages; during life one learns man; in death one learns God."

"But, after all," my interlocutor said to me with a gesture of impatience, "may I know in what I can assist you?"

"Thus, sir. Four of these young men, leaders of the Companions of Jehu, were executed at Bourg, on the Place du Bastion."

“In the first place, sir, in Bourg executions do not take place at the Bastion; they execute on the Fair grounds.”

“Now, sir – these last fifteen or twenty years, it is true – since Peytel. But before, especially during the Revolution, they executed on the Place du Bastion.”

“That is possible.”

“It is so. These four young men were called Guyon, Leprêtre, Amiet, and Hyvert.”

“This is the first time I have heard those names.”

“Yet their names made a certain noise at Bourg.”

“Are you sure, sir, that these men were executed here?”

“I am positive.”

“From whom have you derived your information?”

“From a man whose uncle, then in command of the gendarmerie, was present at the execution.”

“Will you tell me this man’s name?”

“Charles Nodier.”

“Charles Nodier, the novelist, the poet?”

“If he were a historian I would not be so insistent, sir. Recently, during a trip to Varennes, I learned what dependence to place upon historians. But precisely because he is a poet, a novelist, I do insist.”

“You are at liberty to do so; but I know nothing of what you desire to learn, and I dare even assert that, if you have come to Bourg solely to obtain information concerning the execution of – what did you call them?”

“Guyon, Leprêtre, Amiet, and Hyvert.”

“You have undertaken a futile voyage. For these last twenty years, sir, I have been searching the town archives, and I have never seen anything relating to what you have just told me.”

“The town archives are not those of the registrar, sir; perhaps at the record office I may be able to find what I am seeking.”

“Ah! sir, if you can find anything among those archives you will be a very clever man! The record office is a chaos, a veritable chaos. You would have to spend a month here, and then – then –”

“I do not expect to stay here more than a day, sir; but if in that day I should find what I am seeking will you permit me to impart it to you?”

“Yes, sir; yes, sir; and you will render me a great service by doing so.”

“No greater than the one I asked of you. I shall merely give you some information about a matter of which you were ignorant, that is all.”

You can well understand that on leaving my magistrate, my honor was piqued. I determined, cost what it might, to procure this information about the Companions of Jehu. I went back to Milliet, and cornered him.

“Listen,” he said. “My brother-in-law is a lawyer.”

“He’s my man! Let’s go find the brother-in-law.”

“He’s in court at this hour.”

“Then let us go to court.”

“Your appearance will create a sensation, I warn you.”

“Then go alone – tell him what we want, and let him make a search. I will visit the environs of the town to base my work on the localities. We will meet at four o’clock at the Place du Bastion, if you are agreed.”

“Perfectly.”

“It seems to me that I saw a forest, coming here.”

“The forest of Seillon.”

“Bravo!”

“Do you need a forest?”

“It is absolutely indispensable to me.”

“Then permit me – ”

“What?”

“I am going to take you to a friend of mine, M. Leduc, a poet who in his spare moments is an inspector.”

“Inspector of what?”

“Of the forest.”

“Are there any ruins in the forest?”

“The Chartreuse, which is not in the forest, but merely some hundred feet from it.”

“And in the forest?”

“There is a sort of hermitage which is called La Correrie, belonging to the Chartreuse, with which it communicates by a subterranean passage.”

“Good! Now, if you can provide me with a grotto you will overwhelm me.”

“We have the grotto of Ceyzeriat, but that is on the other side of the Reissouse.”

“I don’t mind. If the grotto won’t come to me, I will do like Mahomet – I will go to the grotto. In the meantime let us go to M. Leduc.”

Five minutes later we reached M. Leduc’s house. He, on learning what we wanted, placed himself, his horse, and his carriage at my disposal. I accepted all. There are some men who offer their services in such a way that they place you at once at your ease.

We first visited the Chartreuse. Had I built it myself it could not have suited me better. A deserted cloister, devastated garden, inhabitants almost savages. Chance, I thank thee!

From there we went to the Correrie; it was the supplement of the Chartreuse. I did not yet know what I could do with it; but evidently it might be useful to me.

“Now, sir,” I said to my obliging guide, “I need a pretty site, rather gloomy, surrounded by tall trees, beside a river. Have you anything like that in the neighborhood?”

“What do you want to do with it?”

“To build a château there.”

“What kind of a château?”

“Zounds! of cards! I have a family to house, a model mother, a melancholy young girl, a mischievous brother, and a poaching gardener.”

“There is a place called Noires-Fontaines.”

“In the first place the name is charming.”

“But there is no château there.”

“So much the better, for I should have been obliged to demolish it.”

“Let us go to Noires-Fontaines.”

We started; a quarter of an hour later we descended at the ranger’s lodge.

“Shall we take this little path?” said M. Leduc; “it will take us where you want to go.”

It led us, in fact, to a spot planted with tall trees which overshadowed three or four rivulets.

“We call this place Noires-Fontaines,” M. Leduc explained.

“And here Madame de Montrevel, Amélie and little Edouard will dwell. Now what are those villages which I see in front of me?”

“Here, close at hand, is Montagnac; yonder, on the mountain side, Ceyzeriat.”

“Is that where the grotto is?”

“Yes. But how did you know there was a grotto at Ceyzeriat?”

“Never mind, go on. The name of those other villages, if you please.”

“Saint-Just, Tréconnas, Ramasse, Villereversure.”

“That will do.”

“Have you enough?”

“Yes.”

I drew out my note-book, sketched a plan of the locality and wrote about in their relative positions the names of the villages which M. Leduc had just pointed out to me.

"That's done!" said I.

"Where shall we go now?"

"Isn't the church of Brou near this road?"

"Yes."

"Then let us go to the church of Brou."

"Do you need that in your novel?"

"Yes, indeed; you don't imagine I am going to lay my scene in a country which contains the architectural masterpiece of the sixteenth century without utilizing that masterpiece, do you?"

"Let us go to the church of Brou."

A quarter of an hour later the sacristan showed us into this granite jewel-case which contains the three marble gems called the tombs of Marguerite of Austria, Marguerite or Bourbon, and of Philibert le Beau.

"How is it," I asked the sacristan, "that all these masterpieces were not reduced to powder during the Revolution?"

"Ah! sir, the municipality had an idea."

"What was it?"

"That of turning the church into a storage house for fodder."

"Yes, and the hay saved the marble; you are right, my friend, that *was* an idea."

"Does this idea of the municipality afford you another?" asked M. Leduc.

"Faith, yes, and I shall have poor luck if I don't make something out of it."

I looked at my watch. "Three o'clock! Now for the prison. I have an appointment with M. Milliet at four on the Place du Bastion."

"Wait; there is one thing more."

"What is that?"

"Have you noticed Marguerite of Austria's motto?"

"No; where is it?"

"Oh, all over. In the first place, look above her tomb."

"Fortune, infortune, fort'une."

"Exactly."

"Well, what does this play of words mean?"

"Learned men translate it thus: 'Fate persecutes a woman much.'"

"Explain that a little."

"You must, in the first place, assume that it is derived from the Latin."

"True, that is probable."

"Well, then: 'Fortuna infortunat –'"

"Oh! Oh! 'Infortunat.'"

"Bless me!"

"That strongly resembles a solecism!"

"What do you want?"

"An explanation."

"Explain it yourself."

"Well; 'Fortuna, infortuna, forti una.' 'Fortune and misfortune are alike to the strong.'"

"Do you know, that may possibly be the correct translation?"

"Zounds! See what it is not to be learned, my dear sir; we are endowed with common-sense, and that sees clearer than science. Have you anything else to tell me?"

"No."

"Then let us go to the prison."

We got into the carriage and returned to the city, stopping only at the gate of the prison. I glanced out of the window.

“Oh!” I exclaimed, “they have spoiled it for me.”

“What! They’ve spoiled it for you?”

“Certainly, it was not like this in my prisoners’ time. Can I speak to the jailer?”

“Certainly.”

“Then let us consult him.”

We knocked at the door. A man about forty opened it. He recognized M. Leduc.

“My dear fellow,” M. Leduc said to him, “this is one of my learned friends – ”

“Come, come,” I exclaimed, interrupting him, “no nonsense.”

“Who contends,” continued M. Leduc, “that the prison is no longer the same as it was in the last century?”

“That is true, M. Leduc, it was torn down and rebuilt in 1816.”

“Then the interior arrangements are no longer the same?”

“Oh! no, sir, everything was changed.”

“Could I see the old plan?”

“M. Martin, the architect, might perhaps be able to find one for you.”

“Is he any relation to M. Martin, the lawyer?”

“His brother.”

“Very well, my friend, then I can get my plan.”

“Then we have nothing more to do here?” inquired M. Leduc.

“Nothing.”

“Then I am free to go home?”

“I shall be sorry to leave you, that is all.”

“Can you find your way to the Bastion without me?”

“It is close by.”

“What are you going to do this evening?”

“I will spend it with you, if you wish.”

“Very good! You will find a cup of tea waiting for you at nine.”

“I shall be on hand for it.”

I thanked M. Leduc. We shook hands and parted.

I went down the Rue des Lisses (meaning Lists, from a combat which took place in the square to which it leads), and skirting the Montburon Garden, I reached the Place du Bastion. This is a semicircle now used as the town marketplace. In the midst stands the statue of Bichat by David d’Angers. Bichat, in a frockcoat – why that exaggeration of realism? – stands with his hand upon the heart of a child about nine or ten years old, perfectly nude – why that excess of ideality? Extended at Bichat’s feet lies a dead body. It is Bichat’s book “Of Life and of Death” translated into bronze. I was studying this statue, which epitomizes the defects and merits of David d’Angers, when I felt some one touch my shoulder. I turned around; it was M. Milliet. He held a paper in his hand.

“Well?” I asked.

“Well, victory!”

“What is that you have there?”

“The minutes of the trial and execution.”

“Of whom?”

“Of your men.”

“Of Guyon, Leprêtre, Amiet – !”

“And Hyvert.”

“Give it to me.”

“Here it is.”

I took it and read:

REPORT OF THE DEATH AND EXECUTION OF LAURENT GUYON, ETIENNE HYVERT, FRANÇOIS AMIET, ANTOINE LEPRÊTRE. Condemned the twentieth Thermidor of the year VIII., and executed the twenty-third Vendemiaire of the year IX.

To-day, the twenty-third Vendemiaire of the year IX., the government commissioner of the tribunal, who received at eleven of the evening the budget of the Minister of Justice, containing the minutes of the trial and the judgment which condemns to death Laurent Guyon, Etienne Hyvert, François Amiet and Antoine Leprêtre; – the decision of the Court of Appeals of the sixth inst., rejecting the appeal against the sentence of the twenty-first Thermidor of the year VIII., I did notify by letter, between seven and eight of the morning, the four accused that their sentence of death would take effect to-day at eleven o'clock.

In the interval which elapsed before eleven o'clock, the four accused shot themselves with pistols and stabbed themselves with blows from a poinard in prison. Leprêtre and Guyon, according to public rumor, were dead; Hyvert fatally wounded and dying; Amiet fatally wounded, but still conscious. All four, in this state, were conveyed to the scaffold, and, living or dead, were guillotined. At half after eleven, the sheriff, Colin, handed in the report of their execution to the Municipality for registration upon the death roll:

The captain of gendarmerie remitted to the Justice of the Peace a report of what had occurred in the prison, of which he was a witness. I, who was not present, do certify to what I have learned by hearsay only.

(Signed) DUBOST, Clerk.

Bourg, 23d Vendemiaire of the year IX.

Ah! so it was the poet who was right and not the historian! The captain of gendarmerie, who remitted the report of the proceedings in the prison to the Justice of the Peace, at which he was present, was Nodier's uncle. This report handed to the Justice of the Peace was the story which, graven upon the young man's mind, saw the light some forty years later unaltered, in that masterpiece entitled "Souvenirs de la Révolution." The entire series of papers was in the record office. M. Martin offered to have them copied for me; inquiry, trial and judgment.

I had a copy of Nodier's "Souvenirs of the Revolution" in my pocket. In my hand I held the report of the execution which confirmed the facts therein stated.

"Now let us go to our magistrate," I said to M. Milliet.

"Let us go to our magistrate," he repeated.

The magistrate was confounded, and I left him convinced that poets know history as well as historians – if not better.

ALEX. DUMAS.

PROLOGUE. THE CITY OF AVIGNON

We do not know if the prologue we are going to present to our readers' eyes be very useful, nevertheless we cannot resist the desire to make of it, not the first chapter, but the preface of this book.

The more we advance in life, the more we advance in art, the more convinced we become that nothing is abrupt and isolated; that nature and society progress by evolution and not by chance, and that the event, flower joyous or sad, perfumed or fetid, beneficent or fatal, which unfolds itself to-day before our eyes, was sown in the past, and had its roots sometimes in days anterior to ours, even as it will bear its fruits in the future.

Young man accepts life as it comes, enamored of yestereven, careless of the day, heeding little the morrow. Youth is the springtide with its dewy dawns and its beautiful nights; if sometimes a storm clouds the sky, it gathers, mutters and disperses, leaving the sky bluer, the atmosphere purer, and Nature more smiling than before. What use is there in reflecting on this storm that passes swift as a caprice, ephemeral as a fancy? Before we have discovered the secret of the meteorological enigma, the storm will have disappeared.

But it is not thus with the terrible phenomena, which at the close of summer, threaten our harvests; or in the midst of autumn, assail our vintages; we ask whither they go, we query whence they come, we seek a means to prevent them.

To the thinker, the historian, the poet, there is a far deeper subject for reflection in revolutions, these tempests of the social atmosphere which drench the earth with blood, and crush an entire generation of men, than in those upheavals of nature which deluge a harvest, or flay the vineyards with hail – that is to say, the fruits of a single harvest, wreaking an injury, which can at the worst be repaired the ensuing year; unless the Lord be in His days of wrath.

Thus, in other days, be it forgetfulness, heedlessness or ignorance perhaps – (blessed he who is ignorant! a fool he who is wise!) – in other days in relating the story which I am going to tell you to-day I would, without pausing at the place where the first scene of this book occurs, have accorded it but a superficial mention, and traversing the Midi like any other province, have named Avignon like any other city.

But to-day it is no longer the same; I am no longer tossed by the flurries of spring, but by the storms of summer, the tempests of autumn. To-day when I name Avignon, I evoke a spectre; and, like Antony displaying Cæsar's toga, say:

“Look! in this place ran Cassius' dagger through;
See what a rent the envious Casca made;
Through this the well-beloved Brutus stabbed – ”

So, seeing the bloody shroud of the papal city, I say: “Behold the blood of the Albigenses, and here the blood of the Cevennais; behold the blood of the Republicans, and here the blood of the Royalists; behold the blood of Lescuyer; behold the blood of Maréchal Brune.”

And I feel myself seized with a profound sadness, and I begin to write, but at the first lines I perceive that, without suspecting it, the historian's chisel has superseded the novelist's pen in my hand.

Well, let us be both. Reader, grant me these ten, fifteen, twenty pages to the historian; the novelist shall have the rest.

Let us say, therefore, a few words about Avignon, the place where the first scene of the new book which we are offering to the public, opens. Perhaps, before reading what we have to say, it would be well to cast a glance at what its native historian, François Nouguié, says of it.

“Avignon,” he writes, “a town noble for its antiquity, pleasing in its site, superb for its walls, smiling for the fertility of its soil, charming for the gentleness of its inhabitants, magnificent for its

palace, beautiful in its broad streets, marvellous in the construction of its bridge, rich because of its commerce, and known to all the world.”

May the shade of François Nougier pardon us if we do not at first see his city with the same eyes as he does. To those who know Avignon be it to say who has best described it, the historian or the novelist.

It is but just to assert in the first place that Avignon is a town by itself, that is to say, a town of extreme passions. The period of religious dissensions, which culminated for her in political hatreds, dates from the twelfth century. After his flight from Lyons, the valleys of Mont Ventoux sheltered Pierre de Valdo and his Vaudois, the ancestors of those Protestants who, under the name of the Albigenses, cost the Counts of Toulouse, and transferred to the papacy, the seven châteaux which Raymond VI. possessed in Languedoc.

Avignon, a powerful republic governed by podestats, refused to submit to the King of France. One morning Louis VIII., who thought it easier to make a crusade against Avignon like Simon de Montfort, than against Jerusalem like Philippe Auguste; one morning, we say, Louis VIII. appeared before the gates of Avignon, demanding admission with lances at rest, visor down, banners unfurled and trumpets of war sounding.

The bourgeois refused. They offered the King of France, as a last concession, a peaceful entrance, lances erect, and the royal banner alone unfurled. The King laid siege to the town, a siege which lasted three months, during which, says the chronicler, the bourgeois of Avignon returned the French soldiers arrow for arrow, wound for wound, death for death.

The city capitulated at length. Louis VIII. brought the Roman Cardinal-Legate, Saint-Angelo, in his train. It was he who dictated the terms, veritable priestly terms, hard and unconditional. The Avignoneses were commanded to demolish their ramparts, to fill their moats, to raze three hundred towers, to sell their vessels, and to burn their engines and machines of war. They had moreover to pay an enormous impost, to abjure the Vaudois heresy, and maintain thirty men fully armed and equipped, in Palestine, to aid in delivering the tomb of Christ. And finally, to watch over the fulfillment of these terms, of which the bull is still extant in the city archives, a brotherhood of penitents was founded which, reaching down through six centuries, still exists in our days.

In opposition to these penitents, known as the “White Penitents,” the order of the “Black Penitents” was founded, imbued with the spirit of opposition of Raymond of Toulouse.

From that day forth the religious hatreds developed into political hatreds. It was not sufficient that Avignon should be the land of heresy. She was destined to become the theatre of schisms.

Permit us, in connection with this French Rome, a short historical digression. Strictly speaking, it is not essential to the subject of which we treat, and we were perhaps wiser to launch ourselves immediately into the heart of the drama; but we trust that we will be forgiven. We write more particularly for those who, in a novel, like occasionally to meet with something more than fiction.

In 1285 Philippe le Bel ascended the throne.

It is a great historical date, this date of 1285. The papacy which, in the person of Gregory VII., successfully opposed the Emperor of Germany; the papacy which, vanquished in matters temporal by Henry IV., yet vanquished him morally. This papacy was slapped by a simple Sabine gentleman, and the steel gauntlet of Colonna reddened the cheek of Boniface VIII. But the King of France, whose hand had really dealt this blow, what happened to him under the successor of Boniface VIII.?

This successor was Benedict XI., a man of low origin, but who might perhaps have developed into a man of genius, had they allowed him the time. Too weak for an open struggle with Philippe le Bel, he found a means which would have been the envy of the founder of a celebrated order two hundred years later. He pardoned Colonna openly.

To pardon Colonna was to declare Colonna culpable, since culprits alone have need of pardon. If Colonna were guilty, the King of France was at least his accomplice.

There was some danger in supporting such an argument; also Benedict XI. was pope but eight months. One day a veiled woman, a pretended lay-sister of Sainte-Petronille at Perugia, came to him while he was at table, offering him a basket of figs. Did it conceal an asp like Cleopatra's? The fact is that on the morrow the Holy See was vacant.

Then Philippe le Bel had a strange idea; so strange that it must, at first, have seemed an hallucination.

It was to withdraw the papacy from Rome, to install it in France, to put it in jail, and force it to coin money for his profit.

The reign of Philippe le Bel was the advent of gold. Gold! that was the sole and unique god of this king who had slapped a pope. Saint Louis had a priest, the worthy Abbé Suger, for minister; Philippe le Bel had two bankers, two Florentines, Biscio and Musiato.

Do you expect, dear reader, that we are about to fall into the philosophical commonplace of anathematizing gold? You are mistaken.

In the thirteenth century gold meant progress. Until then nothing was known but the soil. Gold was the soil converted into money, the soil mobilized, exchangeable, transportable, divisible, subtilized, spiritualized, as it were.

So long as the soil was not represented by gold, man, like the god Thermes, that landmark of the fields, had his feet imprisoned by the earth. Formerly the earth bore man, to-day man bears the earth.

But this gold had to be abstracted from its hiding-place, and it was hidden far otherwise than in the mines of Chile or Mexico. All the gold was in the possession of the churches and the Jews. To extract it from this double mine it needed more than a king; it required a pope.

And that is why Philippe le Bel, that great exploiter of gold, resolved to have a pope of his own. Benedict XI. dead, a conclave was held at Perugia; at this conclave the French cardinals were in the majority. Philippe le Bel cast his eyes upon the Archbishop of Bordeaux, Bertrand de Got, and to him he gave rendezvous in a forest near Saint-Jean d'Angely.

Bertrand de Got took heed not to miss that appointment.

The King and the Archbishop heard mass there, and at the moment when the Host was elevated, they bound themselves by this God they glorified to absolute secrecy. Bertrand de Got was still ignorant of the matter in question. Mass over, Philippe le Bel said:

"Archbishop, I have it in my power to make thee pope."

Bertrand de Got listened no longer, but cast himself at the King's feet, saying:

"What must I do to obtain this?"

"Accord me the six favors which I shall ask of thee," replied Philippe le Bel.

"It's for thee to command and for me to obey," said the future Pope.

The vow of servitude was taken.

The King raised Bertrand de Got, and, kissing him on the mouth, said:

"The six favors which I demand of thee are these: First, thou shalt reconcile me completely with the Church, and grant me pardon for the misdeed that I committed toward Boniface VIII. Second, thou shalt restore to me and mine the right of communion of which the Court of Rome deprived me. Third, thou shalt grant me the clergy's tithe in my kingdom for the next five years, to help defray the expenses of the war in Flanders. Fourth, thou shalt destroy and annul the memory of Pope Boniface VIII. Fifth, thou shalt bestow the dignity of cardinal upon Messires Jacopo and Pietro de Colonna. As to the sixth favor and promise, that I shall reserve to speak to thee thereof in its time and place."

Bertrand de Got swore to the promises and favors known, and to the promise and favor unknown. This last, which the King had not dared to mention in connection with the others, was the abolition of the Knights Templar. Besides the promises made on the Corpus Domini, Bertrand de Got gave as hostages his brother and two of his nephews. The King swore on his side that he should be elected pope.

This scene, set in the deep shadows of a crossroad in the forest, resembled rather an evocation between magician and demon than an agreement entered upon between king and pope.

Also the coronation of the King, which took place shortly afterward at Lyons, and which began the Church's captivity, seemed but little agreeable to God. Just as the royal procession was passing, a wall crowded with spectators fell, wounding the King and killing the Duc de Bretagne. The Pope was thrown to the ground, and his tiara rolled in the mud.

Bertrand de Got was elected pope under the name of Clement V.

Clement V. paid all that Bertrand de Got had promised. Philippe was absolved, Holy Communion restored to him and his, the purple again descended upon the shoulders of the Colonna, the Church was obliged to defray the expenses of the war in Flanders and Philippe de Valois's crusade against the Greek Empire. The memory of Pope Boniface VIII. was, if not destroyed and annulled, at least besmirched; the walls of the Temple were razed, and the Templars burned on the open space of the Pont Neuf.

All these edicts – they were no longer called bulls from the moment the temporal power dictated them – all these edicts were dated at Avignon.

Philippe le Bel was the richest of all the kings of the French monarchy; he possessed an inexhaustible treasury, that is to say, his pope. He had purchased him, he used him, he put him to the press, and as cider flows from apples, so did this crushed pope bleed gold. The pontificate, struck by the Colonna in the person of Boniface VIII., abdicated the empire of the world in the person of Clement V.

We have related the advent of the king of blood and the pope of gold. We know how they ended. Jacques de Molay, from his funeral pyre, adjured them both to appear before God within the year. *Ae to geron sithullia*, says Aristophanes. "Dying hoary heads possess the souls of sibyls."

Clement V. departed first. In a vision he saw his palace in flames. "From that moment," says Baluze, "he became sad and lasted but a short time."

Seven months later it was Philippe's turn. Some say that he was killed while hunting, overthrown by a wild boar. Dante is among their number. "He," said he, "who was seen near the Seine falsifying the coin of the realm shall die by the tusk of a boar." But Guillaume de Nangis makes the royal counterfeiter die of a death quite otherwise providential.

"Undermined by a malady unknown to the physicians, Philippe expired," said he, "to the great astonishment of everybody, without either his pulse or his urine revealing the cause of his malady or the imminence of the danger."

The King of Debauchery, the King of Uproar, Louis X., called the Hutin, succeeded his father, Philippe le Bel; John XXII. to Clement V.

Avignon then became in truth a second Rome. John XXII. and Clement VI. anointed her queen of luxury. The manners and customs of the times made her queen of debauchery and indulgence. In place of her towers, razed by Romain de Saint-Angelo, Hernandez de Hériedi, grand master of Saint-Jean of Jerusalem, girdled her with a belt of walls. She possessed dissolute monks, who transformed the blessed precincts of her convents into places of debauchery and licentiousness; her beautiful courtesans tore the diamonds from the tiara to make of them bracelets and necklaces; and finally she possessed the echoes of Vaucluse, which wafted the melodious strains of Petrarch's songs to her.

This lasted until King Charles V., who was a virtuous and pious prince, having resolved to put an end to the scandal, sent the Maréchal de Boucicaut to drive out the anti-pope, Benedict XIII., from Avignon. But at sight of the soldiers of the King of France the latter remembered that before being pope under the name of Benedict XIII. he had been captain under the name of Pierre de Luna. For five months he defended himself, pointing his engines of war with his own hands from the heights of the château walls, engines otherwise far more murderous than his pontifical bolts. At last forced to flee, he left the city by a postern, after having ruined a hundred houses and killed four thousand Avignonese, and fled to Spain, where the King of Aragon offered him sanctuary.

There each morning, from the summit of a tower, assisted by the two priests who constituted his sacred college, he blessed the whole world, which was none the better for it, and excommunicated his enemies, who were none the worse for it. At last, feeling himself nigh to death, and fearing lest the schism die with him, he elected his two vicars cardinals on the condition that after his death one of the two would elect the other pope. The election was made. The new pope, supported by the cardinal who made him, continued the schism for awhile. Finally both entered into negotiations with Rome, made honorable amends, and returned to the fold of Holy Church, one with the title of Arch bishop of Seville, the other as Archbishop of Toledo.

From this time until 1790 Avignon, widowed of her popes, was governed by legates and vice-legates. Seven sovereign pontiffs had resided within her walls some seven decades; she had seven hospitals, seven fraternities of penitents, seven monasteries, seven convents, seven parishes, and seven cemeteries.

To those who know Avignon there was at that epoch – there is yet – two cities within a city: the city of the priests, that is to say, the Roman city, and the city of the merchants, that is to say, the French city. The city of the priests, with its papal palace, its hundred churches, its innumerable bell-towers, ever ready to sound the tocsin of conflagration, the knell of slaughter. The town of the merchants, with its Rhone, its silk-workers, its crossroads, extending north, east, south and west, from Lyons to Marseilles, from Nimes to Turin. The French city, the accursed city, longing for a king, jealous of its liberties, shuddering beneath its yoke of vassalage, a vassalage of the priests with the clergy for its lord.

The clergy – not the pious clergy, tolerantly austere in the practice of its duty and charity, living in the world to console and edify it, without mingling in its joys and passions – but a clergy such as intrigue, cupidity, and ambition had made it; that is to say, the court abbés, rivalling the Roman priests, indolent, libertine, elegant, impudent, kings of fashion, autocrats of the salon, kissing the hands of those ladies of whom they boasted themselves the paramours, giving their hands to kiss to the women of the people whom they honored by making their mistresses.

Do you want a type of those abbés? Take the Abbé Maury. Proud as a duke, insolent as a lackey, the son of a shoemaker, more aristocratic than the son of a great lord.

One understands that these two categories of inhabitants, representing the one heresy, the other orthodoxy; the one the French party, the other the Roman party; the one the party of absolute monarchy, the other that of progressive constitutionalism, were not elements conducive to the peace and security of this ancient pontifical city. One understands, we say, that at the moment when the revolution broke out in Paris, and manifested itself by the taking of the Bastille, that the two parties, hot from the religious wars of Louis XIV., could not remain inert in the presence of each other.

We have said, Avignon, city of priests; let us add, city of hatreds. Nowhere better than in convent towns does one learn to hate. The heart of the child, everywhere else free from wicked passions, was born there full of paternal hatreds, inherited from father to son for the last eight hundred years, and after a life of hate, bequeathed in its turn, a diabolical heritage, to his children.

Therefore, at the first cry of liberty which rang through France the French town rose full of joy and hope. The moment had come at last for her to contest aloud that concession made by a young queen, a minor, in expiation of her sins, of a city and a province, and with it half a million souls. By what right had she sold these souls in æternum to the hardest and most exacting of all masters, the Roman Pontiff?

All France was hastening to assemble in the fraternal embrace of the Federation at the Champ de Mars. Was she not France? Her sons ejected delegates to wait upon the legate and request him respectfully to leave the city, giving him twenty-four hours in which to do so.

During the night the papists amused themselves by hanging from a gibbet an effigy of straw wearing the tri-color cockade.

The course of the Rhone has been controlled, the Durance canalled, dikes have been built to restrain the fierce torrents, which, at the melting of the snows, pour in liquid avalanches from the summits of Mt. Ventoux. But this terrible flood, this living flood, this human torrent that rushed leaping through the rapid inclines of the streets of Avignon, once released, once flooding, not even God Himself has yet sought to stay it.

At sight of this manikin with the national colors, dancing at the end of a cord, the French city rose upon its very foundations with terrible cries of rage. Four papist, suspected of this sacrilege, two marquises, one burgher, and a workman, were torn from their homes and hung in the manikin's stead. This occurred the eleventh of June, 1790.

The whole French town wrote to the National Assembly that she gave herself to France, and with her the Rhone, her commerce, the Midi, and the half of Provence.

The National Assembly was in one of its reactionary moods. It did not wish to quarrel with the Pope; it dallied with the King, and the matter was adjourned. From that moment the rising became a revolt, and the Pope was free to do with Avignon what the court might have done with Paris, if the Assembly had delayed its proclamation of the Rights of Man. The Pope ordered the annulment of all that had occurred at the Comtat Venaissin, the re-establishment of the privileges of the nobles and clergy, and the reinstallation of the Inquisition in all its rigor. The pontifical decrees were affixed to the walls.

One man, one only, in broad daylight dared to go straight to the walls, in face of all, and tear down the decree. His name was Lescuyer. He was not a young man; and therefore it was not the fire of youth that impelled him. No, he was almost an old man who did not even belong to the province. He was a Frenchman from Picardy, ardent yet reflective, a former notary long since established at Avignon.

It was a crime that Roman Avignon remembered; a crime so great that the Virgin wept!

You see Avignon is another Italy. She must have her miracles, and if God will not perform them, so surely will some one be at hand to invent them. Still further, the miracle must be a miracle pertaining to the Virgin. La Madonna! the mind, the heart, the tongue of the Italians are full of these two words.

It was in the Church of the Cordeliers that this miracle occurred. The crowd rushed there. It was much that the Virgin should weep; but a rumor spread at the same time that brought the excitement to a climax. A large coffer, tightly sealed, had been carried through the city; this chest had excited the curiosity of all Avignon. What did it contain? Two hours later it was no longer a coffer; but eighteen trunks had been seen going toward the Rhone. As for their contents, a porter had revealed that; they contained articles from the Mont-de-Piété that the French party were taking with them into exile. Articles from the Mont-de-Piété, that is to say, the spoils of the poor! The poorer the city the richer its pawn-shops. Few could boast such wealth as those of Avignon. It was no longer a factional affair, it was a theft, an infamous theft. Whites and Reds rushed to the Church of the Cordeliers, shouting that the municipality must render them an accounting.

Lescuyer was the secretary of the municipality. His name was thrown to the crowd, not for having torn down the pontifical decrees – from that moment he would have had defenders – but for having signed the order to the keeper of the Mont-de-Piété permitting the removal of the articles in pawn.

Four men were sent to seize Lescuyer and bring him to the church. They found him in the street on his way to the municipality. The four men fell upon him and dragged him to the church with the most ferocious cries. Once there, Lescuyer understood from the flaming eyes that met his, from the clinched fists threatening him, the shrieks demanding his death; Lescuyer understood that instead of being in the house of the Lord he was in one of those circles of hell forgotten by Dante.

The only idea that occurred to him as to this hatred against him was that he had caused it by tearing down the pontifical decrees. He climbed into the pulpit, expecting to convert it into a seat

of justice, and in the voice of a man who not only does not blame himself, but who is even ready to repeat his action, he said:

“Brothers, I consider the revolution necessary; consequently I have done all in my power – ”

The fanatics understood that if Lescuyer explained, Lescuyer was saved. That was not what they wanted. They flung themselves upon him, tore him from the pulpit, and thrust him into the midst of this howling mob, who dragged him to the altar with that sort of terrible cry which combines the hiss of the serpent and the roar of the tiger, the murderous *zou! zou!* peculiar to the people of Avignon.

Lescuyer recognized that fatal cry; he endeavored to gain refuge at the foot of the altar. He found none; he fell there.

A laborer, armed with a stick, dealt him such a blow on the head that the stick broke in two pieces. Then the people hurled themselves upon the poor body, and, with that mixture of gayety and ferocity peculiar to Southern people, the men began to dance on his stomach, singing, while the women, that he might better expiate his blasphemies against the Pope, cut or rather scalloped his lips with their scissors.

And out of the midst of this frightful group came a cry, or rather a groan; this death groan said: “In the name of Heaven! in the name of the Virgin! in the name of humanity! kill me at once.”

This cry was heard, and by common consent the assassins stood aside. They left the unfortunate man bleeding, disfigured, mangled, to taste of his death agony.

This lasted five hours, during which, amid shouts of laughter, insults, and jeers from the crowd, this poor body lay palpitating upon the steps of the altar. That is how they kill at Avignon.

Stay! there is yet another way. A man of the French party conceived the idea of going to the Mont-de-Piété for information. Everything was in order there, not a fork or a spoon had been removed. It was therefore not as an accomplice of theft that Lescuyer had just been so cruelly murdered, it was for being a patriot.

There was at that time in Avignon a man who controlled the populace. All these terrible leaders of the Midi have acquired such fatal celebrity that it suffices to name them for every one, even the least educated, to know them. This man was Jourdan. Braggart and liar, he had made the common people believe that it was he who had cut off the head of the governor of the Bastille. So they called him Jourdan, *Coupe-tête*. That was not his real name, which was Mathieu Jouve. Neither was he a Provençal; he came from Puy-en-Velay. He had formerly been a muleteer on those rugged heights which surround his native town; then a soldier without going to war – war had perhaps made him more human; after that he had kept a drink-shop in Paris. In Avignon he had been a vendor of madder.

He collected three hundred men, carried the gates of the town, left half of his troop to guard them, and with the remainder marched upon the Church of the Cordeliers, preceded by two pieces of cannon. These he stationed in front of the church and fired them into it at random. The assassins fled like a flock of frightened birds, leaving some few dead upon the church steps. Jourdan and his men trampled over the bodies and entered the holy precincts. No one was there but the Virgin, and the wretched Lescuyer, still breathing. Jourdan and his comrades took good care not to despatch Lescuyer; his death agony was a supreme means of exciting the mob. They picked up this remnant of a sentient being, three-quarters dead, and carried it along, bleeding, quivering, gasping, with them.

Every one fled from the sight, closing doors and windows. At the end of an hour, Jourdan and his three hundred men were masters of the town.

Lescuyer was dead, but what of that; they no longer needed his agony. Jourdan profited by the terror he had inspired to arrest or have arrested eighty people, murderers, or so-called murderers of Lescuyer. Thirty, perhaps, had never even set foot within the church. But when one has such a good opportunity to be rid of one's enemies, one must profit by it; good opportunities are rare.

These eighty people were huddled into the Trouillas Tower. Historically it is known as the Tower de la Glacière; but why change this name of the Trouillas Tower? The name is unclean and harmonizes well with the unclean deed which was now to be perpetrated there.

It had been the scene of the inquisitorial tortures. One can still see on the walls the greasy soot which rose from the smoke of the funeral pyre where human bodies were consumed. They still show you to-day the instruments of torture which they have carefully preserved – the caldron, the oven, the wooden horse, the chains, the dungeons, and even the rotten bones. Nothing is wanting.

It was in this tower, built by Clement V., that they now confined the eighty prisoners. These eighty men, once arrested and locked up in the Trouillas Tower, became most embarrassing. Who was to judge them? There were no legally constituted courts except those of the Pope. Could they kill these unfortunates as they had killed Lescuyer?

We have said that a third, perhaps half of them, had not only taken no part in the murder, but had not even set foot in the church. How should they kill them? The killing must be placed upon the basis of reprisals. But the killing of these eighty people required a certain number of executioners.

A species of tribunal was improvised by Jourdan and held session in one of the law-courts. It had a clerk named Raphel; a president, half Italian, half French; an orator in the popular dialect named Barbe Savournin de la Roua, and three or four other poor devils, a baker, a pork butcher – their names are lost in the multitude of events.

These were the men who cried: “We must kill all! If one only escapes he will be a witness against us.”

But, as we have said, executioners were wanting. There were barely twenty men at hand in the courtyard, all belonging to the petty tradesfolk of Avignon – a barber, a shoemaker, a cobbler, a mason, and an upholsterer – all insufficiently armed at random, the one with a sabre, the other with a bayonet, a third with an iron bar, and a fourth with a bit of wood hardened by fire. All of these people were chilled by a fine October rain. It would be difficult to turn them into assassins.

Pooh! Is anything too difficult for the devil?

There comes an hour in such crises when God seems to abandon the earth. Then the devil’s chance comes.

The devil in person entered this cold, muddy courtyard. Assuming the features, form and face of an apothecary of the neighborhood named Mendes, he prepared a table lighted by two lanterns, on which he placed glasses, jugs, pitchers and bottles.

What infernal beverage did these mysterious and curiously formed receptacles contain? No one ever knew, but the result is well known. All those who drank that diabolical liquor were suddenly seized with a feverish rage, a lust of blood and murder. From that moment it was only necessary to show them the door; they hurtled madly into the dungeon.

The massacre lasted all night; all night the cries, the sobs, the groans of the dying sounded through the darkness. All were killed, all slaughtered, men and women. It was long in doing; the killers, we have said, were drunk and poorly armed. But they succeeded.

Among these butchers was a child remarked for his bestial cruelty, his immoderate thirst for blood. It was Lescuyer’s son. He killed and then killed again; he boasted of having with his childish hand alone killed ten men and four women.

“It’s all right! I can kill as I like,” said he. “I am not yet fifteen, so they can do nothing to me for it.”

As the killing progressed, they threw their victims, the living, dead and wounded, into the Trouillas Tower, some sixty feet, down into the pit. The men were thrown in first, and the women later. The assassins wanted time to violate the bodies of those who were young and pretty. At nine in the morning, after twelve hours of massacre, a voice was still heard crying from the depths of the sepulchre:

“For pity’s sake, come kill me! I cannot die.”

A man, the armorer Bouffier, bent over the pit and looked down. The others did not dare.

“Who was that crying?” they asked.

“That was Lami,” replied Bouffier. Then, when he had returned, they asked him:

“Well, what did you see at the bottom?”

“A queer marmalade,” said he. “Men and women, priests and pretty girls, all helter-skelter. It’s enough to make one die of laughter.”

“Decidedly man is a vile creature,” said the Count of Monte-Cristo to M. de Villefort.

Well, it is in this town, still reeking with blood, still warm, still stirred by these last massacres, that we now introduce two of the principal personages of our story.

CHAPTER I. A TABLE D'HÔTE

The 9th of October, 1799, on a beautiful day of that meridional autumn which ripens the oranges of Hyères and the grapes of Saint-Peray, at the two extremities of Provence, a travelling chaise, drawn by three post horses, galloped at full speed over the bridge that crosses the Durance, between Cavaillon and Château-Renard, on its way to Avignon, the ancient papal city which a decree, issued the 25th of May, 1791, eight years earlier, had reunited to France – a reunion confirmed by the treaty signed in 1797, at Tolentino, between General Bonaparte and Pope Pius VI.

The carriage entered by the gate of Aix and, without slackening speed, traversed the entire length of the town, with its narrow, winding streets, built to ward off both wind and sun, and halted at fifty paces from the Porte d'Oulle, at the Hotel du Palais-Egalité, which they were again beginning to quietly rename the Hotel du Palais-Royal, a name which it bore formerly and still bears to-day.

These few insignificant words about the name of the inn, before which halted the post-chaise which we had in view, indicate sufficiently well the state of France under the government of the Thermidorian reaction, called the Directory.

After the revolutionary struggle which had occurred between the 14th of July, 1789, and the 9th Thermidor, 1794; after the days of the 5th and 6th of October, of the 21st of June, of the 10th of August, of the 2d and 3d of September, of the 21st of May, of the 29th Thermidor and the 1st Prairial; after seeing fall the heads of the King and his judges, and the Queen and her accusers, of the Girondins and the Cordeliers, the Moderates and the Jacobins, France experienced that most frightful and most nauseous of all lassitudes, the lassitude of blood!

She had therefore returned, if not to a need of monarchy, at least to a desire for a stable government, in which she might place her confidence, upon which she might lean, which would act for her, and which would permit her some repose while it acted.

In the stead of this vaguely desired government, the country obtained the feeble and irresolute Directory, composed for the moment of the voluptuous Barrès, the intriguing Sièyes, the brave Moulins, the insignificant Roger Ducos, and the honest but somewhat too ingenuous Gohier. The result was a mediocre dignity before the world at large and a very questionable tranquillity at home.

It is true that at the moment of which we write our armies, so glorious during those epic campaigns of 1796 and 1797, thrown back for a time upon France by the incapacity of Scherer at Verona and Cassano, and by the defeat and death of Joubert at Novi, were beginning to resume the offensive. Moreau had defeated Souvarow at Bassignano; Brune had defeated the Duke of York and General Hermann at Bergen; Masséna had annihilated the Austro-Russians at Zurich; Korsakof had escaped only with the greatest difficulty; the Austrian, Hotz, with three other generals, were killed, and five made prisoners. Masséna saved France at Zurich, as Villars, ninety years earlier, had saved it at Denain.

But in the interior, matters were not in so promising a state, and the government of the Directory was, it must be confessed, much embarrassed between the war in the Vendée and the brigandages of the Midi, to which, according to custom, the population of Avignon were far from remaining strangers.

Beyond doubt the two travellers who descended from the carriage at the door of the Hotel du Palais-Royal had reason to fear the state of mind in which the always excitable papal town might be at that time; for just before reaching Orgon, at a spot where three crossroads stretched out before the traveller – one leading to Nîmes, the second to Carpentras, the third to Avignon – the postilion had stopped his horses, and, turning round, asked:

“Will the citizens go by way of Avignon or Carpentras?”

“Which of the two roads is the shorter?” asked the elder of the two travellers in a harsh, strident voice. Though visibly the elder, he was scarcely thirty years of age.

“Oh, the road to Avignon, citizen, by a good four miles at least.”

“Then,” he had replied, “go by way of Avignon.”

And the carriage had started again at a gallop, which proclaimed that the citizen travellers, as the postilion called them, although the title of Monsieur was beginning to reappear in conversation, paid a fee of at least thirty sous.

The same desire to lose no time manifested itself at the hotel entrance. There, as on the road, it was the elder of the two travellers who spoke. He asked if they could dine at once, and the way this demand was made indicated that he was ready to overlook many gastronomical exigencies provided that the repast in question be promptly served.

“Citizens,” replied the landlord, who, at the sound of carriage wheels hastened, napkin in hand, to greet the travellers, “you will be promptly and comfortably served in your room; but if you will permit me to advise – ” He hesitated.

“Oh, go on! go on!” said the younger of the travellers, speaking for the first time.

“Well, it would be that you dine at the table d’hôte, like the traveller for whom this coach, already harnessed, is waiting. The dinner is excellent and all served.”

The host at the same time indicated a comfortably appointed carriage, to which were harnessed two horses who were pawing the ground, while the postilion sought patience in the bottle of Cahors wine he was emptying near the window-ledge. The first movement of him to whom this proposal was made was negative; nevertheless, after a second’s reflection, the elder of the two travellers, as if he had reconsidered his first decision, made an interrogative sign to his companion, who replied with a look which signified, “You know that I am at your orders.”

“Very well, so be it,” said the other, “we will dine at the table d’hôte.” Then, turning to the postilion, who, hat in hand, awaited his order, he added, “Let the horses be ready in a half hour, at the latest.”

And the landlord pointing out the way, they both entered the dining-room, the elder of the two walking first, the other following him.

Everyone knows the impression generally produced at a table d’hôte by new-comers. All eyes were bent upon them and the conversation, which seemed to be quite animated, stopped.

The guests consisted of the frequenters of the hotel, the traveller whose carriage was waiting harnessed at the door, a wine merchant from Bordeaux, sojourning temporarily at Avignon for reasons we shall shortly relate, and a certain number of travellers going from Marseilles to Lyons by diligence.

The new arrivals greeted the company with a slight inclination of the head, and sat down at the extreme end of the table, thereby isolating themselves from the other guests by three or four empty places. This seemingly aristocratic reserve redoubled the curiosity of which they were the object; moreover, they were obviously people of unquestionable distinction, although their garments were simple in the extreme. Both wore hightop boots and breeches, long-tailed coats, travelling overcoats and broad-brimmed hats, the usual costume of the young men of that day. But that which distinguished them from the fashionables of Paris, and even of the provinces, was their long straight hair, and their black stocks buckled round the neck, military fashion. The Muscadins – that was the name then given to young dandies – the Muscadins wore dogs’ ears puffing at the temples, the rest of the hair combed up tightly in a bag at the back, and an immense cravat with long floating ends, in which the chin was completely buried. Some had even extended this reaction to powder.

As to the personality of the two young men, they presented two diametrically opposite types.

The elder of the two, he who, as we have already remarked, had taken the initiative several times, and whose voice, even in its most familiar intonations, denoted the habit of command, was about thirty years of age. His black hair was parted in the middle, falling straight from his temples to his shoulders. He had the swarthy skin of a man who has travelled long in southern climes, thin lips, a straight nose, white teeth, and those hawk-like eyes which Dante gives to Cæsar. He was short rather than tall, his hand was delicate, his foot slender and elegant. His manner betrayed a

certain awkwardness, suggesting that he was at the moment wearing a costume to which he was not accustomed, and when he spoke, his hearers, had they been beside the Loire instead of the Rhone, would have detected a certain Italian accent in his pronunciation.

His companion seemed to be some three or four years younger than he. He was a handsome young man with a rosy complexion, blond hair and light blue eyes, a straight, firm nose and prominent but almost beardless chin. He was perhaps a couple of inches taller than his companion, and though his figure was somewhat above medium height, he was so well proportioned, so admirably free in his movements, that he was evidently if not extraordinarily strong, at least uncommonly agile and dexterous. Although attired in the same manner and apparently on a footing of equality, he evinced remarkable deference to the dark young man, which, as it could not result from age, was doubtless caused by some inferiority of position. Moreover, he called his companion citizen, while the other addressed him as Roland.

These remarks which we make to initiate the reader more profoundly into our story, were probably not made as extensively by the guests at the table d'hôte; for after bestowing a few seconds of attention upon the new-comers, they turned their eyes away, and the conversation, interrupted for an instant, was resumed. It must be confessed that it concerned a matter most interesting to the travellers – that of the stoppage of a diligence bearing a sum of sixty thousand francs belonging to the government. The affair had occurred the day before on the road from Marseilles to Avignon between Lambesc and Pont-Royal.

At the first words referring to this event, the two young men listened with unmistakable interest. It had taken place on the same road which they had just followed, and the narrator, the wine merchant of Bordeaux, had been one of the principal actors in the scene on the highroad. Those who seemed the most curious to hear the details were the travellers in the diligence which had just arrived and was soon to depart. The other guests, who belonged to the locality, seemed sufficiently conversant with such catastrophes to furnish the details themselves instead of listening to them.

"So, citizen," said a stout gentleman against whom a tall woman, very thin and haggard, was crowding in her terror. "You say that the robbery took place on the very road by which we have just come?"

"Yes, citizen, between Lambesc and Pont-Royal. Did you notice the spot where the road ascends between two high banks? There are a great many rocks there."

"Yes, yes, my friend," said the wife, pressing her husband's arm, "I noticed it; I even said, as you must remember, 'Here is a bad place; I would rather pass here by day than at night.'"

"Oh! madame," said a young man whose voice affected to slur his r's after the fashion of the day, and who probably assumed to lead the conversation at the table d'hôte, on ordinary occasions, "you know the Companions of Jehu know no day or night."

"What! citizen," asked the lady still more alarmed, "were you attacked in broad daylight?"

"In broad daylight, citizeness, at ten o'clock in the morning."

"And how many were there?" asked the stout gentleman.

"Four, citizen."

"Ambushed beside the road?"

"No; they were on horseback, armed to the teeth and masked."

"That's their custom," said the young frequenter of the table d'hôte, "and they said, did they not: 'Do not defend yourself, we will not harm you. We only want the government money.'"

"Word for word, citizen."

"Then," continued this well-informed young man, "two dismounted from their horses, flinging their bridles to their comrades, and commanded the conductor to deliver up the money."

"Citizen," said the stout man astonished, "you describe the thing as if you had seen it."

"Monsieur was there, perhaps," said one of the travellers, half in jest, half in earnest.

"I do not know, citizen, whether in saying that you intend a rudeness," carelessly observed the young man who had so pertinently and obligingly come to the narrator's assistance, "but my political opinions are such that I do not consider your suspicion an insult. Had I had the misfortune to be among those attacked, or the honor to be one of those who made the attack, I should admit it as frankly in the one case as in the other. But yesterday at ten o'clock, at precisely the moment when the diligence was stopped, twelve miles from here, I was breakfasting quietly in this very seat. And, by-the-bye, with the two citizens who now do me the honor to sit beside me."

"And," asked the younger of the two travellers who had lately joined the table, whom his companion called Roland, "how many men were you in the diligence?"

"Let me think; we were – yes, that's it – we were seven men and three women."

"Seven men, not including the conductor?" repeated Roland.

"Yes."

"And you seven men allowed yourselves to be plundered by four brigands? I congratulate you, gentlemen."

"We knew with whom we had to deal," replied the wine merchant, "and we took good care not to defend ourselves."

"What! with whom you had to deal?" retorted the young man. "Why, it seems to me, with thieves and bandits."

"Not at all. They gave their names."

"They gave their names?"

"They said, 'Gentlemen, it is useless to defend yourselves; ladies, do not be alarmed, we are not bandits, we are Companions of Jehu.'"

"Yes," said the young man of the table d'hôte, "they warned you that there might be no misunderstanding. That's their way."

"Ah, indeed!" exclaimed Roland; "and who is this Jehu who has such polite companions? Is he their captain?"

"Sir," said a man whose dress betrayed somewhat the secularized priest, and who seemed also to be, not only an habitual guest at the table d'hôte, but also an initiate into the mysteries of the honorable company whose merits were then under discussion, "if you were better versed than you seem to be in the Holy Scriptures, you would know that this Jehu died something like two thousand six hundred years ago, and that consequently he cannot at the present time stop coaches on the highways."

"Monsieur l'Abbé," replied Roland, who had recognized an ecclesiastic, "as, in spite of the sharp tone in which you speak, you seem a man of learning, permit a poor ignoramus to ask you a few details about this Jehu, dead these two thousand six hundred years, who, nevertheless, is honored by followers bearing his name."

"Jehu!" replied the churchman, in the same sour tone, "was a King of Israel anointed by Elisha, on condition that he punish the crimes of the house of Ahab and Jezbel, and put to death the priests of Baal."

"Monsieur l'Abbé," replied the young man laughing, "I thank you for the explanation. I don't doubt it is correct, and, above all, very learned. But I must admit it doesn't tell me much."

"What, citizen!" exclaimed the abbé, "don't you understand that Jehu is his Majesty Louis XVIII., anointed on condition that he punish the crimes of the Revolution and put to death all the priests of Baal; that is to say, all those who had taken any part whatsoever in the abominable state of things which, for these last seven years, has been called the republic?"

"Yes, indeed!" exclaimed the young man; "of course I understand. But among those whom the Companions of Jehu are appointed to fight, do you reckon the brave soldiers who have repulsed the enemy along the frontiers of France, and the illustrious generals who have commanded the armies of the Tyrol, the Sambre-and-Meuse, and of Italy?"

"Why, beyond doubt, those foremost and before all."

The young man's eyes flashed lightning; his nostrils quivered and his lips tightened. He rose from his chair, but his comrade touched his coat and forced him to sit down again, while with a single glance he silenced him. Then he who had thus given proof of his power, speaking for the first time, addressed the young man of the table d'hôte.

"Citizen, excuse two travellers who are just arrived from the end of the earth, from America, or India as it were. Absent from France these last two years; we are completely ignorant of all that has occurred here, and most desirous to obtain information."

"Why, as to that," replied the young man, to whom these words were addressed, "that is but fair, citizen. Question us and we will answer you."

"Well," continued the dark young man with the eagle eye, the straight black hair, and the granite complexion, "now that I know who Jehu is, and to what end his company was instituted, I should like to know what his companions do with the money they take."

"Oh! that is very simple, citizen. You know there is much talk of the restoration of the Bourbon monarchy?"

"No, I did not know it," replied the dark young man, in a tone which he vainly strove to render artless; "I am but just arrived, as I told you, from the end of the earth."

"What! you did not know that? Well, six months hence it will be an accomplished fact."

"Really!"

"I have the honor to tell you so, citizen."

The two soldier-like young men exchanged a glance and a smile, though the young blond one was apparently chafing under the weight of his extreme impatience.

Their informant continued: "Lyons is the headquarters of the conspiracy, if one can call conspiracy a plot which was organized openly. 'The provisional government' would be a more suitable word."

"Well, then, citizen," said the dark young man with a politeness not wholly exempt from satire, "let us call it 'provisional government.'"

"This provisional government has its staff and its armies."

"Bah! its staff perhaps – but its armies –"

"Its armies, I repeat."

"Where are they?"

"One is being organized in the mountains of Auvergne, under the orders of M. de Chardon; another in the Jura Mountains, under M. Teyssonnet; and, finally, a third is operating most successfully at this time, in the Vendée, under the orders of Escarboville, Achille Leblond and Cadoudal."

"Truly, citizen, you render me a real service in telling me this. I thought the Bourbons completely resigned to their exile. I supposed the police so organized as to suppress both provisional royalist committees in the large towns and bandits on the highways. In fact, I believed the Vendée had been completely pacified by Hoche."

The young man to whom this reply was addressed burst out laughing.

"Why, where do you come from?" he exclaimed.

"I told you, citizen, from the end of the earth."

"So it seems." Then he continued: "You understand, the Bourbons are not rich, the émigrés whose property was confiscated are ruined. It is impossible to organize two armies and maintain a third without money. The royalists faced an embarrassing problem; the republic alone could pay for its enemies' troops and, it being improbable that she would do so of her own volition, the shady negotiation was abandoned, and it was adjudged quicker to take the money without permission than to ask her for it."

"Ah! I understand at last."

"That's very fortunate."

“Companions of Jehu then are the intermediaries between the Republic and the Counter-Revolution, the tax-collectors of the royalist generals?”

“Yes. It is not robbery, but a military operation, rather a feat of arms like any other. So there you are, citizen, and now you are as well informed on this point as ourselves.”

“But,” timidly hazarded the wine merchant of Bordeaux, “if the Companions of Jehu – observe that I say nothing against them – want the government money – ”

“The government money, no other. Individual plunder on their part is unheard of.”

“How does it happen, then, that yesterday, in addition to the government money, they carried off two hundred louis of mine?”

“My dear sir,” replied the young man of the table d’hôte, “I have already told you that there is some mistake. As surely as my name is Alfred de Barjols, this money will be returned to you some day.”

The wine merchant heaved a sigh and shook his head, as if, in spite of that assurance, he still retained some doubts. But at this moment, as if the promise given by the young noble, who had just revealed his social position by telling his name, had stirred the delicacy of those whom he thus guaranteed, a horse stopped at the entrance, steps were heard in the corridor, the dining-room door opened, and a masked man, armed to the teeth, appeared on the threshold.

“Gentlemen,” said he, in the profound silence occasioned by his apparition, “is there a traveller here named Jean Picot, who was in the diligence that was held up yesterday between Lambesc and Pont-Royal?”

“Yes,” said the wine merchant, amazed.

“Are you he?” asked the masked man.

“I am.”

“Was anything taken from you?”

“Oh, yes, two hundred louis, which I had intrusted to the conductor.”

“And I may add,” said the young noble, “that the gentleman was speaking of it at this very moment. He looked upon it as lost.”

“The gentleman was wrong,” said the masked unknown, “we war upon the government and not against individuals. We are partisans and not robbers. Here are your two hundred Louis, sir, and if a similar mistake should occur in the future, claim your loss, mentioning the name of Morgan.”

So saying, the masked individual deposited a bag of gold beside the wine merchant, bowed courteously to the other guests, and went out, leaving some terrified and others bewildered by such daring.

CHAPTER II. AN ITALIAN PROVERB

Although the two sentiments which we have just indicated were the dominant ones, they did not manifest themselves to an equal degree in all present. The shades were graduated according to the sex, age, character, we may almost say, the social positions of the hearers. The wine merchant, Jean Picot, the principal personage in the late event, recognizing at first sight by his dress, weapons, mask, one of the men who had stopped the coach on the preceding day, was at first sight stupefied, then little by little, as he grasped the purport of this mysterious brigand's visit to him, he had passed from stupefaction to joy, through the intermediate phases separating these two emotions. His bag of gold was beside him, yet he seemingly dared not touch it; perhaps he feared that the instant his hand went forth toward it, it would melt like the dream-gold which vanishes during that period of progressive lucidity which separates profound slumber from thorough awakening.

The stout gentleman of the diligence and his wife had displayed, like their travelling companions, the most absolute and complete terror. Seated to the left of Jean Picot, when the bandit approached the wine merchant, the husband, in the vain hope of maintaining a respectable distance between himself and the Companion of Jehu, pushed his chair back against that of his wife, who, yielding to the pressure, in turn endeavored to push back hers. But as the next chair was occupied by citizen Alfred de Barjols, who had no reason to fear these men whom he had just praised so highly, the chair of the stout man's wife encountered an obstacle in the immovability of the young noble; so, as at Marengo, eight or nine months later, when the general in command judged it time to resume the offensive, the retrograde movement was arrested.

As for him – we are speaking of the citizen Alfred de Barjols – his attitude, like that of the abbé who had given the Biblical explanation about Jehu, King of Israel, and his mission from Elisha, his attitude, we say, was that of a man who not only experiences no fear, but who even expects the event in question, however unexpected it may be. His lips wore a smile as he watched the masked man, and had the guests not been so preoccupied with the two principal actors in this scene, they might have remarked the almost imperceptible sign exchanged between the eyes of the bandit and the young noble, and transmitted instantly by the latter to the abbé.

The two travellers whom we introduced to the table d'hôte, and who as we have said sat apart at the end of the table, preserved an attitude conformable to their respective characters. The younger of the two had instinctively put his hand to his side, as if to seek an absent weapon, and had risen with a spring, as if to rush at the masked man's throat, in which purpose he had certainly not failed had he been alone; but the elder, who seemed to possess not only the habit but the right of command, contented himself by regrasping his coat, and saying, in an imperious, almost harsh tone: "Sit down, Roland!" And the young man had resumed his seat.

But one of the guests had remained, in appearance at least, the most impassible during this scene. He was a man between thirty-three and thirty-four years of age, with blond hair, red beard, a calm, handsome face, with large blue eyes, a fair skin, refined and intelligent lips, and very tall, whose foreign accent betrayed one born in that island of which the government was at that time waging bitter war against France. As far as could be judged by the few words which had escaped him, he spoke the French language with rare purity, despite the accent we have just mentioned. At the first word he uttered, in which that English accent revealed itself, the elder of the two travellers started. Turning to his companion, he asked with a glance, to which the other seemed accustomed, how it was that an Englishman should be in France when the uncompromising war between the two nations had naturally exiled all Englishmen from France, as it had all Frenchmen from England. No doubt the explanation seemed impossible to Roland, for he had replied with his eyes, and a shrug of the shoulders: "I find it quite as extraordinary as you; but if you, mathematician as you are, can't solve the problem, don't ask me!"

It was evident to the two young men that the fair man with the Anglo-Saxon accent was the traveller whose comfortable carriage awaited him harnessed in the courtyard, and that this traveller hailed from London, or, at least, from some part of Great Britain.

As to his remarks, they, as we have stated, were infrequent, so laconic, in reality, that they were mere exclamations rather than speech. But each time an explanation had been asked concerning the state of France, the Englishman openly drew out a note-book and requested those about him, the wine merchant, the abbé, or the young noble to repeat their remarks; to which each had complied with an amiability equal to the courteous tone of the request. He had noted down the most important, extraordinary and, picturesque features of the robbery of the diligence, the state of Vendée, and the details about the Companions of Jehu, thanking each informant by voice and gesture with the stiffness peculiar to our insular cousins, replacing his note-book enriched each time by a new item in a side pocket of his overcoat.

Finally, like a spectator enjoying an unexpected scene, he had given a cry of satisfaction at sight of the masked man, had listened with all his ears, gazed with all his eyes, not losing him from sight until the door closed behind him. Then drawing his note-book hastily from his pocket —

“Ah, sir,” he said to his neighbor, who was no other than the abbé, “will you be so kind, should my memory fail me, as to repeat what that gentleman who has just gone out said?”

He began to write immediately, and the abbé’s memory agreeing with his, he had the satisfaction of transcribing literally and verbatim the speech made by the Companion of Jehu to citizen Jean Picot. Then, this conversation written down, he exclaimed with an accent that lent a singular stamp of originality to his words:

“Of a truth! it is only in France that such things can happen; France is the most curious country in the world. I am delighted, gentlemen, to travel in France and become acquainted with Frenchmen.”

The last sentence was said with such courtesy that nothing remained save to thank the speaker from whose serious mouth it issued, though he was a descendant of the conquerors of Crecy, Poitiers and Agincourt. It was the younger of the two travellers who acknowledged this politeness in that heedless and rather caustic manner which seemed habitual to him.

“Pon my word! I am exactly like you, my lord – I say my lord, because I presume you are English.”

“Yes, sir,” replied the gentleman, “I have that honor.”

“Well! as I was saying,” continued the young man, “I am delighted to travel in France and see what I am seeing. One must live under the government of citizens Gohier, Moulins, Roger Ducos, Sièyes and Barras to witness such roguery. I dare wager than when the tale is told, fifty years hence, of the highwayman who rode into a city of thirty thousand inhabitants in broad day, masked and armed with two pistols and a sword at his belt, to return the two hundred louis which he had stolen the day previous to the honest merchant who was then deploring their loss, and when it is added that this occurred at a table d’hôte where twenty or twenty-five people were seated, and that this model bandit was allowed to depart without one of those twenty or twenty-five people daring to molest him; I dare wager, I repeat, that whoever has the audacity to tell the story will be branded as an infamous liar.”

And the young man, throwing himself back in his chair, burst into laughter, so aggressive, so nervous, that every one gazed at him in wonderment, while his companion’s eyes expressed an almost paternal anxiety.

“Sir,” said citizen Alfred de Barjols, who, moved like the others by this singular outburst, more sad, or rather dolorous, than gay, had waited for its last echo to subside. “Sir, permit me to point out to you that the man whom you have just seen is not a highwayman.”

“Bah! Frankly, what is he then?”

“He is in all probability a young man of as good a family as yours or mine.”

“Count Horn, whom the Regent ordered broken on the wheel at the Place de Grève, was also a man of good family, and the proof is that all the nobility of Paris sent their carriages to his execution.”

“Count Horn, if I remember rightly, murdered a Jew to steal a note of hand which he was unable to meet. No one would dare assert that a Companion of Jehu had ever so much as harmed the hair of an infant.”

“Well, be it so. We will admit that the Company was founded upon a philanthropic basis, to re-establish the balance of fortunes, redress the whims of chance and reform the abuses of society. Though he may be a robber, after the fashion of Karl Moor, your friend Morgan – was it not Morgan that this honest citizen called himself?”

“Yes,” said the Englishman.

“Well, your friend Morgan is none the less a thief.”

Citizen Alfred de Barjols turned very pale.

“Citizen Morgan is not my friend,” replied the young aristocrat; “but if he were I should feel honored by his friendship.”

“No doubt,” replied Roland, laughing. “As Voltaire says: ‘The friendship of a great man is a blessing from the gods.’”

“Roland, Roland!” observed his comrade in a low tone.

“Oh! general,” replied the latter, letting his companion’s rank escape him, perhaps intentionally, “I implore you, let me continue this discussion, which interests me in the highest degree.”

His friend shrugged his shoulders.

“But, citizen,” continued the young man with strange persistence, “I stand in need of correction. I left France two years ago, and during my absence so many things have changed, such as dress, morals, and accents, that even the language may have changed also. In the language of the day in France what do you call stopping coaches and taking the money which they contain?”

“Sir,” said the young noble, in the tone of a man determined to sustain his argument to its end, “I call that war. Here is your companion whom you have just called general; he as a military man will tell you that, apart from the pleasure of killing and being killed, the generals of all ages have never done anything else than what the citizen Morgan is doing?”

“What!” exclaimed the young man, whose eyes flashed fire. “You dare to compare – ”

“Permit the gentleman to develop his theory, Roland,” said the dark traveller, whose eyes, unlike those of his companion, which dilated as they flamed, were veiled by long black lashes, thus concealing all that was passing in his mind.

“Ah!” said the young man in his curt tone, “you see that you, yourself, are becoming interested in the discussion.” Then, turning to the young noble, whom he seemed to have selected for his antagonist, he said: “Continue, sir, continue; the general permits it.”

The young noble flushed as visibly as he had paled a moment before. Between clinched teeth, his elbow on the table, his chin on his clinched hand, as if to draw as close to his adversary as possible, he said with a Provençal accent, which grew more pronounced as the discussion waxed hotter: “Since *the general* permits” – emphasizing the two words – “I shall have the honor to tell him and you, too, citizen, that I believe I have read in Plutarch that Alexander the Great, when he started for India, took with him but eighteen or twenty talents in gold, something like one hundred or one hundred and twenty thousand francs. Now, do you suppose that with these eighteen or twenty talents alone he fed his army, won the battle of Granicus, subdued Asia Minor, conquered Tyre, Gaza, Syria and Egypt, built Alexandria, penetrated to Lybia, had himself declared Son of Jupiter by the oracle of Ammon, penetrated as far as the Hyphases, and, when his soldiers refused to follow him further, returned to Babylon, where he surpassed in luxury, debauchery and self-indulgence the most debauched and voluptuous of the kings of Asia? Did Macedonia furnish his supplies? Do you believe that King Philip, most indigent of the kings of poverty-stricken Greece, honored the drafts his son drew upon him? Not so. Alexander did as citizen Morgan is doing; only, instead of stopping the coaches on the highroads, he pillaged cities, held kings for ransom, levied contributions from the conquered countries. Let us turn to Hannibal. You know how he left Carthage, don’t you? He did not have even the eighteen or

twenty talents of his predecessor; and as he needed money, he seized and sacked the city of Saguntum in the midst of peace, in defiance of the fealty of treaties. After that he was rich and could begin his campaign. Forgive me if this time I no longer quote Plutarch, but Cornelius Nepos. I will spare you the details of his descent from the Pyrenees, how he crossed the Alps and the three battles which he won, seizing each time the treasures of the vanquished, and turn to the five or six years he spent in Campania. Do you believe that he and his army paid the Capuans for their subsistence, and that the bankers of Carthage, with whom he had quarrelled, supplied him with funds? No; war fed war – the Morgan system, citizen. Let us pass on to Cæsar. Ah, Cæsar! That's another story. He left for Spain with some thirty millions of debt, and returned with practically the same. He started for Gaul, where he spent ten years with our ancestors. During these ten years he sent over one hundred millions to Rome, repassed the Alps, crossed the Rubicon, marched straight to the Capitol, forced the gates of the Temple of Saturn, where the treasury was, seized sufficient for his private needs – and not for those of the Republic – three thousand pounds of gold in ingots; and died (he whom creditors twenty years earlier refused to allow to leave his little house in the Suburra) leaving two or three thousand sesterces per head to the citizens, ten or twelve millions to Calpurnia, and thirty or forty millions to Octavius; always the Morgan system, save that Morgan, I am sure, would die sooner than subvert to his personal needs either the silver of the Gauls or the gold of the capital. Now let us spring over eighteen centuries and come to the General Buonaparté.” And the young aristocrat, after the fashion of the enemies of the Conqueror of Italy, affected to emphasize the *u*, which Bonaparte had eliminated from his name, and the *e*, from which he had removed the accent.

This affectation seemed to irritate Roland intensely. He made a movement as if to spring forward, but his companion stopped him.

“Let be,” said he, “let be, Roland. I am quite sure that citizen Barjols will not say the General Buonaparté, as he calls him, is a thief.”

“No, I will not say it; but there is an Italian proverb which says it for me.”

“What is the proverb?” demanded the general in his companion's stead, fixing his calm, limpid eye upon the young noble.

“I give it in all its simplicity: ‘Francesi non sono tutti ladroni, ma buona parte’; which means: ‘All Frenchmen are not thieves, but –’”

“A good part are?” concluded Roland.

“Yes, ‘Buonaparté,’” replied Alfred de Barjols.

Scarcely had these insolent words left the young aristocrat's lips than the plate with which Roland was playing flew from his hands and struck De Barjols full in the face. The women screamed, the men rose to their feet. Roland burst into that nervous laugh which was habitual with him, and threw himself back in his chair. The young aristocrat remained calm, although the blood was trickling from his brow to his cheek.

At this moment the conductor entered with the usual formula:

“Come! citizen travellers, take your places.”

The travellers, anxious to leave the scene of the quarrel, rushed to the door.

“Pardon me, sir,” said Alfred de Barjols to Roland, “you do not go by diligence, I hope?”

“No, sir, I travel by post; but you need have no fear; I shall not depart.”

“Nor I,” said the Englishman. “Have them unharness my horses; I shall remain.”

“I must go,” sighed the dark young man whom Roland had addressed as general. “You know it is necessary, my friend; my presence yonder is absolutely imperative. But I swear that I would not leave you if I could possibly avoid it.”

In saying these words his voice betrayed an emotion of which, judging from its usual harsh, metallic ring, it had seemed incapable. Roland, on the contrary, seemed overjoyed. His belligerent nature seemed to expand at the approach of a danger to which he had perhaps not given rise, but which he at least had not endeavored to avoid.

“Good! general,” he said. “We were to part at Lyons, since you have had the kindness to grant me a month’s furlough to visit my family at Bourg. It is merely some hundred and sixty miles or so less than we intended, that is all. I shall rejoin you in Paris. But you know if you need a devoted arm, and a man who never sulks, think of me!”

“You may rest easy on that score, Roland,” exclaimed the general. Then, looking attentively at the two adversaries, he added with an indescribable note of tenderness: “Above all, Roland, do not let yourself be killed; but if it is a possible thing don’t kill your adversary. Everything considered, he is a gallant man, and the day will come when I shall need such men at my side.”

“I shall do my best, general; don’t be alarmed.” At this moment the landlord appeared upon the thresh-hold of the door.

“The post-chaise is ready,” said he.

The general took his hat and his cane, which he had laid upon the chair. Roland, on the contrary, followed him bareheaded, that all might see plainly he did not intend to leave with his friend. Alfred de Barjols, therefore, offered no opposition to his leaving the room. Besides, it was easy to see that his adversary was of those who seek rather than avoid quarrels.

“Just the same,” said the general, seating himself in the carriage to which Roland had escorted him, “my heart is heavy at leaving you thus, Roland, without a friend to act as your second.”

“Good! Don’t worry about that, general; seconds are never lacking. There are and always will be enough men who are curious to see how one man can kill another.”

“Au revoir, Roland. Observe, I do not say farewell, but au revoir!”

“Yes, my dear general,” replied the young man, in a voice that revealed some emotion, “I understand, and I thank you.”

“Promise that you will send me word as soon as the affair is over, or that you will get some one to write if you are disabled.”

“Oh, don’t worry, general. You will have a letter from me personally in less than four days,” replied Roland, adding, in a tone of profound bitterness: “Have you not perceived that I am protected by a fatality which prevents me from dying?”

“Roland!” exclaimed the general in a severe tone, “Again!”

“Nothing, nothing,” said the young man, shaking his head and assuming an expression of careless gayety which must have been habitual with him before the occurrence of that unknown misfortune which oppressed his youth with this longing for death.

“Very well. By the way, try to find out one thing.”

“What is that, general?”

“How it happens that at a time when we are at war with England an Englishman stalks about France as freely and as easily as if he were at home.”

“Good; I will find out.”

“How?”

“I do not know; but when I promise you to find out I shall do so, though I have to ask it of himself.”

“Reckless fellow! Don’t get yourself involved in another affair in that direction.”

“In any case, it would not be a duel. It would be a battle, as he is a national enemy.”

“Well, once more – till I see you again. Embrace me.”

Roland flung himself with passionate gratitude upon the neck of the personage who had just given him this permission.

“Oh, general!” he exclaimed, “how happy I should be – if I were not so unhappy!”

The general looked at him with profound affection, then asked: “One day you will tell me what this sorrow is, will you not, Roland?”

Roland laughed that sorrowful laugh which had already escaped his lips once or twice.

“Oh! my word, no,” said he, “you would ridicule me too much.”

The general stared at him as one would contemplate a madman.

"After all," he murmured, "one must accept men as they come."

"Especially when they are not what they seem to be."

"You must mistake me for OEdipe since you pose me with these enigmas, Roland."

"Ah! If you guess this one, general, I will herald you king of Thebes! But, with all my follies, I forgot that your time is precious and that I am detaining you needlessly with my nonsense."

"That is so! Have you any commissions for Paris?"

"Yes, three; my regards to Bourrienne, my respects to your brother Lucien, and my most tender homage to Madame Bonaparte."

"I will deliver them."

"Where shall I find you in Paris?"

"At my house in the Rue de la Victoire, perhaps."

"Perhaps – "

"Who knows? Perhaps at Luxembourg!" Then throwing himself back as if he regretted having said so much, even to a man he regarded as his best friend, he shouted to the postilion, "Road to Orange! As fast as possible."

The postilion, who was only waiting for the order, whipped up his horses; the carriage departed rapidly, rumbling like a roll of thunder, and disappeared through the Porte d'Oulle.

CHAPTER III. THE ENGLISHMAN

Roland remained motionless, not only as long as he could see the carriage, but long after it had disappeared. Then, shaking his head as if to dispel the cloud which darkened his brow, he re-entered the inn and asked for a room.

“Show the gentleman to number three,” said the landlord to a chambermaid.

The chambermaid took a key hanging from a large black wooden tablet on which were arranged the numbers in white in two rows, and signed to the young traveller to follow her.

“Send up some paper, and a pen and ink,” Roland said to the landlord, “and if M. de Barjols should ask where I am tell him the number of my room.”

The landlord promised to obey Roland’s injunctions and the latter followed the girl upstairs whistling the Marseillaise. Five minutes later he was seated at a table with the desired paper, pen and ink before him preparing to write. But just as he was beginning the first line some one knocked, three times at the door.

“Come in,” said he, twirling his chair on one of its hind legs so as to face his visitor, whom he supposed to be either, M. de Barjols or one of his friends.

The door opened with a steady mechanical motion and the Englishman appeared upon the threshold.

“Ah!” exclaimed Roland, enchanted with this visit, in view of his general’s recommendation; “is it you?”

“Yes,” said the Englishman, “it is I.”

“You are welcome.”

“Oh! if I am welcome, so much the better! I was not sure that I ought to come.”

“Why not?”

“On account of Aboukir.”

Roland began to laugh.

“There are two battles of Aboukir,” said he; “one which we lost; the other we won.”

“I referred to the one you lost.”

“Good!” said Roland, “we fight, kill, and exterminate each other on the battlefield, but that does not prevent us from clasping hands on neutral ground. So I repeat, you are most welcome, especially if you will tell me why you have come.”

“Thank you; but, in the first place, read that.” And the Englishman drew a paper from his pocket.

“What is that?” asked Roland.

“My passport.”

“What have I to do with your passport?” asked Roland, “I am not a gendarme.”

“No, but I have come to offer you my services. Perhaps you will not accept them if you do not know who I am.”

“Your services, sir?”

“Yes; but read that first.”

Roland read:

In the name of the French Republic – The Executive Directory hereby orders that Sir John Tanlay, Esq., be permitted to travel freely throughout the territory of the Republic, and that both assistance and protection be accorded him in case of need.

(Signed) FOUCHÉ.

And below:

To whom it may concern – I recommend Sir John Tanlay particularly as a philanthropist and a friend of liberty.

(Signed) BARRAS.

“Have you read it?”

“Yes; what of it?”

“What of it? Well, my father, Lord Tanlay, rendered M. Barras some services; that is why M. Barras permits me to roam about France. And I am very glad to roam about; it amuses me very much.”

“Oh, I remember, Sir John; you did us the honor to say so at dinner.”

“I did say so, it is true; I also said that I liked the French people heartily.”

Roland bowed.

“And above all General Bonaparte,” continued Sir John.

“You like General Bonaparte very much?”

“I admire him; he is a great, a very great, man.”

“By Heavens! Sir John, I am sorry he is not here to hear an Englishman say that of him.”

“Oh! if he were here I should not say it.”

“Why not?”

“I should not want him to think I was trying to please him. I say so because it is my opinion.”

“I don’t doubt it, my lord,” said Roland, who did not see what the Englishman was aiming at, and who, having learned all that he wished to know through the passport, held himself upon his guard.

“And when I heard,” continued the Englishman with the same phlegm, “you defend General Bonaparte, I was much pleased.”

“Really?”

“Much pleased,” repeated the Englishman, nodding his head affirmatively.

“So much the better!”

“But when I saw you throw a plate at M. Alfred de Barjols’ head, I was much grieved.”

“You were grieved, my lord, and why?”

“Because in England no gentleman would throw a plate at the head of another gentleman.”

“My lord,” said Roland, rising with a frown, “have you perchance come here to read me a lecture?”

“Oh, no; I came to suggest that you are perhaps perplexed about finding a second?”

“My faith, Sir John! I admit that the moment when you knocked at the door I was wondering of whom I could ask this service.”

“Of me, if you wish,” said the Englishman. “I will be your second.”

“On my honor!” exclaimed Roland, “I accept with all my heart.”

“That is the service I wished to render you!”

Roland held out his hand, saying: “Thank you!”

The Englishman bowed.

“Now,” continued Roland, “as you have had the good taste, my lord, to tell me who you were before offering your services, it is but fair that, since I accept them, I should tell you who I am.”

“Oh! as you please.”

“My name is Louis de Montrevel; I am aide-de-camp to General Bonaparte.”

“Aide-de-camp to General Bonaparte. I am very glad.”

“That will explain why I undertook, rather too warmly perhaps, my general’s defence.”

“No, not too warmly; only, the plate – ”

“Oh, I know well that the provocation did not entail that plate. But what would you have me do! I held it in my hand, and, not knowing what to do with it, I threw it at M. de Barjols’ head; it went of itself without any will of mine.”

“You will not say that to him?”

“Reassure yourself; I tell you to salve your conscience.”

“Very well; then you will fight?”

“That is why I have remained here, at any rate.”

“What weapons?”

“That is not our affair, my lord.”

“What! not our affair?”

“No; M. de Barjols is the one insulted; the choice is his.”

“Then you will accept whatever he proposes?”

“Not I, Sir John, but you in my name, since you do me the honor to act as my second.”

“And if he selects pistols, what is the distance to be and how will you fight?”

“That is your affair, my lord, and not mine. I don’t know how you do in England, but in France the principals take no part in the arrangements. That duty devolves upon the seconds; what they decide is well decided!”

“Then my arrangements will be satisfactory?”

“Perfectly so, my lord.”

The Englishman bowed.

“What hour and what day?”

“Oh! as soon as possible; I have not seen my family for two years, and I confess that I am in a hurry to greet them.”

The Englishman looked at Roland with a certain wonder; he spoke with such assurance, as if he were certain that he would not be killed. Just then some one knocked at the door, and the voice of the innkeeper asked: “May I come in?”

The young man replied affirmatively. The door opened and the landlord entered, holding a card in his hand which he handed his guest. The young man took the card and read: “Charles du Valensolle.”

“From M. Alfred de Barjols,” said the host.

“Very well!” exclaimed Roland. Then handing the card to the Englishman, he said: “Here, this concerns you; it is unnecessary for me to see this monsieur – since we are no longer citizens – M. de Valensolle is M. de Barjols’ second; you are mine. Arrange this affair between you. Only,” added the young man, pressing the Englishman’s hand and looking fixedly at him, “see that it holds a chance of certain death for one of us. Otherwise I shall complain that it has been bungled.”

“Don’t worry,” said the Englishman, “I will act for you as for myself.”

“Excellent! Go now, and when everything is arranged come back. I shall not stir from here.”

Sir John followed the innkeeper. Roland reseated himself, twirled his chair back to its former position facing the table, took up his pen and began to write.

When Sir John returned, Roland had written and sealed two letters and was addressing a third. He signed to the Englishman to wait until he had finished, that he might give him his full attention. Then, the address finished, he sealed the letter, and turned around.

“Well,” he asked, “is everything arranged?”

“Yes,” said the Englishman, “it was an easy matter. You are dealing with a true gentleman.”

“So much the better!” exclaimed Roland, waiting.

“You will fight two hours hence by the fountain of Vaucluse – a charming spot – with pistols, advancing to each other, each to fire as he pleases and continuing to advance after his adversary’s fire.”

“By my faith! you are right, Sir John. That is, indeed, excellent. Did you arrange that?”

“I and M. de Barjols’ second, your adversary having renounced his rights of the insulted party.”

“Have you decided upon the weapons?”

“I offered my pistols. They were accepted on my word of honor that you were as unfamiliar with them as was M. de Barjols. They are excellent weapons. I can cut a bullet on a knife blade at twenty paces.”

“Peste! You are a good shot, it would seem, my lord.”

“Yes, I am said to be the best shot in England.”

“That is a good thing to know. When I wish to be killed, Sir John, I’ll pick a quarrel with you.”

“Oh! don’t pick a quarrel with me,” said the Englishman, “it would grieve me too much to have to fight you.”

“We will try, my lord, not to cause you such grief. So it is settled then, in two hours.”

“Yes, you told me you were in a hurry.”

“Precisely. How far is it to this charming spot?”

“From here to Vaucluse?”

“Yes.”

“Twelve miles.”

“A matter of an hour and a half. We have no time to lose, so let us rid ourselves of troublesome things in order to have nothing but pleasure before us.”

The Englishman looked at the young man in astonishment. Roland did not seem to pay any attention to this look.

“Here are three letters,” said he; “one for Madame de Montrevel, my mother; one for Mlle. de Montrevel, my sister; one for the citizen, Bonaparte, my general. If I am killed you will simply put them in the post. Will that be too much trouble?”

“Should that misfortune occur, I will deliver your letters myself,” said the Englishman. “Where do your mother and sister live?”

“At Bourg, the capital of the Department of Ain.”

“That is near here,” observed the Englishman. “As for General Bonaparte, I will go to Egypt if necessary. I should be extremely pleased to meet General Bonaparte.”

“If you take the trouble, as you say, my lord, of delivering my letters yourself, you will not have to travel such a distance. Within three days General Bonaparte will be in Paris.”

“Oh!” said the Englishman, without betraying the least surprise, “do you think so?”

“I am sure of it,” replied Roland.

“Truly, he is a very extraordinary man, your General Bonaparte. Now, have you any other recommendations to make to me, M. de Montrevel?”

“One only, my lord.”

“Oh! as many as you please.”

“No, thank you, one only, but that is very important.”

“What is it?”

“If I am killed – but I doubt if I be so fortunate.”

Sir John looked at Roland with that expression of wonder which he had already awakened three or four times.

“If I am killed,” resumed Roland; “for after all one must be prepared for everything – ”

“Yes, if you are killed, I understand.”

“Listen well, my lord, for I place much stress on my directions being carried out exactly in this matter.”

“Every detail shall be observed,” replied Sir John, “I am very punctilious.”

“Well, then, if I am killed,” insisted Roland, laying his hand upon his second’s shoulder, to impress his directions more firmly on his memory, “you must not permit any one to touch my body, which is to be placed in a leaden coffin without removing the garments I am wearing; the coffin you will have soldered in your presence, then inclosed in an oaken bier, which must also be nailed up in your presence. Then you will send it to my mother, unless you should prefer to throw it into the Rhone, which I leave absolutely to your discretion, provided only that it be disposed of in some way.”

“It will be no more difficult,” replied the Englishman, “to take the coffin, since I am to deliver your letter.”

“Decidedly, my lord,” said Roland, laughing in his strange way. “You are a capital fellow. Providence in person brought us together. Let us start, my lord, let us start!”

They left Roland’s room; Sir John’s chamber was on the same floor. Roland waited while the Englishman went in for his weapons. He returned a few seconds later, carrying the box in his hand.

“Now, my lord,” asked Roland, “how shall we reach Vacluse? On horseback or by carriage?”

“By carriage, if you are willing. It is much more convenient in case one is wounded. Mine is waiting below.”

“I thought you had given the order to have it unharnessed?”

“I did, but I sent for the postilion afterward and countermanded it.”

They went downstairs.

“Tom! Tom!” called Sir John at the door, where a servant, in the severe livery of an English groom, was waiting, “take care of this box.”

“Am I going with you, my lord?” asked the servant.

“Yes!” replied Sir John.

Then showing Roland the steps of his carriage, which the servant lowered, he said:

“Come, M. de Montrevel.”

Roland entered the carriage and stretched himself out luxuriously.

“Upon my word!” said he. “It takes you English to understand travelling. This carriage is as comfortable as a bed. I warrant you pad your coffins before you are put in them!”

“Yes, that is a fact,” said Sir John, “the English people understand comfort, but the French people are much more curious and amusing – postilion, to Vacluse!”

CHAPTER IV. THE DUEL

The road was passable only from Avignon to l'Isle. They covered the nine miles between the two places in an hour. During this hour Roland, as he resolved to shorten the time for his travelling companion, was witty and animated, and their approach to the duelling ground only served to redouble his gayety. To one unacquainted with the object of this drive, the menace of dire peril impending over this young man, with his continuous flow of conversation and incessant laughter, would have seemed incredible.

At the village of l'Isle they were obliged to leave the carriage. Finding on inquiry that they were the first to arrive, they entered the path which led to the fountain.

"Oh! oh!" exclaimed Roland, "there ought to be a fine echo here." And he gave one or two cries to which Echo replied with perfect amiability.

"By my faith!" said the young man, "this is a marvellous echo. I know none save that of the Seinnonnetta, at Milan, which can compare with it. Listen, my lord."

And he began, with modulations which revealed an admirable voice and an excellent method, to sing a Tyrolean song which seemed to bid defiance to the human throat with its rebellious music. Sir John watched Roland, and listened to him with an astonishment which he no longer took the trouble to conceal. When the last note had died away among the cavities of the mountain, he exclaimed:

"God bless me! but I think your liver is out of order."

Roland started and looked at him interrogatively. But seeing that Sir John did not intend to say more, he asked:

"Good! What makes you think so?"

"You are too noisily gay not to be profoundly melancholy."

"And that anomaly astonishes you?"

"Nothing astonishes me, because I know that it has always its reason for existing."

"True, and it's all in knowing the secret. Well, I'm going to enlighten you."

"Oh! I don't want to force you."

"You're too polite to do that; still, you must admit you would be glad to have your mind set at rest about me."

"Because I'm interested in you."

"Well, Sir John, I am going to tell you the secret of the enigma, something I have never done with any one before. For all my seeming good health, I am suffering from a horrible aneurism that causes me spasms of weakness and faintness so frequent as to shame even a woman. I spend my life taking the most ridiculous precautions, and yet Larrey warns me that I am liable to die any moment, as the diseased artery in my breast may burst at the least exertion. Judge for yourself how pleasant for a soldier! You can understand that, once I understood my condition, I determined incontinently to die with all the glory possible. Another more fortunate than I would have succeeded a hundred times already. But I'm bewitched; I am impervious alike to bullets and balls; even the swords seem to fear to shatter themselves upon my skin. Yet I never miss an opportunity; that you must see, after what occurred at dinner. Well, we are going to fight. I'll expose myself like a maniac, giving my adversary all the advantages, but it will avail me nothing. Though he shoot at fifteen paces, or even ten or five, at his very pistol's point, he will miss me, or his pistol will miss fire. And all this wonderful luck that some fine day when I least expect it, I may die pulling on my boots! But hush I here comes my adversary."

As he spoke the upper half of three people could be seen ascending the same rough and rocky path that Roland and Sir John had followed, growing larger as they approached. Roland counted them.

"Three!" he exclaimed. "Why three, when we are only two?"

“Ah! I had forgotten,” replied the Englishman. “M. de Barjols, as much in your interest as in his own, asked permission to bring a surgeon, one of his friends.”

“What for?” harshly demanded Roland, frowning.

“Why, in case either one of you was wounded. A man’s life can often be saved by bleeding him promptly.”

“Sir John,” exclaimed Roland, ferociously, “I don’t understand these delicacies in the matter of a duel. When men fight they fight to kill. That they exchange all sorts of courtesies beforehand, as your ancestors did at Fontenoy, is all right; but, once the swords are unsheathed or the pistols loaded, one life must pay for the trouble they have taken and the heart beats they have lost. I ask you, on your word of honor, Sir John, to promise that, wounded or dying, M. de Barjols’ surgeon shall not be allowed to touch me.”

“But suppose, M. Roland – ”

“Take it or leave it. Your word of honor, my lord, or devil take me if I fight at all.”

The Englishman again looked curiously at the young man. His face was livid, and his limbs quivered as though in extreme terror. Sir John, without understanding this strange dread, passed his word.

“Good!” exclaimed Roland. “This, you see, is one of the effects of my charming malady. The mere thought of surgical instruments, a bistoury or a lance, makes me dizzy. Didn’t I grow very pale?”

“I did think for an instant you were going to faint.”

“What a stunning climax!” exclaimed Roland with a laugh. “Our adversaries arrive and you are dosing me with smelling salts like a hysterical woman. Do you know what they, and you, first of all, would have said? That I was afraid.”

Meantime, the three new-comers having approached within earshot, Sir John was unable to answer Roland. They bowed, and Roland, with a smile that revealed his beautiful teeth, returned their greeting. Sir John whispered in his ear:

“You are still a trifle pale. Go on toward the fountain; I will fetch you when we are ready.”

“Ah! that’s the idea,” said Roland. “I have always wanted to see that famous fountain of Vaucluse, the Hippocrene of Petrarch. You know his sonnet?”

“‘Chiari, fresche e dolci acque
Ove le belle membra
Pose colei, che sola a me perdonar.’”

This opportunity lost, I may never have another. Where is your fountain?”

“Not a hundred feet off. Follow the path; you’ll find it at the turn of the road, at the foot of that enormous boulder you see.”

“My lord,” said Roland, “you are the best guide I know; thanks!”

And, with a friendly wave of the hand, he went off in the direction of the fountain, humming the charming pastoral of Philippe Desportes beneath his breath:

“‘Rosette, a little absence
Has turned thine heart from me;
I, knowing that inconstance,
Have turned my heart from thee.
No wayward beauty o’er me
Such power shall obtain;
We’ll see, my fickle lassie,
Who first will turn again.’”

Sir John turned as he heard the modulations of that fresh sweet voice, whose higher notes had something at a feminine quality. His cold methodical mind understood nothing of that nervous impulsive nature, save that he had under his eyes one of the most amazing organisms one could possibly meet.

The other two young men were waiting for him; the surgeon stood a little apart. Sir John carried his box of pistols in his hands. Laying it upon a table-shaped rock, he drew a little key from his pocket, apparently fashioned by a goldsmith rather than a locksmith, and opened the box. The weapons were magnificent, although of great simplicity. They came from Manton's workshop, the grandfather of the man who is still considered one of the best gunsmiths in London. He handed them to M. de Barjols' second to examine. The latter tried the triggers and played with the lock, examining to see if they were double-barrelled. They were single-barrelled. M. de Barjols cast a glance at them but did not even touch them.

"Our opponent does not know these weapons?" queried M. Valensolle.

"He has not even seen them," replied Sir John, "I give you my word of honor."

"Oh!" exclaimed M. de Valensolle, "a simple denial suffices."

The conditions of the duel were gone over a second time to avoid possible misunderstanding. Then, these conditions determined, the pistols were loaded. They were then placed, loaded, in the box, the box left in the surgeon's charge, and Sir John, with the key in his pocket, went after Roland.

He found him chatting with a little shepherd boy who was herding three goats on the steep rocky slope of the mountain, and throwing pebbles into the fountain. Sir John opened his lips to tell Roland that all was ready; but the latter, without giving the Englishman time to speak, exclaimed:

"You don't know what this child has been telling me, my lord! A perfect legend of the Rhine. He says that this pool, whose depth is unknown, extends six or eight miles under the mountain, and a fairy, half woman half serpent, dwells here. Calm summer nights she glides over the surface of water calling to the shepherds of the mountains, showing them, of course, nothing more than her head with its long locks and her beautiful bare shoulders and arms. The fools, caught by this semblance of a woman, draw nearer, beckoning to her to come to them, while she on her side signs to them to go to her. The unwary spirits advance unwittingly, giving no heed to their steps. Suddenly the earth fails them, the fairy reaches out her arms, and plunges down into her dripping palaces, to reappear the next day alone. Where the devil did these idiots of shepherds get the tale that Virgil related in such noble verse to Augustus and Mæcenas?"

He remained pensive an instant, his eyes bent upon the azure depths, then turning to Sir John:

"They say that, no matter how vigorous the swimmer, none has ever returned from this abyss. Perhaps were I to try it, my lord, it might be surer than M. de Barjols' bullet. However, it always remains as a last resort; in the meantime let us try the bullet. Come, my lord, come."

Then turning to the Englishman, who listened, amazed by this mobility of mind, he led him back to the others who awaited them. They in the meantime had found a suitable place.

It was a little plateau, perched as it were on a rocky proclivity, jutting from the mountain side, exposed to the setting sun, on which stood a ruined castle where the shepherds were wont to seek shelter when the mistral overtook them. A flat space, some hundred and fifty feet long, and sixty wide, which might once have been the castle platform, was now to be the scene of the drama which was fast approaching its close.

"Here we are, gentlemen," said Sir John.

"We are ready, gentlemen," replied M. de Valensolle.

"Will the principals kindly listen to the conditions of the duel?" said Sir John. Then addressing M. de Valensolle, he added: "Repeat them, monsieur; you are French and I am a foreigner, you will explain them more clearly than I."

"You belong to those foreigners, my lord, who teach us poor Provençals the purity of our language; but since you so courteously make me spokesman, I obey you." Then exchanging bows

with Sir John, he continued: "Gentlemen, it is agreed that you stand at forty paces, that you advance toward each other, that each will fire at will, and wounded or not will have the right to advance after your adversary's fire."

The two combatants bowed in sign of assent, and with one voice, and almost at the same moment, they said:

"The pistols!"

Sir John drew the little key from his pocket and opened the box. Then approaching M. de Barjols he offered it to him open. The latter wished to yield the choice of weapons to his opponent; but with a wave of his hand Roland refused, saying in a tone almost feminine in its sweetness:

"After you, M. de Barjols. Although you are the insulted party, you have, I am told, renounced your advantages. The least I can do is to yield you this one, if for that matter it is an advantage."

M. de Barjols no longer insisted. He took one of the two pistols at random. Sir John offered the other to Roland, who took it, and, without even examining its mechanism, cocked the trigger, then let it fall at arm's-length at his side.

During this time M. de Valensolle had measured forty paces, staking a cane as a point of departure.

"Will you measure after me?" he asked Sir John.

"Needless, sir," replied the latter: "M. de Montrevel and myself rely entirely upon you."

M. de Valensolle staked a second cane at the fortieth pace.

"Gentlemen," said he, "when you are ready."

Roland's adversary was already at his post, hat and cloak removed. The surgeon and the two seconds stood aside. The spot had been so well chosen that neither had any advantage of sun or ground. Roland tossed off hat and coat, stationed himself forty paces from M. de Barjols, facing him. Both, one to right the other to the left, cast a glance at the same horizon. The aspect harmonized with the terrible solemnity of the scene about to take place.

Nothing was visible to Roland's right and to M. de Barjols' left, except the mountain's swift incline and gigantic peak. But on the other side, that is to say, to M. de Barjols' right and Roland's left, it was a far different thing.

The horizon stretched illimitable. In the foreground, the plain, its ruddy soil pierced on all sides by rocks, like a Titan graveyard with its bones protruding through the earth. Then, sharply outlined in the setting sun, was Avignon with its girdle of walls and its vast palace, like a crouching lion, seeming to hold the panting city in its claws. Beyond Avignon, a luminous sweep, like a river of molten gold, defined the Rhone. Beyond the Rhone, a deep-hued azure vista, stretched the chain of hills which separate Avignon from Nimes and d'Uzes. And far off, the sun, at which one of these two men was probably looking for the last time, sank slowly and majestically in an ocean of gold and purple.

For the rest these two men presented a singular contrast. One, with his black hair, swarthy skin, slender limbs and sombre eyes, was the type of the Southern race which counts among its ancestors Greeks, Romans, Arabs and Spaniards. The other, with his rosy skin, large blue eyes, and hands dimpled like a woman's, was the type of that race of temperate zones which reckons Gauls, Germans and Normans among its forebears.

Had one wished to magnify the situation it were easy to believe this something greater than single combat between two men. One might have thought it was a duel of a people against another people, race against race, the South against the North.

Was it these thoughts which we have just expressed that filled Roland's mind and plunged him into that melancholy revery.

Probably not; the fact is, for an instant he seemed to have forgotten seconds, duel, adversary, lost as he was in contemplation of this magnificent spectacle. M. de Barjols' voice aroused him from this poetical stupor.

"When you are ready, sir," said he, "I am."

Roland started.

"Pardon my keeping you waiting, sir," said he. "You should not have considered me, I am so absent-minded. I am ready now."

Then, a smile on his lips, his hair lifted by the evening breeze, unconcerned as if this were an ordinary promenade, while his opponent, on the contrary, took all the precaution usual in such a case, Roland advanced straight toward M. de Barjols.

Sir John's face, despite his ordinary impassibility, betrayed a profound anxiety. The distance between the opponents lessened rapidly. M. de Barjols halted first, took aim, and fired when Roland was but ten paces from him.

The ball clipped one of Roland's curls, but did not touch him. The young man turned toward his second:

"Well," said he, "what did I tell you?"

"Fire, monsieur, fire!" said the seconds.

M. de Barjols stood silent and motionless on the spot where he had fired.

"Pardon me, gentlemen," replied Roland; "but you will, I hope, permit me to be the judge of the time and manner of retaliating. Since I have felt M. de Barjols' shot, I have a few words to say to him which I could not say before." Then, turning to the young aristocrat, who was pale and calm, he said: "Sir, perhaps I was somewhat too hasty in our discussion this morning."

And he waited.

"It is for you to fire, sir," replied M. de Barjols.

"But," continued Roland, as if he had not heard, "you will understand my impetuosity, and perhaps excuse it, when you hear that I am a soldier and General Bonaparte's aide-de-camp."

"Fire, sir," replied the young nobleman.

"Say but one word of retraction, sir," resumed the young officer. "Say that General Bonaparte's reputation for honor and delicacy is such that a miserable Italian proverb, inspired by ill-natured losers, cannot reflect discredit on him. Say that, and I throw this weapon away to grasp your hand; for I recognize in you, sir, a brave man."

"I cannot accord that homage to his honor and delicacy until your general has devoted the influence which his genius gives him over France as Monk did – that is to say, to reinstate his legitimate sovereign upon the throne."

"Ah!" cried Roland, with a smile, "that is asking too much of a republican general."

"Then I maintain what I said," replied the young noble. "Fire! monsieur, fire!" Then as Roland made no haste to obey this injunction, he shouted, stamping his foot: "Heavens and earth! will you fire?"

At these words Roland made a movement as if he intended to fire in the air.

"Ah!" exclaimed M. de Barjols. Then with a rapidity of gesture and speech that prevented this, "Do not fire in the air, I beg, or I shall insist that we begin again and that you fire first."

"On my honor!" cried Roland, turning as pale as if the blood had left his body, "this is the first time I have done so much for any man. Go to the devil! and if you don't want to live, then die!"

At the same time he lowered his arm and fired, without troubling to take aim.

Alfred de Barjols put his hand to his breast, swayed back and forth, turned around and fell face down upon the ground. Roland's bullet had gone through his heart.

Sir John, seeing M. de Barjols fall, went straight to Roland and drew him to the spot where he had thrown his hat and coat.

"That is the third," murmured Roland with a sigh; "but you are my witness that this one would have it."

Then giving his smoking pistol to Sir John, he resumed his hat and coat. During this time M. de Valensolle picked up the pistol which had escaped from his friend's hand, and brought it, together with the box, to Sir John.

“Well?” asked the Englishman, motioning toward Alfred de Barjols with his eyes.

“He is dead,” replied the second.

“Have I acted as a man of honor, sir?” asked Roland, wiping away the sweat which suddenly inundated his brow at the announcement of his opponent’s death.

“Yes, monsieur,” replied M. de Valensolle; “only, permit me to say this: you possess the fatal hand.”

Then bowing to Roland and his second with exquisite politeness, he returned to his friend’s body.

“And you, my lord,” resumed Roland, “what do you say?”

“I say,” replied Sir John, with a sort of forced admiration, “you are one of those men who are made by the divine Shakespeare to say of themselves:

“Danger and I —
We were two lions littered in one day,
But I the elder.”

CHAPTER V. ROLAND

The return was silent and mournful; it seemed that with the hopes of death Roland's gayety had disappeared.

The catastrophe of which he had been the author played perhaps a part in his taciturnity. But let us hasten to say that in battle, and more especially during the last campaign against the Arabs, Roland had been too frequently obliged to jump his horse over the bodies of his victims to be so deeply impressed by the death of an unknown man.

His sadness was, due to some other cause; probably that which he confided to Sir John. Disappointment over his own lost chance of death, rather than that other's decease, occasioned this regret.

On their return to the Hotel du Palais-Royal, Sir John mounted to his room with his pistols, the sight of which might have excited something like remorse in Roland's breast. Then he rejoined the young officer and returned the three letters which had been intrusted to him.

He found Roland leaning pensively on a table. Without saying a word the Englishman laid the three letters before him. The young man cast his eyes over the addresses, took the one destined for his mother, unsealed it and read it over. As he read, great tears rolled down his cheeks. Sir John gazed wonderingly at this new phase of Roland's character. He had thought everything possible to this many-sided nature except those tears which fell silently from his eyes.

Shaking his head and paying not the least attention to Sir John's presence, Roland murmured:

"Poor mother! she would have wept. Perhaps it is better so. Mothers were not made to weep for their children!"

He tore up the letters he had written to his mother, his sister, and General Bonaparte, mechanically burning the fragments with the utmost care. Then ringing for the chambermaid, he asked:

"When must my letters be in the post?"

"Half-past six," replied she. "You have only a few minutes more."

"Just wait then."

And taking a pen he wrote:

My DEAR GENERAL – It is as I told you; I am living and he is dead. You must admit that this seems like a wager. Devotion to death.

Your Paladin

ROLAND.

Then he sealed the letter, addressed it to General Bonaparte, Rue de la Victoire, Paris, and handed it to the chambermaid, bidding her lose no time in posting it. Then only did he seem to notice Sir John, and held out his hand to him.

"You have just rendered me a great service, my lord," he said. "One of those services which bind men for all eternity. I am already your friend; will you do me the honor to become mine?"

Sir John pressed the hand that Roland offered him.

"Oh!" said he, "I thank you heartily. I should never have dared ask this honor; but you offer it and I accept."

Even the impassible Englishman felt his heart soften as he brushed away the tear that trembled on his lashes. Then looking at Roland, he said: "It is unfortunate that you are so hurried; I should have been pleased and delighted to spend a day or two with you."

"Where were you going, my lord, when I met you?"

"Oh, I? Nowhere. I am travelling to get over being bored. I am unfortunately often bored."

"So that you were going nowhere?"

“I was going everywhere.”

“That is exactly the same thing,” said the young officer, smiling. “Well, will you do something for me?”

“Oh! very willingly, if it is possible.”

“Perfectly possible; it depends only on you.”

“What is it?”

“Had I been killed you were going to take me to my mother or throw me into the Rhone.”

“I should have taken you to your mother and not thrown you into the Rhone.”

“Well, instead of accompanying me dead, take me living. You will be all the better received.”

“Oh!”

“We will remain a fortnight at Bourg. It is my natal city, and one of the dullest towns in France; but as your compatriots are pre-eminent for originality, perhaps you will find amusement where others are bored. Are we agreed?”

“I should like nothing better,” exclaimed the Englishman; “but it seems to me that it is hardly proper on my part.”

“Oh! we are not in England, my lord, where etiquette holds absolute sway. We have no longer king nor queen. We didn’t cut off that poor creature’s head whom they called Marie Antoinette to install Her Majesty, Etiquette, in her stead.”

“I should like to go,” said Sir John.

“You’ll see, my mother is an excellent woman, and very distinguished besides. My sister was sixteen when I left; she must be eighteen now. She was pretty, and she ought to be beautiful. Then there is my brother Edouard, a delightful youngster of twelve, who will let off fireworks between your legs and chatter a gibberish of English with you. At the end of the fortnight we will go to Paris together.”

“I have just come from Paris,” said the Englishman.

“But listen. You were willing to go to Egypt to see General Bonaparte. Paris is not so far from here as Cairo. I’ll present you, and, introduced by me, you may rest assured that you will be well received. You were speaking of Shakespeare just now – ”

“Oh! I am always quoting him.”

“Which proves that you like comedies and dramas.”

“I do like them very much, that’s true.”

“Well, then, General Bonaparte is going to produce one in his own style which will not be wanting in interest, I answer for it!”

“So that,” said Sir John, still hesitating, “I may accept your offer without seeming intrusive?”

“I should think so. You will delight us all, especially me.”

“Then I accept.”

“Bravo! Now, let’s see, when will you start?”

“As soon as you wish. My coach was harnessed when you threw that unfortunate plate at Barjols’ head. However, as I should never have known you but for that plate, I am glad you did throw it at him!”

“Shall we start this evening?”

“Instantly. I’ll give orders for the postilion to send other horses, and once they are here we will start.”

Roland nodded acquiescence. Sir John went out to give his orders, and returned presently, saying they had served two cutlets and a cold fowl for them below. Roland took his valise and went down. The Englishman placed his pistols in the coach box again. Both ate enough to enable them to travel all night, and as nine o’clock was striking from the Church of the Cordeliers they settled themselves in the carriage and quitted Avignon, where their passage left a fresh trail of blood, Roland with the careless indifference of his nature, Sir John Tanlay with the impassibility of his nation. A

quarter of an hour later both were sleeping, or at least the silence which obtained induced the belief that both had yielded to slumber.

We shall profit by this instant of repose to give our readers some indispensable information concerning Roland and his family.

Roland was born the first of July, 1773, four years and a few days later than Bonaparte, at whose side, or rather following him, he made his appearance in this book. He was the son of M. Charles de Montrevel, colonel of a regiment long garrisoned at Martinique, where he had married a creole named Clotilde de la Clémencière. Three children were born of this marriage, two boys and a girl: Louis, whose acquaintance we have made under the name of Roland, Amélie, whose beauty he had praised to Sir John, and Edouard.

Recalled to France in 1782, M. de Montrevel obtained admission for young Louis de Montrevel (we shall see later how the name of Louis was changed to Roland) to the Ecole Militaire in Paris.

It was there that Bonaparte knew the child, when, on M. de Keralio's report, he was judged worthy of promotion from the Ecole de Brienne to the Ecole Militaire. Louis was the youngest pupil. Though he was only thirteen, he had already made himself remarked for that ungovernable and quarrelsome nature of which we have seen him seventeen years later give an example at the table d'hôte at Avignon.

Bonaparte, a child himself, had the good side of this character; that is to say, without being quarrelsome, he was firm, obstinate, and unconquerable. He recognized in the child some of his own qualities, and this similarity of sentiments led him to pardon the boy's defects, and attached him to him. On the other hand the child, conscious of a supporter in the Corsican, relied upon him.

One day the child went to find his great friend, as he called Napoleon, when the latter was absorbed in the solution of a mathematical problem. He knew the importance the future artillery officer attached to this science, which so far had won him his greatest, or rather his only successes.

He stood beside him without speaking or moving. The young mathematician felt the child's presence, and plunged deeper and deeper into his mathematical calculations, whence he emerged victorious ten minutes later. Then he turned to his young comrade with that inward satisfaction of a man who issues victorious from any struggle, be it with science or things material.

The child stood erect, pale, his teeth clinched, his arms rigid and his fists closed.

"Oh! oh!" said young Bonaparte, "what is the matter now?"

"Valence, the governor's nephew, struck me."

"Ah!" said Bonaparte, laughing, "and you have come to me to strike him back?"

The child shook his head.

"No," said he, "I have come to you because I want to fight him –"

"Fight Valence?"

"Yes."

"But Valence will beat you, child; he is four times as strong as you."

"Therefore I don't want to fight him as children do, but like men fight."

"Pooh!"

"Does that surprise you?" asked the child.

"No," said Bonaparte; "what do you want to fight with?"

"With swords."

"But only the sergeants have swords, and they won't lend you one."

"Then we will do without swords."

"But what will you fight with?"

The child pointed to the compass with which the young mathematician had made his equations.

"Oh! my child," said Bonaparte, "a compass makes a very bad wound."

"So much the better," replied Louis; "I can kill him."

"But suppose he kills you?"

“I’d rather that than bear his blow.”

Bonaparte made no further objections; he loved courage, instinctively, and his young comrade’s pleased him.

“Well, so be it!” he replied; “I will tell Valence that you wish to fight him, but not till to-morrow.”

“Why to-morrow?”

“You will have the night to reflect.”

“And from now till to-morrow,” replied the child, “Valence will think me a coward.” Then shaking his head, “It is too long till to-morrow.” And he walked away.

“Where are you going?” Bonaparte asked him.

“To ask some one else to be my friend.”

“So I am no longer your friend?”

“No, since you think I am a coward.”

“Very well,” said the young man rising.

“You will go?”

“I am going.”

“At once?”

“At once.”

“Ah!” exclaimed the child, “I beg your pardon; you are indeed my friend.” And he fell upon his neck weeping. They were the first tears he had shed since he had received the blow.

Bonaparte went in search of Valence and gravely explained his mission to him. Valence was a tall lad of seventeen, having already, like certain precocious natures, a beard and mustache; he appeared at least twenty. He was, moreover, a head taller than the boy he had insulted.

Valence replied that Louis had pulled his queue as if it were a bell-cord (queues were then in vogue) – that he had warned him twice to desist, but that Louis had repeated the prank the third time, whereupon, considering him a mischievous youngster, he had treated him as such.

Valence’s answer was reported to Louis, who retorted that pulling a comrade’s queue was only teasing him, whereas a blow was an insult. Obstinacy endowed this child of thirteen with the logic of a man of thirty.

The modern Popilius to Valence returned with his declaration of war. The youth was greatly embarrassed; he could not fight with a child without being ridiculous. If he fought and wounded him, it would be a horrible thing; if he himself were wounded, he would never get over it so long as he lived.

But Louis’s unyielding obstinacy made the matter a serious one. A council of the Grands (elder scholars) was called, as was usual in serious cases. The Grands decided that one of their number could not fight a child; but since this child persisted in considering himself a young man, Valence must tell him before all his schoolmates that he regretted having treated him as a child, and would henceforth regard him as a young man.

Louis, who was waiting in his friend’s room, was sent for. He was introduced into the conclave assembled in the playground of the younger pupils.

There Valence, to whom his comrades had dictated a speech carefully debated among themselves to safeguard the honor of the Grands toward the Petits, assured Louis that he deeply deplored the occurrence; that he had treated him according to his age and not according to his intelligence and courage, and begged him to excuse his impatience and to shake hands in sign that all was forgotten.

But Louis shook his head.

“I heard my father, who is a colonel, say once,” he replied, “that he who receives a blow and does not fight is a coward. The first time I see my father I shall ask him if he who strikes the blow and then apologizes to avoid fighting is not more of a coward than he who received it.”

The young fellows looked at each other. Still the general opinion was against a duel which would resemble murder, and all, Bonaparte included, were unanimously agreed that the child must be satisfied with what Valence had said, for it represented their common opinion. Louis retired, pale with anger, and sulked with his great friend, who, said he, with imperturbable gravity, had sacrificed his honor.

The morrow, while the Grands were receiving their lesson in mathematics, Louis slipped into the recitation-room, and while Valence was making a demonstration on the blackboard, he approached him unperceived, climbed on a stool to reach his face, and returned the slap he had received the preceding day.

"There," said he, "now we are quits, and I have your apologies to boot; as for me, I shan't make any, you may be quite sure of that."

The scandal was great. The act occurring in the professor's presence, he was obliged to report it to the governor of the school, the Marquis Tiburce Valence. The latter, knowing nothing of the events leading up to the blow his nephew had received, sent for the delinquent and after a terrible lecture informed him that he was no longer a member of the school, and must be ready to return to his mother at Bourg that very day. Louis replied that his things would be packed in ten minutes, and he out of the school in fifteen. Of the blow he himself had received he said not a word.

The reply seemed more than disrespectful to the Marquis Tiburce Valence. He was much inclined to send the insolent boy to the dungeon for a week, but reflected that he could not confine him and expel him at the same time.

The child was placed in charge of an attendant, who was not to leave him until he had put him in the coach for Mâcon; Madame de Montrevel was to be notified to meet him at the end of the journey.

Bonaparte meeting the boy, followed by his keeper, asked an explanation of the sort of constabulary guard attached to him.

"I'd tell you if you were still my friend," replied the child; "but you are not. Why do you bother about what happens to me, whether good or bad?"

Bonaparte made a sign to the attendant, who came to the door while Louis was packing his little trunk. He learned then that the child had been expelled. The step was serious; it would distress the entire family, and perhaps ruin his young comrade's future.

With that rapidity of decision which was one of the distinctive characteristics of his organization, he resolved to ask an audience of the governor, meantime requesting the keeper not to hasten Louis's departure.

Bonaparte was an excellent pupil, beloved in the school, and highly esteemed by the Marquis Tiburce Valence. His request was immediately complied with. Ushered into the governor's presence, he related everything, and, without blaming Valence in the least, he sought to exculpate Louis.

"Are you sure of what you are telling me, sir?" asked the governor.

"Question your nephew himself. I will abide by what he says."

Valence was sent for. He had already heard of Louis's expulsion, and was on his way to tell his uncle what had happened. His account tallied perfectly with what you Bonaparte had said.

"Very well," said the governor, "Louis shall not go, but you will. You are old enough to leave school." Then ringing, "Bring me the list of the vacant sub-lieutenancies," he said.

That same day an urgent request for a sub-lieutenancy was made to the Ministry, and that same night Valence left to join his regiment. He went to bid Louis farewell, embracing him half willingly, half unwillingly, while Bonaparte held his hand. The child received the embrace reluctantly.

"It's all right now," said he, "but if ever we meet with swords by our sides – " A threatening gesture ended the sentence.

Valence left. Bonaparte received his own appointment as sub-lieutenant October 10, 1785. His was one of fifty-eight commissions which Louis XVI. signed for the Ecole Militaire. Eleven years later, November 15, 1796, Bonaparte, commander-in-chief of the army of Italy, at the Bridge of

Arcola, which was defended by two regiments of Croats and two pieces of cannon, seeing his ranks disseminated by grapeshot and musket balls, feeling that victory was slipping through his fingers, alarmed by the hesitation of his bravest followers, wrenched the tri-color from the rigid fingers of a dead color-bearer, and dashed toward the bridge, shouting: "Soldiers! are you no longer the men of Lodi?" As he did so he saw a young lieutenant spring past him who covered him with his body.

This was far from what Bonaparte wanted. He wished to cross first. Had it been possible he would have gone alone.

Seizing the young man by the flap of his coat, he drew him back, saying: "Citizen, you are only a lieutenant, I a commander-in-chief! The precedence belongs to me."

"Too true," replied the other; and he followed Bonaparte instead of preceding him.

That evening, learning that two Austrian divisions had been cut to pieces, and seeing the two thousand prisoners he had taken, together with the captured cannons and flags, Bonaparte recalled the young man who had sprung in front of him when death alone seemed before him.

"Berthier," said he, "tell my aide-de-camp, Valence, to find that young lieutenant of grenadiers with whom I had a controversy this morning at the Bridge of Arcola."

"General," stammered Berthier, "Valence is wounded."

"Ah! I remember I have not seen him to-day. Wounded? Where? How? On the battlefield?"

"No, general," said he, "he was dragged into a quarrel yesterday, and received a sword thrust through his body."

Bonaparte frowned. "And yet they know very well I do not approve of duels; a soldier's blood belongs not to himself, but to France. Give Muiron the order then."

"He is killed, general."

"To Elliot, in that case."

"Killed also."

Bonaparte drew his handkerchief from his pocket and passed it over his brow, which was bathed with sweat.

"To whom you will, then; but I want to see that lieutenant."

He dared not name any others, fearing to hear again that fatal "Killed!"

A quarter of an hour later the young lieutenant was ushered into his tent, which was lighted faintly by a single lamp.

"Come nearer, lieutenant," said Bonaparte.

The young man made three steps and came within the circle of light.

"So you are the man who wished to cross the bridge before me?" continued Bonaparte.

"It was done on a wager, general," gayly answered the young lieutenant, whose voice made the general start.

"Did I make you lose it?"

"Maybe, yes; maybe, no."

"What was the wager?"

"That I should be promoted captain to-day."

"You have won it."

"Thank you, general."

The young man moved hastily forward as if to press Bonaparte's hand, but checked himself almost immediately. The light had fallen full on his face for an instant; that instant sufficed to make the general notice the face as he had the voice. Neither the one nor the other was unknown to him. He searched his memory for an instant, but finding it rebellious, said: "I know you!"

"Possibly, general."

"I am certain; only I cannot recall your name."

"You managed that yours should not be forgotten, general."

"Who are you?"

“Ask Valence, general.”

Bonaparte gave a cry of joy.

“Louis de Montrevel,” he exclaimed, opening wide his arms. This time the young lieutenant did not hesitate to fling himself into them.

“Very good,” said Bonaparte; “you will serve eight days with the regiment in your new rank, that they may accustom themselves to your captain’s epaulets, and then you will take my poor Muiron’s place as aide-de-camp. Go!”

“Once more!” cried the young man, opening his arms.

“Faith, yes!” said Bonaparte, joyfully. Then holding him close after kissing him twice, “And so it was you who gave Valence that sword thrust?”

“My word!” said the new captain and future aide-de-camp, “you were there when I promised it to him. A soldier keeps his word.”

Eight days later Captain Montrevel was doing duty as staff-officer to the commander-in-chief, who changed his name of Louis, then in ill-repute, to that of Roland. And the young man consoled himself for ceasing to be a descendant of St. Louis by becoming the nephew of Charlemagne.

Roland – no one would have dared to call Captain Montrevel Louis after Bonaparte had baptized him Roland – made the campaign of Italy with his general, and returned with him to Paris after the peace of Campo Formio.

When the Egyptian expedition was decided upon, Roland, who had been summoned to his mother’s side by the death of the Brigadier-General de Montrevel, killed on the Rhine while his son was fighting on the Adige and the Mincio, was among the first appointed by the commander-in-chief to accompany him in the useless but poetical crusade which he was planning. He left his mother, his sister Amélie, and his young brother Edouard at Bourg, General de Montrevel’s native town. They resided some three-quarters of a mile out of the city, at Noires-Fontaines, a charming house, called a château, which, together with the farm and several hundred acres of land surrounding it, yielded an income of six or eight thousand livres a year, and constituted the general’s entire fortune. Roland’s departure on this adventurous expedition deeply afflicted the poor widow. The death of the father seemed to presage that of the son, and Madame de Montrevel, a sweet, gentle Creole, was far from possessing the stern virtues of a Spartan or Lacedemonian mother.

Bonaparte, who loved his old comrade of the Ecole Militaire with all his heart, granted him permission to rejoin him at the very last moment at Toulon. But the fear of arriving too late prevented Roland from profiting by this permission to its full extent. He left his mother, promising her – a promise he was careful not to keep – that he would not expose himself unnecessarily, and arrived at Marseilles eight days before the fleet set sail.

Our intention is no more to give the history of the campaign of Egypt than we did that of Italy. We shall only mention that which is absolutely necessary to understand this story and the subsequent development of Roland’s character. The 19th of May, 1798, Bonaparte and his entire staff set sail for the Orient; the 15th of June the Knights of Malta gave up the keys of their citadel. The 2d of July the army disembarked at Marabout, and the same day took Alexandria; the 25th, Bonaparte entered Cairo, after defeating the Mamelukes at Chebreïss and the Pyramids.

During this succession of marches and battles, Roland had been the officer we know him, gay, courageous and witty, defying the scorching heat of the day, the icy dew of the nights, dashing like a hero or a fool among the Turkish sabres or the Bedouin bullets. During the forty days of the voyage he had never left the interpreter Ventura; so that with his admirable facility he had learned, if not to speak Arabic fluently, at least to make himself understood in that language. Therefore it often happened that, when the general did not wish to use the native interpreter, Roland was charged with certain communications to the Muftis, the Ulemas, and the Sheiks.

During the night of October 20th and 21st Cairo revolted. At five in the morning the death of General Dupey, killed by a lance, was made known. At eight, just as the revolt was supposedly

quelled, an aide-de-camp of the dead general rode up, announcing that the Bedouins from the plains were attacking Bab-el-Nasr, or the Gate of Victory.

Bonaparte was breakfasting with his aide-de-camp Sulkowsky, so severely wounded at Salahieh that he left his pallet of suffering with the greatest difficulty only. Bonaparte, in his preoccupation forgetting the young Pole's condition, said to him: "Sulkowsky, take fifteen Guides and go see what that rabble wants."

Sulkowsky rose.

"General," interposed Roland, "give me the commission. Don't you see my comrade can hardly stand?"

"True," said Bonaparte; "do you go!"

Roland went out and took the fifteen Guides and started. But the order had been given to Sulkowsky, and Sulkowsky was determined to execute it. He set forth with five or six men whom he found ready.

Whether by chance, or because he knew the streets of Cairo better than Roland, he reached the Gate of Victory a few seconds before him. When Roland arrived, he saw five or six dead men, and an officer being led away by the Arabs, who, while massacring the soldiers mercilessly, will sometimes spare the officers in hope of a ransom. Roland recognized Sulkowsky; pointing him out with his sabre to his fifteen men, he charged at a gallop.

Half an hour later, a Guide, returning alone to head-quarters, announced the deaths of Sulkowsky, Roland and his twenty-one companions.

Bonaparte, as we have said, loved Roland as a brother, as a son, as he loved Eugene. He wished to know all the details of the catastrophe, and questioned the Guide. The man had seen an Arab cut off Sulkowsky's head and fasten it to his saddle-bow. As for Roland, his horse had been killed. He had disengaged himself from the stirrups and was seen fighting for a moment on foot; but he had soon disappeared in a general volley at close quarters.

Bonaparte sighed, shed a tear and murmured: "Another!" and apparently thought no more about it. But he did inquire to what tribe belonged these Bedouins, who had just killed two of the men he loved best. He was told that they were an independent tribe whose village was situated some thirty miles off. Bonaparte left them a month, that they might become convinced of their impunity; then, the month elapsed, he ordered one of his aides-de-camp, named Crosier, to surround the village, destroy the huts, behead the men, put them in sacks, and bring the rest of the population, that is to say, the women and children, to Cairo.

Crosier executed the order punctually; all the women and children who could be captured were brought to Cairo, and also with them one living Arab, gagged and bound to his horse's back.

"Why is this man still alive?" asked Bonaparte. "I ordered you to behead every man who was able to bear arms."

"General," said Crosier, who also possessed a smattering of Arabian words, "just as I was about to order his head cut off, I understood him to offer to exchange a prisoner for his life. I thought there would be time enough to cut off his head, and so brought him with me. If I am mistaken, the ceremony can take place here as well as there; what is postponed is not abandoned."

The interpreter Ventura was summoned to question the Bedouin. He replied that he had saved the life of a French officer who had been grievously wounded at the Gate of Victory, and that this officer, who spoke a little Arabic, claimed to be one of General Bonaparte's aides-de-camp. He had sent him to his brother who was a physician in a neighboring tribe, of which this officer was a captive; and if they would promise to spare his life, he would write to his brother to send the prisoner to Cairo.

Perhaps this was a tale invented to gain time, but it might also be true; nothing was lost by waiting.

The Arab was placed in safe keeping, a scribe was brought to write at his dictation. He sealed the letter with his own seal, and an Arab from Cairo was despatched to negotiate the exchange. If the emissary succeeded, it meant the Bedouin's life and five hundred piastres to the messenger.

Three days later he returned bringing Roland. Bonaparte had hoped for but had not dared to expect this return.

This heart of iron, which had seemed insensible to grief, was now melted with joy. He opened his arms to Roland, as on the day when he had found him, and two tears, two pearls – the tears of Bonaparte were rare – fell from his eyes.

But Roland, strange as it may seem, was sombre in the midst of the joy caused by his return. He confirmed the Arab's tale, insisted upon his liberation, but refused all personal details about his capture by the Bedouins and the treatment he had received at the hands of the doctor. As for Sulkowsky, he had been killed and beheaded before his eyes, so it was useless to think more of him. Roland resumed his duties, but it was noticeable his native courage had become temerity, and his longing for glory, desire for death.

On the other hand, as often happens with those who brave fire and sword, fire and sword miraculously spared him. Before, behind and around Roland men fell; he remained erect, invulnerable as the demon of war. During the campaign in Syria two emissaries were sent to demand the surrender of Saint Jean d'Acre of Djézzar Pasha. Neither of the two returned; they had been beheaded. It was necessary to send a third. Roland applied for the duty, and so insistent was he, that he eventually obtained the general's permission and returned in safety. He took part in each of the nineteen assaults made upon the fortress; at each assault he was seen entering the breach. He was one of the ten men who forced their way into the Accursèd Tower; nine remained, but he returned without a scratch. During the retreat, Bonaparte commanded his cavalry to lend their horses to the wounded and sick. All endeavored to avoid the contagion of the pest-ridden sick. To them Roland gave his horse from preference. Three fell dead from the saddle; he mounted his horse after them, and reached Cairo safe and sound. At Aboukir he flung himself into the mêlée, reached the Pasha by forcing his way through the guard of blacks who surrounded him; seized him by the beard and received the fire of his two pistols. One burned the wadding only, the other ball passed under his arm, killing a guard behind him.

When Bonaparte resolved to return to France, Roland was the first to whom the general announced his intention. Another had been overjoyed; but he remained sombre and melancholy, saying: "I should prefer to remain here, general. There is more chance of my being killed here."

But as it would have appeared ungrateful on his part to refuse to follow the general, he returned with him. During the voyage he remained sad and impenetrable, until the English fleet was sighted near Corsica. Then only did he regain his wonted animation. Bonaparte told Admiral Gantheaume that he would fight to the death, and gave orders to sink the frigate sooner than haul down the flag. He passed, however, unseen through the British fleet, and disembarked at Frejus, October 8, 1799.

All were impatient to be the first to set foot on French soil. Roland was the last. Although the general paid no apparent attention to these details, none escaped him. He sent Eugène, Berthier, Bourrienne, his aides-de-camp and his suite by way of Gap and Draguignan, while he took the road to Aix strictly incognito, accompanied only by Roland, to judge for himself of the state of the Midi. Hoping that the joy of seeing his family again would revive the love of life in his heart crushed by its hidden sorrow, he informed Roland at Aix that they would part at Lyons, and gave him three weeks' furlough to visit his mother and sister.

Roland replied: "Thank you, general. My sister and my mother will be very happy to see me." Whereas formerly his words would have been: "Thank you, general. I shall be very happy to see my mother and sister again."

We know what occurred at Avignon; we have seen with what profound contempt for danger, bitter disgust of life, Roland had provoked that terrible duel. We heard the reason he gave Sir John for

this indifference to death. Was it true or false? Sir John at all events was obliged to content himself with it, since Roland was evidently not disposed to furnish any other.

And now, as we have said, they were sleeping or pretending to sleep as they were drawn by two horses at full speed along the road of Avignon to Orange.

CHAPTER VI. MORGAN

Our readers must permit us for an instant to abandon Roland and Sir John, who, thanks to the physical and moral conditions in which we left them, need inspire no anxiety, while we direct our attention seriously to a personage who has so far made but a brief appearance in this history, though he is destined to play an important part in it.

We are speaking of the man who, armed and masked, entered the room of the table d'hôte at Avignon to return Jean Picot the two hundred louis which had been stolen from him by mistake, stored as it had been with the government money.

We speak of the highwayman, who called himself Morgan. He had ridden into Avignon, masked, in broad daylight, entered the hotel of the Palais-Egalité leaving his horse at the door. This horse had enjoyed the same immunity in the pontifical and royalist town as his master; he found it again at the horse post, unfastened its bridle, sprang into the saddle, rode through the Porte d'Oulle, skirting the walls, and disappeared at a gallop along the road to Lyons. Only about three-quarters of a mile from Avignon, he drew his mantle closer about him, to conceal his weapons from the passers, and removing his mask he slipped it into one of the holsters of his saddle.

The persons whom he had left at Avignon who were curious to know if this could be the terrible Morgan, the terror of the Midi, might have convinced themselves with their own eyes, had they met him on the road between Avignon and Bédarides, whether the bandit's appearance was as terrifying as his renown. We do not hesitate to assert that the features now revealed would have harmonized so little with the picture their prejudiced imagination had conjured up that their amazement would have been extreme.

The removal of the mask, by a hand of perfect whiteness and delicacy, revealed the face of a young man of twenty-four or five years of age, a face that, by its regularity of feature and gentle expression, had something of the character of a woman's. One detail alone gave it or rather would give it at certain moments a touch of singular firmness. Beneath the beautiful fair hair waving on his brow and temples, as was the fashion at that period, eyebrows, eyes and lashes were black as ebony. The rest of the face was, as we have said, almost feminine. There were two little ears of which only the tips could be seen beneath the tufts of hair to which the Incroyables of the day had given the name of "dog's-ears"; a straight, perfectly proportioned nose, a rather large mouth, rosy and always smiling, and which, when smiling, revealed a double row of brilliant teeth; a delicate refined chin faintly tinged with blue, showing that, if the beard had not been carefully and recently shaved, it would, protesting against the golden hair, have followed the same color as the brows, lashes and eyes, that is to say, a decided black. As for the unknown's figure, it was seen, when he entered the dining-room, to be tall, well-formed and flexible, denoting, if not great muscular strength, at least much suppleness and agility.

The manner he sat his horse showed him to be a practiced rider. With his cloak thrown back over his shoulders, his mask hidden in the holster, his hat pulled low over his eyes, the rider resumed his rapid pace, checked for an instant, passed through Bédarides at a gallop, and reaching the first houses in Orange, entered the gate of one which closed immediately behind him. A servant in waiting sprang to the bit. The rider dismounted quickly.

"Is your master here?" he asked the domestic.

"No, Monsieur the Baron," replied the man; "he was obliged to go away last night, but he left word that if Monsieur should ask for him, to say that he had gone in the interests of the Company."

"Very good, Baptiste. I have brought back his horse in good condition, though somewhat tired. Rub him down with wine, and give him for two or three days barley instead of oats. He has covered something like one hundred miles since yesterday morning."

"Monsieur the Baron was satisfied with him?"

“Perfectly satisfied. Is the carriage ready?”

“Yes, Monsieur the Baron, all harnessed in the coach-house; the postilion is drinking with Julien. Monsieur recommended that he should be kept outside the house that he might not see him arrive.”

“He thinks he is to take your master?”

“Yes, Monsieur the Baron. Here is my master’s passport, which we used to get the post-horses, and as my master has gone in the direction of Bordeaux with Monsieur the Baron’s passport, and as Monsieur the Baron goes toward Geneva with my master’s passport, the skein will probably be so tangled that the police, clever as their fingers are, can’t easily unravel it.”

“Unfasten the valise that is on the croup of my saddle, Baptiste, and give it to me.”

Baptiste obeyed dutifully, but the valise almost slipped from his hands. “Ah!” said he laughing, “Monsieur the Baron did not warn me! The devil! Monsieur the Baron has not wasted his time it seems.”

“Just where you’re mistaken, Baptiste! if I didn’t waste all my time, I at least lost a good deal, so I should like to be off again as soon as possible.”

“But Monsieur the Baron will breakfast?”

“I’ll eat a bite, but quickly.”

“Monsieur will not be delayed. It is now two, and breakfast has been ready since ten this morning. Luckily it’s a cold breakfast.”

And Baptiste, in the absence of his master, did the honors of the house to the visitor by showing him the way to the dining-room.

“Not necessary,” said the visitor, “I know the way. Do you see to the carriage; let it be close to the house with the door wide open when I come out, so that the postilion can’t see me. Here’s the money to pay him for the first relay.”

And the stranger whom Baptiste had addressed as Baron handed him a handful of notes.

“Why, Monsieur,” said the servant, “you have given me enough to pay all the way to Lyons!”

“Pay him as far as Valence, under pretext that I want to sleep, and keep the rest for your trouble in settling the accounts.”

“Shall I put the valise in the carriage-box?”

“I will do so myself.”

And taking the valise from the servant’s hands, without letting it be seen that it weighed heavily, he turned toward the dining-room, while Baptiste made his way toward the nearest inn, sorting his notes as he went.

As the stranger had said, the way was familiar to him, for he passed down a corridor, opened a first door without hesitation, then a second, and found himself before a table elegantly served. A cold fowl, two partridges, a ham, several kinds of cheese, a dessert of magnificent fruit, and two decanters, the one containing a ruby-colored wine, and the other a yellow-topaz, made a breakfast which, though evidently intended for but one person, as only one place was set, might in case of need have sufficed for three or four.

The young man’s first act on entering the dining-room was to go straight to a mirror, remove his hat, arrange his hair with a little comb which he took from his pocket; after which he went to a porcelain basin with a reservoir above it, took a towel which was there for the purpose, and bathed his face and hands. Not until these ablutions were completed – characteristic of a man of elegant habits – not until these ablutions had been minutely performed did the stranger sit down to the table.

A few minutes sufficed to satisfy his appetite, to which youth and fatigue had, however, given magnificent proportions; and when Baptiste came in to inform the solitary guest that the carriage was ready he found him already afoot and waiting.

The stranger drew his hat low over his eyes, wrapped his coat about him, took the valise under his arm, and, as Baptiste had taken pains to lower the carriage-steps as close as possible to the door,

he sprang into the post-chaise without being seen by the postilion. Baptiste slammed the door after him; then, addressing the man in the top-boots:

“Everything is paid to Valence, isn’t it, relays and fees?” he asked.

“Everything; do you want a receipt?” replied the postilion, jokingly.

“No; but my master, the Marquise de Ribier, don’t want to be disturbed until he gets to Valence.”

“All right,” replied the postilion, in the same bantering tone, “the citizen Marquis shan’t be disturbed. Forward, hoop-la!” And he started his horses, and cracked his whip with that noisy eloquence which says to neighbors and passers-by: “Ware here, ‘ware there! I am driving a man who pays well and who has the right to run over others.”

Once in the carriage the pretended Marquis of Ribier opened the window, lowered the blinds, raised the seat, put his valise in the hollow, sat down on it, wrapped himself in his cloak, and, certain of not being disturbed till he reached Valence, slept as he had breakfasted, that is to say, with all the appetite of youth.

They went from Orange to Valence in eight hours. Our traveller awakened shortly before entering the city. Raising one of the blinds cautiously, he recognized the little suburb of Paillasse. It was dark, so he struck his repeater and found it was eleven at night. Thinking it useless to go to sleep again, he added up the cost of the relays to Lyons and counted out the money. As the postilion at Valence passed the comrade who replaced him, the traveller heard him say:

“It seems he’s a ci-devant; but he was recommended from Orange, and, as he pays twenty sous fees, you must treat him as you would a patriot.”

“Very well,” replied the other; “he shall be driven accordingly.”

The traveller thought the time had come to intervene. He raised the blind and said:

“And you’ll only be doing me justice. A patriot? Deuce take it! I pride myself upon being one, and of the first calibre, too! And the proof is – Drink this to the health of the Republic.” And he handed a hundred-franc assignat to the postilion who had recommended him to his comrade. Seeing the other looking eagerly at this strip of paper, he continued: “And the same to you if you will repeat the recommendation you’ve just received to the others.”

“Oh! don’t worry, citizen,” said the postilion; “there’ll be but one order to Lyons – full speed!”

“And here is the money for the sixteen posts, including the double post of entrance in advance. I pay twenty sous fees. Settle it among yourselves.”

The postilion dug his spurs into his horse and they were off at a gallop. The carriage relayed at Lyons about four in the afternoon. While the horses were being changed, a man clad like a porter, sitting with his stretcher beside him on a stone post, rose, came to the carriage and said something in a low tone to the young Companion of Jehu which seemed to astonish the latter greatly.

“Are you quite sure?” he asked the porter.

“I tell you that I saw him with my own eyes!” replied the latter.

“Then I can give the news to our friends as a positive fact?”

“You can. Only hurry.”

“Have they been notified at Servas?”

“Yes; you will find a horse ready between Servas and Sue.”

The postilion came up; the young man exchanged a last glance with the porter, who walked away as if charged with a letter of the utmost importance.

“What road, citizen?” asked the postilion.

“To Bourg. I must reach Servas by nine this evening; I pay thirty sous fees.”

“Forty-two miles in five hours! That’s tough. Well, after all, it can be done.”

“Will you do it.”

“We can try.”

And the postilion started at full gallop. Nine o’clock was striking as they entered Servas.

“A crown of six livres if you’ll drive me half-way to Sue without stopping here to change horses!” cried the young man through the window to the postilion.

“Done!” replied the latter.

And the carriage dashed past the post house without stopping.

Morgan stopped the carriage at a half mile beyond Servas, put his head out of the window, made a trumpet of his hands, and gave the hoot of a screech-owl. The imitation was so perfect that another owl answered from a neighboring woods.

“Here we are,” cried Morgan.

The postilion pulled up, saying: “If we’re there, we needn’t go further.”

The young man took his valise, opened the door, jumped out and stepped up to the postilion.

“Here’s the promised ecu.”

The postilion took the coin and stuck it in his eye, as a fop of our day holds his eye-glasses. Morgan divined that this pantomime had a significance.

“Well,” he asked, “what does that mean?”

“That means,” said the postilion, “that, do what I will, I can’t help seeing with the other eye.”

“I understand,” said the young man, laughing; “and if I close the other eye – ”

“Damn it! I shan’t see anything.”

“Hey! you’re a rogue who’d rather be blind than see with one eye! Well, there’s no disputing tastes. Here!”

And he gave him a second crown. The postilion stuck it up to his other eye, wheeled the carriage round and took the road back to Servas.

The Companion of Jehu waited till he vanished in the darkness. Then putting the hollow of a key to his lips, he drew a long trembling sound from it like a boatswain’s whistle.

A similar call answered him, and immediately a horseman came out of the woods at full gallop. As he caught sight of him Morgan put on his mask.

“In whose name have you come?” asked the rider, whose face, hidden as it was beneath the brim of an immense hat, could not be seen.

“In the name of the prophet Elisha,” replied the young man with the mask.

“Then you are he whom I am waiting for.” And he dismounted.

“Are you prophet or disciple?” asked Morgan.

“Disciple,” replied the new-comer.

“Where is your master?”

“You will find him at the Chartreuse of Seillon.”

“Do you know how many Companions are there this evening?”

“Twelve.”

“Very good; if you meet any others send them there.”

He who had called himself a disciple bowed in sign of obedience, assisted Morgan to fasten the valise to the croup of the saddle, and respectfully held the bit while the young man mounted. Without even waiting to thrust his other foot into the stirrup, Morgan spurred his horse, which tore the bit from the groom’s hand and started off at a gallop.

On the right of the road stretched the forest of Seillon, like a shadowy sea, its sombre billows undulating and moaning in the night wind. Half a mile beyond Sue the rider turned his horse across country toward the forest, which, as he rode on, seemed to advance toward him. The horse, guided by an experienced hand, plunged fearlessly into the woods. Ten minutes later he emerged on the other side.

A gloomy mass, isolated in the middle of a plain, rose about a hundred feet from the forest. It was a building of massive architecture, shaded by five or six venerable trees. The horseman paused before the portal, over which were placed three statues in a triangle of the Virgin, our Lord, and St. John the Baptist. The statue of the Virgin was at the apex of the triangle.

The mysterious traveller had reached his goal, for this was the Chartreuse of Seillon. This monastery, the twenty-second of its order, was founded in 1178. In 1672 a modern edifice had been substituted for the old building; vestiges of its ruins can be seen to this day. These ruins consist externally of the above-mentioned portal with the three statues, before which our mysterious traveller halted; internally, a small chapel, entered from the right through the portal. A peasant, his wife and two children are now living there, and the ancient monastery has become a farm.

The monks were expelled from their convent in 1791; in 1792 the Chartreuse and its dependencies were offered for sale as ecclesiastical property. The dependencies consisted first of the park, adjoining the buildings, and the noble forest which still bears the name of Seillon. But at Bourg, a royalist and, above all, religious town, no one dared risk his soul by purchasing property belonging to the worthy monks whom all revered. The result was that the convent, the park and the forest had become, under the title of state property, the property of the republic; that is to say, they belonged to nobody, or were at the best neglected. The republic having, for the last seven years, other things to think of than pointing walls, cultivating an orchard and cutting timber.

For seven years, therefore, the Chartreuse had been completely abandoned, and if by chance curious eyes peered through the keyhole, they caught glimpses of grass-grown courtyards, brambles in the orchard, and brush in the forest, which, except for one road and two or three paths that crossed it, had become almost impenetrable. The *Correrie*, a species of pavilion belonging to the monastery and distant from it about three-quarters of a mile, was mossgrown too in the tangle of the forest, which, profiting by its liberty, grew at its own sweet will, and had long since encircled it in a mantle of foliage which hid it from sight.

For the rest, the strangest rumors were current about these two buildings. They were said to be haunted by guests invisible by day, terrifying at night. The woodsmen and the belated peasants, who went to the forest to exercise against the Republic the rights which the town of Bourg had enjoyed in the days of the monks, pretended that, through the cracks of the closed blinds, they had seen flames of fire dancing along the corridors and stairways, and had distinctly heard the noise of chains clanking over the cloister tilings and the pavement of the courtyards. The strong-minded denied these things; but two very opposite classes opposed the unbelievers, confirming the rumors, attributing these terrifying noises and nocturnal lights to two different causes according to their beliefs. The patriots declared that they were the ghosts of the poor monks buried alive by cloister tyranny in the *In-pace*, who were now returned to earth, dragging after them their fetters to call down the vengeance of Heaven upon their persecutors. The royalists said that they were the imps of the devil, who, finding an empty convent, and fearing no further danger from holy water, were boldly holding their revels where once they had not dared show a claw. One fact, however, left everything uncertain. Not one of the believers or unbelievers – whether he elected for the souls of the martyred monks or for the Witches' Sabbath of Beelzebub – had ever had the courage to venture among the shadows, and to seek during the solemn hours of night confirmation of the truth, in order to tell on the morrow whether the Chartreuse were haunted, and if haunted by whom.

But doubtless these tales, whether well founded or not, had no influence over our mysterious horseman; for although, as we have said, nine o'clock had chimed from the steeples of Bourg, and night had fallen, he reined in his horse in front of the great portal of the deserted monastery, and, without dismounting, drew a pistol from his holster, striking three measured blows with the butt on the gate, after the manner of the Freemasons. Then he listened. For an instant he doubted if the meeting were really there; for though he looked closely and listened attentively, he could perceive no light, nor could he hear a sound. Still he fancied he heard a cautious step approaching the portal from within. He knocked a second time with the same weapon and in the same manner.

“Who knocks?” demanded a voice.

“He who comes from Elisha,” replied the traveller.

“What king do the sons of Isaac obey?”

“Jehu.”

“What house are they to exterminate?”

“That of Ahab.”

“Are you prophet or disciple?”

“Prophet.”

“Welcome then to the House of the Lord!” said the voice.

Instantly the iron bars which secured the massive portal swung back, the bolts grated in their sockets, half of the gate opened silently, and the horse and his rider passed beneath the sombre vault, which immediately closed behind them.

The person who had opened the gate, so slow to open, so quick to close, was attired in the long white robe of a Chartreuse monk, of which the hood, falling over his face, completely concealed his features.

CHAPTER VII. THE CHARTREUSE OF SEILLON

Beyond doubt, like the first affiliated member met on the road to Sue by the man who styled himself prophet, the monk who opened the gate was of secondary rank in the fraternity; for, grasping the horse's bridle, he held it while the rider dismounted, rendering the young man the service of a groom.

Morgan got off, unfastened the valise, pulled the pistols from the holsters, and placed them in his belt, next to those already there. Addressing the monk in a tone of command, he said: "I thought I should find the brothers assembled in council."

"They are assembled," replied the monk.

"Where?"

"At La Correrie. Suspicious persons have been seen prowling around the Chartreuse these last few days, and orders have been issued to take the greatest precautions."

The young man shrugged his shoulders as if he considered such precautions useless, and, always in the same tone of command, said: "Have some one take my horse to the stable and conduct me to the council."

The monk summoned another brother, to whom he flung the bridle. He lighted a torch at a lamp, in the little chapel which can still be seen to the right of the great portal, and walked before the new-comer. Crossing the cloister, he took a few steps in the garden, opened a door leading into a sort of cistern, invited Morgan to enter, closed it as carefully as he had the outer door, touched with his foot a stone which seemed to be accidentally lying there, disclosed a ring and raised a slab, which concealed a flight of steps leading down to a subterraneous passage. This passage had a rounded roof and was wide enough to admit two men walking abreast.

The two men proceeded thus for five or six minutes, when they reached a grated door. The monk, drawing a key from his frock, opened it. Then, when both had passed through and the door was locked again, he asked: "By what name shall I announce you?"

"As Brother Morgan."

"Wait here; I will return in five minutes."

The young man made a sign with his head which showed that he was familiar with these precautions and this distrust. Then he sat down upon a tomb – they were in the mortuary vaults of the convent – and waited. Five minutes had scarcely elapsed before the monk reappeared.

"Follow me," said he; "the brothers are glad you have come. They feared you had met with some mishap."

A few seconds later Morgan was admitted into the council chamber.

Twelve monks awaited him, their hoods drawn low over their eyes. But, once the door had closed and the serving brother had disappeared, while Morgan was removing his mask, the hoods were thrown back and each monk exposed his face.

No brotherhood had ever been graced by a more brilliant assemblage of handsome and joyous young men. Two or three only of these strange monks had reached the age of forty. All hands were held out to Morgan and several warm kisses were imprinted upon the new-comer's cheek.

"Pon my word," said one who had welcomed him most tenderly, "you have drawn a mighty thorn from my foot; we thought you dead, or, at any rate, a prisoner."

"Dead, I grant you, Amiet; but prisoner, never! citizen – as they still say sometimes, and I hope they'll not say it much longer. It must be admitted that the whole affair was conducted on both sides with touching amenity. As soon as the conductor saw us he shouted to the postilion to stop; I even believe he added: 'I know what it is.' 'Then,' said I, 'if you know what it is, my dear friend, our explanations needn't be long.' 'The government money?' he asked. 'Exactly,' I replied. Then as there was a great commotion inside the carriage, I added: 'Wait! first come down and assure these

gentlemen, and especially the ladies, that we are well-behaved folk and will not harm them – the ladies; you understand – and nobody will even look at them unless they put their heads out of the window.’ One did risk it; my faith! but she was charming. I threw her a kiss, and she gave a little cry and retired into the carriage, for all the world like Galatea, and as there were no willows about, I didn’t pursue her. In the meantime the guard was rummaging in his strong-box in all expedition, and to such good purpose, indeed, that with the government money, in his hurry, he passed over two hundred louis belonging to a poor wine merchant of Bordeaux.”

“Ah, the devil!” exclaimed the brother called Amiet – an assumed name, probably, like that of Morgan – “that is annoying! You know the Directory, which is most imaginative, has organized some bands of chauffeurs, who operate in our name, to make people believe that we rob private individuals. In other words, that we are mere thieves.”

“Wait an instant,” resumed Morgan; “that is just what makes me late. I heard something similar at Lyons. I was half-way to Valence when I discovered this breach of etiquette. It was not difficult, for, as if the good man had foreseen what happened, he had marked his bag ‘Jean Picot, Wine Merchant at Fronsac, Bordeaux.’”

“And you sent his money back to him?”

“I did better; I returned it to him.”

“At Fronsac?”

“Ah! no, but at Avignon. I suspected that so careful a man would stop at the first large town to inquire what chance he had to recover his two hundred louis. I was not mistaken. I inquired at the inn if they knew citizen Jean Picot. They replied that not only did they know him, but in fact he was then dining at the table d’hôte. I went in. You can imagine what they were talking about – the stoppage of the diligence. Conceive the sensation my apparition caused. The god of antiquity descending from the machine produced a no more unexpected finale than I. I asked which one of the guests was called Jean Picot. The owner of this distinguished and melodious name stood forth. I placed the two hundred louis before him, with many apologies, in the name of the Company, for the inconvenience its followers had occasioned him. I exchanged a friendly glance with Barjols and a polite nod with the Abbé de Rians who were present, and, with a profound bow to the assembled company, withdrew. It was only a little thing, but it took me fifteen hours; hence the delay. I thought it preferable to leaving a false conception of us in our wake. Have I done well, my masters?”

The gathering burst into bravos.

“Only,” said one of the participants, “I think you were somewhat imprudent to return the money yourself to citizen Jean Picot.”

“My dear colonel,” replied the young man, “there’s an Italian proverb which says: ‘Who wills, goes; who does not will, sends.’ I willed – I went.”

“And there’s a jolly buck who, if you ever have the misfortune to fall into the hands of the Directory, will reward you by recognizing you; a recognition which means cutting off your head!”

“Oh! I defy him to recognize me.”

“What can prevent it?”

“Oh! You seem to think that I play such pranks with my face uncovered? Truly, my dear colonel, you mistake me for some one else. It is well enough to lay aside my mask among friends; but among strangers – no, no! Are not these carnival times? I don’t see why I shouldn’t disguise myself as Abellino or Karl Moor, when Messieurs Gohier, Sieyès, Roger Ducos, Moulin and Barras are masquerading as kings of France.”

“And you entered the city masked?”

“The city, the hotel, the dining-room. It is true that if my face was covered, my belt was not, and, as you see, it is well garnished.”

The young man tossed aside his coat, displaying his belt, which was furnished with four pistols and a short hunting-knife. Then, with a gayety which seemed characteristic of his careless nature,

he added: "I ought to look ferocious, oughtn't I? They may have taken me for the late Mandrin, descending from the mountains of Savoy. By the bye, here are the sixty thousand francs of Her Highness, the Directory." And the young man disdainfully kicked the valise which he had placed on the ground, which emitted a metallic sound indicating the presence of gold. Then he mingled with the group of friends from whom he had been separated by the natural distance between a narrator and his listeners.

One of the monks stooped and lifted the valise.

"Despise gold as much as you please, my dear Morgan, since that doesn't prevent you from capturing it. But I know of some brave fellows who are awaiting these sixty thousand francs, you so disdainfully kick aside, with as much impatience and anxiety as a caravan, lost in the desert, awaits the drop of water which is to save it from dying of thirst."

"Our friends of the Vendée, I suppose?" replied Morgan. "Much good may it do them! Egotists, they are fighting. These gentlemen have chosen the roses and left us the thorns. Come! don't they receive anything from England?"

"Oh, yes," said one of the monks, gayly; "at Quiberon they got bullets and grapeshot."

"I did not say from the English," retorted Morgan; "I said from England."

"Not a penny."

"It seems to me, however," said one of those present, who apparently possessed a more reflective head than his comrades, "it seems to me that our princes might send a little gold to those who are shedding their blood for the monarchy. Are they not afraid the Vendée may weary some day or other of a devotion which up to this time has not, to my knowledge, won her a word of thanks."

"The Vendée, dear friend," replied Morgan, "is a generous land which will not weary, you may be sure. Besides, where is the merit of fidelity unless it has to deal with ingratitude? From the instant devotion meets recognition, it is no longer devotion. It becomes an exchange which reaps its reward. Let us be always faithful, and always devoted, gentlemen, praying Heaven that those whom we serve may remain ungrateful, and then, believe me, we shall bear the better part in the history of our civil wars."

Morgan had scarcely formulated this chivalric axiom, expressive of a desire which had every chance of accomplishment, than three Masonic blows resounded upon the door through which he had entered.

"Gentlemen," said the monk who seemed to fill the rôle of president, "quick, your hoods and masks. We do not know who may be coming to us."

CHAPTER VIII. HOW THE MONEY OF THE DIRECTORY WAS USED

Every one hastened to obey. The monks lowered the hoods of their long robes over their faces, Morgan replaced his mask.

“Enter!” said the superior.

The door opened and the serving-brother appeared.

“An emissary from General Georges Cadoudal asks to be admitted,” said he.

“Did he reply to the three passwords?”

“Perfectly.”

“Then let him in.”

The lay brother retired to the subterranean passage, and reappeared a couple of minutes later leading a man easily recognized by his costume as a peasant, and by his square head with its shock of red hair for a Breton. He advanced in the centre of the circle without appearing in the least intimidated, fixing his eyes on each of the monks in turn, and waiting until one of these twelve granite statues should break silence. The president was the first to speak to him.

“From whom do you come?” he asked him.

“He who sent me,” replied the peasant, “ordered me to answer, if I were asked that question, that I was sent by Jehu.”

“Are you the bearer of a verbal or written message?”

“I am to reply to the questions which you ask me, and exchange a slip of paper for some money.”

“Very good; we will begin with the questions. What are our brothers in the Vendée doing?”

“They have laid down their arms and are awaiting only a word from you to take them up again.”

“And why did they lay down their arms?”

“They received the order to do so from his Majesty Louis XVIII.”

“There is talk of a proclamation written by the King’s own hand. Have they received it?”

“Here is a copy.”

The peasant gave a paper to the person who was interrogating him. The latter opened it and read:

The war has absolutely no result save that of making the monarchy odious and threatening. Monarchs who return to their own through its bloody succor are never loved; these sanguinary measures must therefore be abandoned; confide in the empire of opinion which returns of itself to its saving principles. “God and the King,” will soon be the rallying cry of all Frenchmen. The scattered elements of royalism must be gathered into one formidable sheaf;

militant Vendée must be abandoned to its unhappy fate and marched within a more pacific and less erratic path. The royalists of the West have fulfilled their duty; those of Paris, who have prepared everything for the approaching Restoration, must now be relied upon —

The president raised his head, and, seeking Morgan with a flash of the eye which his hood could not entirely conceal, said: “Well, brother, I think this is the fulfilment of your wish of a few moments ago. The royalists of the Vendée and the Midi will have the merit of pure devotion.” Then, lowering his eyes to the proclamation, of which there still remained a few lines to read, he continued:

The Jews crucified their King, and since that time they have wandered over the face of the earth. The French guillotined theirs, and they shall be dispersed throughout the land.

Given at Blankenbourg, this 25th of August, 1799, on the day of St. Louis
and the sixth year of our reign.

(Signed) LOUIS.

The young men looked at each other.

“Quos vult perdere Jupiter dementat!” said Morgan.

“Yes,” said the president; “but when those whom Jupiter wishes to destroy represent a principle, they must be sustained not only against Jupiter but against themselves. Ajax, in the midst of the bolts and lightning, clung to a rock, and, threatening Heaven with his clinched hand, he cried, ‘I will escape in spite of the gods!’” Then turning toward Cadoudal’s envoy, “And what answer did he who sent you make to this proclamation?”

“About what you yourself have just answered. He told me to come and inform myself whether you had decided to hold firm in spite of all, in spite of the King himself.”

“By Heavens! yes,” said Morgan.

“We are determined,” said the President.

“In that case,” replied the peasant, “all is well. Here are the real names of our new chiefs, and their assumed names. The general recommends that you use only the latter as far as is possible in your despatches. He observes that precaution when he, on his side, speaks of you.”

“Have you the list?” asked the President.

“No; I might have been stopped, and the list taken. Write yourself; I will dictate them to you.”

The president seated himself at the table, took a pen, and wrote the following names under the dictation of the Breton peasant:

“Georges Cadoudal, Jehu or Roundhead; Joseph Cadoudal, Judas Maccabeus; Lahaye Saint-Hilaire, David; Burban-Malabry, Brave-la-Mort; Poulpiquez, Royal-Carnage; Bonfils, Brise-Barrière; Dampherné, Piquevers; Duchayla, La Couronne; Duparc, Le Terrible; La Roche, Mithridates; Puisaye, Jean le Blond.”

“And these are the successors of Charette, Stoffiet, Cathelineau, Bonchamp, d’Elbée, la Rochejaquelin, and Lescure!” cried a voice.

The Breton turned toward him who had just spoken.

“If they get themselves killed like their predecessors,” said he, “what more can you ask of them?”

“Well answered,” said Morgan, “so that – ”

“So that, as soon as our general has your reply,” answered the peasant, “he will take up arms again.”

“And suppose our reply had been in the negative?” asked another voice.

“So much the worse for you,” replied the peasant; “in any case the insurrection is fixed for October 20.”

“Well,” said the president, “thanks to us, the general will have the wherewithal for his first month’s pay. Where is your receipt?”

“Here,” said the peasant, drawing a paper from his pocket on which were written these words:

Received from our brothers of the Midi and the East, to be employed for the
good of the cause, the sum of...

GEORGES CADOU DAL,

General commanding the Royalist army of Brittany.

The sum was left blank.

“Do you know how to write?” asked the president.

“Enough to fill in the three or four missing words.”

“Very well. Then write, ‘one hundred thousand francs.’”

The Breton wrote; then extending the paper to the president, he said: "Here is your receipt; where is the money?"

"Stoop and pick up the bag at your feet; it contains sixty thousand francs." Then addressing one of the monks, he asked: "Montbard, where are the remaining forty thousand?"

The monk thus interpellated opened a closet and brought forth a bag somewhat smaller than the one Morgan had brought, but which, nevertheless, contained the good round sum of forty thousand francs.

"Here is the full amount," said the monk.

"Now, my friend," said the president, "get something to eat and some rest; to-morrow you will start."

"They are waiting for me yonder," said the Breton. "I will eat and sleep on horseback. Farewell, gentlemen. Heaven keep you!" And he went toward the door by which he had entered.

"Wait," said Morgan.

The messenger paused.

"News for news," said Morgan; "tell General Cadoudal that General Bonaparte has left the army in Egypt, that he landed at Fréjus, day before yesterday, and will be in Paris in three days. My news is fully worth yours, don't you think so? What do you think of it?"

"Impossible!" exclaimed all the monks with one accord.

"Nevertheless nothing is more true, gentlemen. I have it from our friend the Priest (Leprêtre),¹ who saw him relay at Lyons one hour before me, and recognized him."

"What has he come to France for?" demanded several voices.

"Faith," said Morgan, "we shall know some day. It is probable that he has not returned to Paris to remain there incognito."

"Don't lose an instant in carrying this news to our brothers in the West," said the president to the peasant. "A moment ago I wished to detain you; now I say to you: 'Go!'"

The peasant bowed and withdrew. The president waited until the door was closed.

"Gentlemen," said he, "the news which our brother Morgan has just imparted to us is so grave that I wish to propose a special measure."

"What is it?" asked the Companions of Jehu with one voice.

"It is that one of us, chosen by lot, shall go to Paris and keep the rest informed, with the cipher agreed upon, of all that happens there."

"Agreed!" they replied.

"In that case," resumed the president, "let us write our thirteen names, each on a slip of paper. We put them in a hat. He whose name is first drawn shall start immediately."

The young men, one and all, approached the table, and wrote their names on squares of paper which they rolled and dropped into a hat. The youngest was told to draw the lots. He drew one of the little rolls of paper and handed it to the president, who unfolded it.

"Morgan!" said he.

"What are my instructions?" asked the young man.

"Remember," replied the president, with a solemnity to which the cloistral arches lent a supreme grandeur, "that you bear the name and title of Baron de Sainte-Hermine, that your father was guillotined on the Place de la Révolution and that your brother was killed in Condé's army. Noblesse oblige! Those are your instructions."

"And what else?" asked the young man.

"As to the rest," said the president, "we rely on your royalist principles and your loyalty."

"Then, my friends, permit me to bid you farewell at once. I would like to be on the road to Paris before dawn, and I must pay a visit before my departure."

¹ The name Leprêtre is a contraction of the two words "le prêtre," meaning the priest; hence the name under which this man died.

“Go!” said the president, opening his arms to Morgan. “I embrace you in the name of the Brotherhood. To another I should say, ‘Be brave, persevering and active’; to you I say, ‘Be prudent.’”

The young man received the fraternal embrace, smiled to his other friends, shook hands with two or three of them, wrapped himself in his mantle, pulled his hat over his eyes and departed.

CHAPTER IX. ROMEO AND JULIET

Under the possibility of immediate departure, Morgan's horse, after being washed, rubbed down and dried, had been fed a double ration of oats and been resaddled and bridled. The young man had only to ask for it and spring upon its back. He was no sooner in the saddle than the gate opened as if by magic; the horse neighed and darted out swiftly, having forgotten its first trip, and ready for another.

At the gate of the Chartreuse, Morgan paused an instant, undecided whether to turn to the right or left. He finally turned to the right, followed the road which leads from Bourg to Seillon for a few moments, wheeled rapidly a second time to the right, cut across country, plunged into an angle of the forest which was on his way, reappeared before long on the other side, reached the main road to Pont-d'Ain, followed it for about a mile and a half, and halted near a group of houses now called the Maison des Gardes. One of these houses bore for sign a cluster of holly, which indicated one of those wayside halting places where the pedestrians quench their thirst, and rest for an instant to recover strength before continuing the long fatiguing voyage of life. Morgan stopped at the door, drew a pistol from its holster and rapped with the butt end as he had done at the Chartreuse. Only as, in all probability, the good folks at the humble tavern were far from being conspirators, the traveller was kept waiting longer than he had been at the monastery. At last he heard the echo of the stable boy's clumsy sabots. The gate creaked, but the worthy man who opened it no sooner perceived the horseman with his drawn pistol than he instinctively tried to, close it again.

"It is I, Patout," said the young man; "don't be afraid."

"Ah! sure enough," said the peasant, "it is really you, Monsieur Charles. I'm not afraid now; but you know, as the curé used to tell us, in the days when there was a good God, 'Caution is the mother of safety.'"

"Yes, Patout, yes," said the young man, slipping a piece of silver into the stable boy's hand, "but be easy; the good God will return, and M. le Curé also."

"Oh, as for that," said the good man, "it is easy to see that there is no one left on high by the way things go. Will this last much longer, M. Charles?"

"Patout, I promise, in my honor, to do my best to be rid of all that annoys you. I am no less impatient than you; so I'll ask you not to go to bed, my good Patout."

"Ah! You know well, monsieur, that when you come I don't often go to bed. As for the horse – Goodness! You change them every day? The time before last it was a chestnut, the last time a dapple-gray, now a black one."

"Yes, I'm somewhat capricious by nature. As to the horse, as you say, my dear Patout, he wants nothing. You need only remove his bridle; leave him saddled. Oh, wait; put this pistol back in the holsters and take care of these other two for me." And the young man removed the two from his belt and handed them to the hostler.

"Well," exclaimed the latter, laughing, "any more barkers?"

"You know, Patout, they say the roads are unsafe."

"Ah! I should think they weren't safe! We're up to our necks in regular highway robberies, M. Charles. Why, no later than last week they stopped and robbed the diligence between Geneva and Bourg!"

"Indeed!" exclaimed Morgan; "and whom do they accuse of the robbery?"

"Oh, it's such a farce! Just fancy; they say it was the Companions of Jesus. I don't believe a word of it, of course. Who are the Companions of Jesus if not the twelve apostles?"

"Of course," said Morgan, with his eternally joyous smile, "I don't know of any others."

"Well!" continued Patout, "to accuse the twelve apostles of robbing a diligence, that's the limit. Oh! I tell you, M. Charles, we're living in times when nobody respects anything."

And shaking his head like a misanthrope, disgusted, if not with life, at least with men, Patout led the horse to the stable.

As for Morgan, he watched Patout till he saw him disappear down the courtyard and enter the dark stable; then, skirting the hedge which bordered the garden, he went toward a large clump of trees whose lofty tops were silhouetted against the darkness of the night, with the majesty of things immovable, the while their shadows fell upon a charming little country house known in the neighborhood as the Château des Noires-Fontaines. As Morgan reached the château wall, the hour chimed from the belfry of the village of Montagnac. The young man counted the strokes vibrating in the calm silent atmosphere of the autumn night. It was eleven o'clock. Many things, as we have seen, had happened during the last two hours.

Morgan advanced a few steps farther, examined the wall, apparently in search of a familiar spot, then, having found it, inserted the tip of his boot in a cleft between two stones. He sprang up like a man mounting a horse, seized the top of the wall with the left hand, and with a second spring seated himself astride the wall, from which, with the rapidity of lightning, he lowered himself on the other side. All this was done with such rapidity, such dexterity and agility, that any one chancing to pass at that instant would have thought himself the puppet of a vision. Morgan stopped, as on the other side of the wall, to listen, while his eyes tried to pierce the darkness made deeper by the foliage of poplars and aspens, and the heavy shadows of the little wood. All was silent and solitary. Morgan ventured on his path. We say ventured, because the young man, since nearing the Château des Noires-Fontaines, revealed in all his movement a timidity and hesitation so foreign to his character that it was evident that if he feared it was not for himself alone.

He gained the edge of the wood, still moving cautiously. Coming to a lawn, at the end of which was the little château, he paused. Then he examined the front of the house. Only one of the twelve windows which dotted the three floors was lighted. This was on the second floor at the corner of the house. A little balcony, covered with virgin vines which climbed the walls, twining themselves around the iron railing and falling thence in festoons from the window, overhung the garden. On both sides of the windows, close to the balcony, large-leaved trees met and formed above the cornice a bower of verdure. A Venetian blind, which was raised and lowered by cords, separated the balcony from the window, a separation which disappeared at will. It was through the interstices of this blind that Morgan had seen the light.

The young man's first impulse was to cross the lawn in a straight line; but again, the fears of which we spoke restrained him. A path shaded by lindens skirted the wall and led to the house. He turned aside and entered its dark leafy covert. When he had reached the end of the path, he crossed, like a frightened doe, the open space which led to the house wall, and stood for a moment in the deep shadow of the house. Then, when he had reached the spot he had calculated upon, he clapped his hands three times.

At this call a shadow darted from the end of the apartment and clung, lithe, graceful, almost transparent, to the window.

Morgan repeated the signal. The window was opened immediately, the blind was raised, and a ravishing young girl, in a night dress, her fair hair rippling over her shoulders, appeared in the frame of verdure.

The young man stretched out his arms to her, whose arms were stretched out to him, and two names, or rather two cries from the heart, crossed from one to the other.

“Charles!”

“Amélie!”

Then the young man sprang against the wall, caught at the vine shoots, the jagged edges of the rock, the jutting cornice, and in an instant was on the balcony.

What these two beautiful young beings said to each other was only a murmur of love lost in an endless kiss. Then, by gentle effort, the young man drew the girl with one hand to her chamber,

while with the other he loosened the cords of the blind, which fell noisily behind them. The window closed behind the blind. Then the lamp was extinguished, and the front of the Château des Noires-Fontaines was again in darkness.

This darkness had lasted for about a quarter of an hour, when the rolling of a carriage was heard along the road leading from the highway of Pont-d'Ain to the entrance of the château. There the sound ceased; it was evident that the carriage had stopped before the gates.

CHAPTER X. THE FAMILY OF ROLAND

The carriage which had stopped before the gate was that which brought Roland back to his family, accompanied by Sir John.

The family was so far from expecting him that, as we have said, all the lights in the house were extinguished, all the windows in darkness, even Amélie's. The postilion had cracked his whip smartly for the last five hundred yards, but the noise was insufficient to rouse these country people from their first sleep. When the carriage had stopped, Roland opened the door, sprang out without touching the steps, and tugged at the bell-handle. Five minutes elapsed, and, after each peal, Roland turned to the carriage, saying: "Don't be impatient, Sir John."

At last a window opened and a childish but firm voice cried out: "Who is ringing that way?"

"Ah, is that you, little Edouard?" said Roland. "Make haste and let us in."

The child leaped back with a shout of delight and disappeared. But at the same time his voice was heard in the corridors, crying: "Mother! wake up; it is Roland! Sister! wake up; it is the big brother!"

Then, clad only in his night robe and his little slippers, he ran down the steps, crying: "Don't be impatient, Roland; here I am."

An instant later the key grated in the lock, and the bolts slipped back in their sockets. A white figure appeared in the portico, and flew rather than ran to the gate, which an instant later turned on its hinges and swung open. The child sprang upon Roland's neck and hung there.

"Ah, brother! Brother!" he exclaimed, embracing the young man, laughing and crying at the same time. "Ah, big brother Roland! How happy mother will be; and Amélie, too! Every body is well. I am the sickest – ah! except Michel, the gardener, you know, who has sprained his leg. But why aren't you in uniform? Oh! how ugly you are in citizen's clothes! Have you just come from Egypt? Did you bring me the silver-mounted pistols and the beautiful curved sword? No? Then you are not nice, and I won't kiss you any more. Oh, no, no! Don't be afraid! I love you just the same!"

And the boy smothered the big brother with kisses while he showered questions upon him. The Englishman, still seated in the carriage, looked smilingly through the window at the scene.

In the midst of these fraternal embraces came the voice of a woman; the voice of the mother.

"Where is he, my Roland, my darling son?" asked Madame de Montrevel, in a voice fraught with such violent, joyous emotion that it was almost painful. "Where is he? Can it be true that he has returned; really true that he is not a prisoner, not dead? Is he really living?"

The child, at her voice, slipped from his brother's arms like an eel, dropped upon his feet on the grass, and, as if moved by a spring, bounded toward his mother.

"This way, mother; this way!" said he, dragging his mother, half dressed as she was, toward Roland. When he saw his mother Roland could no longer contain himself. He felt the sort of icicle that had petrified his breast melt, and his heart beat like that of his fellowmen.

"Ah!" he exclaimed, "I was indeed ungrateful to God when life still holds such joys for me."

And he fell sobbing upon Madame de Montrevel's neck without thinking of Sir John, who felt his English phlegm disperse as he silently wiped away the tears that flowed down his cheeks and moistened his lips. The child, the mother, and Roland formed an adorable group of tenderness and emotion.

Suddenly little Edouard, like a leaf tossed about by the wind, flew from the group, exclaiming: "Sister Amélie! Why, where is she?" and he rushed toward the house, repeating: "Sister Amélie, wake up! Get up! Hurry up!"

And then the child could be heard kicking and rapping against a door. Silence followed. Then little Edouard shouted: "Help, mother! Help, brother Roland! Sister Amélie is ill!"

Madame de Montrevel and her son flew toward the house. Sir John, consummate tourist that he was, always carried a lancet and a smelling bottle in his pocket. He jumped from the carriage and, obeying his first impulse, hurried up the portico. There he paused, reflecting that he had not been introduced, an all-important formality for an Englishman.

However, the fainting girl whom he sought came toward him at that moment. The noise her brother had made at the door brought Amélie to the landing; but, without doubt, the excitement which Roland's return had occasioned was too much for her, for after descending a few steps in an almost automatic manner, controlling herself by a violent effort, she gave a sigh, and, like a flower that bends, a branch that droops, like a scarf that floats, she fell, or rather lay, upon the stairs. It was at that moment that the child cried out.

But at his exclamation Amélie recovered, if not her strength, at least her will. She rose, and, stammering, "Be quiet, Edouard! Be quite, in Heaven's name! I'm all right," she clung to the balustrade with one hand, and leaning with the other on the child, she had continued to descend. On the last step she met her mother and her brother. Then with a violent, almost despairing movement, she threw both arms around Roland's neck, exclaiming: "My brother! My brother!"

Roland, feeling the young girl's weight press heavily upon his shoulder, exclaimed: "Air! Air! She is fainting!" and carried her out upon the portico. It was this new group, so different from the first, which met Sir John's eyes.

As soon as she felt the fresh air, Amélie revived and raised her head. Just then the moon, in all her splendor, shook off a cloud which had veiled her, and lighted Amélie's face, as pale as her own. Sir John gave a cry of admiration. Never had he seen a marble statue so perfect as this living marble before his eyes.

We must say that Amélie, seen thus, was marvelously beautiful. Clad in a long cambric robe, which defined the outlines of her body, molded on that of the Polyhymnia of antiquity, her pale face gently inclined upon her brother's shoulder, her long golden hair floating around her snowy shoulders, her arm thrown around her mother's neck, its rose-tinted alabaster hand drooping upon the red shawl in which Madame de Montrevel had wrapped herself; such was Roland's sister as she appeared to Sir John.

At the Englishman's cry of admiration, Roland remembered that he was there, and Madame de Montrevel perceived his presence. As for the child, surprised to see this stranger in his mother's home, he ran hastily down the steps of the portico, stopping on the third one, not that he feared to go further, but in order to be on a level with the person he proceeded to question.

"Who are you, sir!" he asked Sir John; "and what are you doing here?"

"My little Edouard," said Sir John, "I am your brother's friend, and I have brought you the silver-mounted pistols and the Damascus blade which he promised you."

"Where are they?" asked the child.

"Ah!" said Sir John, "they are in England, and it will take some time to send for them. But your big brother will answer for me that I am a man of my word."

"Yes, Edouard, yes," said Roland. "If Sir John promises them to you, you will get them." Then turning to Madame de Montrevel and his sister, "Excuse me, my mother; excuse me, Amélie; or rather, excuse yourselves as best you can to Sir John, for you have made me abominably ungrateful." Then grasping Sir John's hand, he continued: "Mother, Sir John took occasion the first time he saw me to render me an inestimable service. I know that you never forget such things. I trust, therefore, that you will always remember that Sir John is one of our best friends; and he will give you the proof of it by saying with me that he has consented to be bored for a couple of weeks with us."

"Madame," said Sir John, "permit me, on the contrary, not to repeat my friend Roland's words. I could wish to spend, not a fortnight, nor three weeks, but a whole lifetime with you."

Madame de Montrevel came down the steps of the portico and offered her hand to Sir John, who kissed it with a gallantry altogether French.

“My lord,” said she, “this house is yours. The day you entered it has been one of joy, the day you leave will be one of regret and sadness.”

Sir John turned toward Amélie, who, confused by the disorder of her dress before this stranger, was gathering the folds of her wrapper about her neck.

“I speak to you in my name and in my daughter’s, who is still too much overcome by her brother’s unexpected return to greet you herself as she will do in a moment,” continued Madame de Montrevel, coming to Amélie’s relief.

“My sister,” said Roland, “will permit my friend Sir John to kiss her hand, and he will, I am sure, accept that form of welcome.”

Amélie stammered a few words, slowly lifted her arm, and held out her hand to Sir John with a smile that was almost painful.

The Englishman took it, but, feeling how icy and trembling it was, instead of carrying it to his lips he said: “Roland, your sister is seriously indisposed. Let us think only of her health this evening. I am something of a doctor, and if she will deign to permit me the favor of feeling her pulse I shall be grateful.”

But Amélie, as if she feared that the cause of her weakness might be surmised, withdrew her hand hastily, exclaiming: “Oh, no! Sir John is mistaken. Joy never causes illness. It is only joy at seeing my brother again which caused this slight indisposition, and it has already passed over.” Then turning to Madame de Montrevel, she added with almost feverish haste: “Mother, we are forgetting that these gentlemen have made a long voyage, and have probably eaten nothing since Lyons. If Roland has his usual good appetite he will not object to my leaving you to do the honors of the house, while I attend to the unpoetical but much appreciated details of the housekeeping.”

Leaving her mother, as she said, to do the honors of the house, Amélie went to waken the maids and the manservant, leaving on the mind of Sir John that sort of fairy-like impression which the tourist on the Rhine brings with him of the Lorelei on her rock, a lyre in her hand, the liquid gold of her hair floating in the evening breezes.

In the meantime, Morgan had remounted his horse, returning at full gallop to the Chartreuse. He drew rein before the portal, pulled out a note-book, and pencilling a few lines on one of the leaves, rolled it up and slipped it through the keyhole without taking time to dismount.

Then pressing in both his spurs, and bending low over the mane of the noble animal, he disappeared in the forest, rapid and mysterious as Faust on his way to the mountain of the witches’ sabbath. The three lines he had written were as follows:

“Louis de Montrevel, General Bonaparte’s aide-de-camp, arrived this evening at the Château des Noires-Fontaines. Be careful, Companions of Jehu!”

But, while warning his comrades to be cautious about Louis de Montrevel, Morgan had drawn a cross above his name, which signified that no matter what happened the body of the young officer must be considered as sacred by them.

The Companions of Jehu had the right to protect a friend in that way without being obliged to explain the motives which actuated them. Morgan used that privilege to protect the brother of his love.

CHAPTER XI. CHÂTEAU DES NOIRES-FONTAINES

The Château of Noires-Fontaines, whither we have just conducted two of the principal characters of our story, stood in one of the most charming spots of the valley, where the city of Bourg is built. The park, of five or six acres, covered with venerable oaks, was inclosed on three sides by freestone walls, one of which opened in front through a handsome gate of wrought-iron, fashioned in the style of Louis XV.; the fourth side was bounded by the little river called the Reissouse, a pretty stream that takes its rise at Journaud, among the foothills of the Jura, and flowing gently from south to north, joins the Saône at the bridge of Fleurville, opposite Pont-de-Vaux, the birthplace of Joubert, who, a month before the period of which we are writing, was killed at the fatal battle of Novi.

Beyond the Reissouse, and along its banks, lay, to the right and left of the Château des Noires-Fontaines, the village of Montagnac and Saint-Just, dominated further on by that of Ceyzeriat. Behind this latter hamlet stretched the graceful outlines of the hills of the Jura, above the summits of which could be distinguished the blue crests of the mountains of Bugey, which seemed to be standing on tiptoe in order to peer curiously over their younger sisters' shoulder at what was passing in the valley of the Ain.

It was in full view of this ravishing landscape that Sir John awoke. For the first time in his life, perhaps, the morose and taciturn Englishman smiled at nature. He fancied himself in one of those beautiful valleys of Thessaly celebrated by Virgil, beside the sweet slopes of Lignon sung by Urfé, whose birthplace, in spite of what the biographers say, was falling into ruins not three miles from the Château des Noires-Fontaines. He was roused by three light raps at his door. It was Roland who came to see how he had passed the night. He found him radiant as the sun playing among the already yellow leaves of the chestnuts and the lindens.

"Oh! oh! Sir John," cried Roland, "permit me to congratulate you. I expected to find you as gloomy as the poor monks of the Chartreuse, with their long white robes, who used to frighten me so much in my childhood; though, to tell the truth, I was never easily frightened. Instead of that I find you in the midst of this dreary October, as smiling as a morn of May."

"My dear Roland," replied Sir John, "I am an orphan; I lost my mother at my birth and my father when I was twelve years old. At an age when children are usually sent to school, I was master of a fortune producing a million a year; but I was alone in the world, with no one whom I loved or who loved me. The tender joys of family life are completely unknown to me. From twelve to eighteen I went to Cambridge, but my taciturn and perhaps haughty character isolated me from my fellows. At eighteen I began to travel. You who scour the world under the shadow of your flag; that is to say, the shadow of your country, and are stirred by the thrill of battle, and the pride of glory, cannot imagine what a lamentable thing it is to roam through cities, provinces, nations, and kingdoms simply to visit a church here, a castle there; to rise at four in the morning at the summons of a pitiless guide, to see the sun rise from Rigi or Etna; to pass like a phantom, already dead, through the world of living shades called men; to know not where to rest; to know no land in which to take root, no arm on which to lean, no heart in which to pour your own! Well, last night, my dear Roland, suddenly, in an instant, in a second, this void in my life was filled. I lived in you; the joys I seek were yours. The family which I never had, I saw smiling around you. As I looked at your mother I said to myself: 'My mother was like that, I am sure.' Looking at your sister, I said: 'Had I a sister I could not have wished her otherwise.' When I embraced your brother, I thought that I, too, might have had a child of that age, and thus leave something behind me in the world, whereas with the nature I know I possess, I shall die as I have lived, sad, surly with others, a burden to myself. Ah! you are happy, Roland! you have a family, you have fame, you have youth, you have that which spoils nothing in a man – you have beauty. You want no joys. You are not deprived of a single delight. I repeat it, Roland, you are a happy man, most happy!"

“Good!” said Roland. “You forget my aneurism, my lord.”

Sir John looked at Roland incredulously. Roland seemed to enjoy the most perfect health.

“Your aneurism against my million, Roland,” said Lord Tanlay, with a feeling of profound sadness, “providing that with this aneurism you give me this mother who weeps for joy on seeing you again; this sister who faints with delight at your return; this child who clings upon your neck like some fresh young fruit to a sturdy young tree; this château with its dewy shade, its river with its verdant flowering banks, these blue vistas dotted with pretty villages and white-capped belfries graceful as swans. I would welcome your aneurism, Roland, and with death in two years, in one, in six months; but six months of stirring, tender, eventful and glorious life!”

Roland laughed in his usual nervous manner.

“Ah!” said he, “so this is the tourist, the superficial traveller, the Wandering Jew of civilization, who pauses nowhere, gauges nothing, judges everything by the sensation it produces in him. The tourist who, without opening the doors of these abodes where dwell the fools we call men, says: ‘Behind these walls is happiness!’ Well, my dear friend, you see this charming river, don’t you? These flowering meadows, these pretty villages? It is the picture of peace, innocence and fraternity; the cycle of Saturn, the golden age returned; it is Eden, Paradise! Well, all that is peopled by beings who have flown at each other’s throats. The jungles of Calcutta, the sedges of Bengal are inhabited by tigers and panthers not one whit more ferocious or cruel than the denizens of these pretty villages, these dewy lawns, and these charming shores. After lauding in funeral celebrations the good, the great, the immortal Marat, whose body, thank God! they cast into the common sewer like carrion that he was, and always had been; after performing these funeral rites, to which each man brought an urn into which he shed his tears, behold! our good Bressans, our gentle Bressans, these poultry-fatteners, suddenly decided that the Republicans were all murderers. So they murdered them by the tumbrelful to correct them of that vile defect common to savage and civilized man – the killing his kind. You doubt it? My dear fellow, on the road to Lons-le-Saulnier they will show you, if you are curious, the spot where not six months ago they organized a slaughter fit to turn the stomach of our most ferocious troopers on the battlefield. Picture to yourself a tumbrel of prisoners on their way to Lons-le-Saulnier. It was a staff-sided cart, one of those immense wagons in which they take cattle to market. There were some thirty men in this tumbrel, whose sole crime was foolish exaltation of thought and threatening language. They were bound and gagged; heads hanging, jolted by the bumping of the cart; their throats parched with thirst, despair and terror; unfortunate beings who did not even have, as in the times of Nero and Commodus, the fight in the arena, the hand-to-hand struggle with death. Powerless, motionless, the lust of massacre surprised them in their fetters, and battered them not only in life but in death; their bodies, when their hearts had ceased to beat, still resounded beneath the bludgeons which mangled their flesh and crushed their bones; while women looked on in calm delight, lifting high the children, who clapped their hands for joy. Old men who ought to have been preparing for a Christian death helped, by their goading cries, to render the death of these wretched beings more wretched still. And in the midst of these old men, a little septuagenarian, dainty, powdered, flicking his lace shirt frill if a speck of dust settled there, pinching his Spanish tobacco from a golden snuff-box, with a diamond monogram, eating his “amber sugarplums” from a Sevres bonbonnière, given him by Madame du Barry, and adorned with the donor’s portrait – this septuagenarian – conceive the picture, my dear Sir John – dancing with his pumps upon that mattress of human flesh, wearying his arm, enfeebled by age, in striking repeatedly with his gold-headed cane those of the bodies who seemed not dead enough to him, not properly mangled in that cursed mortar! Faugh! My friend, I have seen Montebello, I have seen Arcole, I have seen Rivoli, I have seen the Pyramids, and I believe I could see nothing more terrible. Well, my mother’s mere recital, last night, after you had retired, of what has happened here, made my hair stand on end. Faith! that explains my poor sister’s spasms just as my aneurism explains mine.”

Sir John watched Roland, and listened with that strange wonderment which his young friend's misanthropical outbursts always aroused. Roland seemed to lurk in the niches of a conversation in order to fall upon mankind whenever he found an opportunity. Perceiving the impression he had made on Sir John's mind, he changed his tone, substituting bitter raillery for his philanthropic wrath.

"It is true," said he, "that, apart from this excellent aristocrat who finished what the butchers had begun, and dyed in blood the red heels of his pumps, the people who performed these massacres belonged to the lower classes, bourgeois and clowns, as our ancestors called those who supported them. The nobles manage things much more daintily. For the rest, you saw yourself what happened at Avignon. If you had been told that, you would never have believed it, would you? Those gentlemen pillagers of stage coaches pique themselves on their great delicacy. They have two faces, not counting their mask. Sometimes they are Cartouche and Mandrin, sometimes Amadis and Galahad. They tell fabulous tales of these heroes of the highways. My mother told me yesterday of one called Laurent. You understand, my dear fellow, that Laurent is a fictitious name meant to hide the real name, just as a mask hides the face. This Laurent combined all the qualities of a hero of romance, all the accomplishments, as you English say, who, under pretext that you were once Normans, allow yourselves occasionally to enrich your language with a picturesque expression, or some word which has long, poor beggar! asked and been refused admittance of our own scholars. This Laurent was ideally handsome. He was one of seventy-two Companions of Jehu who have lately been tried at Yssen-geaux. Seventy were acquitted; he and one other were the only ones condemned to death. The innocent men were released at once, but Laurent and his companion were put in prison to await the guillotine. But, pooh! Master Laurent had too pretty a head to fall under the executioner's ignoble knife. The judges who condemned him, the curious who expected to witness him executed, had forgotten what Montaigne calls the corporeal recommendation of beauty. There was a woman belonging to the jailer of Yssen-geaux, his daughter, sister or niece; history – for it is history and not romance that I am telling you – history does not say which. At all events the woman, whoever she was, fell in love with the handsome prisoner, so much in love that two hours before the execution, just as Master Laurent, expecting the executioner, was sleeping, or pretending to sleep, as usually happens in such cases, his guardian angel came to him. I don't know how they managed; for the two lovers, for the best of reasons, never told the details; but the truth is – now remember; Sir John, that this is truth and not fiction – that Laurent was free, but, to his great regret, unable to save his comrade in the adjoining dungeon. Gensonné, under like circumstances, refused to escape, preferring to die with the other Girondins; but Gensonné did not have the head of Antinous on the body of Apollo. The handsomer the head, you understand, the more one holds on to it. So Laurent accepted the freedom offered him and escaped; a horse was waiting for him at the next village. The young girl, who might have retarded or hindered his flight, was to rejoin him the next day. Dawn came, but not the guardian angel. It seems that our hero cared more for his mistress than he did for his companion; he left his comrade, but he would not go without her. It was six o'clock, the very hour for his execution. His impatience mastered him. Three times had he turned his horse's head toward the town, and each time drew nearer and nearer. At the third time a thought flashed through his brain. Could his mistress have been taken, and would she pay the penalty for saving him? He was then in the suburbs. Spurring his horse, he entered the town with face uncovered, dashed through people who called him by name, astonished to see him free and on horseback, when they expected to see him bound and in a tumbrel on his way to be executed. Catching sight of his guardian angel pushing through the crowd, not to see him executed, but to meet him, he urged his horse past the executioner, who had just learned of the disappearance of one of his patients, knocking over two or three bumpkins with the breast of his Bayard. He bounded toward her, swung her over the pommel of his saddle, and, with a cry of joy and a wave of his hat, he disappeared like M. de Condé at the battle of Lens. The people all applauded, and the women thought the action heroic, and all promptly fell in love with the hero on the spot."

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