

UNIVERSITY OF ST. MICHAEL'S COLLEGE



3 1761 05021137 4





Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2007 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation

H. Dobson.
Dec. 1909.

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH
REVOLUTION

VOL. I



BY THE SAME AUTHOR

Uniform with this Volume

Price 10s. net

THE LAST DAYS OF
MARIE ANTOINETTE

“Although this collection of narratives and official documents is not, as M. Lenotre says, ‘a new book about Marie Antoinette,’ it is something much better than what is often palmed off upon the public under that designation. To the great body of readers its contents will be fresh; and to specialists in revolutionary history it is a boon to have in convenient form, adequately introduced and carefully annotated, authentic documents which are not easily to be seen in the original.”—*Athenaeum*.

“The book should find its way to every library of any pretensions to an historical character.”—*The Outlook*.

“Very full, accurate, and intelligent.”—*Morning Post*.

“M. Lenotre is the chief living authority, we suppose, on the history of the Terror. His study of the documents of the time is proved beyond question to be absolutely exact and thorough. We may accept as literal truth the heartrending story of these months, which can have no effect but to deepen reverence for a Princess so noble in adversity.”—*Spectator*.

“The straightforward vividness is intensified by the lack of premeditation or artifice in the narrative.”—*Daily Telegraph*.

LONDON: WILLIAM HEINEMANN



LUCILE DESMOULINS.

(From a portrait by BOILLY in the Musée Carnavalet, Paris.)

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

FROM THE FRENCH OF

G. LENOTRE

AUTHOR OF "THE LAST DAYS OF MARIE ANTOINETTE," ETC.

BY

FREDERIC LEES

With many Illustrations

VOL. I



LONDON

WILLIAM HEINEMANN

1908



Copyright, London, 1908, by William Heinemann.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
THE LOVE STORY OF CAMILLE DESMOULINS.	1
MADemoisELLE DE ROBESPIERRE	26
TWO DETECTIVES—	
I. HÉRON	39
II. FIGARO'S LAST INCARNATION	47
SAVALETTE DE LANGES—	
I. THE UNKNOWN ONE	57
II. THE MAN-WOMAN	71
THE LAST DAYS OF ANDRÉ CHÉNIER	82
CAGLIOSTRO'S HOUSE	101
TWO STAGES IN NAPOLEON'S CAREER—	
I. THE HOTEL DE CHERBOURG	108
II. JOSEPHINE'S MARRIAGE	113
CHIEFLY ABOUT MADAME DU BARRY—	
I. MONSIEUR DU BARRY	120
II. ZAMOR'S END	134
TALLIEN IN HIS OLD AGE	139
AN UNKNOWN LATUDE	150
PAPA PACHE	158
COUTHON'S BATH-CHAIR	169
LEBLANC	181
SAINT-JUST AT BLÉRANCOURT	195
M. LE COMTE DE FOLMON	206

CONTENTS

	PAGE
MADAME SIMON	220
BAPTISTE	253
BARON GÉRAMB	266
A PRECIOUS TRIO : GREIVE, BLACHE, AND ROTONDO—	
I. GREIVE	283
II. BLACHE	299
III. ROTONDI-ROTONDO : PROFESSOR OF LANGUAGES	304
THE ABBÉ DE CAJAMAÑO	319
THE PROTOTYPE OF CÉSAR BIROTTEAU	333
COLONEL VIRIOT	346

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

	PAGE
LUCILE DESMOULINS (From a portrait by Boilly in the Musée Carnavalet, Paris)	<i>Frontispiece</i>
CAMILLE DESMOULINS SPEAKING OUTSIDE THE PALAIS ROYAL	<i>To face</i> 8
CHARLOTTE DE ROBESPIERRE (From a portrait by Isabey in the collection of M. Émile Morel, of Arras)	<i>To face</i> 26
Facsimile of the invitation issued on Augst 1, 1834, on the occasion of the death of Mademoiselle de Robespierre	38
PICHEGRU	<i>To face</i> 54
MLE. SAVALETTE DE LANGES (From a portrait made at Versailles in 1858)	<i>To face</i> 58
ANDRÉ CHENIER	<i>To face</i> 84
THE COMTESSE DE CAGLIOSTRO	<i>To face</i> 102
CAGLIOSTRO	<i>To face</i> 106
JOSEPHINE BONAPARTE	<i>To face</i> 114
THE TAKING OF THE BASTILLE	<i>To face</i> 136
TALLIEN	<i>To face</i> 140
J. M. ROLAND	<i>To face</i> 158
COUTHON'S BATH CHAIR (In the Musée Carnavalet, Paris)	<i>To face</i> 170
GEORGES COUTHON	<i>To face</i> 178
MONSIEUR DE SAINT-JUST, PÈRE (From a portrait in the possession of the family of the former member of the Convention)	<i>To face</i> 196
SIMON AND HIS WIFE (From a picture by BOILLY)	<i>To face</i> 220

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

	PAGE
SIMON (From a sketch by Gabriel in the Musée Carnavalet, . . . Paris)	238
BAPTISTE (From an engraving in the Cabinet des Estampes at the Bibliothèque Nationale) <i>To face</i>	254
GENERAL FERDINAND, BARON DE GÉRAME <i>To face</i>	266
REV. PÈRE DE GÉRAMB. PROCUREUR GÉNÉRAL OF THE ORDER OF TRAPPISTS <i>To face</i>	280
MADAME DU BARRY (From a coloured print by Dagoty) <i>To face</i>	286
MALET <i>To face</i>	320
THE IMPASSE VILLEHARDOUIN, FORMERLY THE CUL-DE-SAC SAINT-PIERRE <i>To face</i>	328

INTRODUCTION

FEW readers of French historical works will have failed to observe the marked change which has taken place during the last half-century in the outlook and methods of French historians. History has come under the influences which have dethroned romanticism from every branch of French literature, and has become objective, that is to say, impersonal and scientific. The *rôle* of the modern writer of history is less ambitious than was that of an historian of the old school. He sets out with none of those preconceived ideas—ethnological, philosophical, or political—which have so often detracted from the value of historical works, but is content to record facts with scrupulous accuracy and to explain their significance with the utmost impartiality. Leaving nothing to the imagination, he builds on a solid foundation of indisputable documentary evidence, every particle of which he has subjected to the most exacting criticism; and he conducts his researches with a thoroughness, with a concern for realistic detail hitherto unknown. Certain words of Stendhal admirably sum up the spirit in which the modern historian searches after historical truth: *Quant on veut savoir l'histoire, il faut avoir le courage de la regarder en face.*

In the following *Romances of the French Revolution* we have as good an example as could be found of the methods adopted by writers of this modern school of history. Like all the other works of M. G. Lenôtre, *Vieilles maisons, vieux papiers*, under which title these studies were originally published, show that earnest desire for the unadorned truth

INTRODUCTION

which, on more than one occasion, he has explicitly set forth as his ideal. "History, as it has too long been written," he says in one of his books, "is similar to stage scenery when seen from the body of a theatre. Everything is in perfect order, everything is logical and in its place, everything appears to be solid and real—provided you do not go behind the scenes, that is to say, provided you do not study the facts in the heaps of authentic documents stored in the record offices. For if you investigate you will discover that the building has only a front, and that it is kept upright only by the aid of cords and pegs." A typical case in point, on which he has a right to speak with special authority, since it comes within his own special branch of study, the French Revolution, is furnished by the manner in which historians, without an exception, have described the Temple Prison and related the captivity of the Royal family. These writers have taken such liberties with the pamphlets containing the only true version of those events, they have so altered and dramatised the facts, in order to make them fit in with the theses they had determined to uphold, that their accounts, compared with the original texts, are utterly unrecognisable. Commenting on this, M. Lenôtre writes: "We have too great a respect for the truth and we seek it with too sincere an independence to permit ourselves to mutilate the evidence of a witness and to choose in it what pleases us. Let us give facts! and facts only! Let us find out, first of all, how things happened. We will pass judgment upon them later on. The history of the Revolution is only at the inquiry stage." As regards accuracy, history has manifestly everything to gain by this rigid adherence to authentic sources of information. But there is another quality, though not so important a one as the other, which we look for in historical works: we expect to be interested, and the question arises as to whether history does not lose in interest by being stripped of embellishments. Such, at one time, was a prevalent opinion, if reliance can be placed on a passage in M. Anatole France's delightful novel *Le Crime de Sylvestre Bonnard*. Coccoz, the book-traveller, in pressing Bonnard to purchase a *History of the Tour de Nesle*, says: "It is an

INTRODUCTION

historical work—a real story.” “In that case,” replies M. France’s sympathetic hero, “it would be very wearisome to read, for historical works which do not lie are all exceedingly dull.” Never was there a more erroneous view, and we have but to read M. Lenôtre’s vivid pages to realise it. As we reach the end, we shall have no difficulty in saying, with their author: “What narrative, were it written by the most illustrious poet, can rival that of a person who is able to say: I was an eye-witness?”

Fascinating though living facts may be in themselves, it would be idle to deny that a good deal of the interest of these studies is due to the manner in which they are written, and had the materials of which they are formed been in the hands of a less skilled craftsman the result might easily have merited Sylvestre Bonnard’s judgment. For M. Lenôtre is a master in the art of graphic presentation; he arranges his facts (but without swerving a hair’s-breadth from his ideal) much in the same way as a writer of romance marshals imaginary personages and incidents; and his essays, in consequence, often out-distance the wildest flights of the imagination. At the same time he has the romanticist’s eye for the picturesque, coupled with his knowledge of what almost invariably awakens a reader’s attention. He is a worshipper of ancient papers, hidden away in family chests or in the musty office-archives of Parisian and provincial notaries, a worshipper of prisons whence famous people of revolutionary times were led away to the guillotine, or where they found protection from the scaffold, but especially a worshipper of old houses with curious and well-nigh forgotten histories. “Old buildings possess a kind of soul,” he says, “a soul composite of the happiness and suffering which people have experienced in them, and of all sorts of ever dead, yet living things. The most familiar details connected with them have a suggestive charm.” To such a lover of historic houses, Paris is a veritable paradise; for no city can boast of more, notwithstanding the making of so many fine new streets. Should an old building, unfortunately, have been pulled down, M. Lenôtre knows exactly where it stood, can describe its appearance, and the daily lives of the people who inhabited it; if it still exists, you may be

INTRODUCTION

certain he has visited every floor, every room, every nook and corner in his pious search for traces of the past. The thousand and one minute details which result from this patient study of old houses and ancient documents may, in themselves, seem trifling, but, regarded as a whole, they will be seen to serve a most useful purpose. In order to judge the actors in the French Revolution correctly, we must picture their environment, steep ourselves in their ideas, enter into the feverish movements which agitated their lives; and all these difficult tasks M. Lenôtre helps us to accomplish when he takes us into their homes, describes their habits and private affairs, and the houses where they lived. He has somewhere declared that he writes of these things only for those who take a trifling interest in history, but it would be doing him an injustice to take his modest confession literally. As a matter of fact, all serious students of the French Revolution, knowing that it is still far from being clearly understood in all its ramifications, read and inwardly digest his scholarly studies, which they know will have to be taken into account when the final history of the upheaval of '89 comes to be written.

Among the nine or ten historical works which M. Lenôtre has produced, these *Romances of the French Revolution* are given a foremost place by both special students and general readers. The reason is not far to seek. The varied incidents which they relate appeal to an inborn love of romance as well as to a respect for historic truth. How tragic, how thrilling, and how touching were the events which made up the daily lives of the men and women of the Revolution! And what a wonderful gallery of portraits these pages set before us! They relate the courtship and marriage of such widely different characters as Camille Desmoulins and Lucile Duplessis, Bonaparte and Joséphine, Antoine Simon and Marie Jeanne Aladame, the custodians of the Dauphin in the Temple; they describe the arrival in Paris of young Napoleon, with other military students, and his life as a half-starved officer in a furnished hotel, which still stands near the Central Markets, an officer with "smooth, hairless face, prematurely wrinkled, sad, dreamy, and meditative"; and they summarise, in a masterly manner, the strong evidence in support

INTRODUCTION

of the truth of Mme. Simon's confession that she assisted in smuggling her royal charge out of prison. One after another, the leading, secondary, and supernumerary actors in the great drama pass before us—sinister, ludicrous, or pathetic. Couthon, Robespierre's crippled confidential friend, dashes through the streets of Paris in his mechanical bath-chair; police-spy Héron beats up "game" for the guillotine; and Fouquier-Tinville, who sent so many people to the scaffold, himself passes through the hands of Sanson; Jacques de Tromelin, the Breton Royalist, cleverly acts his part as Commodore Sidney Smith's servant when the English admiral is imprisoned in the Abbaye and Temple Prisons; the English adventurer, George Greive, makes his appearance like a character of romance in the peaceful village of Louveciennes, and with the aid of his accomplices robs Mme. du Barry of her jewels; Baron Géramb, an adventurer of another type, tries to persuade the British Government to allow him to aid it in crushing Napoleon, and, after many vicissitudes, ends his remarkable career as Procurator-General of the Order of Trappists; and André Chenier, the great poet, whose genius remained hidden until so many years after his execution, pens his immortal verses in the Prison of Saint-Lazare. Women, too, are not lacking in M. Lenôtre's evocation of the past, and his sketches of La Montansier, the second Mme. Fouquier-Tinville, Mme. Hébert ("la mère Duchesne"), and Mlle. de Soyecourt, a brave Carmelite nun whose life was one long romance, are to be classed with his best work.

It is related of Michelet that his vocation as a historian was revealed to him by the narratives of an aunt and a visit to a museum. M. G. Lenôtre's interest in the French Revolution was awakened in a similar manner. His parents occupied, in the neighbourhood of Metz, an old *château* full of terrible souvenirs of '89, and his great-aunts used to tell him stories of those days. The impression which these left upon his mind impelled him, on leaving the Ministry of Finance, where he was employed with his father, the director of the staff, to devote part of his time as a journalist to a study of the history of the Revolution. He soon began to write on the subject himself, and a certain article on Varennes

INTRODUCTION

brought him into relations with M. Victorien Sardou and was the turning point in his career. Most of us know what an intimate knowledge of the Revolution the author of "Thermidor" possesses, and everyone who has been privileged to hear him discourse on Danton, Robespierre, or Marat has regretted that he has written so little about them. What he has not done himself, however, he has encouraged others to do, and, as M. Lenôtre acknowledges in one of his dedications, the dramatist assisted him with his knowledge and guided him in his researches. M. Sardou's fine library of revolutionary literature and his collection of autographs have often been drawn upon by the historian; M. Sardou has often been able, thanks to his clear recollection of conversations in bygone years with survivors of the Revolution, to throw light on knotty historical questions; and often have master and disciple searched together for information. Referring to these joint inquiries, M. Sardou says in the preface to one of his friend's books: "He who has no taste for such excursions cannot imagine their charm. . . . This hunt for documents . . . is really the most amusing sport, especially in company with such a searcher as Lenôtre, endowed as he is with a scent which ever puts him on the right track."

Encouraged and assisted in this way, M. Lenôtre set to work and produced his first book of history, *Paris Révolutionnaire*, a volume of studies after the fashion of those here translated. This was followed in 1893 by *La Guillotine pendant la Révolution*, based on unpublished documents in the French State Archives. *Le vrai Chevalier de Maison-Rouge, A. D. J. Gonzze de Rougeville, 1761-1814*, which is the true history of the hero of Alexandre Dumas' *Chevalier de Maison-Rouge*, was published a year later. In 1896 appeared his first important work, based, like the preceding volumes, on unpublished documents: *Une conspiration royaliste pendant la Terreur: Le Baron de Batz, 1792-1795*. A collection of original manuscripts and narratives bearing on the captivity and death of Marie Antoinette followed in 1897, and two years later his second important book was published: *Un agent des princes pendant la Révolution: Le Marquis de la Rouërie et la conjuration bretonne, 1790-1793*. Until M.

INTRODUCTION

Lenôte began to study the life of this great Breton conspirator, historians, including Louis Blanc and Michelet, had dismissed him as unworthy of serious attention. A third volume devoted to a single character appeared in 1901, under the title *La Chouannerie normande au temps de l'Empire, Tournebut, 1804-1809*, and is by many regarded as the best extended study he has written. His latest historical works include these *Romances of the French Revolution*, written from time to time during the last five years, and a detailed account of the flight of Louis XVI. and his family to Varennes, which originally appeared in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*.

One would hardly have thought it possible, in view of the great literary activity shown by this record of work, that M. Lenôte could have found time of recent years for imaginative work. Yet he has somehow managed to do so. In 1898 "Colinette," a four-act play written in collaboration with M. Gabriel Martin, was played at the Odéon Theatre; and since then Madame Sarah Bernhardt produced the admirable play entitled "Varennes," which he wrote with M. Henri Lavedan.

FREDERIC LEES.

Paris, 1908.

THE LOVE STORY OF CAMILLE DESMOULINS

I

A CONFUSION of slate roofs, smoking chimneys, little gardens, and aloft the sturdy tower of the old castle, surmounted by a pointed roof—there you have Guise.

During some fifty years the little town has become industrial; it possesses foundries, spinning-mills, blast furnaces, and refineries. But this transformation does not deceive one. Guise has remained the type of those small and honest provincial towns where, formerly, life glided calmly along; those peaceful and charming spots which were on the road to no particular place, and where people lived that inexpensive country life which is so universal and so easy. Despite its utilitarianism, the town has retained the tranquil aspect of that happy period. Numbers of the private residences of the last century are still to be found there, recognisable by their stately appearance, their wrought-iron balconies, and those long windows which give buildings I cannot say how inviting and good-mannerly an air.

At the beginning of the reign of Louis XVI. there lived in one of these houses a certain lieutenant-general of police, civil and criminal, for the bailiwick of Vermandois. Descended from an honest family of citizens who, from father to son, had gained a small competency and much respect, he served his king unostentatiously. The future of this honest magistrate had but a limited though, in his eyes, sufficiently extensive horizon; for, serenely unambitious, his only object was to carry out his honourable duties conscientiously, to bring up his children to reverence the traditions of old France and pious

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

family souvenirs, and to prepare them for a life as calm and pleasant as his own. About the end of 1758 he had married a young lady of Wiège, some five miles from Guise, who brought him a small dowry. On March 2nd, 1760, a son, who was baptized Lucie Simplicie Camille Benoist, was born. Two other sons¹ and two daughters further increased the family and its expenses. So, in order to lighten a little the household budget, the father solicited and obtained a scholarship at the College of Louis-le-Grand for his eldest son; and one October morning the Noyon stage-coach took up the trifling luggage of the child whose destination was Paris.² . . . The boy's name was Camille Desmoulins.

Since the suppression of the Order of Jesuits, a singular modification had taken place at Louis-le-Grand in the spirit of its studies. Under their management, the Greek and Latin classics were held up as models only from a purely æsthetic point of view, as shown in expression and form. Moreover, the importance attached in education to veneration

¹ Extract from a letter from M. Desmoulins senior to Camille (1792): "You ask, my son, for the name of your brother Du Bucquoy, as well as for that of Sémery (Camille's other brother). The former is called Armand Jean Louis Domitille, who was born on May 5th, 1765. For the past seven years he has served in the late royal Rousillon cavalry regiment, or the 11th Regiment of the Army of the Midi, and which I believe is either in the interior at Saumar or at Saint-Jean-d'Angély, for I have had no news of him for the last twelve months. The latter is named Lazare Nicolas Norbert Félicité, born on June 6th, 1769, and for the past two years in the 10th Battalion of Chasseurs, late Gevaudan, with the Army of the North, in which he shows much zeal. He tells me in his last letter that he is a forlorn sentinel in a wood, and congratulates you on the birth of a son. 'As for me,' he says, 'I also am married. My wife is a musket, and I take greater care of her than of myself.'" (Published by the *Journal de Vervins*, 1884.)

Desmoulins Du Bucquoy (so surnamed after a fief in the commune of Aubigny) was killed in the Vendée in 1793. Desmoulins Sémery (Sémery was the name of a small fief, on the territory of Puiseux, belonging to M. Desmoulins) was taken prisoner at the siege of Maestricht. His family, hearing nothing more of him, thought he was killed. He was still living in 1807.

Camille's two sisters were named: one, Marie Emilie Toussaint Desmoulins, who was born in 1763—she became Mme. Morcy on her first and Mme. Lagrange on her second marriage, and was still living in 1837—the other, Anne Clotilde Pélagie Marie Desmoulins, born in 1767, who married a M. Lemoine.

² Camille had previously spent a few months in a religious boarding school at Cateau-Cambrésis, where he had as a schoolfellow Marie Joseph Benoit Godard, son of Godard Briseux, brother of Mme. Desmoulins.

LOVE STORY OF CAMILLE DESMOULINS

of Catholic tradition cooled the enthusiasm which daily intercourse with the heroes of antiquity might arouse in young minds. On succeeding to the celebrated society in the government of the college, the University did not know how to avoid the pitfall. Sparta and Rome, too exclusively extolled, took precedence of France in the pupil's affection. Camille has himself written: "We were educated in the ardour of the republic to live in the abjection of the monarchy and under the reign of the Claudiuses and the Vitelliuses! Insensate Government! to imagine that we could become enthusiastic over the Fathers of the Fatherland and of the Capitol without regarding with horror the men-eaters of Versailles, and admire the past without considering the present."

Shall we ever be able to reveal the share of responsibility, in the psychology of the men of the Revolution, which was due to this inconsiderate admiration of antiquity? It is not Louis XVI. but Tarquin whom these legislators, nourished on Titus Livius and Tacitus, will judge. They will imagine they are imitating the cruel virtues of Brutus and Cato; human life will count for nought in the eyes of these classics accustomed to Pagan hecatombs; Charlotte Corday herself will make use of the name of Cinna, and rest assured that when Javogue, the member of the Convention, walks naked through the streets of Feurs he will naïvely regard himself as an ancient.

It was therefore a young Roman¹ whom the Noyon stage-coach in the holidays set down before M. Desmoulins' door. Camille amply profited by his first year's studies: he spoke much about Cicero, was moved to pity at the death of the Gracchi, and cursed the memory of the tyrant of Syracuse. A flattering result in the eyes of a father who was anxious for the scholastic success of his son! Nevertheless, this idolatry jarred somewhat on the inhabitants of Guise.

The year following, the collegian's fervour had only increased. He had received as a prize Vertot's "Révolutions romaines," and he saturated himself with its contents, pro-

¹ "Did you guess that I should be a *Roman* when you baptized me Lucius Sulpicius Camillus, and did you prophesy?" (Letter from Camille to his father, December 2nd, 1789.)

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

claiming on high the benefits of liberty, denouncing despotism, catechising his brothers and sisters, creating such a disturbance in his father's house that one day the Prince de Condé, who came to talk over business matters, seized the lad by an ear and put him out into the street.

M. Desmoulin was astonished at these outbursts of enthusiasm, and began to think that classical studies had undoubtedly some drawbacks.

"Pooh!" he exclaimed philosophically. "He will get over that."

But Camille did not get over his passion. From year to year the young man returned home more smitten than ever with Athens and Sparta, and looked upon Guise as infinitely inferior to these model cities. With the customary disdain of the Parisian for the provinces, he ridiculed the simple manners of the people of Guise, and affected to startle them by a noisy freedom of manner and negligence in dress. Nay, on one occasion, invited by one of his father's friends who was giving a banquet to distinguished persons of the district, he became so animated in the course of the meal that, his eyes ablaze and trembling with anger, he sprang on to the table, shattering the china and glass, and from this improvised platform vociferated an ardent appeal to arms, inciting his dumfounded listeners to revolt.

Such scenes made his residence in Guise impossible. Moreover, he felt cramped under the paternal roof, in this ancient dwelling with damp, green walls, which retained, in its cracks and mouldiness, a certain air of grim pride.

This house still exists. Its façade skirting the street has been partly rebuilt; but on the side of the narrow strip of garden nothing is changed: there are the same walls, the same roof as of old, so steep that there is room for three rows of dormer windows; there is the same silence, the same air of composure, favourable to the monotonous and upright life of honest citizens engrossed in regular and daily toil. And the impression is so intense that, in recalling the exuberance of the fiery youth who lived there, this tranquil residence seems like the deserted cage of some fierce lionet, seized with a desire for the arena.

LOVE STORY OF CAMILLE DESMOULINS

The arena was Paris—Paris which he loved already and wished to conquer. When once he had obtained his diploma as an advocate, he entered his name at the Parliament and launched out into the struggle for life. The fight was fierce, so fierce that Camille, in after years, never allowed himself to betray any disclosure relating to the vicissitudes of those years of apprenticeship, and one is reduced, in reconstituting the facts of his early career, to glean a few slender items of information from his letters, which were found at his father's house. His biographers are silent on the subject of the period dating from 1784,¹ when he entered his name at the bar, to 1789, the time at which the hazard of politics turned him into a journalist; not even one of them has been able to record whether Camille lived regularly in Guise or in Paris.

This silence on the part of the biographers is a source of considerable embarrassment to us—we who are attempting to write the revolutionary chronicle based on a study of the surroundings in which men played their parts and the topography of the places where incidents occur—inasmuch as personal research has not resulted in our discovering where Camille resided in Paris during this period of his life. Nevertheless, even this mystery seems to us a valuable indication of the sort of life which he led prior to 1789.

First of all, it is an established fact, at which nobody will be astonished, that he pleaded little. Destitute of acquaintances, unprepossessing in appearance, affected by a difficulty of speech which caused him to stutter and preface all his phrases with oratorically displeasing “Ahems!” he was doomed to remain among the anonymous crowd of briefless barristers.²

¹ As regards this period of Camille's life, here is the information given by the *Journal de Vervins*, which published in 1884 a series of very interesting articles, most probably written by M. Matton, who, with his brother, inherited the papers of Mlle. Duplessis, who died at Vervins in 1863: “Camille, on September 4th, 1784, obtained his bachelor's diploma; on March 3rd, 1785, that of a licentiate; on the 7th of the same month he was received as an advocate at the Parliament of Paris; and, on the introduction of M. Hardouin, obtained permission at the assembly of the following 4th of June to keep his terms. MM. Perdry, de Denisard, Perrin, and Forget gave him a few cases; but he principally drew up petitions for the procurators at *threepence halfpenny each*.”

² We have, however, information as to two cases pleaded by Camille: first, the Society of the Friends of the Constitution of Marseilles, defendant,

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

On the other hand, his father, burdened with a family and, it seems, disapproving of the spirit of independence which impelled his son to live idly in Paris, sent him little money. It has been concluded from this that Camille, in order not to die of hunger, was reduced to copying petitions for procurators—the traditional occupation of all bachelors who have no other. When copying was unproductive and the young man, at the end of his resources, knew neither at what door to knock nor by what expedient to live, he doubtless bent his steps towards Guise where, under the familiar roof, he would find, at least, board and lodging. Then, after a few weeks, a little refreshed, weary of his father's exhortations, fitted out afresh by his good mother, he returned to the road to Paris. Such, at any rate, is the indication which it is permissible to deduce from his letters. For instance, in describing to his father the opening ceremony of the States-General, he writes: "*Even if I had come to Paris merely to see this procession, I should not have regretted the pilgrimage.*" The fête, therefore, coincided with the conclusion of one of his flights to his native place. A little later, he shows a determination "to abandon Guise definitely"—a proof that his sojourns in Paris were not yet regarded by his family as a definite arrangement.

When there, where did he lodge? The point is a difficult one to elucidate. One of his biographers says: "At the Hôtel de Pologne, opposite the Hôtel de Nivernais." Be it so. But the old almanacks of Paris mention three Hôtels de Pologne, situated in the Rue de l'Hirondelle, the Rue Saint-André-des-Arcs, the Rue des Orties-du-Louvre, and a single Hôtel de Nivernais in the Rue Saint-Jacques. The indication, therefore, is not very conclusive; and, if we are to lodge Camille at the Pologne, it is in the hotel in the Rue Saint-André-des-Arcs that we should choose a room for him. There, at all events, he would be near the house of a wealthy citizen, M. Duplessis; a proximity which would explain how it was he could see from his garret window into the comfort-

v. André, plaintiff, for slander (December, 1791); second, Dithurbide and a woman, named Beffroi, v. the Public Prosecutor, for a breach of the laws against gambling, heard before the Correctional Police Tribunal.

LOVE STORY OF CAMILLE DESMOULINS

able apartment in which a fair and amiable child of thirteen laughed and played.¹

Every fine day he saw her set out for the Luxembourg garden and instinctively followed her in the distance. This picture of innocence was like a ray of sunshine across the gloomy path of this bohemian and sceptic, this man without aim in life, without hope of better days, who was already old though only twenty-five years of age, who felt that he was ill-favoured, knew that he was poor, threadbare, and needy, who had amassed at college a formidable amount of useless knowledge and yet was acquainted with no calling which would assure him his daily bread.

He watched little Lucile running with her sister in the green alleys of the Luxembourg, their mother looking on and smiling. Camille mused. He dreamed of that calm happiness which he would never know, and of those tranquil joys which were forbidden to him. At such times he would have given all his science to be handsome and rich; the rebel awakened in him, and he was filled with bitterness against the social order; he was indignant at the servitude in which poverty kept him, and he returned to his garret with clenched fists and rage in his heart—that terrible rage of those whom education has made capable for all employments but whom pride prevents from soliciting any.

Camille has voluntarily kept silent on the subject of this period of his life. He has disowned the few satires which he then wrote against the Court, just as he disowned his roving life when, in 1790, in his marriage certificate, he claimed to have lived in the *Rue du Théâtre Français* (now the Rue de l'Odéon) *for the last six years*. We know nothing, therefore, of his tastes, his morals, his private life, and his habits as a young man. If we place reliance on what Chateaubriand said, his youth was not a very honourable one; but what

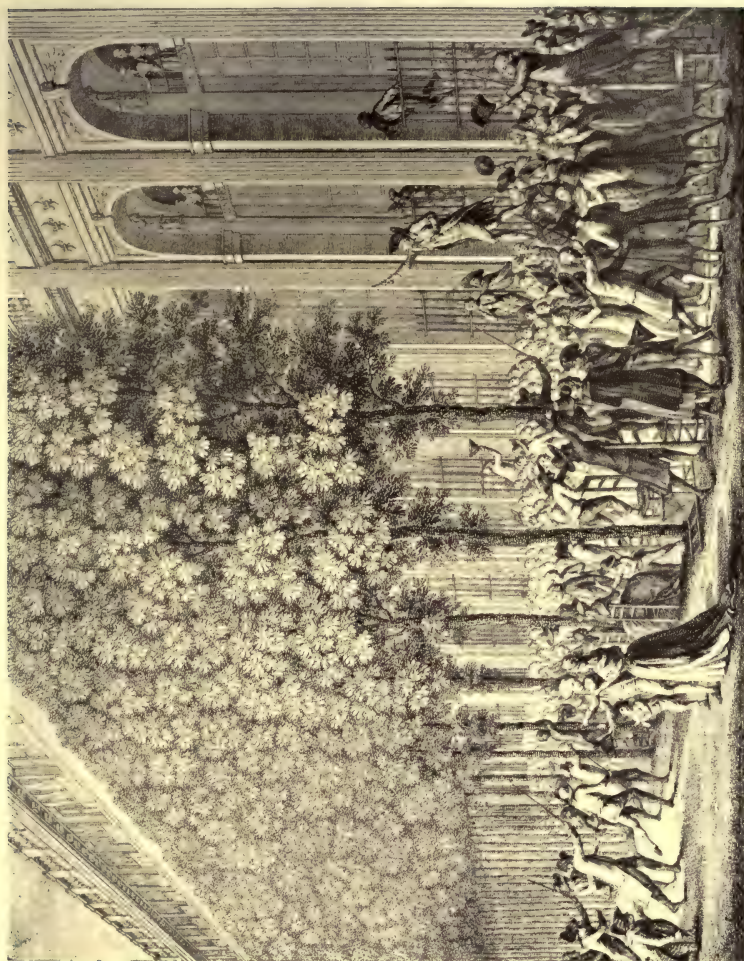
¹ Camille appears to have fallen in love with Mme. Duplessis before looking with affection upon her daughter Lucile. One must read the very curious documents published by M. Jules Claretie in the *Journal Officiel* for April 26th, 1879. Amongst them is a letter from Camille to Mme. Duplessis, and another to M. Duplessis, containing most precious details, as much from the point of view of assisting us to reconstitute the young man's life prior to 1789 as from that of his private feelings towards Lucile and her mother.

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

insurgent who is thrown into the furnace of Paris, comes out of it purified?

From the time of the convocation of the States-General, Camille grasped that he was about to begin to play his part. What was it going to be? He knew not. But he foresaw that the threatening innovation reserved a compensation for him, and that his opportunity had come. He hastened to Guise; he thought of becoming a candidate and preparing for his election; he succeeded in obtaining the support of the three hundred electors of the bailiwick of Vermandois; and he urged his father likewise to canvass for the votes of his fellow-citizens. A double failure! M. Desmoulin, unmoved by the feverish excitement of the times, refused to be mixed up in politics, and Camille was defeated. He returned to Paris with a distressed heart, more animated than ever against those odious people of Guise, "who are at the antipodes of philosophy and patriotism . . .," but who would have been the greatest citizens in the world had they chosen him as a deputy. "One of my comrades (of Louis-le-Grand)," he wrote to his father, "has been more fortunate than myself—De Robespierre, deputy for Arras. He had the good sense to plead in his province. I have seen our deputies . . . how they did carry their heads on high! They had *caput inter nubes* and with reason . . . I have a terrible grudge against you and your gravel. Why did you show so little eagerness to obtain so great an honour?"

These letters to his father are astonishing in their *naïveté*. He relates therein the incredible amount of trouble which he took to make himself known, hurrying first to Bailly's and then to Mirabeau's, "to beg to be included amongst the writers of the celebrated gazette recording everything which is going to happen at the States-General." He openly confesses his vanity and his gluttony . . . for this poor fellow, who, until then, on good days had fed but scantily and in bad times not at all, was fond of a good meal. At the dinners to which he was invited he talked wittily; he was laughed at but listened to also. "Many people who hear me hold forth express astonishment that I was not elected a deputy, a compliment which flatters me beyond words." Behold him, now, with Mirabeau



CAMILLE DESMOULINS SPEAKING OUTSIDE THE PALAIS ROYAL.

LOVE STORY OF CAMILLE DESMOULINS

at Versailles! "We have become great friends; at all events he calls me 'his dear friend.' He is continually taking me by the hands and giving me friendly taps with his fist . . . , he returns to dinner with an excellent company and sometimes with his mistress, and we drink admirable wines. I feel that his too delicate and over-loaded table will corrupt me. His Bordeaux and Maraschino are expensive, a fact which I vainly endeavour to forget, and I have the greatest difficulty in the world afterwards, to resume my republican austerity and detest the aristocrats whose crime is a liking for these excellent dinners."

His growing celebrity obtained for him these unexpected honours. The well-known scene in the Palais-Royal, that poetical inspiration to distribute—like cockades—the green leaves from the trees of the garden, and that march which he made through Paris, followed by a crowd which he had just filled with enthusiasm and which accompanied him with triumphal shouts, placed him in the front rank of the enemies of the Court. In that mighty movement which upheaved France, Camille is not to be classed with the thinkers; he played the part of a Gavroche, but, like Gavroche, he instinctively knew what pleased Parisians: a genius for theatrical effect, playful audacity, and that bitterly satirical eloquence which carries away the crowd. In the centre of that turbulent Palais-Royal he leaped on to a table, announced Necker's dismissal to the idlers, pulled a pistol from his pocket with which to threaten imaginary spies, and spoke of the tocsin of St. Bartholomew—all matters which have an unerring effect. And that was how it happened that Paris fell asleep that night in the uproar of a riot which lasted for ten years.

Camille, who saw the dawn of success, was exhilarated by the commotion made around him. He published *La France libre* and, almost immediately afterwards, his *Discours de la lanterne aux Parisiens*. The analysis of these two pamphlets is not, as one may well imagine, within our province. Besides, they do not assure a place among political men to their author. His animation was applauded and his witticisms raised a laugh; but he was not taken

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

seriously. This *Discours de la lanterne aux Parisiens* does not, one must confess, contribute to Camille's glory. With the sole object of increasing his popularity, he tickled the population, already intoxicated with success, in order to make it laugh. What a waste of talent in attaining this pitiful end! "His shaft flies when he wishes and it strikes where he wishes. He aims at the nobles, at the priests, at the conquered, at the wounded, and at the dead." The dignity of his pen mattered little provided he was talked about.

He attained his object. Soon he could write to his father: "I have made a name; I begin to hear people say: 'There is a pamphlet by Desmoulins;' they no longer say: 'by an author named Desmoulins;'" and he sent the old man "two newspapers, in which," he says, "I am highly praised." But glory did not enrich him. "You will oblige by sending me some shirts and two pairs of sheets; I thought that you would not have refused to assist me with five to six louis, and that you would take into consideration the knavery which I have suffered at the hands of my book-sellers."

M. Desmoulins, from the depth of his stern province, judged coldly his son's pamphlets, which, far from the excitement of Paris, seemed dreadful appeals to massacre. The general opinion at Guise was that Camille had "gone to the bad;" and the inhabitants commiserated his "poor parents" in that enraptured tone of compassion which is peculiar to small towns. Be that as it may, the father did not reply.

Camille, at the last extremity, addressed a fresh and urgent appeal as follows: "All the newspapers have praised me immoderately. . . . This celebrity adds still more to my natural shame in disclosing my needs. I do not dare even to reveal them to M. Mirabeau. Truly you show extreme injustice towards me. You see that, in spite of my enemies and detractors, I have been able to make a place for myself among writers, patriots, and men of character. . . . The sensation caused by my works has brought my creditors upon me, and they have left me nothing. . . . Since you receive your revenues

LOVE STORY OF CAMILLE DESMOULINS

at this time I beg you to send me six louis. I should like to profit, at a time when I have a reputation, by furnishing an apartment and matriculating in a district. Will you be so cruel as to refuse me a bed and a pair of sheets? Am I without fortune and without kindred? Is it true that I have neither father nor mother? For six years past I have not had what is necessary. Be candid, have you even put me in a position not to have to pay the exorbitant rental of furnished rooms? Oh! what a bad policy yours has been to send me two louis at a time, and with which I have never been able to solve the problem of having furniture and a permanent residence. And when I think that my fortune depended on my residence! that with a residence I should have been president, commander of a district, representative of the Commune of Paris, instead of being only a 'distinguished writer.' . . . It has been easier for me to cause a revolution and to convulse France than to obtain from my father, once for all, a sum of fifty louis. What a man you are. . . . You have not even known how to know me; you have everlastingly slandered me, everlastingly called me a prodigal, a spendthrift,—and I was anything but that. I have longed my whole life for a permanent residence, and after leaving Guise and the paternal home, you wished that I should have no other abode in Paris than an hotel. And I am thirty years of age! You have always told me that I have other brothers. Yes, but there is this difference between us, that nature gave me wings, and that my brothers could not feel, like myself, the continual needs which bound me to the earth. . . . Send me a bed if you are unable to buy one for me here. Can you refuse me a bed? . . . I have a reputation in Paris; I am consulted in important matters, and am invited out to dinner. . . . The only thing I lack is a permanent residence. Assist me, I beg of you; send me six louis or a bed!"

M. Desmoulin allowed himself at last to be convinced; he sent money to his son, who rented a room in the Rue du Théâtre-Français and founded his newspaper, *Révolutions de France et de Brabant*. With his mischievous wit, the style of an erudite vaudevillist, and the joyousness of a lettered *gamin*, he treated the most serious subjects in brilliant and smart

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

language, full of surprises and amusing witticisms. From a literary point of view, this publication is a masterpiece. But what a terrible responsibility did it not incur? His coarse vehemence was directed against everything; his pitiless irony undermined, hustled, overturned, destroyed, was implacable. . . . The Terror might well follow after Camille. He had laughed at so many victims beforehand that they would inspire no further pity!

What a revenge was that immanent justice which presides over human events preparing! This pamphleteer, so proud of his striking success—this *enfant terrible* of the Revolution, whose laughter crumbled the Bastille into ruins and caused the royalty to totter, was to meet in his path a power against which he was powerless to struggle: the fair child whom formerly, when an idle dreamer, he watched under the trees of the Luxembourg.

Chance had sometimes brought them together. Introduced to the Duplessis family by his friend Fréron, Camille first of all visited the household (where, however, he was happy) at fairly long intervals. M. Duplessis, the son of a working man, had raised himself by his industry to the position of head clerk at the *Contrôle des Finances*; he was a money-loving man, but without conceit and easy to approach. His wife was still young, pretty, good-humoured, and unceremonious; their two children, Annette and Lucile, appeared intelligent and affectionate. In summer the whole family spent Sunday at *Bourg-la-Reine*, where M. Duplessis owned a fairly large estate. Fréron and Camille were sometimes invited. The family and friends had luncheon under the trees, ran about in the long grass, and drank milk at the farm; held unconstrained and mirthful *fêtes* in the open air such as only Parisians understand. They returned late at night in a cart.

At one of these gatherings, Camille, who until then had no suspicion of his feelings, perceived that Lucile had suddenly become a young woman. "He had left her a child; when he found her again she was disquieting." That day high spirits

LOVE STORY OF CAMILLE DESMOULINS

were lacking at Bourg-la-Reine, and by this sign Camille discovered that he was in love.¹

The situation was a tragic one. The poor fellow had nothing, and Lucile was wealthy. She was adorably pretty; he had a bilious complexion, hard and irregular features, a grimacing mouth, and, in his face, that indelible mark which is left by poverty. Nevertheless, he loved her! Isolation, disappointments, pride, and independence had made ready his empty heart for some violent passion. He strove against it, but without conviction. Growing bolder, he confessed his love to Lucile, whose downcast eyes and blushing cheeks were an eloquent answer.

She was a little romantic, was Lucile; and we possess some strange pages of hers—accounts of glowing reveries and agitated appeals to the “Être des Etres;” for, unknown to her parents, she wrote at night when she had gone to bed. “A light and an extinguisher are on my bed. If I hear a noise I put it out.” What singular disclosures she makes to this little notebook in which she records her thoughts: “I do not love! When shall I love then? It is said that everybody must love. Shall I then be eighty before I love? I am made of marble. Ah! how strange life is!”

Camille’s confession lit the fire so well prepared, and the result was a conflagration. “I dare not confess to myself my feelings towards you; I am absorbed in disguising them.

¹ Camille had formerly shown an intention to marry—when she was a suitable age—his first cousin, Flore Godard, who was nine years younger than himself. But the project was several times opposed by the Godard family, “because of Camille’s political opinions and the dangers to the durability and happiness of this union which were to be anticipated.”

Rose Flore Amélie Godard was the daughter of Joseph Godard (1732–1806) and Marie Rose Briseux (1731–1807). She was born at Wiège (Aisne) on January 23rd, 1769. On August 1st, 1792, she married there Charles Anne Tarrieux de Taillan, and on September 5th, 1830, became a widow. She died on February 2nd, 1842.

Lucile was aware that Camille loved his cousin and was jealous of her. A letter from Camille to his father, dated July 9th, 1793, contains these lines: “You complain that I do not write to you. . . . Lucile is so frightened that I shall be seized with a desire to embrace you that she would be alarmed if she saw me writing; so I am taking advantage of the office provided by the Committee of War, of which I have been made secretary, to write to you freely without her seeing over my shoulder that I am writing to Guise. I imagine that the cause of her anxiety is the recollection of *some cousin* who has been mentioned to her.”

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

You say you suffer. Oh! but I suffer more. Your image is unceasingly in my mind; it never leaves me. I look for imperfections in you, find them, and love them. Tell me, then, the reason for all these conflicts? why I love to keep them a secret, even to my mother? I wish that she knew, that she guessed; but I do not like to tell her."

Mme. Duplessis, however, soon became the confidant of the lovers. Her husband, unpoetical in temperament, flatly refused to give his consent—like the true aristocratic father on the stage—when consulted in his turn; he would not think of a penniless gazetteer without prospects as a son-in-law. His opposition lasted for a long time; but finally—in conformity with traditional ending of all plays—he allowed the much desired "yes" to be wrung from him.

It was on December 11th, 1790. Good Mme. Duplessis, weeping the while, told Camille the news. He approached Lucile; but, overcome with emotion, she fled to her room. He followed her, threw himself on his knees, and murmured that he loved her. . . . Astonished to hear her laugh, he raised his eyes. . . . She was sobbing bitterly, and yet laughing in the midst of her tears. . . . Then, his heart melting, Camille took his *fiancée's* hands, hid his face in them, and wept with her, for joy and love.

II

IF there be any satisfaction in furnishing one's house, I imagine that nobody must have felt it so much as this Bohemian journalist, who for the past ten years had lived in furnished lodgings in the Latin Quarter, and who, never having possessed more than two louis at a time, had long since abandoned the dream of having a home of his own. He suddenly found himself in possession of a fabulous fortune, Lucile having brought him a dowry of £4,000. . . . What pleasure there was in playing the citizen, buying the furniture, and renting an apartment! Camille chose his residence in his favourite quarter, in that Rue du Théâtre-Français—not

LOVE STORY OF CAMILLE DESMOULINS

entirely built in three days—where there were only fine new houses. But what was its exact position? That was a little problem in Parisian topography which was not easy of solution.

About 1850, M. Victorien Sardou, who at that time had hardly left college and was not yet the applauded author of *Pattes de Mouche*, became friendly with an old Parisian, who went by the name of “Petit Père” Lenoir.

With M. Sardou, the playwright was preceded by the historical investigator, and at that time, when nobody thought of questioning the already rare survivors of the Revolution, he endeavoured to discover them, converse with them, and note down their narratives. The reminiscences of old people, it has been said, are a portion of a heritage which they ought to hand down during their lifetime. M. Sardou was aware of this, and has thus been able to amass a treasury of those minor facts and “things seen” which are not to be found in books.

Père Lenoir lived on the ground floor of an old house in the Rue du Paon, which was swept away at the time of the opening of the Boulevard Saint Germain—a strange dwelling, such as can hardly be found nowadays, with a semicircular courtyard, at the corner of which, behind dependent buildings, rose one of the subsisting towers of the wall of Philip Augustus. At that time Lenoir was an acute and jovial old man, an agreeable talker, and an assiduous attendant of the lectures at the Sorbonne and the Collège de France. He possessed a valuable library, and M. Victorien Sardou ransacked both the worthy man's books and his recollections. They often went out together, and, walking through the quarter, which was not yet altered by new streets, Lenoir related the past. Every house in the old district of the Cordeliers, which he had inhabited for sixty years, had its story for him. He had not left Paris during the Revolution; curious about men and things, he had seen everything and seen it well, in the character of an onlooker who is diverted by cataclysms; he had even beheld Robespierre, known Danton, and conversed with De Batz.

One day, when Lenoir was passing in front of the Odéon, accompanied by his young friend, he pointed to the third floor

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

windows of a house at the corner of the square and the Rue Crébillon.

"Look," he said, "that is where Camille Desmoulins lived."

M. Sardou never afterwards crossed the square without raising his eyes to those windows and without thinking of poor Camille. Now, some twenty years ago, a tablet commemorative of the sojourn of Camille Desmoulins was put up; but, instead of placing it at the corner of the Rue Crébillon, it was fixed on the house opposite, above the Café Voltaire. As one may well imagine, nobody raised an objection; for a tablet is a solemn, official thing; in a sense, it is the Legion of Honour of a house, and one must be very sure of oneself to protest against so flattering an honour. . . . Nevertheless, M. Sardou had his doubts.

It is far from my wish to incriminate the Commission des Inscriptions Parisiennes, which undertook to "decorate" this house; for I know with what science and precaution it carries out its work, and doubt was permissible between the two houses. In fact, according to the *procès-verbal* of Lucile's arrest, we know officially only one thing—*i.e.* that the Desmoulins' household occupied "the third floor of the house of Citizen Labretinière, Place du Théâtre-Français." Did Labretinière own the house on the right or that on the left? The whole question rested on that. The Commission entered upon an inquiry, examined the title-deeds, and came to the conclusion that Labretinière was the owner of *both houses*. One of them—better designated than the other by tradition—was chosen, and the tablet was affixed. Better could not have been done, nor more either.

It is always by chance that these little problems of Parisian topography are solved. When recently examining a number of manuscripts with which M. Georges Cain, the amiable curator of the Musée Carnavalet, had just enriched his collection, my attention was attracted to a small book of notes signed Devise. Devise, who was a student in Paris about 1832, had become acquainted with one of his compatriots of the Aisne, M. Matton, a writer on the staff of *La Tribune* and *Le National*, who, as a relative of Desmoulins, had sought and discovered

LOVE STORY OF CAMILLE DESMOULINS

in Paris Mme. Laridon-Duplessis, Camille's mother-in-law, and was seized with a warm affection for her. At the end of 1834, Mme. Duplessis, her daughter Adèle, and M. Matton lived together in a ground floor apartment, to which there was a garden, in a little Rue de la Montagne-Sainte-Geneviève.

Devise visited at his friend's house, and often received interesting disclosures from Mme. Duplessis' own mouth. After forty years' mourning, the poor woman's thoughts dwelt on her happy days. She was incessantly speaking of her Lucile. "Her eyes were not blue," she said, "but black like her father's. It was I who drove Camille and Lucile in my carriage, a few days before their marriage, to the Cordeliers, where a Father confessed them one after the other—first of all Camille, and then Lucile, who awaited her turn at the other side of the confessional. They confessed with such confidence and ingenuousness that I could hear everything. . . ."

And later :—

"*Camille lived with Lucile at 1, Rue du Théâtre-Français, now 38, Rue de l'Odéon.* They were on the third floor, and their windows looked into the Rue Crébillon. Before her marriage, Lucile lived almost opposite in a second floor apartment of a house (now 22) in the Rue de Condé with her father, mother, and sister Adèle. Camille could easily see her from his windows. Some time ago, a house was built in the Rue Crébillon opposite the one occupied by Camille, and it now prevents one seeing that in which M. and Mme. Duplessis lived."

This is again irrefutable testimony. No. 1, Rue du Théâtre Français became, in 1834, 38, Rue de l'Odéon; it is now No. 22. The establishment of the fact is of the simplest. M. Sardou was right, and "Petit Père" Lenoir did not mislead him. On the other hand, the tablet is wrong; but that is an error which is as excusable as it is easy to remedy.

The apartment which served as a framework for Camille's tender passion was, then, on the third floor of the Rue Crébillon, at the corner of the square.

How living this idyl has remained in this quiet and still unaltered corner! Here, in the Rue de Condé, is the old iron

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

balcony from which Lucile sent kisses to her neighbour opposite; here are the windows of the apartment from which Camille watched the charming girl whom he had loved so long.

The day on which Mlle. Duplessis married the journalist, the quarter was in a flutter of excitement. The neighbours, standing at the doors, watched the cabs bringing the witnesses, each of whom was carefully pointed out. That one was Pétion; the other, Sillery; that was Mercier, the author of the *Tableau de Paris*; and there went Robespierre. During the service the two last named held the canopy over the heads of the newly married couple; and a recollection is yet retained of the fright of Vicar Gueudeville on seeing all these names—already celebrated and feared—ranged in the parish register when, at the conclusion of the nuptial benediction, they signed the marriage certificates in that admirable sacristy of Saint Sulpice still wainscoted with the panels which Lucile's white dress has brushed.

Then, by way of the Rue de Condé, they went towards the Place du Théâtre Français. The wedding dinner was given at Camille's. A large round table had been laid, at which the four witnesses, Camille and Lucile, the parents of the bride, her sister Adèle, whose hand had been asked in marriage by Robespierre, and the Abbé Bérardier, the old master of the College of Louis-le-Grand, for whom Camille retained an affectionate recognition,—ten persons in all,—took their seats.

A waif of happy days, this table, quite worm-eaten now, and barely supported by its four massive mahogany legs, still exists in an attic at Vervins. Other relics are preserved at Laon: the white waistcoat, worked in flowers, which Camille wore that day; Lucile's wedding veil, her pink satin bodice with little basques and narrow sleeves, and her silk garter, embroidered with forget-me-nots and joined hearts, on which doves are placing a crown bearing the motto:

Unisson (*sic*)-nous-pour-la-vie.

How touching these things are with their air of departed gaiety and the tender charm of the love recollections which they evoke!

LOVE STORY OF CAMILLE DESMOULINS

And what pleasant evenings Camille spent in his home with Lucile! On what terms of amiable intimacy he was with his new kinsfolk! Youth made a tardy but triumphant entry into his soul. So great was his astonishment to find himself happy and loved, the possessor of a home of his own and trust in the future, that his passion was already less scourging. His paper still appeared; he still scoffed; but it seemed as though the passionate sincerity of early numbers had given place to mere literary craft.—“Tu dors, Camille, et Paris est esclave!” wrote a versifier. But Camille did not sleep—he loved, and however brilliant his reputation as a writer might be in this year 1791, which unfolded a prospect of happy days, his ambition was no longer the same. Moreover, he has himself confessed it in the words: “It is not the weathercock but the wind which turns;” and that bitter wind which, until then, had blown on him with the force of a hurricane had then changed into a calm zephir laden with delicate odours.

On the first appearance of fine weather, Camille and his wife and parents-in-law again turned to the country. Historians, disdainful of these little details, believed that Duplessis' house at Bourg-la-Reine, which was the scene of the tenderest chapters of Camille's story, was so lost, forgotten, and undiscoverable that not one has taken the trouble to point out its site. The search tempted me, and although Mme. Duplessis, after the crash of 1794, had decided to sell her estate, I knew for certain that at the time of the Restoration she had not yet found a purchaser. A little patience, therefore, was all that was necessary to discover, in the administrative documents of that period, the description of “the house, farm, vine, meadows, cultivated land and garden, containing an area of twenty-one hectares, belonging to Mme. Duplessis.” The communal plans annexed to the deeds supplied me with a most complete topography of the property, which was then reconstituted on paper. But what remained of it in reality? Was a disappointment in store for me on visiting Bourg-la-Reine? Had Lucile's farm been replaced by one of those hideous plaster constructions which seem to be a speciality of the

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

outskirts of Paris? No. The property has been divided, but it is little disfigured;¹ it is almost as it was a hundred years ago, skirting the right-hand side of the road from Paris, just at the entrance to the village.

The farm is situated at the end of a long wall, and is picturesque and rural with its cart-gateway, its two posts surmounted by stone balls, its rustic courtyard where the old bucket and chain well displays a worn well-curb, its stable, and its cow-shed—all of small proportions, resembling rather the model farm at Trianon than buildings for agricultural purposes. The barn opens on to the enclosure, which is still surrounded by the old wall of yore, and barely touched by the railway line. Fowls pick for food under a barrow resting against the bole of a walnut-tree, washing is drying on the hedge, tracks, full of ruts made by carts, straggle through the oats, and an ancient rabbit hutch, constructed of moss-grown planks, in a corner, seems to have been forgotten since the happy days when Lucile, carrying a feed of clover, gravely fed “her animals.” Here is the low room where Fréron slept. On sunny mornings Camille came to lean on this window-sill, while his wife was busying about the farm, making the coffee, calling the fowls, burdened with labours not one of which she finished, “labouring like a fairy, spitting like a cat,” bustling about, taking her duties as a farmer’s wife seriously, disdaining the playful banter of Camille and Fréron, who imitated her favourite phrases—“What does that matter to me? It’s as clear as day”—until, exasperated, she ran after them, throwing at their heads her whole stock of thyme with which, “with her dimpled hands,” she filled their mouths to silence them: “Here, Bouli-Boula, eat; eat, Hon-Hon!”

“Bouli-Boula” was Fréron, “Hon-Hon” was Camille, whom she had thus nicknamed because of his stuttering. All these laughing grown-up children who frolicked in the midst of nature had sobriquets, Mme. Duplessis being “Daronne”² and Lucile “Loulou” or else “Poule à Cachan,” in remembrance of

Some time since, however, a road was made through the enclosure and now separates the farm from the house.

² “Daronne” is a slang word for “Patronne.”

LOVE STORY OF CAMILLE DESMOULINS

a fowl which Camille and Lucile, when passing through the village of Cachan saw defending itself against a cock. How all these things, the archness of which vanishes before the tragic *dénouement* of the idyl,—how all these things merrily ring of love, youth, joy of life, exuberancy, and happiness!

A double row of trimmed lindens bordered—and still border—the garden which was planted with large trees and undivided from the remainder of the enclosure by any barrier. At the north corner of the estate M. Duplessis had built a small but comfortable house, where the young married couple lived; and although the commonplaceness of modern elegance has set its mark on this agreeable house, the recollection of Camille and Lucile seems to meet us there every step we take. We see them, walking side by side, in the linden alley, amid the pleasant darkness of the greenery; they sat on these stone benches, now green and moss-covered; and along this footpath, at supper-time, they reached the farm, whilst night was coming on, convolvuluses and honeysuckle gave forth their delicate and enchanting scent, and birds sang in the depths of the chestnut trees.

Camille was happy during the whole of this year 1791. “I will say only one word about my wife,” he wrote later. “I have always believed in the immortality of the soul; but my household has been so happy that I fear having received my reward on earth, and lost the conclusive proof of immortality!” Observe, too, how happiness made the man indulgent. In the summer of 1791 he stopped the publication of his paper; for since he had lived in ease he considered the Revolution at an end and announced his determination to resume work at the bar. His son was born,¹ and he desired a calm,

¹ “. . . And I, too, have a child! My only wish is that he will one day love me as much as I love my father.” (*Letter from Camille to his father*, July 9th, 1792.)

Horace Desmoulin was born at nine o'clock in the morning on July 6th. He was the first to be entered in the Paris register of births, which superseded the parish registers. At the end of the declaration, Camille had written on the certificate the following promises, in which again appears the railing pamphleteer of *La France libre*: “. . . As religious freedom has been decreed by the Constitution, and as, by a decree of the Legislative Assembly relative to the manner of establishing the civil state of citizens otherwise than by religious ceremonies, an altar ought to be raised in each

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

assured, and peaceful future. Nevertheless, when the Republic was proclaimed and Danton, a minister, appointed him secretary-general to the Chancellerie,—when, on Lucile's arm, he entered the solemn ministry in the Place Vendôme, this un-hoped-for stroke of good luck resuscitated the Camille of former days. He brightened up and exulted. "Behold me living in the palace of the Maupeous and De Lamoignons," he writes to his father. "In spite of all your predictions that I should never do anything, I am raised to the topmost rung of the ladder attainable by one of our profession. . . . How the people of Guise, so full of envy, hatred, and petty passions, will burst with bitterness to-day!"

This effusion of pride outlasted his glory. He thought to make good his popularity by excusing the September massacres, voting for the death of the King, and siding with the adversaries of the Girondins. It was only at the trial, on hearing the conviction of Brissot and his friends, that he entered, like Saul, on the road to Damascus. "It is I who have killed them," he exclaimed; "I shall never forgive myself." This portion of his life belongs to historians of his political career, and we intentionally pass it over in silence. Indeed, Camille's story approaches its end, the supreme and majestic catastrophe of which has been summed up by Chateaubriand in the few words: "A young and charming woman, in awakening his heart to love, made him capable of virtue and sacrifice." Yes; this terrible *gamin*, this "scapegrace of literature," this Bohemian pamphleteer, was to die a victim of that Revolution which he had let loose. Once more he threw himself into the fray; but this time to enter on a hand-to-hand struggle with the Terror, to brave the scaffold, and to place Robespierre in the pillory of his *Vieux Cordelier*. In so doing, he knew that he was risking his life. One day, when having luncheon together, his friend Brune did not conceal his fears from him. But

municipality on which a father, accompanied by two witnesses, can offer his children to the country; the person present, wishing to use the provisions of the law and desiring to spare himself, some day, on the part of his son, the reproach of having bound him by oath to religious opinions which he could not yet hold and made him enter on life with an inconsequent choice between the nine hundred and odd religions which divide mankind, at a time when he could not even distinguish his mother, consequently . . . etc." (*Journal de Vervins*, 1884.)

LOVE STORY OF CAMILLE DESMOULINS

Lucile was proud of her husband, and said: "Let him alone, Brune! Let him fulfil his mission! He must save his country!" And Camille, embracing at one and the same time his wife, tenderly bent over him, and his son Horace, who was sitting on his knees, added philosophically: "Edamus et bibamus, cras enim moriemur."

At times, poor Lucile, also, was frightened, and would have liked to see her Camille surrounded by friends. For the past eight months Fréron had been before besieged Toulon, and she cried to him for help. "Return Fréron, return quickly. Bring with you all the old Cordeliers you can find; for we have most urgent need of them; . . . the wild thyme is quite ready; I have gathered it amidst a thousand cares. I no longer laugh, no longer act the kitten, no longer play my piano, no longer dream; I am nothing but a machine . . . return, return quickly! . . ."

The end had now come, dark days were foreshadowed, and misfortune was about to fall on this happy family. On March 20th (1794) Camille received a black-edged letter from Guise. . . . He opened it. M. Desmoulins announced that his wife had just died. "Your mother is no more, she died to-day at noon. She loved you tenderly. I embrace most affectionately and very sadly your wife—my dear daughter-in-law—and little Horace." Camille wept. His elbows on the table and his face buried in his hands, he sobbed a long while, seeing again the quiet house at Guise now in mourning; he remained there for hours buried in reverie; night had fallen. Lucile, in the next room, was stretched on her bed, near her child's cradle, overcome by fatigue, and asleep. Suddenly, the measured tread of a patrol broke the silence of the street. Camille started, rose, opened the window and leaned out. . . . The soldiers had stopped at his door. He rushed to his wife, crying: "They have come to arrest me!" Rudely awakened, Lucile hardly understood. She clasped him in her arms and pressed him to her breast to protect him; but he disengaged himself from that last kiss, bent over little Horace's cradle, embraced him, and himself went down to open the door to the agents of the Committee. In the twinkling of an eye he was surrounded,

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

bound like a malefactor, and conveyed to the Luxembourg prison.

Never do I pass the corner of the peristyle of the Odéon without thinking of the last look which Camille, as he was dragged along by the soldiers, cast from that spot at the house where he had lived in happiness. His whole past flashed before him there during a moment of poignant anguish. At the open window, standing out on the luminous background of the room, he saw the silhouette of Lucile who—half-naked, convulsed with sobs, her arms stretched towards him—called to him, cried to him “Farewell!” He heard her still when turning the corner of the Rue de Vaugirard; then the voice was lost in the distance. . . . Death was in sight.

The window of his prison-cell looked on the Luxembourg garden where, ten years before, he had seen Lucile playing as a child. What thoughts must have rent his heart when he recalled those departed joys! Who has not read the sublime letters which he wrote in prison to his wife? What poem contains a more heartrending cry of despair and love? “Sleep has eased my troubles. One is free when asleep . . . Heaven has had pity on me. But a moment ago, I saw you in a dream, and embraced you one by one—you, Horace, and Daronne, who was at the house. But our little one had lost an eye through a disease which had just attacked it, and the sorrow occasioned by this accident awakened me. I found myself again in my cell. Day was breaking . . . I arose to write to you. But, on opening my windows, the solitude, the horrible bars, the bolts which separated me from you overcame all my strength of soul. I broke into tears, or rather I sobbed while crying in my tomb: Lucile! Lucile! Oh, my dear Lucile, where art thou? . . . Farewell, my Lolotte, ‘mon bon loup,’ and say farewell to my father; for I see the fate which awaits me. . . . Oh! my dear Lucile, I was born to compose verses, to defend the unfortunate, and to make you happy. . . . Pardon, dear friend, my real life, which I lost the instant they separated us . . . my Lucile, my good Loulou, ‘ma Poule à Cachan,’ I entreat you not to remain on your roost, not to call to me; for your cries would torture me in the depths of my tomb. Scratch for your little one, live for my

LOVE STORY OF CAMILLE DESMOULINS

Horace, and speak to him of me. You must tell him, what he cannot comprehend, that I should have loved him dearly! In spite of suffering, I believe there is a God. My blood will efface my faults, the weaknesses of humanity; and all the good in me—my virtues and love of liberty—God will reward. I shall see you again some day. Farewell, Loulou, my life, my soul, my divinity on earth. Farewell, Lucile, my Lucile, my dear Lucile. . . . Farewell, my father. I feel that the shores of life are slipping away from me. I still see Lucile! I see her, my well beloved, my Lucile! My bound hands embrace you, and my separated head still rests its dying eyes upon you.”

On April 5th, 1794, Camille died in the midst of the joyous acclamation of the people who had so much adulated him. A week later, it was Lucile's turn. She went to the scaffold courageously. At the very moment her hair was being cut, before her hands were bound, she wrote these touching words to her mother: “Good-night, my dear mamma. A tear runs from my eyes. It is for you. I am going to sleep in the calm of innocence.” Camille's father died of grief at Guise; M. Duplessis survived his daughter by only a few days; his widow was doomed to weep alone and to live for her grandson, who had no one but her in the world. She brought up Horace Desmoulins, who in 1817 embarked for Haïti, where he died in 1825, leaving two daughters, one called Camille and the other Lucile, who, quite recently, were still living. Both of them widows, they were reduced to poverty, and an attempt was made, a few years ago, to interest the Government and the Chambers in their situation. But the application was without result, and I believe that one of them is now dead.

But let us return to the Place de l'Odéon. When the commemorative marble tablet receives its final place on Camille's house, could not a brief inscription also be put up between those windows of the Rue de Condé whence Lucile sent so many kisses to her betrothed? Is not the memory of the charming woman whose story was the idyl of the Revolution worth recalling within a few yards of the Luxembourg, where her heart expanded with love and whence she set out to meet her death?

MADEMOISELLE DE ROBESPIERRE

ON recently perusing, at a notary's in the Tournelle quarter, a seventy-year-old file of papers I came across the will of Robespierre's sister. It read as follows :—

“Wishing to make known my feelings towards the memory of my eldest brother, before paying to Nature the tribute which all mortals owe her, I declare that I have ever known him to be a man full of virtue. I protest against all the letters contrary to his honour which have been attributed to me, and, desiring to dispose of what I shall leave at my death, I appoint Mlle. Reine Louise Victoire Mathon as my sole heir.

“Written by my hand, in Paris, on February 6th, 1828.

“Marie Marguerite Charlotte de Robespierre.”¹

These lines were written in a firm, round, masculine hand, without hesitation or mis-spelling; and pinned to the paper was its envelope, the seals of which were broken by the notary on August 1st, 1834, the day when Charlotte died. I thought this cry of protest very touching—this cry uttered, so long after Thermidor, by an old maid living wholly engrossed in her sorrow, traversing the storms of our history without observing or forgetting anything, finding her indignation, after half a century, as deep-rooted as at first and expressing it in that special style which seems like an ancient perfume of the discourse to the “Être suprême.”

This led me to read those astonishing memoirs found in manuscript at her house and published by a belated Robespierriest about the end of 1834. Ah! in what tender colours

¹ Archives of Me. Dauchez, notary in Paris, 37 Quai de la Tournelle.



CHARLOTTE DE ROBESPIERRE.

(From a portrait by ISABEY in the collection of M. ÉMILE MOREL, of Arras.)

MADemoiselle DE ROBESPIERRE

is Robespierre there portrayed! What sensibility and amiable resignation he shows! Florian's heroes are Tiberiuses compared with him. Every line praises the sweetness of his character, the purity of his heart, his equable temper, or the simplicity of his manners. He reared little birds . . . he wept over the death of a pigeon, and, on one occasion, when a judge at the Arras tribunal, we see him renouncing his duties in order not to pronounce sentence of death. The idea of sending a man to the scaffold is insupportable to him!

How bitter, therefore, was his sister's despair when she learnt that wicked men were making an attempt on Maximilien's life. "Drowned in sorrow, I counted life as nought, and should have welcomed death as a blessing . . ." What tragic imprecations she heaps on the "cowardly Thermidorians!" Charlotte wrote this idyllic narrative between 1827 and 1830, and people imagine her weeping for her well-beloved brother during forty years, suffering on account of the admiration which his memory inspired, and continually repeating: "Ah! if he had only lived!"

Well, her tale must be toned down. Had Robespierre lived, it is probable Charlotte would have written nothing. Certain pages in the record-office, buried away in the jumble of documents of the revolutionary police, throw some doubt on the sincerity of her regrets. These old files of the *Sûreté générale* are cruel in their indiscretion; for they reveal people destitute of that theatrical make-up which is indispensable, it appears, to history. Mlle. de Robespierre did not imagine, doubtless, that the refutation of the romance, by means of which she hoped to deceive posterity, would, some day, be sought in that quarter.

Charlotte's childhood had been a sad one: her mother was dead, and her father, summoned abroad on mysterious business, left Arras in 1766 and never reappeared. Maximilien and his brother were received by their maternal grandfather, the brewer Carraut; the little girl found a refuge at the house of her aunts De Robespierre—very pious but very poor old maids, who were unable to carry out for very long the task

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

which they had undertaken. The Bishop of Arras was concerned at their situation, so Charlotte,—and her sister Henriette, who died young,—were admitted on his recommendation to the Manarres' charity home, at Tournai, which was under the management of a Jesuit Father.¹ The poor children there were fed and clothed for a period of nine months; they were taught to read, write, sew, and make lace; and on leaving they were supplied with clothes "suitable to their station."

The girls being thus provided for, Dom Briois d'Hulluch, the Abbé of Saint-Waast, was induced to take an interest in Maximilien and his brother Augustin. The elder obtained a scholarship at the college of Louis-le-Grand; the younger was sent to Douai until he also could be admitted to the great Parisian school. Several years thus passed by. It was not until the end of 1781 that Charlotte and her two brothers were reunited at Arras, where, in that house in the Rue des Rapporteurs which is still pointed out, they had a household in common. Their resources were meagre. In right of their mother, the two Robespierres possessed an annuity of only £16, and Charlotte an equal amount. But the advocate's office producing little, their capital was broken into and quickly swallowed up. Not a penny of it remained in 1789. Maximilien's election to the States General and his establishment in Paris, when—after the Constituent Assembly—he was appointed public prosecutor, necessitated fresh sacrifices. At her brother's request, and in spite of the predictions of her aged aunts, who were alarmed at the future, Charlotte alienated her modest patrimony, and even handed over to Maximilien a sum of £40, which she had saved penny by penny, and six silver forks and spoons rescued from the disaster. In return the "Incorruptible" undertook never to abandon his sister,² and, in fact, Charlotte left Arras, as soon

¹ Paris' "La Jeunesse de Robespierre."

² "I know that the Robespierres, in right of their mother, had only £16 a year. Their father, who had abandoned them, died in hospital at . . . Well, the two brothers, after finishing their studies at Louis-le-Grand, sold the capital and their income to maintain themselves. Their sister—generous and imprudent—also sold on their behalf, notwithstanding an aunt's prediction, the capital of her annuity of £16, when it was a question of assisting them to come to Paris."—*Guffroy, member of the Committee of the Sûreté générale to his colleagues* . . . (Archives nationales, F⁷, dossier Charlotte Robespierre).

MADemoiselle DE ROBESPIERRE

as he was elected a deputy to the Convention, to take up her abode with him.

Robespierre then resided at the house of the carpenter Duplay, in the Rue Saint-Honoré, where he lived, said Danton, "in the midst of fools and gossips." Secluded by Duplay, by his wife and by his daughters, who took the greatest care of him and overwhelmed him with flattery, he found a new home there, so that when Charlotte arrived she was coldly received. However, Duplay agreed to lodge her, and let her have the first floor apartment on the street,—quite apart from the room where Maximilien lived sequestered. This was grievance number one. Charlotte found fault; Mme. Duplay replied acrimoniously; offensive remarks were exchanged, and Mlle. Robespierre left the house. Persuading her brother to follow her, they installed themselves in the Rue Saint-Florentin. But the carpenter's wife did not confess she was beaten, and before a month had gone by had triumphantly brought her great man back to the house in the Rue Saint-Honoré. Charlotte, vexed, remained alone, and was preparing for some outburst when Augustin Robespierre saved the situation. He was sent on a mission with Ricord, his colleague at the Convention, to the army in Italy, and he decided to take his sister with him. Mme. Ricord, a charming and gay young lady, also went on the journey, which commenced merrily. Members of the Convention when on a mission were, in a way, like sovereigns, and the little party crossed France in a comfortable berlin. At Nice, General Dumberbion and the officers of his staff became the knights of Citoyennes Ricord and Robespierre, who were invited to pleasure parties, rides on horseback, and other gatherings. It was Charlotte's heyday. There were some patriots,—dying of hunger,—who thought it was all very fine her giving herself "the airs of a princess"; and others threw apples at her when she was entering her box at the theatre. But, "trusting in her virtue," she was little concerned with these trifles.

Unfortunately, Mme. Ricord's virtue was not so unyielding in its constitution. Augustin Robespierre was acquainted

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

with the fact, and, as Charlotte gave signs of intending to spoil the fun, he used his discretionary power and ordered his sister to leave the army immediately. Furious and indignant at this public affront, she secured a seat in a private carriage which was leaving for Paris and set out the next day.

On finding herself once more in the solitary lodging in the Rue Saint-Florentin, she comprehended that she was lost. Spurned by her two brothers, for whom she had stripped herself, she lived in deep poverty. In order to become reconciled with Maximilien, she got a neighbour to take him two pots of jam! but Mme. Duplay, whose malice was tenacious, immediately sent them back. "Take them back," she said to the bearer, "I don't want her to poison Robespierre."

Affairs were turning out badly. The Duplays lived in continual fear. Convinced that everybody was plotting against the life of their guest, they kept him under triple bolts, and it was not safe to draw on oneself the suspicion of these fear-stricken people. Charlotte learnt this to her cost. Maximilien informed her, in fact, that he wished to see her; she hastened to him; he received her amicably, and even appeared to take an interest in her condition, gave her to understand that, in her present situation, living in Paris was costly and useless, and that he would be pleased to see her return to Arras. She agreed to everything. As it happened that their friend Joseph Lebon, who had arrived from his proconsulate at Artois two days before, was leaving for his post on the very next day, he kindly undertook to accompany Charlotte, and she left her brother on fairly good terms. While on the road Lebon was full of engaging attentions; but, hardly had Mlle. Robespierre reached Arras, when she learnt that she was denounced to the Société populaire "as an aristocrat."¹ She took fright. All the members of

¹ "Lebon returned to Paris for two days. He was very assiduous at Robespierre's. Maximilien's sister, who was worthy of the esteem of all good citizens, reproached him for his cruelties. He denied them, and under pretence of; proving his assertion by making her an eye-witness, took the sister of the Robespierres, *who wished to get rid of her*, with him. This is proved by their correspondence. Lebon had her denounced to the Société populaire of Arras as an aristocrat." (A. B. J. Guffroy's *Les Secrets de Joseph Lebon.*)

MADemoiselle DE ROBESPIERRE

Lebon's staff were devoted to Robespierre. Handsome Daillet, the important man of the tribunal, was so intimate with Maximilien that he supplied him with cravats; Darthé, the public prosecutor, the friend of Lebon, received his instructions direct from the Duplays, with whom he regularly corresponded. Even in prison, Charlotte found herself among acquaintances, her first cousin, Carraut, being one of those who rifled the prisoners. Men and women stripped before him; after which he shook their clothes, turned their pockets inside out, and silenced the discontents by boasting of the esteem in which he was held by "his virtuous relative," Robespierre.¹

There was not a moment to be lost. Charlotte escaped from this den and placed herself under the protection of Florent Guyot, the member of the Convention,—and enemy of Lebon,—who was in command at Lille and consented to take her back to Paris. But she did not dare to appear again at her rooms in the Rue Saint-Florentin, which was too near the Duplays', so asked a friend, Citoyenne Laporte,² to give her shelter. She was there on the 9th of Thermidor (July 27th, 1794).

Ah! with what touching lines this event inspired her forty years later! "I rush through the streets, my head in a whirl

¹ "Lefetz, fatigued by the debauchery which had accompanied these first dilapidations, charged the said Carreau (*sic*) and Cavois to take away the remainder of our clothes. After the example of their general, these men took all our effects, placed part of our money in rolls, tore up the few historical and other works which we were allowed to read, and sealed up everything which fastened with a key. . . . They devoted particular attention to young women, whom they stripped almost naked. One of these, whose father and uncle died on the scaffold, was distinguished by reason of the terrible treatment which she received at the hands of the wretches employed by Carreau. Scoundrels! . . . you who continually boasted of the virtue of your relative Robespierre, it was in this way then that you put it into practice!" (*Les Horreurs des prisons d'Arras*, Histoire des Prisons, vol. iii, p. 421 *et seq.*)

² This woman was the wife of Citoyen Laporte, member of the Tours military committee and judge at the Paris revolutionary tribunal. He did not obtain the latter post until 22nd of Messidor, Year II. "He proceeded to the tribunal. A considerable number of accused were crowded in the dock. The deputy public prosecutor interrupted the proceedings and swore in the new magistrate, who could recognise, among the unfortunate men whose sentence was going to be pronounced, his only brother, Henri Louis Laporte." (Campardon's *Le Tribunal révolutionnaire*.) Laporte (or Delaporte) was a dealer in gloves and perfumery before being appointed a judge. (Wallon's *Tribunal révolutionnaire*.)

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

and despair in my heart. I call for my brothers, and seek for them. I hear that they are at the Conciergerie. I hasten there, ask to see them, entreat with clasped hands. I throw myself on my knees before the soldiers . . . they spurn me. My mind wanders; I know nothing that happens or what becomes of me . . . on recovering consciousness, I found myself in prison."

The poor woman's memory served her very badly. As soon as she heard of Maximilien's arrest, she left the lodgings which she occupied at Citoyenne Laporte's, but, far from clamouring her despair at the door of the Conciergerie, she prudently took refuge at the house of a woman named Béguin, who consented to receive her in the Rue du Four-Honoré, in the Halles quarter. Three days later, the spies of the Comité de Sûreté générale discovered her, disguised under the name of Carraut.¹ She was taken to the Section du Contrat-Social, where the Commissaries questioned her.

It must be confessed that, in the presence of danger, the bearing of this sister of the Gracchi was lamentable. She disowned her brothers in the most disconcerting manner, relating how they had driven her away and "that she had narrowly escaped being their victim"; swearing that, "had she suspected the infamous plot which was being laid, she would have denounced it rather than see her country lost"; and not forgetting "la femme Duplay," whom she blamed for all her misfortunes and who, at that very moment,—distracted with terror,—was strangling herself in the Sainte-Pélagie prison, into which she had been cast on the evening of the 9th. Citoyenne Béguin was as unreserved. She knew, she said, without a shadow of a doubt, that "Robespierre had determined to guillotine everybody who showed any interest in his sister," and, in the course of these examinations, the whole mystery of Duplay's house was revealed: the frequent visits of Fouquier-

¹ "Section du Contrat-Social. The 13th of Thermidor, Year II. There was brought before us Citoyenne Carraut, who was found at Citoyenne Béguin's, in the Rue du Four, No. 482, Section du Contrat-Social.—She was asked her name, age, rank and residence. She replied she was called Marie Marguerite Charlotte Robespierre, twenty-eight years of age, living on her income, and residing for about a month past at Citoyenne Laporte's, No. 200, Rue de la Réunion." (Archives nationales, F⁷, dossier Charlotte Robespierre).

MADemoiselle DE ROBESPIERRE

Tinville to the "Incorruptible"; the manner in which, in the family circle, lists of condemned were drawn up; and the daily correspondence which was kept up between the house and certain jurors of the revolutionary tribunals of Paris and Arras,—Lebrun, Didier, Daillet, and others

Thus Charlotte saved her head. Having thrown heroism to the winds, she laid stress on her commonplace knowledge and turned her misfortunes to the best account. She was in dire poverty. Her uncle, Dr. Durut, had sent her a small sum from Arras, but it was quickly exhausted. "She possessed nothing in the world but the dress on her back; and her weakened sight and lungs, impaired through grief, prevented her from making lace." Turned into the street, after a few days' imprisonment, she begged shelter from one of her compatriots, named Mathon,¹ who, owing to Robespierre's influence, had obtained a situation in the state carriage department. Reduced to a state of dependence "which drew groans from her truly free soul," she conceived the strange plan of soliciting a pension. Anything could be obtained from the Thermidorians by defaming Robespierre, and Guffroy, who drew up the petition, was not sparing in his accusations. He set forth Charlotte's sacrifices and the ingratitude of her brothers;² the expedient they had employed to get rid of her, by entrusting her to Joseph Lebon; and, finally, he pleaded that it would be a fine thing

¹ "I shall not undertake the defence of Citoyen Mathon; but simply tell you that, obliged to leave my brothers, who were unjustly incensed against me, he had the courage—notwithstanding their interdiction—to offer me asylum at his house. It did not then suit me to accept his offer. I accepted when my misfortunes, becoming greater than ever, made me too burdensome for those who had first of all given me shelter." (*Letter from Charlotte Robespierre to the representatives of the People composing the Comité de Sûreté Générale, 24th Ventôse, Year III. Archives nationales F⁷, Dossier Mathon.*)

² "Her brothers drove her from them because she did not think as they did, because she came to see my wife, and saw citizens, who were sincere friends of justice and truth. She was even exposed to a prosecution when Lebon took her to Arras, and but for Florent Guyot, who brought her back to Paris, would have been imprisoned there, for Joseph Lebon's accomplices had denounced her in their infernal club, the Société Populaire as they called it." (*Guffroy, member of the Comité de Sûreté Générale to his Colleagues. Archives Nationales, F⁷, Dossier Mathon.*)

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

“to see the Convention honour virtue in the sister of a conspirator.”

The Comité de Sûreté Générale was tender-hearted towards this victim of Thermidor. It decreed¹ that Citoyenne Robespierre, “whom tyrants had persecuted, merited the confidence of good citizens and the protection of the constituted authorities, who were requested to render her that aid and assistance which the most pure citizenship merited and which French loyalty ought to accord.” And it must have been no slight humiliation for Charlotte to see, among the signatures of the most ardent Thermidorians at the foot of this decree, the name of Courtois, Robespierre’s implacable enemy—the very man who, in her mind, she accused “of having destroyed Maximilien’s papers to put forgeries in their place.”

Astonishment has been caused at seeing her pensioned by the Thermidorians, by the Empire, by Louis XVIII., and by the Constitutional Monarchy, and it has been suspected that all Governments purchased her silence regarding certain mysterious compromising acts. It was not her silence which they bought, but clearly her disavowal. To attest by Robespierre’s own sister that this high-priest of the Revolution was a monster was well worth, both to Napoleon and Louis XVIII., an annuity of £80.

Protected from want, Charlotte thus grew old, and from that time was without a history. But who can tell the secret of her life? This woman, surviving such anguish and such great but disappointed expectations, remained silent about the past. Nevertheless, she must have reflected. In what light did she, who had been acquainted with the under-currents of the Revolution, and had lived in the side-scenes of the Terror, regard the sequel of the events with which she had been so closely connected?

She had met young Bonaparte at Nice, and he, omitting nothing which might serve his purpose, had been full of engaging attentions towards her. When she saw him, in his

¹ The 24th of Germinal, Year III. Archives Nationales, F⁷, Dossier Charlotte Robespierre.

MADemoISELLE DE ROBESPIERRE

turn, grow greater, and succeed the little advocate of Arras in the ephemeral idolatry of the crowd, her regret must have become keener. Was it not Maximilien who had been destined by fortune to the high rank towards which the hero was raising himself? And when the Emperor, on the day of his coronation, crossed Paris to be crowned by the Pope, did she not have, while the splendid *cortège* filed past, as it were a vision of that other fête, in times of yore, at which her brother, also master—for a day—of the destinies of France, instituted the Supreme Being? This fresh start in public affairs must have been full of bitterness to her, and what a look she must have cast at the coaches, resplendent with mirrors and gold, in which the princesses, sisters of the poor artillery officer whose obsequiousness and humility she recollected, held their heads on high? Had fate so ordained it, however, she herself would have been in that seat . . . Why not? Had not Fouché, at a time when he was trying to discover which way the wind was blowing, asked her to marry him? ¹ . . . She would have been a duchess now! . . . And whilst returning to the quiet street where she had taken refuge, her sadness must have been intense. The neighbours, standing at the doors of their houses, greeted her with a "Good day, Mme. Carraut!" for she hid her own accursed name.²

She lived with the Mathons, who never left her, in the Rue de la Fontaine (now the Rue de la Pitié), near the

¹ "Fouché was not a handsome man. But he was pleasantly witty and extremely amiable. He proposed marriage to me, and I confess that I felt no repugnance to this union, and that I was rather disposed to give my hand to him whom my brother had introduced as a true democrat and as his friend." (*Memoirs of Charlotte Robespierre*, p. 107.)

² If we are to believe Pierre Joigneaux's *Souvenirs historiques*, in which we find the following lines, she also called herself Caroline Delaroche:

"I recollect that, about 1833 or 1834, a sister of Marat lived on the top floor of a house on the Place Saint-Michel. . . . Mlle. Marat disliked Robespierre's sister, who was also still alive and in Paris, and did not associate with her. Mlle. Marat was a character; Charlotte Robespierre was absolutely lacking in strength of mind. The former retained her name; the latter concealed hers under the pseudonym of *Caroline Delaroche*. These two sisters of members of the Convention had only poverty and love of work in common. One made watch-springs in her solitude; the other, in company with Mlle. Matton (*sic*), who died at Icaria, in Cabet's community, made underclothing." (*Souvenirs historiques* by Pierre Joigneaux, vol. ii., p. 293.)

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

Jardin des Plantes. A more solitary or more silent place does not exist in Paris. The street, which has not changed, winds along the walls of the old hospital.

Charlotte occupied, on the first floor of the house of a tanner, a room lit by two windows, one looking on to the street, and the other on to the courtyard. On the walls she had hung a lithograph portrait of Maximilien, a pencil sketch representing her other brother, and a miniature of Joséphine de Beauharnais—her only ornaments. She did her own cooking on the stove which warmed her room, read little, mused much, and sometimes wrote. Such was her life up to 1834. In the afternoon¹ of August 1st of that year she died. A priest called to see her; but she showed him to the door, saying “that she had practised virtue all her life, and that she died with a clear and easy conscience.”

When it became known in the quarter that Mme. Carraut was dead and that she was Robespierre's sister, people were in a flutter of excitement. Her real name, until then, was unknown, and two witnesses—Fichet, a grocer of the Rue Mouffetard, and Thorel, a currier and joint-tenant with the deceased—had to certify her identity at a notary's. An inventory of her personal property was drawn up. The portrait of Maximilien was valued at two francs, and the medallion of Joséphine at a franc; in a drawer of the chest of drawers was found three silver forks and spoons “marked with the family initials,” a dress made of “gros de Naples,” other dresses in linen, and a dozen worn undergarments. The whole was valued at 328 francs, five francs² of which was set down for an old arm-chair and six other chairs!

¹ Register of Births, Marriages, and Deaths of the Seine.

Copy delivered on unstamped paper by Me. Lavocat, notary in Paris, of an authentic copy of death certificate annexed to the minute in his possession of a deed drawn up in the presence of a notary, received on September 8th, 1834, by Me. Preschey, his immediate predecessor: “on August 2nd, 1834, at noon, certificate of death of Marie Marguerite Charlotte de Robespierre, deceased on the 1st of this month, at four o'clock in the afternoon, Rue de la Fontaine, No. 3, aged 74 years, without profession, born at Arras, spinster. Witnesses: Pierre Louis Fichet, age 37 years, wholesale grocer, Rue Mouffetard, No. 91, and Louis Jourdain, aged 35 years, picture dealer, living in the said street, No. 99.”

² Archives of Me. Dauchez, notary.

MADemoiselle DE ROBESPIERRE

Before me lies the printed notice of Charlotte's death, as follows :—

“ Paris, August 1st,
1834.

“ M,

“ Mlle. Reine Louise Victoire Mathon has the honour to inform you of the death of Marguerite Charlotte Robespierre, who died at four o'clock yesterday afternoon. The obsequies will take place on Sunday afternoon, August 3rd. The funeral procession will leave the house of the deceased, 3, Rue de la Fontaine, at ten o'clock in the morning.”

It will be noticed that the “ de ” to which Mlle. de Robespierre, as her will shows, remained attached, does not appear in this circular, and this is explained by the fact that a certain number of incorrigible Robespierrists—there were still some left even in 1834—proposed on the occasion of the funeral “ to give a lesson to the authorities.” A “ considerable concourse of patriots ” accompanied the body to the Montparnasse cemetery. An oration composed by Citoyen Laponneraye was read by someone at the grave side, the author being imprisoned in Sainte-Pélagie for a political offence. One passage is worthy of quotation: “ No, virtuous and unfortunate Maximilien, your sister has not disowned you. . . . Sister of Maximilien Robespierre, break away for a moment from the arms of death, appear to us once more, and tell us if ever, in thought, your good and unfortunate brother has ceased to be revered and loved, and if ever you have ceased to render homage to his virtues. . . . ”

The grant obtained by Victoire Mathon at the Montparnasse cemetery being only temporary,¹ Mlle. de Robespierre's tomb is no longer to be seen there. Five years later, Charlotte's remains were placed in the Catacombs, where they are to-day, pellmell with millions of others, including those of

¹ See August 3rd, 1834, in the registers of the Montparnasse cemetery.

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

Maximilien and the victims of Thermidor, which a tumbril brought from the Rue d'Errancis,¹ about 1860, at the time of the opening of the Boulevard Malesherbes.

¹ At the top of this street, now the Rue du Rocher, was a waste piece of ground, where Philippe-Egalité, Charlotte Corday, the two Robespierres, Couthon, St. Just, Henriot, and other members of the Convention were buried.—Translator.



Mademoiselle REINE-LOUISE-VICTOIRE MATHON a l'honneur de vous faire part de la mort de MARGUERITE-CHARLOTTE ROBESPIERRE, décédée aujourd'hui à quatre heures de l'après-midi Ses obsèques auront lieu après-demain dimanche, 3 août Le convoi partira de la maison mortuaire, rue de Fontaine, n. 3, à dix heures du matin.

Facsimile of the invitation issued on August 1, 1834, on the occasion of the death of Mademoiselle de Robespierre.

TWO DETECTIVES

I

HÉRON

WINDOWS without curtains on the third floor of 275, Rue Saint-Honoré—a solid, old house the ground-floor of which is used as a chemist's shop—indicated vacant premises. I entered.

The door of the building opens on to the Rue Saint-Florentin. A gloomy porch, a damp and cold courtyard, a staircase with wooden steps and brick landings, iron banisters with straight bars; sash-windows, four rooms in addition to a box-room, not very modern in appearance, but without style—such are the exceedingly commonplace surroundings. The house, however, has a history; for it was in this small apartment that Marat, on his escape from the Châtelet commissaries, took refuge in 1790.

Before the issue of the warrant for his arrest, the "friend of the people" occupied two rooms at the Hôtel de la Fautrière, in the Rue de l'Ancienne-Comédie. He lived there with a servant, named Victoire Nogait, who, at one and the same time, was his secretary, servant, and archivist, for she carried her master's correspondence concealed under her skirts. A cardboard box, which lay forgotten in the garrets of the Chancellerie from the time of Danton's ministry, contained a packet of letters labelled, "Papers found on the spinster Nogait on seals being affixed at Marat's residence." When the King's men presented themselves at the Hôtel de la Fautrière—on January 22nd, 1790—the populace rose against them. Whilst the two factions were parleying, Mlle. Fleury, an

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

actress of the Théâtre-Français, a nice girl and obliging to everybody, who also lived in the house, admitted Marat to her apartment, a private exit of which led into the Rue des Mauvais-Garçons, and thence he was able to escape. At night-fall, the proscribed made for a place where he knew he would find an accomplice, and thus it was that, awaiting better days, he took up his residence in the small apartment in the Rue Saint-Honoré.

The accomplice who sheltered him was Héron.

This name is hardly an illustrious one. Only those who have read the "Révélations de Sénar," the detective of the Sûreté Générale, will recollect the strange figure of this man Héron—extravagantly wicked, so odious and so black that good people, scared, exclaim, "Is such a thing possible?" Then, in order to reassure themselves, they add, "Nonsense! it cannot be true!" That is how Sénar has got a reputation for being a boaster; and it has even been recently stated that he never wrote a line, and that his embarrassing revelations are apocryphal.

Sénar sinned, however, only in being too reserved. He could have said very much more than he did; but he shielded Héron, having worked with him. Moreover, Héron was a cunning fellow. As he opened every carton and ferreted in every *dossier*, he destroyed many documents, hoping to cover up his traces and prevent reprisals. But one cannot think of everything, and, in spite of all his precautions, it is still possible, with time and patience, to reconstitute this forgotten figure of history.

It was in 1785 that he rented from the chemist Folloppe, the owner of the house, the small third-floor apartment in the Rue Saint-Honoré. On signing the lease, the honest apothecary certainly did not suspect the calamities he was bringing down upon his property. Héron was at this time an honourable naval officer,¹ who had come to Paris on

¹ The following is his birth certificate:—

"Louis Julien Simon Héron, who was born yesterday, legitimate son of worthy man Jean Héron and Judith Costar, the father and mother, was to-day baptised by me the undersigned. Simon Pinson and Julienne Chollet were god-father and god-mother, in the presence of Jean Malar,

TWO DETECTIVES

important business. The bankers Vandeniver, Lecoulteux, and Pascauld had, in fact, sent him to Havana to recover a bill of a million piastres which the Cuban commissariat had borrowed from them two years before.¹ Héron, who remained six months at sea, returned without the money and without the bill. The bankers expressed astonishment; Héron took offence; he felt that he was suspected, at least of blundering; and he made out that he was a victim of a "criminal band of princes, nobles, ministers, financiers, lawyers, emissaries of the Court, agents of the police—everybody, down to the vilest instruments of crime, appears to have conspired to ruin him." Such was his theme, and his folly became so developed that it can only be explained by attributing it to a sudden outburst of the persecution mania. If Clozanne, his man of business, were invited to dinner, he accused him of pocketing the silver; or if he met Mme. Buard, his neighbour, on the staircase of his house, he declared she had been stationed there by the bankers to spy

Marie Ohier, and Julienne Grossetête, who all declared they could not write, and in the name of the god-father and the said M. Héron, senior, who signed in our presence, March 16th, 1746." (*Extracted from the Parish Registers of Saint-Lunaise, Ille-et-Vilaine.*)

Héron's service record is summed up as follows:—

Voyage for the service: March 28th, 1772, at Brest, on board the *Alexandre*.

Special Voyages: in 1762, ten months and twelve days at Newfoundland, on the *Erasme*, as ensign; in 1765, six months and two days; in 1765—66, two months and fourteen days on the *Marquerite*, as coast-pilot; in 1766, six months and eight days, at Newfoundland, on the *Erasme*, as ensign; in 1767, six months and twenty-six days, on the *Erasme*, as second lieutenant; four months and five days on the *Union*, as coast-pilot; in 1768, four months and twenty-three days at Newfoundland, on the *Erasme* (wrecked September 15th), as second lieutenant; in 1769, five months and seven days at Newfoundland on the *Françoise*, as lieutenant; same year, twenty-one days on the *Lézard*, as first mate; in 1770, eight months at Newfoundland on the *Françoise*, as first mate; in 1771, seven months and five days at Newfoundland on the *Sainte-Suzanne*, as first mate; same year, one month and seventeen days, in command of the *Sainte-Juliac*.

A note, dated 1783, contains this appreciation: "Héron has sailed since 1764, served during the late war, and has been on the sea fourteen years, including three years and nine months in the service. When in command of a corvette, he stood a fight against superior forces, was wounded, and captured. Comte d'Hector, who did not know him, heard him highly praised by Comte d'Orvilliers. (*Archives of the Ministry of Marine.*)

¹ Héron sailed for Havana on the *Sartine*, belonging to Joseph Denis Gognet, shipowner at La Rochelle. (*Registers of the Admiralty of La Rochelle.*)

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

upon him. His wife herself—for, before leaving for Havana, he had married Modeste Desbois, the daughter of an honourable citizen of Cancale¹—even his own wife, according to him, was “in league with his tormentors.” He declared that she had a lover, an officer named Thiboult de Puissac, “an agent of the Court and ministers, delegated to carry out their criminal designs.” But he paid little heed to his conjugal misfortunes, for he knew that the rôle of his “unworthy spouse,” in the intrigue with which he contended, consisted “in driving him mad and obtaining his confinement as a lunatic.” Consequently, he took infinite care to keep cool. With “calm contempt” he ascertained that his house was “continually watched by a multitude of police, ready to seize him if he departs from his character”; and it was with similar calmness that, one day, on the invitation of Modeste herself, he convinced himself of the *sans-gêne* with which Thiboult de Puissac² trifled with his marital honour. And whilst “this dishonouring, indecent, and scandalous scene presented itself to his view,” advantage was taken of his contemplation of it to break open a desk in the next room and rob him of his whole fortune—800,000 francs in Caisse d’escompte shares and the title-deeds of his estates!³ This

¹ Marriage certificate of Louis Julien Simon Héron and Modeste Anne Jeanne Desbois, daughter of worthy man Etienne Benoist Desbois and Modeste Charlotte Helvant, August 12th, 1777. (*Registers of the Commune of Cancale.*)

² Jacques François Thiboult de Puissac, born in Paris, in the parish of Notre-Dame-des-Grès. Gentleman-cadet in the 68th infantry (ex-Beauce) regiment, June 6th, 1776; sub-lieutenant, June 22nd, 1779; second lieutenant, June 1st, 1783; first lieutenant, September 1st, 1786; and captain, January 12th, 1792.

“Thiboult, in garrison at Saint-Malo, a *protégé* of D’Artois and secret emissary of the Court, subjugated my wife, took possession of my house, and squandered there part of my fortune during my sojourn at Havana.” (*Note by Héron.*)

³ “Thiboult, an agent of the Court and Ministers. . . , that knave whom they brought from Brest to carry out their criminal designs, first of all enticed my wife to doubtful resorts and ended by appearing with her in public. They planned the most infamous scene with her—the means of robbing and murdering me. On February 11th, 1788, my wife lay in bed longer than usual. Tiné, her chamber-maid, an accomplice and *confidante*, feigning disquietude on the subject of her health, advised me to go to her apartment. I did so, but found the door fastened. A confused voice and low spoken-words told me that she was not alone. It was not long before I was allowed to enter the room. . . A dishonouring, indecent, and scandalous scene presented itself to my view. My wife’s

TWO DETECTIVES

sum of £32,000, in his possession, would lead us to suppose that Héron did not return from Cuba empty-handed. . . But one must admit that his enemies, the bankers, adopted a singular method of diverting his attention and getting back their money.

From the time of this theft his existence was that of a maniac. His conduct became incoherent. There was a daily fight in the house in the Rue Saint-Honoré. He fought with his brother-in-law, who came from Brest, where he was a midshipman, to call him to account for his extravagance; he fought "with men concealed on the staircase"; the chemist Follope, owner of the house, "receives blows with the fist in his face"; the doorkeeper barricaded his lodge; and the servant no longer dared to show herself, "for fear of an unlucky blow." Héron went backwards and forwards, hurried to the bankers', demanded his money, laughed at the civil lieutenant, "an iniquitous magistrate who supports his wife," and puts to flight Thiboult and Clozanne who, "one night, on the Carrousel, attempt to assassinate him."¹

His aberration was only increased by the events of 1789. He fatigued the committees of the Assembly² by his

affectation in not wishing to spare me even the conviction of the crime proved to me that she is a monster. . . Calmness and contempt were the arms which I opposed to so great a horror. . . I confided my indignation to my friends. On returning I found my house empty and 800,000 francs in Caisse d'escompte script and the title-deeds of my Bas-Marais farm stolen. . . . They sought to provoke my indignation in order to ascribe it to insanity." (*Note by Héron.*)

¹ A very dignified letter from Benoist Desbois, the father-in-law of this maniac, must here be given:—

"It is now, Héron, January 29th, 1789. You left my house early in August, 1788. You have, therefore, been absent six months, without letting me have any news from you. This letter is despatched to-day, the 29th, and you will receive it on Sunday, February 1st. I hope to receive a reply by the 8th, at the latest. If I do not have it by that time I shall have nothing more to do with your affairs, unless they involve my family honour."

² About this time, Modeste Desbois made a last attempt to live again with her husband. This is how Héron relates her effort towards conciliation:—

"On March 5th, 1790, I was served with a petition from my wife tending to force me to live with her and to appear before the civil lieutenant. This iniquitous magistrate supported my wife and presented her to me with the words: 'Héron, here is a beautiful, amiable, tall, and well-made woman. She says no ill of you, and wishes to live with you. Isn't there any means

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

recriminations; he plagued journalists; he entered into relations with Marat, whose intimate friend he became and whom he hid at his house during four months. On August 10th, his rancour was directed against the Château de Versailles. Wounded five times in the attack on the Tuileries, Héron recovered strength to hasten to Versailles, where the Orleans prisoners were to be brought. Among these unhappy people was one of his enemies, Delessart, and, when the *cortège* entered the town, Héron, at the head of Maillard's "Hardhitters," rushed on the waggons, demanded a massacre, took part in the slaughter, and returned to Paris satisfied.

Delessart's blood gave him a taste for more. Attached to the Comité de Sûreté Générale as chief agent, he recruited a band of men who were not particular what work they did, and whom he formed into a regiment under the name of "Porteurs d'ordres." All "beat up game for the guillotine"; and the information which they collected was centred in the hands of Héron, whose reports were drawn up by Pillé, his secretary. I have found some of these bulletins, which invariably begin with the words: "I denounce the said¹ . . ." As to the reasons for suspicion, they were most vague, viz., "This man is an enemy of our revolution," or, "He is a gamester and a man of very bad morals," or again, "He is

of finding a little corner for her in your apartment?' I replied that my fortune had been stolen by her friend, Thiboult, and that her crimes would not allow me to take her back."

¹ The following is a specimen of the literature of this procurer of the guillotine:—

"I denounce the said Le Joindre, ex-military officer, living at Mans, as a pronounced counter-revolutionary. This is justified by the annexed letter of August 10th last, sealed with forbidden arms, and bearing the address 'To citizen Taburet,' and in which he uses the word 'Monsieur' five times and the formula 'Your very humble and very obedient servant,' which is now used only by counter-revolutionaries. These facts, added to my knowledge of all his old acquaintances with dukes, counts, and barons, convince me that he is really a counter-revolutionary and the correspondent of the *émigrés*, as well as the two brothers De Launy, of Laval, one of whom is his father-in-law, who is in bankruptcy, and the other an ex-noble by right of purchase. All of them were court valets and agents of the Maréchal de Castries, Duc de Coigny, etc., and closely connected with Cottin, the famous fighter of the Champ de Mars.—Héron." (Archives nationales. Documents found among the papers of Héron, agent of the Comité de Sûreté Générale, F⁷. 4543.)

TWO DETECTIVES

mentioned in my memorandum to the Committee." The last was the worst stigma, for it was especially his personal enemies whom he pursued. He gave himself the pleasure of personally arresting the banker Vandener, whom he sent to the scaffold; and the chemist Folloppe, his landlord, was guillotined under the pretext that he had at his house "the silver of the woman Séozan, a proved aristocrat." Mme. Buard, his neighbour, was guillotined "for residing in a château belonging to an *émigré*"; young Letellier, who also lodged in Folloppe's house, was guillotined because he was reputed "to be Biron's natural son and has made counter-revolutionary remarks"; and the woman Crussol was guillotined "for sometimes appearing on an elevated terrace overlooking the courtyard through which one passed when going to Héron's." It seems as though, haunted by a perpetual nightmare, he had some terrible secret to hide and that all the witnesses of his life must die.¹

His wife also annoyed him, so, one fine day, he went to Sénar and offered him 3,600 livres and a regular situation at 6,000 francs if he would consent to slip the name of Modeste Desbois into some conspiracy in order to have her guillotined.

"My wife, don't you see," he said, "is a native of the suburbs of Saint-Malo, which is a district of aristocrats. She must be put into a report. When a name is slipped into some big affair, the thing's done. All you've got to do is to point out the accomplices; then, names are called out, heads fall, and slap! bang! it's finished!"

In other respects, Héron was a coward. His apartment was a perfect arsenal. When he went out he was always accompanied by two men armed to the teeth; and he himself carried a hunting-knife in a white baldric, had two blunderbusses in his great coat, some pocket-pistols, other smaller pistols in a belt, a poinard, and a stiletto. In short, he was a walking battery.

¹ Héron visited Fouquier-Tinville at the tribunal almost daily. They had some truly epic conversations. "Our business is prospering—heads are falling like slates," said one of them. "That's how we deal with heads," replied the other. "During a revolution one mustn't stop over such play-things." And they parted with the words: "Right! cut off their heads, and thereby enrich the Republic." (Archives nationales, W-500.)

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

His reign of prosperity came to an end in Thermidor. Arrested, set free (for he had influential friends), again arrested,¹ and once more liberated, it was finally decided to send him for trial to the Eure-et-Loire criminal tribunal. He passed through the country districts or department of the Seine-et-Oise, which he had terrorised, between two gendarmes, his hands chained to the horses' saddles, and on the journey was received with a never-ending volley of maledictions and insults.

Worn out with fatigue and foaming at the mouth with anger, he was cast into a dungeon of the Chartres prison. The public prosecutor of the department brought up more than three hundred witnesses against him. Things were looking very black.

Héron, in order to gain time, objected to the Eure-et-Loire tribunal, legal formalities, this time, appearing to him insufficiently observed! The amnesty of October 26th, 1795, however, saved him. Disgusted with mankind, he took up his residence at Versailles, where, on February 16th, 1796,² he died in a comfortable house in the Rue des Réservoirs.

His wife survived him nearly fifty years.³

Paris is the happy hunting-ground of searchers. It is strange that after the accumulation of a century of old papers, after so many fires, removals, and revolutions, one can succeed in disinterring from the jumble of documents in the record-office certain leaves which so many people had an interest in

¹ At the time of his arrest, on the 27th Vendémiaire, Year III, Héron threw a bundle of compromising papers down the water-closet of his house. The chemist Folloppe, nephew of the owner of the house whom Héron had denounced and had executed, declared "that, at the request of Citizen Adam, tenant on the second floor, below the said Héron's apartment, he had had the soil-pipe searched, and having found it obstructed, had had withdrawn a number of documents which he ascertained must have come from the third floor, as, moreover, their deciphering proved . . ." (Archives Nationales, F⁷ 4743.)

² Death certificate of Louis Julian Simon Héron, age 50 years, native of Limer (*sic*) (Ille-et-Vilaine), husband of Modeste Desbois, deceased at his residence, 1, Rue des Réservoirs, the 27th Pluviôse, Year IV (February 16th, 1796). (*Registers of Versailles.*)

³ Modeste Desbois, who was born on January 12th, 1757, died on July 22nd, 1843. She had no children. She appointed as sole heirs her three nephews Jean Baptiste, Edmond Avice, and Paul Etienne Desbois, the last of whom, born on October 31st, 1822, died at Fougères on June 12th, 1883.

TWO DETECTIVES

destroying, and when, gleaning here a letter and there a single indication, one has succeeded in making a vanished figure live again, it is also strange that after so many houses have been pulled down and new streets have been made, one can reconstitute the surroundings in the midst of which the forgotten drama was played, and find the house where the personage lived still standing. Héron's house has remained as it was a hundred years ago. Truly, it does not merit the honour of a commemorative tablet; but, when we have studied the career of this strange man, we experience a very peculiar and intense sensation in concerning ourselves a little—from afar—with his life, in mounting his staircase, in pushing open his bedroom door, and in leaning out of the window from which, with the satisfaction of a satiated tiger, he saw his victims pass, on Sanson's cart turning the fatal corner whence those unhappy people suddenly perceived the guillotine.

II

FIGARO'S LAST INCARNATION

If Beaumarchais knew—as appears to me to be very probable—a certain Dossonville, who played a minor rôle in the revolutionary tragi-comedy, he must have felt a thrill of joy on recognising, in this person of flesh and blood, the child of his genius, Figaro, struggling against the most extensive, most dramatic intrigue that man has ever seen. Figaro in the thick of the Revolution, Figaro conspiring, snapping his fingers at the guillotine, railing at the Terror, playing with the Comité de Sûreté Générale, as with a simple Bartholo, and holding his own against the Convention, as he did in the case of Count Almaviva,—what a pity that such a subject as this did not tempt the author of *Le Barbier de Séville*, and what an astounding epilogue he would have added to his immortal trilogy!

The end of the eighteenth century saw the appearance of a number of Figaros. This type of mischievous, sceptical,

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

cunning, impudent, joking bohemian was so perfectly suited to the habits and customs of the epoch, that he was frequently to be met with in those days of refined corruption. There were pedantic Figaros, like Fabre d'Églantine; and tragic Figaros, like Collot d'Herbois. But undoubtedly the most complete, the one who, on account of his high spirits, his gaiety, and inexhaustible ingenuity, bears the closest resemblance to the model, was this unknown Dossonville, "who had seen everything, done everything, exhausted everything," and whose name has not even been retained by history.

Son of I know not whom, and, in conformity with tradition, valet to a great lord,¹ Dossonville spent the first twenty years of his life in the service of President Salaberry. Quickwitted, handsome, active, insidious, ever in a good humour, giving up the present entirely to pleasure, and troubling himself as little over the future as about the past, he one day threw off his livery and, confiding in his good fortune, launched out into the world. He recognised in himself but one "weakness," which, moreover, he frankly admitted, and that was an enormous appetite. Alternately a clerk, a petition writer, half an author, and for a short time a faro banker, he kept, in 1789, at the Cour des Miracles, a well-frequented café, where the wits and politicians of the quarter often met to read the newspapers or to play at cards.²

Such was his occupation on the breaking out of the Revolution. He welcomed it with enthusiasm, became excited, held forth in his café, had a finger in everything, and won the confidence of his district by his eloquence. Made a lieutenant in the National Guards, he was to be seen at reviews

¹ "Dossonville was brought up at my grandmother's and at the house of my uncle, President de Salaberry. He was a tall, handsome man, with an open countenance, whom I had known to be very active, very strong, and possessed of truly uncommon courage." (*Mémoires du Comte de Moré.*) Interesting details about Dossonville are also to be found in the second volume of the *Mémoires de Dürfort de Cheverny*.

² Statement of Citizen Bernier, junior, 17, Rue de la Lune. The text of this document, the wording of which is no less curious than its orthography, is as follows: Je certifie que le caffee que Dossonville cour des miraque etes le rassembleman des Lafayette e des royalliste donc les Mahieux rousialle et morin et de boullée voila ce que je peut conaitre vus que je nes pas parlé a vec eux vu que la sanguloterie ne pouvait pas entré dans leur conversasion et a signé Bernier." (Archives Nationales, F⁷ 4680.)

TWO DETECTIVES

in short jacket and leather breeches, galloping by the side of Lafayette, and shouting: "Vive notre sauveur! Vive notre brave Général!"¹ A year later he was an officer of the peace; no longer a "Fayetteur," but on the side of the Court. Or rather he belonged to both camps; for, like his model, the illustrious barber, what he loved above *all* things, was "two, three, four intrigues at a time, well interwoven one with the other." He became one of the intimates² at the Tuileries, conversed with Louis XVI., advised and captivated him, and was entrusted with a secret mission in England. He remained there three months, returned at the time of danger, and, on August 10th, was among the defenders of the Château. On the following day he was arrested, and brought up for trial with his accomplice Collenot d'Angremont, who was guillotined. . . . He himself was imprisoned in the Abbaye, but the place being unsafe, he made a great to-do, and succeeded in getting out of prison on September 1st, a few hours before the commencement of the massacres. Thus, in less than a fortnight, did Dossonville escape from the headsman Sanson and the hard-hitting Maillard.

It had been a close shave. But, in faith, he was well able to look after himself. On finding himself in the street, an entire section of society had been swept away, and Dossonville, who was astonished by nothing, was at ease from the very first day. Men and things immediately became familiar to him; the Paris of the Convention, the novelty of which was so disconcerting to everybody, withheld nothing from him. He dined with the woman Saint-Ange, who was the bosom friend of Chabot; he shook the hand of Saint-Laurent, the spy who was in the pay of the Prince de Condé; he visited at the house of Bezon, the skilled engraver of forged passports; he was well received in gaming-houses, at Sainte-Amarante's and Mme. Latour's, in suspicious agencies, in all places where people chattered, amused themselves, and plotted. He was now a detective, and, less than six months after his appearance before

¹ Statement of Citizen Villain (Archives Nationales, F^v 4680.)

² "They did me the honour to receive and listen to me, as a servant on whom they could rely." (*Mémoires du Comte de Moré.*)

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

the revolutionary tribunal as a "Chevalier de poignard" and a defender of royalty, he became the confidential agent of the Comité de Sûreté Générale.

Two men whom he employed as spies are worthy of mention. One was a certain Armand, an ex-soldier, ex-wine-shop keeper, ex-commercial agent, ex-clerk to a procurator, ex-employé in the finance department, who had experienced the annoyance of being sentenced to twenty years' penal servitude for putting into circulation forged assignats which he had been ordered to destroy.¹ The other was named Demonceau, an unfrocked monk, who, eaten up with itch and covered with rags, had been picked out of the gutter. Dossonville took him to an old clothes dealer, fitted him out "from top to toe," for he had not even a shirt to his back, and promoted him to the dignity of ferreter.

Whilst these two accomplices got on the scent and beat up game, Dossonville, ever smiling, affable, good-tempered, and eating his fill, walked about Paris with head on high and ears wide open, observing public feeling.

Unlike his colleagues on the Comité, who never went out except armed to the teeth—swords at their sides and blunderbusses in their belts—he prided himself on carrying no other defensive weapon than a slender switch with which he lashed the air as he walked along.² Besides, he alone was more powerful than the entire united Convention. I have before me the commission which he held, and the powers which

¹ "On the 7th of Germinal year II, Armand was sentenced to twenty years' penal servitude by the criminal tribunal of the Department of Paris for fabricating warrants, forging the signatures of police administrators, etc., and using them to intimidate and blackmail a wealthy citizen, named Hofmann. I followed the proceedings as a lawyer from beginning to end, and on leaving the last sitting of the tribunal was filled with horror at this Armand. I did not foresee that this man, in Dossonville's hands, would become an informer protected by the Comité de Sûreté Générale." (*Citizen Demonceau to Clauzel, representative of the People. Archives Nationales, F⁷ 4680.*) Armand was imprisoned, in Vendémiaire year III, at the Couvent des Anglaises, in the Rue de Lourcine, from which he escaped. He was recaptured at Rheims. He had in his possession 70,000 livres in assignats, 30,000 livres in cash, in a belt, and a bag containing many watches and diamonds valued at 300,000 livres. (*Archives Nationales, F⁷ 4581.*)

² "As an offensive and defensive weapon he carried a small stick, a foot and a half long, and as thick as a switch." (*Mémoires du Comte de Moré.*)

TWO DETECTIVES

it conferred upon him were limitless. He was authorised to proceed against "all enemies of public happiness, under whatever denomination"; prisons of all kinds were open to him; he had the right to retain there and examine, without witnesses, any prisoners he liked; "he could not be arrested or interrupted in the course of his mission, or *imprisoned under any pretext whatever*, without having previously been brought before the Comité de Sûreté Générale, which must immediately inquire into the reason for his arrest."

Now, he was at home at the Comité de Sûreté Générale, and he was doubtless the only one who enjoyed the excessive privilege of that time of being certain, on leaving his residence in the morning, of not sleeping at night in prison—unless he wanted to. Note that he was authorised, in addition, "to obtain the assistance of all citizens whom he chose to select, and to whom he could delegate either a part or the whole of the powers with which he was invested."

Dossonville was a fine fellow, he had established himself purveyor to the guillotine with the sole object of rendering service to suspicious persons whom he hunted down—service for which he never required payment. He himself, later, cheerfully said: "I saved as many of them as I could. Many know it, but many more are utterly ignorant of the fact, for I never told them—fearing their indiscreet gratitude."

And, as a matter of fact, many men owed their lives to him. He knew so well how to put things into a tangle, mislay documents, and prolong the most simple inquiries. He had, on the other hand, discovered so many secrets and was so well armed against his masters that they never suspected the double game he was playing—or, if they had any suspicion of it, they did not dare to enter into conflict with so well-informed an accomplice. I have a letter of his, written on a certain day when he felt he was threatened, in which he refers, without circumlocutions, to "important documents" which were his safeguard, and which he had deposited "in sure and inviolable hands." "It is no use trying to get hold of them by force or cunning," he added. "There is only one way to recover them and make certain that I shall do other-

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

wise than hand them to those whom they concern, and that is to leave me at liberty."

This was, however, a dangerous game, and Thermidor would certainly have put a stop to his roguish tricks in a tragic manner had Dossonville not foreseen the catastrophe and scented the danger. Be on your guard! Figaro, turn aside! Two days before the *coup d'état*, when Robespierre was still powerful, the Comité de Salut public received a denunciation of Dossonville. It was followed by a second and a third. Ten, fifteen, thirty reports came one after the other. The whole quarter in which he lived denounced him with touching ingenuousness; his neighbours, the former customers at his café at the Cour des Miracles, and the sans-culottes of his section, unanimously accused him of always having been an enemy of the Jacobins, of criticising Robespierre, and of abusing the laws of Prairial But it was not *until the 9th of Thermidor* that the Comité received this *dossier*, at the very hour Robespierre was succumbing and his enemies were triumphing. Dossonville was saved! His admirable juggling transferred him from the camp of the conquered to that of the conquerors. But, as he needed rest and wished to let the storm blow over, he consented to take refuge in a select prison. At the beginning of Fructidor he saw "from the inside of a cab, the drawbridge of a castle lowered for him," and as he entered left behind him if not hope, at any rate liberty. This castle was, however, not very grim in appearance—it was the house of the Marquis de Talaru.

This house, which is still intact at 62, Rue Richelieu, was a strange prison. It was built at great cost, at the beginning of the reign of Louis XVI., by the Marquis de Talaru, chief majordomo to the Queen. The Revolution having forced him to be more modest in his tastes, the Marquis, thinking he would derive benefit from his property, let it for 6,600 livres to a speculator named Gence, who proposed to transform it into a furnished hotel. But foreigners were scarce in Paris in 1793, and the rooms of the hotel remained almost empty. In order not to be without tenants, Gence hit upon the ingenious idea of letting the building, in his turn, to the revolutionary

TWO DETECTIVES

committee of the Lepeletier section, which was in need of a prison.

In a few days the apartments were crowded with wealthy people who had been arrested on suspicion, and who were incarcerated there by favour and on payment. Prices were exorbitant. One of eight prisoners who was lodged at four francs a day in the salon on the ground floor calculated that this room alone produced 320 livres for every ten days, 960 livres a month, or 10,520 livres (£420 16s. 8d.) a year, whereas the poor Marquis de Talaru received *for the entire house* only 6,600 livres. What was considered by general consent to be very piquant was the fact that one of the first suspected persons who occupied the Talaru prison was Talaru himself. Arrested as a former nobleman, he succeeded in getting incarcerated in his own house. On expressing a desire to occupy a room alone, on account of his age and infirmities, he was allotted a small room at eighteen livres a day—6,600 francs a year—so that, for being in prison in his own house, he reimbursed the entire sum which his tenant paid him.

This combination highly amused his companions in captivity. Talaru's was a cheerful prison; for the inmates played, ate well,—which especially delighted the famished Dossonville,—and even danced. Schmidt, the head jailer, was very proud of his select *clientèle* and saw that *his prison* preserved the air of a fashionable drawing-room. While the majority of his *confrères* at the Conciergerie and elsewhere kept enormous bull dogs at their heels, Schmidt's ordinary companion on his rounds of inspection was a large curly backed sheep with knots of pink ribbons attached to its neck and feet. That was the distinctive mark of the house.

When Dossonville—well-filled, hearty, and refreshed—left the house of the Marquis de Talaru, the Terror had long been forgotten, and it was no use thinking any longer of living at the expense of the Comité de Sûreté Générale. But as one must dine, although no longer in prison, the former Terrorist returned to his first occupation and became a Royalist agent.

Fructidor came. Dossonville was arrested, imprisoned in

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

the Temple, and placed in an iron cage in excellent company, including Barthélemy, the Abbé Brothier, Tronson-Ducoudray, Barbé-Marbois, and sixty others. This menagerie on wheels then travelled by short stages to Rochefort, where the prisoners were embarked on the corvette *La Vaillante* for French Guiana.¹

The impressions received on this voyage were, as one may well believe, only moderately agreeable. Poor Dossonville could not succeed in getting sufficient to eat. Meals were rare and bills of fare were concise, and, for the first time, he began to abuse politics, "which did not nourish its dependant." During the fifty days which the passage took, he only once ate his fill. The crew caught a shark, which was cut up on deck and divided among the convicts. The badly cooked, oily, and tasteless flesh of this fish was uneatable to all but Dossonville, who devoured six pounds of it! He had that very day exchanged his last coat for a large piece of bread, over which he gloated. This meal was one of the best he ever had in his life²; but his stomach was so disordered by privation that it nearly killed him!

But his good humour was irrepressible. At Cayenne and Sinnamary Dossonville retained his high spirits, in spite of privation and fever, which decimated the convicts. His ever-active mind sought for a means of "delivering them from that place." He submitted to his companions a wild plan of escape, and seven of them—Barthélemy, Aubry, Ramel, Pichegru and three others—were persuaded to carry it out. This devil of a man inspired confidence. Besides, he undertook everything himself and had only to be followed.

One fine June night he threw the sentry, who was guarding the hut, from the ramparts of the fort, into the river, led his

¹ "I was finally transported in the very best of company," said Dossonville, who added; "This was a roguish trick on the part of Fouché, who greatly annoyed me by it." (*Mémoires du Comte de Moré.*)

² "The horrors of this famine will never be effaced from my mind. The unfortunate Dossonville uttered such cries of rage that we feared we should be bitten. The crew having caught a very large shark, the captain ordered that the worst parts be given to us. How oily, indigestible, and unwholesome is the flesh of this monster is well known. . . Dossonville, with frightful voracity, alone ate more than six pounds; but it nearly killed him. . ." (*Journal de l'Adjudant Général Ramel*, p. 63.)



PICHEGRU.

TWO DETECTIVES

friends to the bank, and pushed them into a pirogue which he had been awaiting for some days past. . . . At dawn the fugitives found themselves out at sea, without a compass, without a map, and without provisions of any sort. They could hear the triple cannon shots from the redoubt at the Pointe signalling their escape.

Alternately drenched to the skin and baked by the sun, they remained in their boat, which was submerged by the smallest wave, for a week. Harassed, bleeding, and eaten up with scurvy, they were cast, naked, on Dutch territory. Their entire possessions consisted of a pipe, a handful of tobacco, and a flint and steel, which Pichegru had saved from the wreck. Dossonville remained for a week without food—the greatest trial he ever experienced during his adventurous life, and the thought of which even twenty years afterwards made perspiration break out on his forehead.

Another man, perhaps, would have been satisfied with so many emotions. . . . But Dossonville had no sooner landed at Hamburg than he conceived a fresh project. As access to France was forbidden him, he hit upon the idea of delivering Mexico from Spanish tyranny. He set out for London and entered into relations with Miranda's secretary. But the English stole his idea, so Dossonville sailed for Spain to inform the Government of the danger which threatened their colony. How is it that, a little later, we find him a prisoner of Austria at Olmütz? That is a mystery which I have been unable to solve.

The Treaty of Lunéville gave him back to France. Bonaparte, who had heard his merits extolled, entrusted him with the organisation of his secret police. Dossonville showed such zeal in this work that the first conspirator who fell into his clutches was—Pichegru, Pichegru his friend, the gallant companion of his flight from French Guiana! He allowed him to escape. This good action brought about his re-imprisonment, and he was sentenced to be shot for high treason. Fortunately, he had taken care to inform himself thoroughly about the men in power, he let them guess what he knew, and so they were satisfied with shutting him up at Melun, under the eye of the superior police.

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

But only to note briefly the events of Dossonville's varied life would make a volume sufficient to furnish plots for a dozen novelists. Let us go straight to the *dénouement*.

The Bourbons, being unable to reward everyone who, rightly or wrongly, claimed they had shown devotion to their cause, decided right royally to be ungracious. At the Restoration, Dossonville was promoted to the dignity of police commissary for the Ile-Saint-Louis quarter,¹ and declared he was satisfied. He was adored by his fellow-citizens. The shopkeepers and the gossips of the quarter came to settle their quarrels before him. When they abused each other *à propos* of an incommodious sun-blind or a flower-pot which had fallen into the street, *Monsieur* Dossonville calmed them with a smile which seemed to signify: "This is not the first quarrel I've seen." And as the story of his extraordinary adventures passed from mouth to mouth in the Ile-Saint-Louis he came to be regarded as an almost fantastic being, a hero and a very fine fellow at one and the same time.

And, in truth, Dossonville, who died a poor man, committed only one crime—that of neglecting to write his memoirs. A simple, sincere, and truthful narrative of his life would teach us more about the Revolution than all the volumes by Michelet and Louis Blanc, and would assure its author a place of honour in the Library of Marvels, between Casanova and Baron de Treuck.

¹ "Dossonville, police commissary of the Ile-Saint-Louis quarter. Neither good nor evil is said of him nowadays; but it is recollected that he was the agent of various factions. The position which he holds at the present time is probably the reward for services rendered in former days. His son is *chef de bureau* in the furnished lodgings section at the Prefecture of Police." (*Biographie des Commissaires de police et des officiers de paix de la ville de Paris*, 1826.)

SAVALETTE DE LANGES

I

THE UNKNOWN ONE

THE Royal Almanack for the year 1786 gives the following information: "*Keeper of the Royal Treasury*: M. Savalette senior, Rue Saint-Honoré, above the Jacobins—M. Savalette de Langes, his son, deputy, same address."

M. Savalette senior, who bore the Christian names of Charles Pierre, was born in 1716. An honorary member of the Council of State and ex-intendant of Tours, he was loaded with royal favours and received, from 1752, in addition to the revenues of his office, a pension of 4000 livres (£160) from the King's privy-purse. His son likewise enjoyed the entire confidence of the Court, which he little merited if we are to believe the Abbé Barruel's *Histoire du Jacobinisme*. He was, in fact, the correspondent in Paris of the German *illuminati*, who, as everybody knows, played a considerable rôle in the preparation of the revolutionary movement. This man Savalette, according to Barruel, "was mixed up in all sorts of mysteries and plots." He established in the Rue de la Sourdière a brilliant lodge where agreeable fêtes were given, ruled over by a secret committee, which governed all the disciples of Weishaupt, Swedenborg, and Saint-Martin, affiliated to illuminism. We possess details on the subject of this secret committee which are, perhaps, somewhat vulgarly picturesque. For instance, nobody was allowed to cross the threshold of the room in which it was holding its sittings, and two "terrible brothers," with drawn swords, defended

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

the door of the sanctuary. It was also Savalette de Langes who, in order to reform the lodge of the Rue de la Sourdière, brought to Paris Comte de Saint-Germain and Cagliostro, thaumaturgists who had a great influence on secret societies, on the eve of 1789.

These details are rumours rather than historical facts, for authentic documents bearing on these ever obscure points are lacking. But an established fact would lead one to believe that Barruel was right in giving the Keeper of the Royal Treasury the title of "ardent revolutionary." During the whole of the Revolution, Barère, who was little suspected of moderation, lived "at the house of his friend Savalette, Rue Saint-Honoré."¹—The house now bears the number 352.—When Savalette was accused of having lent Comte d'Artois, in 1791, a sum of five million francs, which enabled him to emigrate, Barère interceded with the Commune for his host, who was already imprisoned, and succeeded in saving him from the scaffold.

Moreover, Savalette de Langes ardently served the Revolution. He was one of the most influential officers of the National Guard and one of the five commissaries of the Public Treasury appointed by the Convention. This personage, whose history, in short, is rather suspicious, died in 1798.²

Now, at the beginning of the Restoration, there lived in Paris a woman who claimed to be the natural daughter of this former Court banker. She had assumed the names of Henriette Jenny Savalette de Langes, and made much of the disinterestedness shown by her father in emptying his coffers for the benefit of Comte d'Artois. This fine action, she said, had ruined him: he had died bankrupt through fidelity to his princes—which was not true. But the Restoration did not inquire very closely into these statements. Jenny Savalette, who knew neither where she was born nor the name of her mother, obtained, in addition to two pensions,³

¹ Barère's *Mémoires*.

² The Duc de Gaëte, in his *Mémoires*, several times mentions the name of Savalette de Langes, who was his colleague on the Treasury Committee.

³ *General list of pensioners on the old civil list*. Paris, 1833: "Savalette Delanges (Henriette Jenny), spinster. Daughter of the former paymaster-general of the Royal Treasury. Amount of the pension, 800 francs."



MLLE. SAVALETTE DE LANGES,
(From a portrait made at Versailles in 1858.)

SAVALETTE DE LANGES

the management of the Villejuif post-office, and, later, the concession of an apartment at the Château de Versailles.

This good royalist was exceedingly pious. Before being lodged at the King's expense she had stayed as a lady boarder at Abbaye-aux-Bois, and then with the sisters of Saint-Thomas-de-Villeneuve. She also lodged for some months at the Saint-Maur convent and with the Ursulines of Saint-Germain-en-Laye. Received into the most select royalist society of Paris, she was looked upon as a woman of true virtue and great intelligence. Her friends reproached her with only one defect—a kind of ambulatory mania which impelled her to remove continually. I possess a list of her abodes from 1814 to 1858, and it would fill, if printed, three octavo pages. Jenny passed from the Marais to the Saint-Sulpice quarter, from the Saint-Sulpice quarter to the Faubourg Saint-Germain, then returned to the Marais, whence she emigrated to the Faubourg Saint-Denis, changing her residence almost every three months and occupying four or five different houses in succession in the same street. From 1824 to 1832 she was established at Versailles;¹ but when the alterations undertaken by Louis Philippe deprived her of her apartment she recommenced her peregrinations in Paris.

In short, she seemed unhappy. Brilliant proposals of marriage had been made to her, and two were on the point of being realised when they were suddenly broken off. She remained, therefore, a spinster. Known to be poor, people overwhelmed her with presents, the most acceptable to her being toilet articles and dresses, which she altered to fit her figure.² She wrote a good deal, in a large, effeminate, almost illegible hand, which caused all her correspondents to complain. She exercised her wits in rendering service, finding situations for servants, even obtaining money for people in embarrassed circumstances; and in doing this showed an abnegation and

¹ Her apartment at the Château was situated—"Cour de Marbre, staircase No. 13; second floor, door No. 66."

² "To Mademoiselle Savalette: This dress was made several years ago, but it has never been worn. By adding a flounce, as good a match as possible, and placing the trimming over the joining, I think it will fit Mlle. Savalette, who, in addition, will choose the sleeves she thinks fit to add. I do not wish her to know me and still less to guess at my identity." (*Savalette's Papers.*)

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

devotion for which she received much gratitude. A lady with a great name always wrote to her as "My Dear Angel." Her whole conduct was irreproachably respectable. Moreover, she was not without influence, and, although a downright Legitimist—on which she greatly prided herself—she contrived to interest Queen Amélie in her lot. Later, she appears to have been on friendly terms with Prince Louis, who afterwards became Napoleon III.

Little by little, however, her fine connections were lost. Although the date of her birth had always been a mystery to her, she felt she had grown old, so retired to Versailles, where she spent her time in removing. In April, 1858, she went to reside at 11, Rue du Marché-Neuf. A few days later, on May 4th, she took to her bed, although her condition did not seem to present the slightest gravity, her needs, as she always lived without a servant, being attended to by two charitable neighbours. On the morning of May 6th, these women, on entering her room, found her crouched inanimate at the foot of the bed, rolled in a long nightdress which completely covered her, and her face encircled by the cap which she usually wore indoors. Mlle. Savalette de Langes was dead. The body was replaced on the bed; the *médecin des morts* was called in, verified the death, and wrote out a burial certificate.

While the Justice of the Peace was affixing seals on the furniture, Dame Dompmartin and Demoiselle Bohy prepared to lay out the corpse. Suddenly they uttered a cry. . . They had discovered that the *deceased was a man!*

Called to witness the fact, the magistrate interrupted his operations; a message was sent to the registry of births, where the death certificate had already been drawn up; the doctors were called in again, and the imperial procurator intervened. Highly improbable though the thing seemed, the evidence had to be accepted, so, after the first—annulled—certificate, the entry of the *death of an unknown man who bore the name of Henriette Jenny Savalette de Langes*¹ was inscribed on the registers of the Mairie.

¹ *Extract from the Register of Deaths for the town of Versailles in the year 1858:*

"Thursday, May 6th, noon, death certificate of an unknown man who bore the name of Henriette Jenny Savalette Delange, bachelor, without

SAVALETTE DE LANGES

The house in which this astonishing scene occurred is situated on a little square, planted with trees, in the Saint-Louis quarter. A corridor leads to a narrow courtyard, encompassed on three of its sides by buildings, and on the fourth, to the right, by a wall, above which appear the tops of the trees of a neighbouring garden. The windows of the apartment occupied by Savalette are on the first floor, at the bottom of the courtyard, facing the passage; the apartment is composed of a bedroom with two windows, a smaller dining-room, and a kitchen without a window, near the front door. The rental in 1858 was fifteen francs a month.

In these two rooms, which he occupied, however, only for a few days, Savalette had accumulated a "cracked, worm-eaten, shaky, dilapidated, cranky, expiring" collection of pieces of furniture, like that of the Maison Vauquer—an extraordinary assemblage of things beggaring description: Empire arm-chairs with the Utrecht velvet so worn that the horsehair was coming out, Louis XVI. *bergères* covered with blue silk shreds, a sofa without a back, two fine clocks. . . . A quilt, hung up at the window, did duty for a curtain; silk dresses lay about on the furniture, among staved-in casks, dirty linen, and broken plates. When the Justice of the Peace entered this filthy hole to affix the seals, he made an inventory of the following things which he found in a cupboard: a yellowish muslin dress, a bolster, some sugar, some picture-frames, a plaster mask, some torn pants, a quantity of old fringes and ribbons, a broken cellaret, some saucepans, some sugar-tongs, a Nile green dress, a copy of *l'Esprit de Bourdaloue*, a bouquet of flowers in a wooden frame, and a pewter syringe. Each piece of furniture as it was opened contained a surprise. In a mahogany desk, ornamented with brass, was found, among shreds of stuffs, a Louis XIV. quilt, a magnificent piece of silk guipure, and 21,000 francs (£840) in bank-notes. Out of an old trunk came some violet *moiré* dresses and 8,940 francs (£357 12s. 6d.) in gold. And so the inventory continued

profession, born at (the place of birth could not be indicated) in the year 1786, who died to-day, at two o'clock in the morning, at his residence, at Versailles, Rue du Marché-Neuf, No. 11. Witnesses: Antoine Octave Ramin, clerk of the peace (southern canton of this town).—Louis Jauquet, linen draper, Rue Royale, 25."

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

—rags, broken sunshades, flat-irons, skirts in puce, grey, blue, white, and figured silk. . . . The opening of a small box brought to light memorandums of purchases on the Stock Exchange, Civil List pension deeds, a Government annuity receipt for 3,000 francs (£120), a second for 1,500 francs (£60), a third for 500 francs (£20), and others, making a total of 5,350 francs' (£214) worth of Government stock. Then was discovered a number of empty bottles, hat-rails, chemises, chimney-boards, hats, bonnets, broken tables, stools without legs, broken dishes, bits of tin, and wadded silk pelisses.¹ . . . One thing causes surprise—the inventory contains no mention of razors.

Such were the surroundings of this unknown one. But imagine what must have been the existence of the man who lived alone in this apartment resembling the shop of a second-hand clothes dealer, amidst this accumulation of miscellaneous objects. His life during the day needs no explanation. Although he troubled himself little over the cares of his household, he was, however, obliged to attend to his wants, and he went out to make his purchases. Quite a number of inhabitants of Versailles recollect this tall, skinny woman with hard features, surrounded by a sinister black bonnet the ruches of which covered her forehead and cheeks. She walked through the streets—sometimes followed by a troop of cheery boys—raising her eyes towards the notices of apartments to let, entering the tobacconist's, the baker's, or the pork-butcher's, ever taciturn, suspicious, and uneasy in manner. But in the evening, in his room, when he had had his meal and drunk his litre of wine—the remains of a stock of wine and some empty bottles were found in his cellar—when the unoccupied hours commenced, what must have been the thoughts of this man who, for a long time past, had neither written nor received letters, nor read the newspapers? With what feelings of remorse were his thoughts absorbed, what agony of mind, what recollections kept him on the alert? We can picture him sitting, motionless, on one of his

¹ Inventory made after the death of an unknown man, known as the Demoiselle Savalette de Lange, July 24th, 1858.

Office of Me. Finot, notary at Versailles, 2, Place Hoche.

SAVALETTE DE LANGES

dilapidated arm-chairs, his eyes fixed on the gathering darkness, intently listening to noises in the street, a prey to the terror of a nightmare similar to that which Victor Hugo attributed to Jean Valjean. What mysterious conflict went on in his brain? The closed door of his past reopened in the solitude; he lived over again his stolen life; he must have been haunted by the spectre of the stranger, of the man he would have been had he not entombed his real personality under a stone which was never to be raised.

On May 8th, after a service at the church of Saint-Louis, his body was taken to the cemetery. The State, which inherited his property, expended 2 frs. 50 over the burial. Two months later a bill, which delighted the idlers of Versailles, was posted up on the house, announcing the *SALE after the decease of the man who, during his lifetime, was known by the name of Mlle. Henriette Jenny SAVALETTE DE LANGES*. Readers made merry over the enumeration of goods added by the auctioneer: *numerous articles of a woman's wardrobe, including thirty dresses, most of them of silk, etc.*

The famous royal quilt was bought in by the State, and now lies on Louis XIV.'s bed. The Imperial Procurator, the Police Commissary, the Justice of the Peace, and the notaries exercised their wits in trying to discover, in the heap of letters with which the furniture was crammed, an indication likely to throw light on the mystery of this surprising existence. Every paper was carefully numbered and read; but nothing was learnt, and the enigma remained unsolved.

An old proverb declares that a god watches over drunkards. Historical investigators must surely also be protected by a special providence. One day I set out for Versailles, not with the object of unearthing Savalette's secret after forty years, but at any rate to collect at the house which he occupied and in the neighbourhood some tradition or evidence less open to suspicion than the details published at the time of his death by the newspapers of the department of Seine-et-Oise.

On entering upon an inquiry of this nature, you must arm yourself with patience and a philosophical spirit. You must bravely face the scornful "we don't know anything

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

about that ” of lawyers’ and registrars’ clerks, be unabashed by the gaze of solemn notaries who take you for an inheritance hunter, and be careful not to stammer unduly when the time comes to explain your business to an official whom it is easy to see you are disturbing. “Monsieur,” you say, “I’m trying to find some information concerning a woman . . . who was a man, and about whom I possess only very vague details. . . .” That is the critical moment : you are the object of suspicious glances and questions for which you are unprepared, such as, “Why do you inquire ?” or, “Are you a member of the family ?” To state that you are inquiring through mere curiosity arouses suspicion and closes the source of information. But what matter ! It is the element of danger which attracts those who are convinced, and nobody would be a tamer if wild beasts were without teeth or claws.

My first inquiry was made at the registrar’s office, where I obtained the unknown one’s death certificate—my basis for investigation. I then went to the Chamber of Notaries, to the Bureau des Domaines, to the office of the Justice of the Peace, and to the clerk of the Northern Canton, who sent me to the clerk of the Southern Canton. At the office of the last-named I discovered the document relating to the affixing of seals at Savalette’s residence, an official report of evidence ascertained after his death, and the inventory of his last ready-money accounts and stock-receipts. Better still, I found there the names and addresses of witnesses, notaries, auctioneers, bailiff’s men, and even neighbours who had been examined by the Imperial Procurator—all people who were doubtless dead, but whose relatives or successors might still be able to furnish information. And so, with beating heart, I went from door to door, secretly hoping as I rang at the bell that nobody was at home, repeating to each person who came, with the simple air of a man who smiles at his own mania, the terrible introduction to my business. “I’ve called on the subject of a woman . . . who was a man.” But I will cut the story short, for this recital is only interesting in so far as it is connected with the history of the documents sought for, and proves their authenticity.

SAVALETTE DE LANGES

After many hours' investigation, I finally called upon Me. Moussoir, a distinguished member of the Versailles bar. The treasure was in his possession—all the papers found in Savalette's apartment, her accounts, statements of purchases of French Government stock, *love letters which she had received*, rough drafts of her letters, a detailed inventory of her strange collection of furniture, her petitions to the King, her pension certificates. . . . In these incontestably truthful documents, so picturesque that in reading them we ask ourselves if we are not the victims of an hallucination, Savalette's life was recorded.

What ! In spite of detectives, tribunals, and agents of all sorts paid to assure the normal and regular working of the established order of things, there existed, in the nineteenth century, a man who, passing himself off for a woman, was able to take the name of a family *which was not extinct*; obtain in that quality a certificate drawn by a notary and executed in his presence, signed by seven of the most honourable witnesses¹ and confirmed by the Court of Paris; announce the banns of his marriage with an officer in the army; obtain three pensions on the Civil List,² a comfortable

¹ "To the Presidents and Judges composing the Civil Court of the First Instance of the Seine: Dlle. Jenny Savalette de Langes, living with the Lady Hospitaliers of Saint-Thomas-de-Villeneuve, Rue de Sèvres, Paris, has the honour to inform you that she was born out of wedlock in the year 1786, that she lost her father, M. Charles Pierre Paul Savalette de Langes when very young, and that since, her efforts to discover the residence of her mother have been fruitless. She solicits the homologation of a certificate drawn by a notary, which shall replace a birth certificate.

"The Court grants the homologation, but regards the designation of the father named as null and void, since the applicant is an illegitimate child who does not appear to have been recognised by her father, and, consequently, the latter should not be indicated."

The witnesses who signed the certificate were: 1, Mme. Jeanne Marguerite Derly, wife of M. Irénée Charles Delaby, gentleman, 7, Rue Grenier-Saint-Lazare; 2, M. Denis Elie Lefrotter Delezeverne, employed at the Saint-Lazare account department, 117, Faubourg Saint-Denis; 3, M. Pierre Corbin de Saint-Marc, property owner, 6, Rue du Pot-de-Fer; 4, Mme. Marguerite Julie de Saint-Alde, wife of the above-named Corbin de Saint-Marc; 5, Mme. Louise Emilie Picot Dampierre, wife of M. Guillaume Gervais, Marquis de Vernon, equerry, commander of the King's stables, living at the Place du Carrousel, Paris; 6, M. Guillaume Gervais, Marquis de Vernon; 7, M. Irénée Charles Hippolyte Delaby, gentleman, 7, Rue Grenier-Saint-Lazare.

² "1st, Villejuif Post-Office, producing an income of 1200 francs (£48); 2nd, an annual pension of 500 francs (£20) granted to Mlle. Savalette de

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

apartment at the Palace of Versailles, and, pretending to be poor, amass a personal fortune which may be estimated at £8,000? Balzac's Vautrin was very inferior to the adventurer Savalette de Langes. Note that the former or the latter—which you like—did not apply to poor and easily duped people. This “good Demoiselle de Langes,” had illustrious friends; her usual correspondents were the Duc de Luynes, Mlle. de Polignac, Maréchale Macdonald, and the Duchesse de la Rochefoucauld, who even put her down in her will. And you must not imagine that she obtained the protection of these great people by begging for it; not so, she spoke very loud and in an insolent tone. In the letters which she received excuses were made for unintentionally wounding her susceptibility, although she herself was full of harshness and would not pardon the slightest want of respect.

The story of this man contains charming details. The false Savalette was rich; but she was thought to be poor, and had to continue to appear so. Never did she dare to have a dress made at a dressmaker's or risk the indiscreet trying-on of a gown. She dressed herself, therefore, on the cast-off clothes of her friends—hence the large number of silk petticoats discovered in her wretched lodging. As to the history of her engagement—or rather her two engagements, for she was loved successively by an official in the Poor Law department and by a major in the infantry, named Lacipière¹—it is

Langes, as a reward for her services, out of the King's privy-purse on September 27th, 1825; 3rd, a pension of 500 francs granted by the King on May 5th, 1829, to Mlle. Savalette de Langes as a reward for the services of M. Savalette, with enjoyment of it from January 1st, 1819.”

¹ Nothing is more extraordinary than Savalette's *liaison* with Lacipière, a *liaison* the phases of which can be followed by means of the letters of the latter found among Savalette's papers. The first were written in 1823 and, at the outset, were merely affectionate. Their relations began with a loan of 800 francs (£32) which Savalette made or, to be more correct, forced on the officer. This sum became the pivot of the whole intrigue, the object of which is incomprehensible. The officer was burdened with other debts, so Savalette proposed to become his unique creditor, paying everything if he consented to marry her. Lacipière was quite agreeable to the payment of his debts, but wanted them settled *before* the marriage, hence discussions, reproaches, quarrels, &c. The following are a few extracts from Lacipière's letters to Savalette:

“My interview with you has disclosed a secret which has deeply grieved me. . . But I persist in my determination and will marry you as soon as I have received a letter from my mother. This letter will be

SAVALETTE DE LANGES

bewildering and tragic. The officer after an engagement of sixteen years, during which there were perpetual breakings-off, reconciliations, and supplications, appears to me to have killed himself in despair! As soon as he was dead, Savalette, "who considered herself," she said, "as his widow," demanded from his relatives, in threatening terms, the money which she had lent him.

It is impossible to give this strange figure his true name. But what can positively be asserted is that "this good Mlle. de Langes," in spite of the affection which she inspired in so many people, had neither tenderness, nor shame, nor heart, nor human respect of any kind.

Who was he?

I must explain that on the document certifying the placing of seals on his residence, the name Louis XVII. is written in red pencil.

some time in arriving, for my eldest brother, who is the head of the family, must be consulted, and at the present time he is not at Sarlat. Your promise to assist me to pay my creditors at the early part of this week has definitely won my heart. I am writing in bed, to which I am kept partly through laziness and partly because of an indisposition the cause of which is common to both of us." (?)

December 6th, 1831: "What! after informing some of my creditors that they would be paid during the week, you go back on your promises and tell me that you cannot make any more payments! . . . Unexpected and painful as was the disclosure which you made to me on the subject of your birth, I have nevertheless persisted in my proposal to marry you."

December 16th, 1831: "Time has had no effect on my feelings towards you, feelings which you have inspired in my breast for several years past."

February 2nd, 1832: "Permit me to tell you that it is quite impossible to continue my relations with you, for they daily become more insupportable. You not only delight in heaping reproaches, threats, and insults upon me, but you make every effort to disgrace me. In spite of everything . . . I am ready to do anything you require. Our union depends on you alone, for my mother, who knows everything, is not opposed to it, if you will immediately give me the wherewithal to pay my creditors in the regiment."

The correspondence, full of alternate declarations of love, breakings off, and demands for money, continued until 1839. As soon as Lacipière tries to escape from him, Savalette, who knows he is at bay, offers him money, which is accepted. When, touched by this kind act, he speaks of discharging his debt by marrying *her*, *she* demands the sums which have been lent and threatens to inform his colonel. Thus, during sixteen years did Savalette harass this wretched man, whose last letter was as follows:

August, 1839: "I am resigned to all your persecutions, for you appear to me to be implacable! Every day I weep bitter tears through having known you. Ah! cursed be the day on which I first met you!"

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

The rumour of Savalette's identity with the prisoner of the Temple passed from mouth to mouth in Versailles in 1858. The hypothesis that this mysterious personage, whose age was much the same as that of the Dauphin, who was pensioned by the Restoration, lodged in the Château, and in relations with frequenters of the Tuileries, was the son of Louis XVI. was seductive to superficial minds. But the supposition will not bear examination. It is difficult to imagine the legitimate King of France abandoning his crown for a pension of 800 francs (£32), and forcing himself uselessly to reside, dressed as a woman, without ever a word of complaint, or regret, without an allusion to his past, in the palace where he had lived as a child.

The mystery is certainly other than that. Though nothing in the enormous heap of Savalette's papers throws light on his personality, they furnish nevertheless a few vague indications. He was, without a doubt, an anxious, suspicious man, haunted by the fear of being unmasked, employing every hour of his life in establishing a sort of social alibi, like Jean Valjean or Vautrin. This man had committed a crime and was hiding himself—such is the impression which the mind receives, without it being quite satisfied, however, for we can no longer suppose, as formerly, that after having killed a daughter of the ex-keeper of the royal treasury, in order to obtain possession of her papers, the murderer was obliged to change his sex, so as not to lose the benefit of his crime. The supposition falls to the ground on the simple statement that Savalette possessed no family papers, and that it was only by means of stratagems, lies, and forgeries, the whole genesis of which can be followed, that his social state was, at last, in a way regularly established.

Moreover, there is a love letter which an admirer sent him in the Year XII.¹ He was, therefore, *already a woman* at that date,

¹ The text of this letter is as follows :

“Wednesday, June 8th, Year XII. I did not dare, my dear friend, to bring your veil myself, but I counted on returning it to you this morning. I am very sorry to have kept you waiting for it : it returns to its mistress covered with a thousand kisses which I almost thought I was giving to the one I love. This evening, exactly at eight o'clock, I shall be seated on the boulevard, between the Rue Montmartre and the Rue du Santier, at the spot

SAVALETTE DE LANGES

when, if we are to believe the certificate drawn up by a notary, he would be only eighteen years old, which would be making him a very precocious, though terribly precautions, murderer.

Then we must take into account this famous certificate signed by seven witnesses, and not the lowest in social position, who, in 1820, took oath "that they were well acquainted with Mlle. Jenny Savalette de Langes; that they knew she was born out of wedlock in 1786, her father being M. Charles Pierre Paul Savalette de Langes, long deceased, and whilst the said lady was a child; and that they had never been able to discover either her birthplace, or the name and residence of her mother."

This was precisely the story which she herself had told them. Yet among these seven dupes, a few at least must have known her—as a girl—for a long time past, since they bore witness to the alleged fact.

Later, when she had to produce her baptismal certificate, on the publication of her banns, a fresh difficulty arose. Savalette made out that she had been baptised *a very long way off*, and as she had no certificate, a paper signed by the lady superior of Abbaye-aux-Bois took its place.

How was it that so many irregularities never aroused where you saw my uncle the other day. Thence we can go anywhere you like. Farewell, sweetheart. I cannot say more. I heartily embrace you.

J. D.

"To Mlle. Jenny Savalette, Paris."

It is needless to point out, however, that this letter, as regards the date on which Savalette took to wearing female dress, proves nothing. It may, in fact, have been forged by Savalette himself, to be shown or found among his papers in case of a domiciliary visit. . . What leads me to believe this is the fact that June 8th, Year XII., fell on a *Friday*, and not on a *Wednesday*. This man is enveloped in mystery. What, again, is one to think of the following letter, undated and only signed by a paraph :

"To Mlle. de Savalette, Rue des Vieux-Augustins :

"... Instead of going to Passy to-day, I must go to my manufactory, and shall not return until about nine o'clock. How shall I arrange to see you this evening? There is an easy way of writing to me from where you are—namely, fasten a little stone to your letter and throw it over the trellis-work. If I were younger I should say that love is ever fertile in expedients; but friendship, although calmer, has also its little inventions.

"If, on my return at nine o'clock, you are at home, I will appear at my window, and we can meet at your post, whence I will bend my steps. I will make a sign that I'm going out and you will also leave the house. A few notes on my violin will be the signal."

The date of this letter must be Frimaire, Year XIII., for only at that time did Savalette lodge at 28, Rue des Vieux-Augustins.

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

suspicion? Why did no one take it into his head, if only out of affectionate interest—she had so many friends in good positions!—to clear up the mystery of her birth? Why, taking a name which, evidently, was not his, did the unknown one of Versailles choose that of Savalette de Langes? Why did this name serve as a title to the favours of the Bourbons, since it was notorious that the former keeper of the royal treasury had been the friend and host of the regicide Barère, and an ardent partisan of the Revolution?

I repeat that nothing in the numerous letters found at Savalette's enables these questions to be answered. But a few lines of his writing, traced on a scrap of paper, may lead to the solution of the problem.

These lines take the form of a sort of imprecation which Savalette addressed to himself in a remorseful moment; its terms are violent and sometimes ribald, and it contains such phrases as these:

“The day has at last arrived on which I am going to tear off the veil which covers your terrible iniquities. Tremble, eternal sinner . . . , tremble lest I reveal to this world, which is seeking for you, the execrable monster who approaches it. . . . *Do you not see that all who surround you are beginning to guess the enigma of your hypocrisy?* . . . You are horribly disgusting; the filth which covers your hideous body will cause it soon to fall into shreds; so I advise you to cleanse yourself—your bleared eyes, rotten teeth, and foul mouth. . . . Farewell, old monster, whom demons vomited on to the earth . . . *return to Orleans to sell your cheeses and salads.* Once more, farewell, *old Michel!*”

Must we attempt to read between the lines of this savagely eloquent testament, which is not without a sort of sinister grandeur? If so, the point to be cleared up is whether, during the closing years of the eighteenth century, some young market-gardener of the suburbs of Orleans, bearing the Christian name of Michel, disappeared from the district after some crime. . . . Everything is to be found in the record offices. Solvers of riddles, take notice! After all, this rebus is as good as those which family periodicals set before unoccupied Œdipuses.

SAVALETTE DE LANGES

II

THE MAN-WOMAN

I CONCLUDED the mysterious history of this unknown man, at the time of its first publication, with the above note of interrogation. Although several persons assured me that the enigma was sufficiently interesting to merit elucidation, I was much at a loss to find a solution to the problem, and, notwithstanding certain interesting but—perhaps designedly—vague communications, which some obliging correspondents made to me, I had given up all hope of finding one. But chance—that divinity before whom historical searchers should bend the knee—was kind enough to intervene and place me in a position to raise the mask under which this strange adventurer thought he had for ever concealed his real personality.

Everything leads me to suppose (an author's self-conceit assisting me) that a very large number of readers anxiously await this revelation. The others will perhaps take a pleasure in running over the scenario of the life of "this good Mademoiselle de Langes," so pious, so well placed in the royalist society of the Restoration, who was twice asked in marriage, whose banns were even announced, whom all Governments, from Louis XVIII. to Napoleon III. pensioned as the daughter of a former banker of the Royal Treasury, and who, on her death in a wretched apartment in Versailles, was found to be a man, without anyone being able to suggest even a reasonable hypothesis for the motives of her ancient imposture.

Unfortunately, the anecdote is on the border-line between history and indiscretion, so readers will understand the feeling of restraint which obliges me to indicate most of the names which have been given to me merely by initials. Those who are in the secret—some there are who know everything—will alone be judges of the truth of my narrative; I ask others to trust my word.

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

In 1792, there lived in Paris a certain M. Savalette de Langes, brother or cousin of a banker of the Royal Treasury, who, in the early days of the Revolution, had lent seven million francs to the brothers of Louis XVI. This Savalette was a widower, and he had a daughter named Jenny, who was then from twelve to fourteen years of age. As there was nothing to keep him in Paris, and as, like all those whose aristocratic names held them up to public hatred, he did not feel safe there, he decided to allow the worst part of the revolutionary storm to blow over, and withdraw, with his daughter, to Versailles, until calmer times came. Versailles was, however, as agitated as Paris, so M. Savalette, after a few weeks' stay, determined to take refuge in Brittany, whence, should prudence counsel such a step, they could easily get abroad.

Father and daughter set off on their journey by easy stages. At one of their first stopping places (which, possibly, was Orleans) they made the acquaintance, at the inn, of a young man, distinguished in manners and quick-witted, who, seeking his fortune, was very anxious for lucrative adventures. To facilitate the narrative, I will call him B——, although this initial is not that of the name—authentic or borrowed—under which he introduced himself.

B——, seeing the embarrassment of Savalette and his daughter, who were not over certain towards what goal they were directing their steps, offered to guide them, boasting that he knew every corner of Brittany, his native place, and undertaking to direct the fugitives, without mishap, to Saint-Malo, and thence, if need be, to the Channel Islands. Savalette thankfully accepted, and they set off on the journey. The coast was reached in a few days' time. All along the route B—— adroitly removed difficulties arising through their want of passports and the sharp eye which certain municipalities kept over travellers. His skill in getting out of scrapes, his assurance, even his loquacity inspired the greatest confidence in Savalette, whose faint-heartedness was an easy prey to such a shrewd companion.

Saint-Malo was crowded with Breton nobles and refractory priests, all ready to cross the sea to escape the political cataclysm which could then easily be foreseen. Among

SAVALETTE DE LANGES

these prospective emigrants was Mlle. Jeanne Françoise de T—c, almost a child, who, under the care of an old family servant named Robin, had come from lower Brittany. The Marquis de T—c, her father, well informed as to the insurrection which was fomenting in Brittany, decided to emigrate; but, detained at the Château de Br— on account of the health of his wife, who was about to become a mother, he had ordered Robin to set off in advance in company with Jeanne Françoise, and take up their residence at Plymouth, where he and the Marquise would join them as soon as the latter's health allowed her to make a sea journey.

Jeanne François de T—c and Jenny Savalette de Langes met at the hotel, where by chance they were both stopping, and on account of their similarity of age became friends. B— made active preparations for the passage of his companions and himself, for he had decided to follow them. He entered into negotiations with the owner of a foreign vessel who, for a good price, undertook to land them at Plymouth. Savalette and his daughter, Jeanne Françoise and Robin, in addition to B—, who had appointed himself major-domo of the little band, therefore embarked together.

As the English coast, after the passengers had been forty-eight hours on the sea, did not appear within sight, they began to be anxious. The owner of the vessel—a German, who had been paid in advance—then confessed that it was impossible for him, for reasons which he set forth, to land in England; that his port of register was Hamburg, and that it was towards Hamburg they were sailing; but that they would there have plenty of opportunities for reaching Plymouth. M. de Savalette, who was not particularly drawn towards England, easily consoled himself for this enforced delay. B— swore that as soon as they reached Hamburg he would lodge a complaint with the Council of the Hanse, but finally resigned himself to the situation. Robin—much put about over the responsibility which he was incurring, terrified at the idea that M. and Mme. de T—c would not find their daughter at Plymouth when they arrived there—alone wanted

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

to force the captain to keep his engagements. A violent discussion took place, in the course of which the old Breton was seized with a fit of rage, which degenerated into a burning fever. Hardly had they landed than he took to his bed, and died three days afterwards in an inn at Altona.

Jeanne Françoise de T——c therefore remained alone with B——, Savalette, and Jenny. The two last named were comfortable in Hamburg, and prepared to establish themselves there. B—— undertook to inform M. and Mme. T——c of the whereabouts of their daughter; but, either because they had already left their Château, or because the letter did not reach Brittany, no reply was received. The young lady therefore resigned herself to living with the companions whom chance had thrown in her way. She was, it must be explained, indolent and passive in nature, and B——, moreover, assured her that she would not long be in this position, and would shortly return to France. Such was the common illusion of all the emigrants with which Hamburg was crowded, and who daily expected, on opening the newspapers, to learn that the Revolution was over.

Time passed, however, and M. Savalette's resources were exhausted all the more quickly, as living in common with B—— and Jeanne Françoise imposed on him an expense which he had not foreseen. We know how tragic the situation of the emigrants became, principally that of those who took refuge in North Germany. The population had little sympathy for them, and often treated them as despicable vagabonds; while French law for ever closed the doors of their native country upon them and forfeited all their rights. After first of all living fairly well, Savalette and his companions experienced terrible poverty, living promiscuously in a kind of cellar, where they slept on heaps of rags. An additional misfortune inflicted them in the form of an epidemic of typhus fever which carried off M. Savalette, owing to want of proper medical treatment, in a few days. The two young ladies, henceforth alone with B——, were themselves attacked by the malady. Mlle. Savalette, haunted by the recollection of the enormous sums which her relative, the keeper of the Royal Treasury, had lent Comte d'Artois,

SAVALETTE DE LANGES

expressed her indignation at the ingratitude of the brothers of Louis XVI., to whom her father had several times made fruitless applications. On B——'s advice, she wrote to the princes, describing her poverty and imploring them to give her pecuniary assistance. But the letter was never answered. A second appeal met with no better success, and the unfortunate orphan died in turn, ceaselessly repeating to her friend Jeanne Françoise in her delirium: "Never forget that Comte d'Artois has left me to die in poverty, and that he owes my family seven millions!"

Jeanne Françoise did not succumb to the illness, but she was left without any resources. B——, who was fruitful in expedients and little troubled by scruples, imagined that it would be possible for him, although Jenny was no longer alive, to recover all or part of the money which the Royal family owed the Savalettes. He wrote letter after letter which he signed with Jenny's name and which, to increase the chances of success, were addressed to the princes no longer by a mere relative of the former keeper of the Royal Treasury, but in the name of his daughter. This fraud was without result. Mlle. de T——c, who had been told nothing about this, was on the point of dying of starvation; she was crushed by so many misfortunes; she was alone, far from her parents, dependant on an adventurer, and too indolent not to come under his influence. They lived together in the promiscuous manner which is imposed by poverty, and with the inevitable result—she became his mistress. What did he exact from her after her fall? Did he carry his infamy so far as to force the poor girl to become his bread-winner? The sequel seems to answer these questions in the affirmative, although no authentic testimony, as one can quite understand, confirms the supposition.

Nevertheless, Jeanne Françoise was conscious of her degradation: "she lost none of her family pride," and was seized with trembling at the thought of her father's despair should he chance to hear of the shameful commerce to which she was reduced. I must explain that the name T——c is among the noblest names in the Breton armorial. One who bore it, Jeanne Françoise's uncle, was one of the recognised heroes of

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

the Chouan insurrection; and, knowing him to be one of those men who regard the honour of their name as sacred, the unfortunate woman pictured him crossing Europe to kill her over the body of her infamous lover. But the Revolution dragged on, the Directory followed on the Convention, and the situation of the emigrants did not improve. Mlle. de T—c, after lamenting over the impossibility of returning to France, now heartily wished that circumstances would keep her away for ever, and she resigned herself to the thought of dying far from Brittany, without her parents ever hearing her name or becoming acquainted with her dishonour.

But Brumaire unexpectedly changed everything. Relations between the emigrants and France were rapidly resumed; they breathed again, there were mutual recognitions, and news could be exchanged. The T—c family, which had not left Brittany, made inquiries and soon learnt that Jeanne Françoise was in Hamburg. A lady friend offered to fetch the young lady home, her name, after some negotiations, having been struck off the list of the emigrants.

B— thought it was prudent to disappear, so Jeanne Françoise left Hamburg and returned to Brittany. As one can well understand, she confided only part of her adventures to her parents. She herself had determined to expiate her sins in solitude and retirement. But years slipped by and the nightmare through which she had passed was gradually effaced from memory. Her years of exile and poverty seemed so forgotten that, yielding to the entreaties of her family, and probably fearing that obstinacy in isolating herself would arouse suspicion, she consented to marry and, in 1810, became the wife of Comte de S—-R—.

The new Comtesse de S—-R— gained the reputation of being a perfect model of every virtue. What was known of her past misfortunes, her piety, the sort of anxious resignation which she showed in the practice of life, and her wealthy position won universal respect. She devoted the greater part of her time to charitable works, particularly interesting herself in Magdalens; and her renown for saintliness daily increased.

SAVALETTE DE LANGES

The Empire fell ; the Bourbons returned, and the resurrection of ancient France still further improved Mme. de S——-R——'s position in society. She became one of the assiduous frequenters of the ultra-royalist court at the Pavillon de Marsan, and her intimacy with the Duchesse d'Angoulême classed her among the high personages of the royalist society of Paris. She and her husband and part of her family occupied a large mansion in the Rue de la P——, in the Marais quarter.

One day, in 1815, she was informed that a woman of modest appearance wished to speak to her. The doors of S——-R——'s house were too wide open to the poor and unfortunate for this fact to astonish the countess, who gave orders that the visitor be shown in. A "tall, thin woman with a circular border of hair and ample bonnet strings," which hid the contour of her face, entered the drawing-room and humbly introduced herself. But as soon as she was alone with Mme. de S——-R—— she raised her veil.

"Don't you recognise me?" she asked.

Mme. de S——-R—— stammered out a reply. . . In an instant her past life returned. The person before her was B——, B—— dressed as a woman, B—— with changed carriage and even voice, which had become "sour and cracked," B——, unrecognisable to any other person . . . He immediately stated the *rôle* he intended to play.

"I am your old friend of the days of the emigration, Jenny Savalette de Langes," he said. "Do you remember?"

If Mme. de S——-R—— had had the strength to respond, she would have replied that Jenny died in her arms fifteen years before. But she was struck dumb at the sight of this spectre of her years of shame, and was distracted at the thought of the threats which lay hidden in the few words just spoken by her former lover.

B—— calmly set forth his plans. He explained that since Jeanne Françoise had left him in Hamburg he had met with many reverses of fortune, and that his thoughts had often gone forth to the young girl with whom he had believed his fate was linked for life. Accordingly he had returned to France and taken up his residence in Paris in the

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

hope of meeting her. Nor had he forgotten the oft-repeated allusions made by Jenny Savalette to the millions formerly borrowed by Comte d'Artois, and he had a hope of making something out of this old story. Having assured himself, he said, that only distant relatives of the Savalette family, or those who had no title to the estate of the former Keeper of the Royal Treasury, were living, he had hit on the idea of representing himself to the princes as the direct descendant of their creditor. Success was certain if an authorised person with a good position at Court, like Mme. de S——-R——, would consent to attest her identity and support her by her influence. He gave her to understand, moreover, that he had nothing to lose, and that in case of refusal he would not hesitate to make a terrible scandal which might prove most lucrative to him.

The unfortunate woman, feeling that she was lost, bowed her head, and, to save the honour of the name which she bore, promised. . . .

Such are the circumstances, as revealed to me, which led up to the intrusion of the impersonated Savalette upon Mme. de S——-R——. From that day the poor woman entered upon a period of torture the cruelty of which was increased almost every hour. She was condemned to seeing the phantom of the past, which she thought was buried for ever, continually prowl around her. Her fault—so carefully concealed from everyone, so forgotten by herself—assumed substantial form and entered into her life, which became a living lie. She had to deceive those whom she loved, introduce the detestable person to them, praise his virtues, recommend him, commend his claims to recognition and to the affection of her family—and all the time in fear and trembling lest a fatal accident should reveal the fraud of which she was an accomplice.

However, the intruder played his rôle with disconcerting skill. He had assumed the carriage, manners, figure, as well as the habits and occupations of a woman ; he made lace caps and did embroidery work, not without art ; he talked learnedly on the subject of cooking, and his recipes for *entrémets* were much in request, and he daily went round to the registry

SAVALETTE DE LANGES

offices in search of competent servants whom he trained for service with pious friends and acquaintances. He was learned in genealogy and spoke as an expert "on all the particulars of aristocratic families with whom he visited." He even showed a little modest coquetry and joked about lovers who, when she was about sixteen, had sent her love-letters, which she carefully preserved and produced at the opportune moment.

Mme. de S——-R——'s connections treated Mlle. Savalette—we will let him retain the stolen name—as a rather touchy but indulgent relative. As her face pricked a little, the children called her Auntie Beard. She patiently put up with all the little annoyances of which she was the object. Thanks to Mme. de S——-R——'s influence, she successively obtained, in addition to an official certificate of identity, a pension from Louis XVIII. and another from Comte d'Artois, both of whom she had not failed to remind of the services which "her ancestors" had formerly rendered. She was also granted the management of the Villejuif Post-Office, and then a comfortable apartment at the Château de Versailles. Moreover, everybody exercised their wits in assisting this good Royalist "who had been so unfortunate," and who was chaperoned by the saintly Mme. de S——-R——. To have suffered by the Revolution was at this time the best of claims to consideration.

But can one imagine the moral tortures which Mme. de S——-R—— underwent, forced as she was to make a traffic of her respectability, her nobility, and her husband's station? She was face to face with this dramatic dilemma: either reveal the secret which stifled her and sacrifice, by the revelation, the honour and repose of all her family, or degrade herself in her own eyes by seconding, by her silence, the wretch who was imposing on her with such audacious cynicism. Was this torture beyond her strength, and did she make up her mind to disclose her martyrdom, if not to her husband at any rate to some less directly interested adviser? Certain facts lead me to think so. There came a day, in fact, when a very marked change took place in the attitude of the S——-R—— family towards Savalette. He was discreetly eliminated; one after another doors were closed; and letters addressed to him

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

became shorter and colder. He was unmasked and no longer feared. He was not handed over to justice, however, for that would have made the scandal public; but he was repelled, shunned, and disarmed by the tacit complicity of the friends and relatives of his victim. This covenant of silence and devotion, concluded to save the honour of a noble woman, is almost sublime, and shows how deeply she was loved. It was then that Savalette began his life of continual anxiety and hurried removals. He left Paris, buried himself in Versailles, and saw nobody; and when he died, when the doctor's certificate revealed his real sex, when M. de B——'s telegram announcing the startling news that "Langes was a man" arrived at S——-R——'s house, nobody was affected, nobody demanded an inquiry, everybody kept obstinately silent out of respect for Mme. de S——-R——, who had so long and so unjustly suffered.

This account has one great defect—it is unsupported by proofs. A few guiding-marks enable one to assert, however, that it coincides in a very satisfactory manner with the little we know of the truth.

Besides, reduced to these proportions, the matter is only of very ordinary interest to us; and that is what makes me think that the above narrative is perfectly true. The legend of Psyche is a beautiful one; but though as old as the world, it has never been a lesson to anybody. Human beings are tormented with a desire for knowledge, although they know very well that pleasure lasts only as long as there is mystery, and that one vanishes with the other. The story of Savalette as first of all related seemed so enigmatical, so compact with mystery, so obstinately impenetrable, that the imagination had perfectly free play and could satisfy all its fancies. Each reader embellished it as he liked. Some thought this man-woman was Louis XVII.; others that he was a person compromised in some dark political intrigue. They agreed in regarding him to be either an august victim of our revolutions or a great criminal who, for reasons unknown, was treated with consideration by all Governments. Without a doubt he was a hero, a lamentable or tragic hero.

SAVALETTE DE LANGES

Alas! there is a glimmer of light and the hero vanishes! And all that remains is a somewhat sorry scoundrel, such as we daily read of in the newspapers under one or other of the titles: "A Cunning Swindler"—"The Exploits of an Adventurer." There is a mysterious attraction in the question, "Who was it?" and it is one which should never be answered. In short, it is better not to know. Only disappointments are revealed by Psyche's lamp.

THE LAST DAYS OF ANDRÉ CHENIER

ON Friday, March 21st, 1721, all Paris was in the streets.

Wherever fine uniforms and pretty dresses are to be seen, Parisians congregate; and on this particular day the sight was well worth seeing; for Celeby Mémétt Effendi, Ambassador of the Grand Seignior, Emperor of the Turks, was solemnly proceeding to the Tuileries to pay his respects to young King Louis XV.

Mémétt Effendi left the mansion in the Rue de Tournon, where extraordinary ambassadors were lodged, at about nine o'clock in the morning. He was taken through the fine streets—the Rue Dauphine, the Pont Neuf, the Rue de la Monnaie, and the Rue Saint-Honoré. A quadruple row of sightseers had been standing on the causeways all along the route since dawn, and all heads were turned towards the point where the *cortège* was to make its appearance. The rough and continuous murmur of the crowd, alternately rising and falling, filled this great thoroughfare of the city.

Suddenly there was a great commotion among the people, who exclaimed, "Here they come!"

First came musketeers, their large cloaks covering the croups of their horses; then lords of the Court, disdainful in their curled wigs; and afterwards the King's Guards, glittering in the pale sunlight, which made swords, buttons, gold galloons, and arms flash and sparkle. These were followed by fifty Turkish officers, mounted on horses led by grooms from the Sultan's stables. Then, alone, the Ambassador's son advanced, bearing with outstretched hands,

THE LAST DAYS OF ANDRÉ CHÉNIER

as one would a monstrance, the Grand Seignior's letter, on a plate covered with an embroidered cloth. Finally, in the midst of trumpeters and kettle-drummers, Méhémett Effendi himself appeared, surrounded by eight bearded notables. A tumultuous crowd of servants, soldiers, grooms, and cavalry completed the procession.

At the Tuileries, the French Guard and the Swiss Guard were drawn up in line from the swing bridge to the grand staircase. The Turks descended at the bottom of the flight of stone steps and awaited the attendants, the gentlemen of the King's bed-chamber, and the introducers of ambassadors, under whose guidance they passed through ante-chambers and lofty drawing-rooms ornamented with mirrors and marble. The doors of the gallery opened. . . . And what a dazzling sight was revealed! at the bottom, under a daïs of golden satin, representing a large radiant sun, on a platform with eight steps, behind a gilded balustrade, was sitting the King, dressed in a flame-coloured coat, sparkling with twenty-five million francs' worth of diamonds. On each side of the entire length of the gallery the silent Court—beautiful women in furbelows and knights of the Holy Ghost in full dress—was standing on crimson velvet benches. On the floor were large pieces of Gobelins tapestry. Violins played, cannon boomed at the Carrousel, and bells rang at all the churches. . . . The Ambassador advanced, his hand raised to his turban and his head turned to one side, "which," notes *Le Mercure*, "is a mark of the deepest respect with the Turks." Then he ceremoniously made his three bows, almost prostrate, seeing nothing, "except," as he says in his narrative, "that the royal child had light hyacinthine hair and the majestic carriage of a partridge."

Back in his native land, one of the eight bearded notables who, on his knees, had contemplated these splendours from afar, dreamed of them for long afterwards, haunted by the recollection of the country where he had lived a few days. His name was Santi Lomaca. When a daughter was born to him, he gave her the French name Elisabeth. As soon as the child's intelligence awakened, he spoke to her of that Western

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

country whose glory shone over the world, and of that Court where all the graces reigned, submissive to the majesty of a prince who was beautiful as a young god. He provided her with French masters; he had her taught the pavan and the minuet; and he obtained for her the works of our poets and novelists.

What a singular education this child received, brought up as she was to admire a dreamland which doubtless she was never to know! She was already French in heart and imagination, and yet, necessarily, she remained Oriental in temperament and habits. Her youth slipped by in that refined solitude which Mohammedan customs impose on women. Whenever she went out she was always escorted by a group of attendants, her face hidden by a white veil interwoven with gold; she spent her days in dreaming, reclining on a sofa, in a cool drawing-room, with closed blinds, and furnished with embroidered cushions and ivory caskets, and, as she toyed with the gold chains which hung from her neck, she languidly sang Lulli's melodies, whilst her women fanned her with large peacock-feather fans.

On reaching a marriageable age, she refused to have a husband of her own nationality. Intoxicated by her father's stories, she awaited the handsome lord who was to come from distant France to fetch her and initiate her into the splendours of the Court of which her imagination was full. She waited for him until she was twenty-six, and then married a modest Councillor to the French Ambassador, named Louis Chénier. Her dowry consisted of "precious stones and clothes magnificently displayed."

This lady was the mother of André Chénier. When, at the age of three, he left with his parents for France, he already inherited from this beautiful Grecian, who had been brought up amidst Eastern luxurious idleness, that craving for the beautiful which makes a poet. The white mosques on the shore, the seven hills of ancient Byzantium, rising one above the other under the clear sky of the Bosphorus, and the roseate houses of Scutari, the Paradise of Orientals, were indelibly fixed in his memory, communicating the painter's gift and a love of glowing sensations. When,



ANDRÉ CHÉNIER.

THE LAST DAYS OF ANDRÉ CHÉNIER

from the deck of the steamer which was bearing him far from his native country, he saw the Golden Horn disappear in the mist, André Chénier took with him poetry for all his life—which was to be a short one.

A low sky, muddy ground, narrow winding streets, leprous-looking houses, and smoky courtyards; everywhere the feverish commotion of a crowd which toils and labours; shouting costermongers, disputes between coachmen and chairmen, and an incessant noise of carriages, coaches, or market-gardeners' carts; meanness of manners, arrogance of the rich, foolishness of the poor, and indiscreet curiosity of neighbours—such was Paris as it appeared to Mme. Chénier. As happens to everyone who has not been brought up in the great city, her first impression was one of deep disappointment, a feeling of real aversion and dismal solitude. In order to appreciate the charm of Paris and its peculiar picturesqueness, one must have years of experience, and that great suppleness of character which only Parisian life can produce.

The Court, which she saw only from afar, appeared to her to be a sad and wearisome place, a nest of intrigues and short-lived ambitions. The King was old, his mistresses were all-powerful, and the monarchy was discredited. Mme. Chénier, moreover, was not entitled to appear there.

Financial embarrassment and the prosaic duties of a household followed on this primary disillusionment. Her husband had to solicit for a post, was offered that of Consul to the Emperor of Morocco, set out, and was absent seventeen years. When he returned to France he was a sexagenarian.

During this separation his wife lived on the money which he sent her as regularly as possible, and laboriously brought up their five children. She remained, however, an aristocrat in tastes and manners. But her free mind, thoroughly convinced of its superiority, preserved, amidst the disappointments of Parisian life, a sort of bitterness against society. She considered it was badly constructed, because she had not the place in it which, in her opinion, was worthy of her. So unable to go to Court, she formed one for herself, composed of a handful of wits, doubters, censurers, malcontents, and

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

upholders of new ideas, such as Suard, Lebrun-Pindare, the painter David, and Palissot. They did not desire the destruction of the old world; but, as men of intelligence, they loved to criticise it, and, without foreseeing the danger, hoped for the triumph of vague utopias.

These sciolists were then known as philosophers; nowadays we call them snobs. But the race is the same, and many a comfortable citizen of our own times dabbles in socialism, without giving a thought to the terrible conflagration which his ancestors before 1789 caused by playing with fire.

These acquaintances, however, were useful to Mme. Chénier, since they enabled her to place her children. She had a daughter, named Hélène, who, in 1786, married Comte de la Tour-Saint-Ygest, a man of sixty years of age. It was his third marriage, and from his two previous alliances there remained five children and a very large fortune.

As regards Mme. Chénier's four sons, the eldest, Constantin Xavier, was, in 1781, Vice-Consul at Alicante; the second, Louis Sauveur, was in the army; the third, André, after having also tried the profession of arms, got tired of garrison life and entered the diplomatic service under M. de la Luzerne, Ambassador in London; and the last wrote pompous tragedies. He signed himself "le Chevalier de Chénier," and sealed his letters with his arms, an oak and a tower surmounted by a star and a count's coronet. By these details we shall recognise Marie Joseph, the future Jacobin and stern regicide.

When the Revolution broke out all these people threw themselves into the movement. Formerly, the father had indeed rather flattered the great to obtain a pension; and the tragic poet had indeed done much bowing and scraping in order to have his *Azémire* played before the Court. But, as *Azémire* had been hissed, and as the pension was only a small one, they did not consider they were bound to show exaggerated gratitude. Besides, they had to make haste, for there was a great scrimmage around the new Government. The father immediately came forward as a demagogue, and

THE LAST DAYS OF ANDRÉ CHÉNIER

obtained his appointment as a member of the Watch Committee of the City of Paris; Louis Sauveur, although a gendarme, boasted of being one of the first insurgents of July 12th; and Marie Joseph wrote *Charles IX. ou la Saint-Barthélemy*, a five-act play in which tyrants received their deserts. "This play," said Camille Desmoulins, "advanced our affairs more than the days of October."

Whilst his family threw in its lot with the Revolution, André remained in London, where, heedless of politics, he gave himself up "to diversions and errors of a decidedly wild nature." But in the course of 1790 he returned to France, and, as soon as he had crossed the Channel, was carried away by the universal enthusiasm. With such friends as Trudaine, Pastoret, Barthélemy, and Pange,—with the whole of France one might say, he foresaw the pacific triumph of philosophy, and "conceived a regenerated humanity, worthy of the fruits of liberty, and submissive to all-powerful reason."

But the dream of this noble mind was of short duration. As soon as André Chénier had distinguished in the mob which was attacking the monarchy between sincerely ingenuous opponents and starving mischief-makers and hired assassins, he took his place in the fight. Wishing to teach the people that the only hope of happiness and liberty lay in the accomplishment of their duty, he published his *Avis aux Français*. Immediately the pack of libellers whom he had unmasked was yelping around him. But he disdainfully turned away his head, and henceforth did battle with his pen. He wrote political articles, letters to the newspapers, reflections on events, and addresses to the National Assembly; he employed every means of bringing back the country to a respect for monarchical tradition. His efforts, however, were in vain. Too many other people had an interest in making things worse. Of these illusions André Chénier soon retained only the inconsolable regret that he had too easily believed, "not in ideas which do not mislead, but in men who exploit and corrupt them."

This retrograde movement, the disgust which he could not hide on coming into contact with leaders of the Revolution,

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

pointed him out to the wild enthusiasts of the movement. Camille Desmoulins denounced to his brothers: "A man of the name of André Chénier, more sanguinary than Marat!" Sanguinary, indeed! He was merely disgusted. And could he be anything else? Can one imagine this man of splendid mind following in the wake of the Chabots, the Saint-Huruges, the Collot d'Herbois, the Fabre d'Églantines, the Héberts, and the Cloutzs,—all those conceited, good-for-nothings who were to lead the Revolution? He who hailed the birth of

" la belle liberté
Altière, étincelante, armée,"¹

inherited from his beautiful Greek mother recollections of his early childhood, and a love of what is noble, beautiful, and pure. He instinctively hated imbecile majorities and triumphant sharpers; he hated meanness, baseness, forced silence, and the tyranny of cynicism; and to see his pride, dignity, and nobility struggling with a democracy which, unable to be worthy, became brutal, is one of the most poignant dramas of the Revolution.

It is this drama which I wish to summarise.

*
* *

At the beginning of 1794 André Chénier took refuge at Versailles. He fled not because he was frightened, but in order to escape from the spectacle of man's cowardice. His weary soul fraternised voluptuously with the marble gods, the dismantled porticos, and the broad pieces of water reflecting the clear sky.

He resided in a house near the Satory gate, at the entrance to the forest, with which he lived in communion. Not far away is an ever-deserted spot which he must have loved. A marble statue by Bernini rises in the middle of a circular spot of verdure; grassy slopes descend to an extensive piece of ornamental water, like a large mirror, which is commanded, from the height of its triumphal terraces, by the admirable silhouette of the Château of Louis XIV. Then, without being spied upon, he could walk through the woods

¹ Beautiful liberty / Proud, flashing, armed.

THE LAST DAYS OF ANDRÉ CHÉNIER

to Pourrat's house, where Fanny lived, at Louveciennes, and to Marly, where his friends, the Trudaines, had completed that fine country house which is now owned by M. Victorien Sardou. Some thirty years ago the author of *Thermidor* collected the reminiscences of a Marly peasant who, as a child, had seen André Chénier there.

This man's name was Lebrun. When engaged, at the close of the winter of 1794, in making a well on the Place du Verduron for his employer Moisseron, he received a visit from "Monsieur Trudaine," who, being interested in his work, came to see what progress he had made, accompanied by "Monsieur Chanier, a dumpy little man with a tanned complexion, glowing eyes, a square face, and an enormous head. He often walked from Versailles and returned in the evening, unless he slept at his friends' house." In the latter case he occupied a bedroom on the first floor, which still exists, and the delicate decoration of which has been piously preserved.

It was in this Versailles retreat that André, through some secret channel, heard, early in March 1794, of the imminent arrest of his friend Pastoret. He immediately set out for Passy, where, at the house of his wife's parents, Pastoret had taken refuge.

Without a thought of the danger he was running, André crossed the Parc de St. Cloud and the Bois de Boulogne, passing the first houses of Passy at about eight o'clock at night. He hoped, under cover of the darkness, to slip into Pastoret's house without being seen, persuade his friend to follow him, and return to Versailles. But Pastoret was no longer in Passy. André was received by two weeping ladies, Mmes. Pastoret and Piscatory. He sought to reassure them, and pressed them to flee; offered to go to the coach office and order a cab; and said that in an hour they would be in his small apartment at Versailles, near the woods, safe from all domiciliary visits.

But suddenly knocks were heard at the door. A patrol was in front of the house. A voice shouted: "Open, in the name of the nation!"

Such were the prophetic words which every suspected person at the time of the Terror awaited in constant anguish

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

—words of which one dreamed at night, if, perchance, the day's anxieties found in sleep any respite. The proudest hearts froze on hearing that simple phrase.

The door had to be opened, whereupon the sordid members of the Revolutionary Committee of Passy, casting dull, suspicious glances at the terrified women, clumsily entered the drawing-room. The house was surrounded by armed men.

Will some historian ever take the trouble to write an account of the exploits of these revolutionary committees? They it was who created the Terror. The Convention delegated its sovereign authority to them, without foreseeing,—one must suppose,—into what hands that redoubtable weapon was to fall. In each district and commune, honest people had gradually become indifferent to the Revolution: they silently and submissively went about their business. And whilst they withdrew, there arose from the lower order of society those dregs which ferment and boil when political storms are raging. Every enlightened citizen and every honourable shopkeeper declined the singular honour of sitting on these revolutionary watch committees, whose sole work consisted in spying, denouncing, and arresting. One can imagine the class of men who took a pleasure in these odious duties. In order to save me the trouble of describing them, picture to yourself an assembly at which Monsieur Cardinal with his unconscious and conceited cynicism would preside, an assembly where the vain folly of Pipelet of *Les Mystères de Paris*, the brutal hatred and envy of Grinchu of *Les Bons Villageois*, every vice, every form of ignorance, and every base ambition would be represented. And think that there were 21,000 of these committees in France!

I know nothing sadder than the examination which André Chénier, whom the Passy patriots had just found in the house of a suspect, had immediately to undergo. He was not threatened by any special decision or decree; but these brutes were endowed with a sort of bestial instinct which enabled them to select an aristocrat in the unknown person whom chance had thrown in their way. Without understanding why, they comprehended that they were face to face

THE LAST DAYS OF ANDRÉ CHÉNIER

with a man of proud and noble heart. He was a certain prey for the scaffold.

Moreover, it is probable that the sansculottes Guénot, Cramoisin, and Boudgoust, who undertook this examination, were intoxicated, so far did their folly, on this occasion, exceed all limits. For instance, when André declared that the only document in his possession was his *carte de sûreté*, and that he had destroyed an unimportant and quite private letter, informing him of the despatch of his things which had been left in England, the commissaries looked aghast at each other and asked him :¹

“What sort of man can he be who doesn't keep his letters, and especially letters of personal interest? called upon to tell us the truth.”

“Replied: ‘It seems to me that letters announcing the arrival of above-mentioned things are of no value when goods are received.’”

“Represented to him that he was not right in his reply, and all the more so as private letters should be preserved, not only for the justification of the person who sent the goods, but also for that of the person who received them.”

“Replied that he persisted in thinking that private persons did not show more exactitude than business houses, whose correspondence became useless when goods ordered were received, and that he believed the majority of private persons acted on that belief.”

“Represented to him that we have nothing to do with

¹ The following are the exact terms of the official document :

“Quel sorte de genre que personne ne conserve et surtout des lettre portant son interest personnelle nommé de nous dire la vérité.”

“A répondu il me semble que des lettre qui enonce l'arrive des effect designies cy-dessus lorsque ses effect son recue ne son plus daucune valeure.”

“A lui represente quil nest pas juste dans faire reponse dautant plus que des lettre personnelle doive se conserver pour la justification de celui qui a en voyé les effect comme pour celui qui les a recue.”

“A repond quil persiste a pensé quand des particuliers qui ne métre pas tant dexactitude que des maison de commerce lorsque la reception des fait demande est acuse toute la correspondance devient inutile et qu'il croit que la plus part des particuliers en use insy.”

“A lui represente que nous ne fond pas de demande de comerce nommé à lui ne nous repondre sur les motifs de son arrestation qui ne son pas affaire de commerce.”

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

business. Called upon him not to reply regarding the reasons for his arrest which are not commercial affairs."

When Chénier, exasperated by the idiocy of his judges, disdainfully replied that he did not understand a word they were saying, the *procès-verbal* records that he was:

"Asked why he sought to make them speak in set phrases. Whereupon he replied to us categorically."¹

A little later, questioned as to his friendship for the Pastorets, he explained that he had seen them several times four or five years ago at the Trudaines'.

The latter resided in one of the houses on the Place Louis XV., and as the Pastorets occupied the adjoining house² (*maison à côté*), neighbourly relations were naturally established.

The commissaries became wildly excited. They got it into their heads that a person named Coté, the owner of a house on the Place Louis XV., might be a suspect. They gravely pointed out to the accused that:

"He was not correct in his reply, since there was no house on the Place de la Révolution known as Cottée's house, as he has just declared to us."

"Replied that he meant the adjoining house."

"Represented to him that he speaks to us in set phrases, seeing that he has twice spoken of Cottée's house."

"Replied that he spoke the truth."³

The struggle was unequal. André Chénier refused to sign this idiotic *procès-verbal*. Convicted by the Passy patriots of being an enemy of the French people, he was taken the same night to the Saint-Lazare prison.

* * *

The ancient charitable institution of Saint-Vincent de Paul

¹ "A lui demande pourquoi il nous cherche des frâse surquoy il nous repond cathégoriquement."

² That which afterwards became the property of Mme. du Plessis-Bellièvre, and which is now occupied by the Automobile Club.

³ "Qu'il nest pas juste dans sa reponse attendue que place de la révolution il ny a pas de maison qui se nome la maison à Cottée donc il vien de nous déclarer."

"A repondu qu'il entendait la maison voisine. . . ."

"A lui représenter quil nous fai des frâse attendue quil nous a repettes deux foie la maison à Cottée."

"A repondu quil a dit la verité."

THE LAST DAYS OF ANDRÉ CHÉNIER

had become the Maison Lazare. This old, mud-coloured building, closed by triple gates and doors encased in sheet-iron, studded all over with enormous nails, resembled a huge cage of wild animals. Four floors of prisoners moaned and howled one above the other. Three broad, badly-lit passages, barred with gates and smelling like a wild-beasts' den, divided each floor. Most of these sinister galleries—now white-washed, often scrubbed, and sufficiently ventilated—still exist. The tragic recollection of the Terror still clings to them. You climb a staircase which every victim descended on his or her way to the mournful tumbrils passing backwards and forwards between the various prisons and the court. It is even related that at the bottom of this staircase there was a trap-door, covered with a board which, in 1793, tipped up when stepped upon. Unfortunate people who unsuspectingly placed their foot upon it were precipitated into a deep pit where their bones are said still to lay. . . . What is the origin of the legend? I know not; but, like all legends, it is long-lived, and this gloomy spot still goes by the name of the *Casse-cou*—the break-neck place. Certain it is that in 1793 it was called the *Casse-gueule*. Perhaps it was there they placed the *griaches*, those horrible tubs into which each prisoner emptied the filth from his cell. Life at Lazare was hard. Each in this swarm of eight to nine hundred prisoners, continually moving about the galleries, kept to himself, and suspecting that a spy was behind every door, avoided speaking to his companions. These doomed men and women showed something like the instinctive terror of sheep which are huddled together in the pens of a slaughter-house.

As soon as he set foot in this den, André Chénier resigned himself to death. Many there were who showed sublime resignation and courage when face to face with the scaffold, but he alone revolted and uttered a cry of contempt for his persecutors. Why should he regret life? What had become of justice, honour, and friendship? Where were they to be found among men?

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

“ Ah ! lâches que nous sommes !
Tous, oui, tous ! Adieu, terre, adieu !
Vienne, vienne la mort ! que la mort me délivre ! ”¹

Recovering himself, however, he raised up his downcast heart. No, he did not wish to die without having spoken his mind about the Terror.

“ Mourir sans vider mon carquois !
Sans percer, sans fouler, sans pétrir dans leur fange
Ces bourreaux barbouilleurs de lois . . .
Nul ne resterait donc pour attendre l'histoire
Sur tant de justes massacrés . . . ”²

And the iambs which he passionately scrawled on a scrap of paper concluded with this sublime apostrophe which admirably sums up “ this life full of disappointed hopes, and desecrated noble enthusiasm, still trembling all over, on the threshold of death, with the ardour of a hopeless struggle.”

“ Souffre, ô cœur gros de haine, affamé de justice :
Toi, vertu, pleure si je meurs ! ”³

The poet will reap the glory of having concentrated in himself alone the revolted soul of violated France, and of having, from a prison cell, anathematised those who dishonoured all.

Indignation had a singular vitalising influence on André Chénier. Prison life transformed him into a poet and a lover. He there met that woman who, under the name of *La Jeune Captive*, will live immortally in the memory of man. He does not otherwise describe her, but he concludes the melodious stanzas which he addressed to her with these lines :

“ Ces chants, de ma prison, témoins harmonieux,
Feront à quelqu'amant des loisirs studieux
Chercher quelle fut cette belle. ”⁴

¹ Ah ! cowards that we are ; / All, yes, all of us ! Farewell, earth, farewell ! / Come, come Death ! may Death deliver me !

² Die without emptying my quiver ! / Without piercing, crushing, and trampling in the mud / These brutal scribblers of laws. . . / Nobody would then remain to excite the pity of History / For so many virtuous massacred ones. . .

³ Suffer, oh ! heart overburdened with hatred and thirsting for justice : / Thou, virtue, weep should I die !

⁴ These songs, from my prison, harmonious witnesses / Will make some lover of studious leisure / Search for this beautiful one.

THE LAST DAYS OF ANDRÉ CHÉNIER

This "amant des loisirs studieux" is found, and he has discovered the true social state of the "Jeune Captive." According to tradition her name was Mlle. de Coigny—that is so; but it must be added that André Chénier looked upon her with a poet's eyes. She was no longer the "sprouting ear of corn" he represented her to be; and neither was she the young person whom Alfred de Vigny, another poet, depicted in *Stello*, on the faith of Chénier's verses. She did not "dance when she walked, as children do"; she had not "the air of the youngest of the Muses"; nor was she flat-chested and round-shouldered, like young growing girls"; and, finally, she was far from possessing "the innocence of seventeen"—very far, indeed, from possessing it, considering that she was married, ten years before the Revolution, to Comte de Rossay-Fleury, that she had "ill resisted the seductions of a giddy and gallant courtship," that she had not been clever enough "to keep a flighty and dissipated husband," and that she had obtained a divorce as soon as she was able, casting off her married name to resume that of Coigny, under which André Chénier's stanzas, aided by legend, will hand her down to posterity.

Otherwise, she was charming, and Mme. Vigée-Lebrun states that she had an enchanting face, an ardent look, a Venus-like figure, and a superior mind. "When I thought how beautiful she was and how susceptible to passion," adds the celebrated painter, who well knew the weaknesses of pretty women, "I trembled for her repose."

Mme. Lebrun's fears were well founded. Mlle. de Coigny was perhaps amused by André Chénier's "little verses"; but she did not love him. She kept all her tenderness for a certain M. de Montrond, a lady-killer, who was a prisoner like herself at the Maison Lazare. A hundred louis judiciously distributed erased the names of Montrond and Mlle. de Coigny from the list of victims, and they thus gained a few days and were saved. Perhaps the "Jeune Captive" might have thought also of purchasing the head of the poet who immortalised her, but—the idea never occurred to her.

After the 9th of Thermidor, she married Montrond, and they went to hide their happiness in a deserted spot a few

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

miles from Paris. But they soon returned—to be divorced, the amiable lady having conceived a passion for a brother of Garat, the singer. She was no happier, however, than before. A melancholy detail must be recorded—she did not even keep the verses which were to consecrate her glory. The autograph manuscript of *La Jeune Captive* was, in fact, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, in the possession of Millin, another prisoner at Saint-Lazare, to whom Mlle. de Coigny had given it!

* *

André Chénier was not, however, in imminent danger. His family, although it had relinquished its former demagogism, had given pledges to the Revolution; his brother, Marie Joseph, was among the powerful men of the day, having attributed to himself the rôle of official poet of the Terror; and though certain divergences in politics had separated the two brothers, so different in nature and character, misfortune had reconciled them.

Marie Joseph and his mother hoped, therefore, that André, like so many others, would be forgotten in prison, and that nothing would attract the attention of his enemies to him. But either because old Chénier, the father, did not share their opinion, or because feverish anxiety impelled him to take action, he wearied the offices of the Committees with his visits. He first of all sent a memorial to the popular Prisons Committee, still believing—poor fellow!—in the equity of revolutionary magistrates! The only result of this step was that the prisoner was kept in closer confinement. On arriving one day at the Maison Lazare, which he visited daily, the old man was informed of a fresh regulation—a decision of the Comité de Sûreté Générale forbidding him to see his son.

He returned along the Faubourg Martin and entered his house, in the Rue de Cléry, in tears. But he was unable to remain inactive. Avoiding his wife and Marie Joseph, he went from one administration to another, exhausting his influence and that of his friends in order to bring his memorial before the Committee . . . Time passed, and every day the guillotine claimed its batch of victims. The poor old man was worried out of his life.

THE LAST DAYS OF ANDRÉ CHÉNIER

“Have patience!” counselled Marie Joseph, who had ardently joined forces with the enemies of Robespierre, whose fall would have saved André’s head. But the father’s anxiety only increased with the Terror.

At the beginning of Thermidor, when wandering around the Maison Lazare, which he was no longer able to enter, he learnt from one of the turnkeys that a list of thirty prisoners had been sent to the tribunal that very morning, and that thirty more victims would follow the next day. Frantic with anguish he rushed to Barère and, after many supplications and lamentations, was at last received.

Barère—cold and insensible to his grief—uttered polite, vague, and evasive replies. Old Chénier, clinging like a desperate man to this last chance of success, made a touching appeal to soften the marble heart of his listener. . . . Fancy trying to move Barère to pity!

“Very good,” at last said the member of the Convention, tired of the scene. “*Your son shall come out in three days’ time.*”

Beaming with joy, full of confidence, and lost in thanks, the poor father returned home, and, telling nobody of what he had done, gloried in the thought that he had saved his son.

Towards evening, three days later—it was the 7th of Thermidor—he was sitting, tranquil and full of hope for the future, in his little apartment in the Rue de Cléry. There was a ring at the door. . . . The old man was momentarily deluded by the thought that it might be André who had returned.

He rushed to the door and threw it open. . . . But it was not André; it was Marie Joseph who, pale and motionless on the landing, stood silently staring at his father. Old Chénier, suddenly terrified, his eyes fixed on those of his son, had not sufficient strength to question him. . . . And there the two men remained, their lips trembling and not daring to utter a word, until the old man, starting back with horror, fell with a piercing scream on the dining-room floor.

The old house where this drama took place is still standing.

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

Sinking under the burden of its years it juts out, narrow and curious, like a slender promontory, between the Rue de Cléry and the Rue Beauregard. We can see it, in thought, as it was on that warm evening in Thermidor. In search of a cool place people were standing at the doors, laughing and chattering; some little girls, with boisterous laughter, were playing in the street at ball; the thousand joyous sounds which one can hear on a Parisian summer evening arose from the whole quarter . . . and up there, near that open window, André Chénier's father, choking with sobs, cried aloud for his son, accused himself of having killed him, and called upon death, which was still to keep him waiting for nearly a year, to deliver him.

At that very hour a cart, loaded with twenty-five mutilated bodies, left the town-gate of Vincennes—the place of execution—and proceeded by way of the outer boulevard towards an abandoned quarry, where, for six weeks past, tumbril-loads of corpses had been emptied every evening. Two men there carried out the horrible work of stripping the blood-stained clothes from the bodies, which they then threw into the quarry, the grave remaining open in readiness for the next batch of victims.

Thus was André Chénier buried. We should still be ignorant as to the place where he lay—for the deed was done secretly, and those who were entrusted with it never spoke on the subject—if a poor work-girl, named Mlle. Paris, who accompanied her father as far as the guillotine, had not had the incredible courage to attend the execution and, at a distance, follow the cart to the common grave. Alone among the relatives of so many condemned people she knew where the victims of the revolutionary scaffold lay in horrible confusion. Every Sunday the poor girl went to pray on that piece of ground, which, filled up after the 9th of Thermidor, was purchased by an inhabitant of the Faubourg de Picpus, enclosed with walls, and consecrated by a refractory priest who was hiding in Paris.

When Mme. de Montagu-Noailles returned to France in 1802, one of the first things she did was to make inquiries as to the place where her mother, the Duchesse d'Ayen, who was

THE LAST DAYS OF ANDRÉ CHÉNIER

executed on July 22nd, 1794, was buried. But nobody could tell her. At last, however, she chanced to hear of Mlle. Paris, and obtained the information she required. Mme. de Noailles purchased the ground where lay the thirteen hundred and seven victims who were executed between June 14th and July 27th. The enclosure has remained intact; but the vaults and monuments—most of them very plain—of families of sufferers who have obtained permission to be laid to rest with the relatives whom the Revolution put to death are in a neighbouring garden. In a corner is the tomb of General Lafayette, still surmounted by the United States flag. Through a little grated door can be seen the common grave, a square grass plot with an iron cross, shaded by poplars and cypress trees. The neighbouring convent is now occupied by the ladies of the Perpetual Adoration. Every day a burial service is celebrated in the chapel in memory of victims of the scaffold, and annually, at the end of April or in May, there is a solemn service, at the conclusion of which the clergy and families in mourning walk in procession from the Church to the sacred enclosure, which has been named *Le Champ des Martyrs*—The Martyrs' Field.

André Chénier's name is only recalled there by a tablet which was very recently fixed on the wall surrounding the common grave. The poet's mother never knew where his body was thrown. Although sharing Marie Joseph's adventurous and irregular life, she survived the tragedy of Thermidor by fifteen years.

Marie Joseph bought—doubtless at the time of the Directory—a small estate at Antony. During the Empire, Mme. Chénier built a fine and commodious house there, which still exists. Its white façade is shaded by large trees, and the wrought iron-work of the balcony on the first-floor represents three lyres, separated by two crescents. The beautiful Grecian, old and exhausted by the astonishing diversity of events which had composed her life, recollected, you see, the East, and thus symbolised her descent, her two poet-sons, and herself, who was not without literary pretensions.

When she died her body was buried in this Antony garden

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

where she had spent her last summers. Old inhabitants of the village still speak of the tall, thin, sad lady who, in a light-coloured dress, used to walk along the straight alleys; and many remember her tomb, under a large walnut tree, at the bottom of a lawn.

Ten years later a publisher collected André Chénier's scattered manuscripts and published his poems, which until then had never been printed. They were a remarkable revelation. The world discovered with astonishment that the Revolution was responsible for an atrocious crime—it had murdered, without motive, one of France's greatest poets.

CAGLIOSTRO'S HOUSE

THE building still exists, and one can easily imagine—for it has changed but little—the effect which its corner pavilions, then hidden by old trees, its deep courtyards, its broad terraces, and the mysterious glimmers from the alchemist's crucibles filtering through the tall blinds made on those who at night passed along the deserted rampart.

This house, which, under parasitical constructions built during the course of the last century, retains its noble outlines, possesses something indescribably fantastic and disquieting. But that is doubtless an effect of the imagination, for the house was built neither by nor for Cagliostro; it belonged to the Marquise d'Orvillers¹ when he occupied it, and he made no other alterations, perhaps, than the addition of a few contrivances necessary for his magical *séances*. Nevertheless, the building is a strange one, and the plan on which it was built is abnormal.

A cart-gateway opens on to the Rue Saint-Claude, at the corner of the Boulevard Beaumarchais. The courtyard, closed in by buildings, is solemn and gloomy. At its far end, under a flagged porch, is a stone staircase which has preserved its original iron balustrade, but which has subsided under its weight of years. How many beautiful women, attracted by curiosity to the magician's den, and fearful at what they were about to witness, must have placed their trembling fingers on this handrail! One can evoke the silhouette of Mme. de la Motte, hurriedly mounting these steps, her head covered with a mantilla; or that of Cardinal

¹ Title-deeds.

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

de Rohan's valets, slumbering on a bench, with a lantern between their legs, whilst their master, up above, applied himself, in company with the "great Copt," to the study of necromancy, metallurgy, the Cabala, or oneirocritics, which, as everyone knows, are the four elementary parts of divination.

A private staircase, now walled in, doubling the main one, reached to the second floor, where traces of it are still to be seen. A third staircase, narrow and tortuous, still exists at the other extremity of the building, on the boulevard side; it winds about in the middle of the wall in complete darkness, and communicates with the former drawing-rooms—now partitioned off—the French windows of which opened on to a terrace which has preserved its iron balconies. Underneath are the coach-house and stable, with their worm-eaten doors—the stable of Djérid, the mettlesome black mare of Lorenza Feliciani.

If the surroundings are picturesque, the personages had the air of heroes of romance.

It was in the summer of 1781 that Comte de Cagliostro made his *début* in Paris. Fanciful particulars exist in abundance, but we will confine our attention only to what is authentic. He was a rather awkward man, badly dressed in blue taffetas gallooned all over, and his powdered hair was arranged in long, drooping curls in the most ridiculously curious manner. He wore *chiné* stockings with gold clocks, and velvet shoes with buckles gemmed with precious stones. There was an excess of diamonds on his fingers, on his shirt-frill, and on his watch-chains; on his head was a charlatan's hat ornamented with white feathers; and eight months out of the year he wore a large blue fox-skin cloak, in addition to a fur hood shaped like a *carapousse*. When children caught sight of him in his three-cornered fox-skin hat, it was a question as to who could get away first.

His features were regular, his skin rosy, and his teeth superb. I shall not describe his physiognomy, because he had twelve or fifteen at his disposal. Never had such eyes as his been seen before.

Beugnot, who dined with him at Mme. de la Motte's, gives the following amusing description of the magician:



THE COMTESSE DE CAGLIOSTRO.

CAGLIOSTRO'S HOUSE

“I only looked at him by stealth, and did not yet know what to think of him. His face, his head-dress, the man's whole appearance awed me in spite of myself. I waited to hear him speak. He spoke a most awful gibberish of Italian and French, and made many quotations, which were supposed to be in Arabic, but which he did not trouble to translate. He alone spoke, and had time to touch on twenty subjects, because he developed them only as far as suited his convenience. He was constantly asking if he were understood, whereupon the company all around bowed to assure him of it. Upon entering on a subject he seemed transported and assumed a lofty attitude as regards both voice and gesture. But suddenly he would descend to the level of ordinary mortals to address most tender compliments and comical pretty speeches to our hostess. This manœuvre lasted the whole of the meal, and I learnt nothing from the hero except that he had spoken of the heavens, the stars, the great Arcanum, Memphis, the Hierophant, transcendental chemistry, giants, and huge animals; of a town which was ten times larger than Paris, in the interior of Africa, where he had correspondents; of our ignorance as to all these beautiful things, which he had on the tips of his fingers; and that he had interlarded his discourse with comically inspired compliments to Mme. de la Motte, whom he called his *biche*, his gazelle, his swan, and his dove,—thus borrowing his appellations from what was most lovable in the animal kingdom. At the close of the dinner he deigned to put several questions to me one after the other, to all of which I replied with a most respectful confession of ignorance. I have since heard from Mme. de la Motte that he received the most favourable impression of my person and knowledge.”

The thaumaturgist's wife, Comtesse Lorenza, who was rarely to be seen, had a reputation for possessing every perfection. It was said she had the purest Greek outline combined with a perfect Italian expression. Her warmest partisans, the most enthusiastic admirers of her beauty, were precisely those who had never seen her face. Duels were fought on her account, challenges were made and accepted over the question as to whether her eyes were black or blue, and as to whether there

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

was a dimple on her right or left cheek. She did not appear to be more than twenty years of age ; but she discreetly spoke of her eldest son, who for a long time past had been a captain in the service of the Dutch Government.

One can imagine the excitement which was produced in the Marais quarter by the arrival of such strange people at Mme. d'Orvillers' house. Cardinal de Rohan had himself chosen the residence and supplied the necessary furniture. He was to be seen entering Cagliostro's three to four times a week, at the dinner hour, and he did not leave until far into the night. It was declared that the grand almoner worked in the magician's laboratory, and many were the people who spoke of the liquid gold and the sparkling diamonds in crucibles at a white heat which were to be seen in that mysterious place. But nobody had entered it. All that was known for certain was that the rooms were decorated "with Oriental luxury," and that Comte de Cagliostro received his visitors, to whom he gave his hand to be kissed, dressed in fascinating costumes. On a slab of black marble in the ante-chamber was engraved in gold letters, Pope's Universal Prayer, a paraphrase of which, ten years later, was to be sung by Paris as a hymn to the *Etre Suprême*.

One of Cagliostro's magical wonders was to make known in Paris events which had just taken place in Vienna, London, and Pekin, or which would happen in six days', six months', six years' or twenty years' time. But in order to do this he needed an apparatus consisting of a glass globe filled with clarified water and placed on a table. This table was covered with a black cloth embroidered in red with cabalistic Rosicrucian signs. On the table and around the globe, at certain religiously observed distances, were placed various emblems, including some small Egyptian figures, ancient phials filled with lustral water, and even a crucifix, but different from that worshipped by Christians. When these preparations had been made, a clairvoyante was to kneel before the globe and relate what she saw in it. But a clairvoyante was difficult to find, for she had to possess more than one qualification. She had to be as pure as an angel, born under a certain constellation, possess delicate nerves, great sensibility, and blue eyes.

CAGLIOSTRO'S HOUSE

By a piece of indescribable good luck, Mlle. de Latour, the niece of Mme. de la Motte, was found, after having been duly examined by Cagliostro, to fulfil all the required conditions. Her mother almost succumbed with joy on hearing the news, and was persuaded that all the treasures of Memphis were going to be heaped on her family, which was badly in need of them.¹

As one can easily imagine, many comments were made. One fine day, people heard that at a private supper in the dining-room of the house in the Rue Saint-Claude, Cagliostro had evoked the dead. Six guests and the host sat down at a round table set with sixteen covers, and each guest named the dead person whom he desired to see. Cagliostro, dressed in a jacket ornamented with gold, slowly called over the names, at the same time concentrating all his will power on the subject. A fearful moment of uncertainty and anguish ensued. But it did not last long, for the six evoked guests appeared—the Duc de Choiseul, Voltaire, d'Alembert, Diderot, the Abbé de Voisenon, and Montesquieu. . . One might have been in more foolish company.

When the living diners had recovered their breath a little, the company conversed. . . . But the only known narrative of this uncommon conversation is evidently fanciful, for all these great men talk nonsense.

Nevertheless, the affair created a sensation. The public became excited and the Court talked about the *souper des morts*. The King shrugged his shoulders and turned to his game; the Queen gave orders that "the name of this charlatan" was not to be mentioned in her presence. A few hare-brained women, however, dreamed of the splendid magician and longed to cross the threshold of his mysterious house, so they begged Lorenza Feliciani to start a course of lectures on magic for women only. Lorenza consented, and said that she would commence the lectures as soon as there were thirty-six adepts. The list was complete that very day and, a week later, the first lesson was given. But the initiates gossiped, there was a fresh scandal, and a second

¹ *Mémoires du Comte Beugnot, ancien ministre*, vol. i., p. 73.

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

séance was never held. Besides, Cagliostro had other things to think about.

In addition to the Cardinal de Rohan, who had a magnificent apartment in the Rue Vieille-du-Temple, he had as a neighbour Comte de la Motte, whose wife, a perfect adventuress, boasted of overcoming the Queen's antipathy to the alchemists. Mme. de la Motte occupied the house which forms the north corner of the Rue Neuve-Saint-Gilles and the Boulevard Beaumarchais. She first of all entered into relations with Lorenza, and then with Cagliostro, who introduced her to the Cardinal. We know what followed: the well-known Diamond Necklace intrigue resulting in the arrest of the Cardinal, "the woman La Motte," and Cagliostro. The following is the account which the last-named gave of his misadventure:—

"On August 22nd (1786), a commissary, a police-officer, and eight policemen entered my house. The pillage began in my presence. They forced me to open my desk. Elixirs, balsams, precious liquids,—everything fell a prey to the myrmidons who were ordered to escort me. I begged the commissary to allow me to use my carriage, but he refused. The agent of the Brunières, out of the pockets of whose coat protruded the butt-ends of some pistols, seized me by the collar, thrust me into the street, and most scandalously dragged me on foot up the boulevard to the Rue Notre-Dame de Nazareth. There we came across a cab, which I obtained permission to enter, and we at last set off for the Bastille."¹

The poor "great Copt"—greatly depressed—did not appear at the house in the Rue Saint-Claude until ten months later, on June 1st, 1787. He had a triumphal return, a crowd of "eight to ten thousand people" obstructing the boulevard. The courtyard of the house, staircases, and rooms "were all crowded." He was cheered, embraced, and carried into his drawing-room. . . . But this success was of short duration; for on June 13th the agent of the Brunières brought Cagliostro an order from the King to leave Paris within twenty-four hours and France within a

¹ *Mémoire pour le Comte de Cagliostro.*



CAGLIOSTRO.

CAGLIOSTRO'S HOUSE

fortnight—a contingency which the magician had not been able to foresee. Cagliostro complied, locked the door of his laboratories, put the key in his pocket, and was driven to the Royal Sword Inn, at Saint-Denis, where he spent the night. He then proceeded by short stages, in company with Lorenza, towards Switzerland. Paris was never to see him again.

His house remained shut up during the whole of the Revolution, and it was not until 1805 that its doors, which had been closed for eighteen years, were reopened. The owner sold the “great Copt’s” furniture by auction, as an indemnity for unpaid rent.

“Sale of furniture, crucibles, elixirs . . . formerly the property of Comte de Cagliostro . . .” What a splendid poster for a collector! Since then the quiet house in the Rue Saint-Claude has been without a history.

No; I am mistaken! About 1855, during some work of restoration, the doors of the old cart-gateway were removed and replaced by doors which were part of the old building materials of the Temple palace. And there they are to-day, with their heavy bolts and huge locks.

The doors of Louis XVI.’s prison closing Cagliostro’s house. . . . Such coincidences do occur!

TWO STAGES IN NAPOLEON'S CAREER

I

THE HOTEL DE CHERBOURG

It can be affirmed, without being paradoxical, that the Saint-Paul port has lost much of its picturesqueness by the abolition of the "floating house" which arrived at Paris from Bourgogne twice a week. This boat was an immense ark, filled with preserved grapes, casks, and wet-nurses. Sometimes as many as three hundred poor and leisurely passengers crowded on board, for the fifty hours' journey cost only a little over eight shillings.

The Saint-Paul port was in a state of commotion as soon as the boat, about four o'clock in the afternoon, appeared at the Saint-Bonnet bend of the river. From a distance people could see the Custom's pinnace come alongside, and an exciseman step on board "to receive His Majesty's duties." Then it slowly moved up the river, steered clear of the headland of the Ile Saint-Louis, and, creaking in all its timbers and colliding with barges and washhouses, was moored to the bank, where a joking crowd awaited its arrival. According to a tradition of mysterious origin, passengers, as they landed, had to be unmercifully chaffed. Two planks, placed end to end, served as a landing-stage, but a very shaky one indeed.

On October 19th, 1784, the idlers who had been attracted by this sight saw a Minim Friar, followed by a string of five young provincials, emerge from the huge cabin. They were not over-burdened with luggage, each of them carrying but a

TWO STAGES IN NAPOLEON'S CAREER

small bag containing clothes. The smallest of the group, —a puny, ill-favoured, dark-complexioned boy,—trotted behind the others, and in all probability not one of the idle onlookers paid any attention to him as he stepped ashore, so destined did he seem to pass unobserved everywhere.

Thus did Napoleon come into contact for the first time with the great city, which, dazzled and submissive, was to give herself up to him fifteen years later.

It has since been learnt that the Minim Friar, still followed by the children with whose transference from the Brienne preparatory college to the Royal Military School he had been entrusted, crossed the Seine at the Pont Marie; that they dined at an eating-house, at the sign of the "Daring Cock," in the Rue des Deux Ponts; and that they afterwards walked along the quays, where young Bonaparte chose a copy of *Gil Blas*, for which his comrade De Castries paid, from one of the second-hand book-boxes. It was nearly dark when, after a prayer had been said at Saint-Germain-des-Près, they reached the Military School.

The room which Napoleon occupied has not been discovered in the present school buildings.

Marco Saint-Hilaire declared that this "cell," which was reached, he said, by a staircase with a hundred and seventy-three steps, was lit by a single window opening on to the courtyard. But this information is erroneous. In 1785 military cadets were lodged in a wooden dormitory, built in the middle of the first courtyard, each having a small square room, furnished with an iron bedstead with linen curtains, a wooden chair, and a low wardrobe (in which to keep shoes and the powder-bag) on which was a pewter wash-hand basin.

There the boy lived for a year, during which he was confirmed in the school chapel, still in existence, though closed for some time past. The young Corsican left Paris on October 30th, 1785, with a second-lieutenant's commission, and did not return until two years later. In October, 1787, we find him at the Hôtel de Cherbourg, in the Rue du Four-Saint-Honore.

The whole of the right-hand side of the Rue du Four

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

disappeared at the time of the building of the Central Markets. Even its name was changed, the street since 1864 being called the Rue de Vauvilliers. Doubtless these changes discouraged historians, who did not think there was much chance of discovering the house inhabited by Bonaparte among the few existing buildings of the period. However, it still exists at No. 33, and is easily to be recognised by the coat of bright red paint which covers it up to the second floor. Before the quite recent application of this decoration, there could be distinguished, traced on the stone-work, the name "Cherbourg," a part of the old sign. For the building remained a furnished hotel, under the name which it bore in the 18th century, until 1878.

Let us enter. The ground-floor and *entresol* have been totally changed of recent years, but all the upper floors have remained as Napoleon saw them. The house is more than modest in appearance. The staircase is badly lit from an air-shaft formed of four black walls, pierced by narrow windows and obstructed by little balconies, corbel tables, and other excrescences by means of which the occupants of these small lodgings tried to gain space. Here everything is old—the iron balustrade, the partitions, and the doors. . . . Perhaps one of these keys, sticking in the doors, was that of Napoleon's bedroom.

In 1787 the Hôtel de Cherbourg was kept by a man named Védrine. It is said that the Corsican officer occupied Room No. 9, on the third floor, and that he only went out at meal times. The man with "the glabrous, prematurely-wrinkled face, whose coat flapped around an emaciated body," was to be seen walking to the Passage des Petits-Pères, where he ate for threepence a course. He also went to a small eating-house in the Rue de Valois, near the Passage Radziwill. As though ashamed of the small amount which he expended, he was in the habit of wrapping his money in the bill and handing it to the cashier without ever saying a word. Then, sadly and pensively, he would retrace his steps towards the Hôtel de Cherbourg. Ah, if Père Védrine, a few years afterwards, had the curiosity to go and see his former tenant, now an Emperor, proceed to Nôtre-Dame, where, for

TWO STAGES IN NAPOLEON'S CAREER

two hours, the Pope had been awaiting him, he must have had a difficulty in recognising, in the Cæsar who was being saluted by cannon, flourishes of trumpets, and bells, "the bit of a man with dishevelled hair," the little mountebank of five feet three whom he had formerly lodged for five crowns a month.

Besides, he was a quiet and peaceful lodger, and he wisely kept to his room, composing a novel.

M. Frédéric Masson has published the opening of this lucubration in conformity with the original rough drafts. It is a narrative, in the form of letters, of the adventure of Baron de Neuhof, who, in 1736, under the title of Theodore I., was proclaimed King of Corsica.

Bonaparte was, in fact, homesick: his imagination took refuge in his island; he mentally lived there, fleeing from the muddy Paris where he was nothing, where he felt out of his element, and where—a poor provincial without relations—he despaired of ever playing a part. What a state of inactivity these leaves scrawled at the Hôtel de Cherbourg denote, leaves which he dates with the day and hour as though to delude himself that he is engaged on a serious work!

“ November 17th, Paris, 11 o'clock p.m.

“ I have barely reached the age of the birth of passion, and yet I wield the pencil of History; . . . but perhaps, for the kind of writings which I compose, this is the best state of soul and mind to be in. . . . The venality of manhood will not soil my pen. I only breathe truth. . . . ”

And in his endeavour to fix his thoughts on paper, he lets his pen flow on, tracing sentimental declarations and tirades after the manner of Raynal and Rousseau, whom he imitated like an unskilful schoolboy. . . . But it was so little in his way!

At times, however, his *ennui* was so great that the austere young man deserted his attic. Quite near was the Palais-Royal with its joyous crowd, its lights, its gambling saloons, its pretty promenaders, and all those attractions which his

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

poverty prevented him enjoying. The temptation was too great; one evening he gave way and went to see. . . . The poor girl whom he met there was timid, which encouraged him, he who "always thought himself sullied by a single glance." He immediately questioned her, in brief hurried phrases; just as, later, he was to question Goethe. "*Why? How?*" he said, "are such useful questions that we cannot too often ask them." Conversing as they walked along, he and the woman returned to the Hôtel de Cherbourg. . . . It was cold. This meeting was such an event in his gloomy life that, as soon as he was alone he wrote an account of it, which he once more carefully dated, as a thing to be remembered.—*Thursday, November 22nd, 1787, in Paris, Hôtel de Cherbourg, Rue du Four-Saint-Honoré.*

There is something attractive about this mean building which was the scene of a crisis in Napoleon's life. We can picture to ourselves the then narrow street, almost deserted at nightfall, the closed lodging-house; and, up there, a lighted window standing out against the grey façade. Napoleon was sitting up in his poor bedroom; he was dreaming, a discouraged, saddened man, without energy, at eighteen! And in the presence of such a picture one thinks of those lines of Chateaubriand: "There was a prologue to the Emperor's life. An unknown Bonaparte preceded the mighty Napoleon. The idea of Bonaparte was in the world before he appeared there in person; it secretly convulsed the earth. At the moment Bonaparte appeared in 1789, one felt that something terrible had taken place, a feeling of indescribable disquietude. When the earth is threatened with a catastrophe, we are warned of its approach by latent shocks. We are seized with fear, we listen during the night, and we watch the heavens, without knowing what is the matter with us or what is going to happen. . . ."

TWO STAGES IN NAPOLEON'S CAREER

II

JOSEPHINE'S MARRIAGE

THE large mansion at 3 Rue d'Antin dates from the time of the Regency.

During the eighteenth century it was the property of the Marquis Jean Jacques de Gallet de Mondragon, Lord of Pluvieux, Saint-Chamant, and other places, Councillor of State, steward to the King, and private secretary to Madame. Confiscated at the time of the Revolution as the estate of an aristocrat, the house was appropriated for the use of the Mairie of the second *arrondissement* of Paris; and it was there, as we shall see, that, on March 9th, 1796, the civil marriage of Napoleon and Josephine was celebrated.

The contract had been drawn up on the afternoon of the previous day at Me. Raguideau's, the notary of "the future wife," in the presence of a single witness, Citizen Lemarois, "a friend of the parties." The future husband declared that he owned "neither real nor personal estate, with the exception of his wardrobe and his military accoutrements, the whole valued at the sum of . . ." But, when about to name a figure, he changed his mind and struck out this confession of his poverty. However, as he had faith in his future, he settled "on the future wife a dowry of an annuity of fifteen hundred francs." Citoyenne Beauharnais was no richer, and the property which she brought to the common estate amounted to nil.

The original of this contract is preserved among the records of Me. Mahot de la Quérantonais, the present owner of Me. Raguideau's office. Its only interest lies in its signatures. That of *Napolione Buonaparte*, hastily written and already illegible, is distorted, passionate, and underlined by a broad stroke, and forms a contrast to that of Josephine—*M. J. R. Tascher*, traced with an indifferent hand. Lower down is the notary's name firmly written in the neat hand of a steady, methodical man. We can imagine the honest

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

scrivener casting a protecting look at the poor devil of an officer, "without either real or personal estate of any kind," whose paltry possessions he had just set down on paper.

When this formality had been carried out, the bride and bridegroom separated until their meeting on the following day, March 9th, at eight o'clock in the evening, at the Mairie in the Rue d'Antin, where the marriage certificate was to be signed.

The reception-room where this ceremony was performed has preserved its pompous decoration of the beginning of the eighteenth century: a broad frieze, in two shades of gold, on which divinities, mingled with cupids, sport in grottoes, wainscotings, doors, shutters, mirror-frames with their borders of reeds and roses, garlands, and old gold; frieze-panels on which mythological heroes are enthroned in Olympian heavens after the style of Natoire; a whole collection of beautiful things tarnished and harmonised by time, in which the ceremonious air of the *grand siècle* is mingled with the lively grace of the Regency.

"All places which are full of recollection," says Victor Hugo, "give rise to enrapturing reveries." Mirrors, especially the mirrors in old houses, are impressive, for they have reflected so many figures, and surprised so many secrets! . . . Ah! if we could only resuscitate the images which have appeared in them! . . . They are face to face in the large reception-room, at the Mondragon mansion, reflecting without end its tarnished gold panels, the arabesques of its arches, and the heavy red marble mantel-piece with protruding console; and we can imagine the singular picture which they reflected on the evening of March 9th, 1796. Barras, self-conceited, and a good talker, was conversing with Tallien. Both were to sign as witnesses to the marriage of their *protégé*. Honest Camelet, Josephine's confidential man, modestly stood on one side. With a creole's indescribable indifference, her exceedingly sweet smile, her amber-coloured skin, and her auburn hair knotted in the Greek style, the bride, dressed in one of the loose, flowing tunics which made her attitudes so graceful, was dreaming, her chin resting on the palm of her hand, as she warmed her little slender feet at the dying fire. At that



JOSEPHINE BONAPARTE.

TWO STAGES IN NAPOLEON'S CAREER

late hour, there was not a sound in the deserted street, unless it was the noise of the coachmen's voices or the pawing of Barras's horses. The regular ticking of the clock on the mantel-piece increased the general feeling of drowsiness. Josephine, a little anxious, glanced at the clock. Bonaparte was late. "Suppose," she thought, "he did not come?"

He kept them waiting in this way for two long hours, and we can easily imagine what anxious glances passed between disappointed Josephine and vexed Barras as time slipped by. As to Citizen Leclercq, the registrar, he had shamelessly gone to sleep in his armchair behind his desk.

Shortly after ten o'clock there was a sound of voices on the staircase, and the clatter of a sword on the stone steps. The door opened, and the General appeared, followed by his aide-de-camp, Lemarois. He was in a hurry, so walked straight to the sleeping Mayor, shook him by the shoulder, and said impatiently ;

"Come, Monsieur le Maire, marry us quickly."

The irregularity of the marriage certificate, which was drawn up there and then, must doubtless be attributed—partly, at any rate—to the honourable magistrate's rude awakening. If the text of this document has been faithfully reproduced in the reprint of the *Mémoires de Bourrienne*, we cannot conceive anything more fantastic. Napoleon produced a birth certificate which made him eighteen months older than he was, and indicated that he was *born in Paris, on February 8th, 1768!* On the other hand, Josephine had procured a birth certificate—not merely a certificate drawn up by a notary, as has been stated—which made her four years younger. But everything seems to have been hastily done at this marriage, and the bride and bridegroom, as well as the witnesses and officials, do not appear to have taken it seriously. Moreover, everybody had good reasons for palliating the irregularity of the official documents. Josephine made herself younger out of coquetry; Bonaparte made himself older out of gallantry. But as he became a Genoese by retarding the date of his birth by eighteen months, the words "born in Paris" did away with the difficulty. Only Lemarois was without an excuse, for he was a minor, and thus had no

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

right to act as a witness. . . . But who of those present ever imagined that future historians would criticise these minutiae? Was not the document bearing all these unknown names destined to lie forgotten in the registrar's dusty office?

It is probable, however, that nobody listened to the reading of this strange document. The texts were read in a few minutes, the "yeas" were pronounced, and the papers were signed—in a military manner. The newly married pair descended the staircase, followed by their witnesses; there was a shaking of hands under the porch before separating, and Barras stepped into his coach, which took him back to the Luxembourg; Tallien returned to his residence at Chaillot; and Lemarois strolled off with Camelet in the direction of the headquarters of the military division in the Rue des Capucines.

Josephine also possessed a carriage. Expert in fishing in the troubled waters of the Revolution, she had obtained from the Comité de Salut Public, six months before, the concession of two black horses and a barouche belonging to the stables of the late King. It was doubtless owing to Barras's friendship that she owed this extraordinary liberality—almost a national reward—given as compensation for the loss of horses and carriage which Beauharnais had formerly handed to the Army of the Rhine, and of which the representatives had disposed.

It was in this carriage that Bonaparte entered his wife's estate in the Rue Chantierine.

The famous house which sheltered his love was, as everyone knows, the property of Julie Carreau, the wife of Talma. Josephine had rented it for the past six months, and was only summarily installed there, being short of money. It was a four-sided little villa with blunted angles, standing at the end of a long passage, which formed an avenue. A few steps supported by two stone lions led to a semi-circular *perron*, which gave access to an oval-shaped dining-room. To the right there was a boudoir with a mosaic floor; to the left a small study; and at the back a drawing-room with two French windows opening on to the garden.

A narrow, winding staircase led to the upper floor,

TWO STAGES IN NAPOLEON'S CAREER

composed of a drawing-room and two other rooms with low ceilings. One of the latter, which was over the dining-room and the same shape, was covered from floor to ceiling with mirrors framed between little columns surmounted by arches. This was the bedroom. The alcove was decorated with paintings of birds.

On entering this bemirrored bedroom, in which the elegance of certain details concealed but poorly the poverty of the furnishing, the poor officer, who was unaccustomed to such splendours, had, nevertheless, a disappointment—he found Fortuné, the Creole's well-beloved poodle, comfortably installed under the eiderdown, and he dare not expel him.

“You see that fellow there,” he said, later, to one of the intimates of the Hôtel Chantereine. “He was in possession of Madam's bed when I married her. I wanted to turn him out, but it was a useless precaution. I was informed that I must make up my mind either to sleep elsewhere or consent to the division. That rather put me out; but it was either one thing or the other, and the favourite was less accommodating than I was. . . .”

And, as a matter of fact, the dog, in his rage at seeing an intruder usurp his customary place, bit “the happy husband's” leg. Napoleon long after retained the scar and the recollection of this wound, for, writing from Italy, he said: “A million kisses, and some even for Fortuné, notwithstanding his viciousness.”

When Napoleon felt that he was strong enough to dictate his wishes in his own home, his grudge was still deep-rooted, and he encouraged his cook “to keep a very powerful bulldog,” in the hope that the big dog would worry the little one.

The day after the marriage, Josephine wished to introduce her new husband to her children. Hortense and Eugène de Beauharnais had been at school at Saint-Germain for the past six months. The latter was at the academy for young gentlemen managed by the Irishman Patrick MacDermott; the former was at the educational establishment which

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

Mme. Campan had founded at a former Hôtel de Rohan, a huge house, adjoining a fine garden, situated in the Rue de Poissy, at the far end of the town, almost in the forest.

Eugène already knew the General, having waited upon him, after Vendémiaire, to solicit the remission of the Beauharnais arms, which had been sequestered by a decree of the Convention. Neither was Bonaparte unknown to Hortense, who, at a dinner at Barras's, to which she had been taken by her mother, had been his neighbour at table. The young lady's impression of him was unfavourable. According to the notes left by one of her schoolfellows, Mlle. Pannelier—notes which have been brought to light by Mlle. C. d'Arjuzon—poor Hortense one day began to cry before the whole class. On her friends surrounding her and affectionately asking what was troubling her, she related, amidst her tears, "that she was much grieved, because her mother was going to marry General Bonaparte, who frightened her, and that she feared he would be very severe with her and Eugène."¹

But, on the occasion of his visit to Saint-Germain on March 10th, the "Ogre" was charming. He expressed a wish to visit the classes and put several questions to the children; but Hortense's terror had been contagious, and the pupils trembled as they replied. The General nevertheless paid a great many compliments to the mistress. "I must entrust my little sister Caroline to you, Madame Campan," he said. "Only I warn you that she knows absolutely nothing. Try to return her to me as accomplished as dear Hortense." And as he said these words he playfully pinched the lobe of his stepdaughter's ear.

There you have the complete history of Napoleon's honeymoon. On March 11th a post-chaise, loaded with valises filled with books, maps, and arms, drew up in the courtyard of the house in the Rue Chantereine. Junot, the aide-de-camp, and Chauvet, the Orderer of Wars, had taken their seats in it. Bonaparte dragged himself from the arms of the woman whom he had desired so much, mounted the step, and made a sign of farewell. Then the door closed and the

¹ *Hortense de Beauharnais*, by C. d'Arjuzon.

TWO STAGES IN NAPOLEON'S CAREER

carriage moved away in the direction of the Barrière d'Italie. . . . Thus commenced the "incredible journey" which was to end at Sainte-Helena twenty years later.

Nothing remains of the Hôtel Chantereine ; but the reception-room of the former Mairie, where Bonaparte and Josephine uttered the prophetic "Yes" which united their lives, has remained intact in all its ancient splendour. The Hôtel de Mondragon was returned to its rightful owners in 1815 ; but, the City of Paris paying them a rental for it during twenty years, it continued to be used as the Mairie of the 2nd Arrondissement until the early years of the reign of Louis Philippe. The building now belongs to the Paris and Netherlands Bank, and the former Salle des Mariages is used as an office by one of the directors.

CHIEFLY ABOUT MADAME DU BARRY

I

MONSIEUR DU BARRY

ABOUT the middle of July, 1768, a singular scene occurred at Levignac, a small town some thirteen miles from Toulouse, and which, at that date, was almost completely isolated by the extensive Forest of Bouconne.

There stood there a rather large house, called the "Château," occupied by the Lady Catherine de Lacaze-Sarta, the widow for nearly a quarter of a century of "noble man" Antoine du Barry.¹ They had had six children, only three of whom now lived with her, viz. Guillaume who, after serving in the army, had retired to Levignac at the age of thirty-six; Françoise, who was called Chon, and Marthe, who went by the name of Bitschi—two girls of a certain age whose meagre dowry had condemned them to celibacy. Moreover, Chon was hunchbacked, witty, and a backbiter. But Bitschi, it appears, was not lacking in charms. Another daughter of the lady of the manor had married the mayor of the village (he was known as the "Chief Consul"), and did not live in the family home. Elie, the younger son, was in the army. As to Jean Baptiste, the eldest of the family, he had married Mlle. Ursule Catherine

¹ Antoine du Barry, ensign in the Ile-de-France regiment in 1702, lieutenant in October, 1703, captain on October 12th, 1707, and Knight of Saint-Louis. He retired from service in 1731. (*Archives of the Ministry of War.*)

CHIEFLY ABOUT MADAME DU BARRY

Dalmas de Vernongrèse,¹ the daughter of a nobleman of the district; but, one fine day, growing tired of the monotony of provincial life, and feeling that he was born for a greater rôle, had abandoned his wife and child and gone in search of lucrative adventures.

The success of his *début* in fashionable life at Bagnères-de-Luchon emboldened him. Under the name of Comte de Cères, which he borrowed from an old Donjon of his family, he tried his hand at political espionage, and went on suspicious missions to London, into Germany, and Russia.² He then dallied with some commissariat business for the navy, the army, and the Island of Corsica, but was unsuccessful. Seeing that this was not in his line, he settled in Paris, fully determined to devote his whole attention for the future to alcove diplomacy, in which he was a past master. He was a type of the impudent, noisy, stubborn, and marvelously vicious Gascon, and he won for himself the name of the "Roué"—"The Rake." Spending the winter in Paris and the summer at Spa, following the Court—amongst the menials—to Fontainebleau, Choisy, and Compiègne, living on intrigues, and showing a genius for discovering pretty girls, whom he chaperoned not without profit, he attained a reputation for being "the worst subject in France." He had already, about 1760, produced at the Compiègne theatre the daughter of a Strasburg water-carrier, named Dorothee, whose beauty had attracted Louis XV.'s attention. In the event of her becoming the King's mistress, the Roué, as the price of his discovery, intended to ask for the post of French Minister to Cologne.³ But Mme. de Pompadour, who was then in favour, kept a sharp look out, and Dorothee was set aside.

Now, Jean du Barry had given no sign of his existence to his kindred for more than ten years, and had almost been forgotten at Levignac, when, one fine day, he arrived there

¹ The marriage was celebrated on December 8th, 1748. A son, named Jean Baptiste du Barry (known as Adolphe) was born on September 12th, 1749. He married Mlle. de Tournon, and was killed in a duel in England on November 10th, 1779. According to M. Charles Vatel, the pommel of his sword, which was picked up on the scene of the fight, is used as a seal by the Bath Town Council.

² *Le Tribunal révolutionnaire de Toulouse*, by Alexandre Duboul.

³ *Mémoires de Mme. du Hausset*, chamber-maid to Mme. de Pompadour.

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

from Paris, post haste, very busy, agitated and excited. Without wasting time over family effusions, he called a council of his mother, his brother Guillaume, and his two sisters, and laid before them the object of his journey.

What a strange story he had to tell!—so strange that any other man would have hesitated to enter upon such a narrative. Though doubtless disdainful of the art of introducing a subject, for he had to be quick over his tale, he must, all the same, have felt some embarrassment upon commencing, before a provincial audience, the delicate history of a certain Jeanne Bécu, the illegitimate daughter of a servant-girl and an erring monk,¹ whom he had met in a gaming-house, with whom he had lived for several months, and who, thanks to his relations with M. Lebel, the provider of his Majesty's secret pleasures, he had succeeded in introducing into the royal harem by dressing her out, so as to cleanse her, with the title and name of his own wife, the Comtesse du Barry.

Such revelations were astounding news for Levignac. This echo from the social sewers of Paris jarred strangely on the necessarily austere and poor family, and one can picture the old woman, a cap on her head, sitting dumb with astonishment, the brother attentively listening, and the sisters open-mouthed, whilst the scamp, as he filliped his shirt-frill, revealed the mysteries of the little house in the Parc-aux-Cerfs, and indignantly cursed the intrigue which narrowly escaped ruining his pleasant little plan. A certain Mme. de G——, —and here he gave the name of one of the great families of France,—whose personal hopes were destroyed by Jeanne Bécu's success, had suspected a fraud and committed the mean action of writing to M. de Riquet-Bourepos, President of the Toulouse Parliament, for informa-

¹ It can be asserted that Mme. du Barry's father was the monk Jean Jacques Gomard, since his heirs themselves swore to the fact before the Cour de Paris, and, on that ground, claimed the courtesan's fortune. (See the *Gazette des Tribunaux* for February 23rd, 1830.)

Jean Jacques Gomard, who was born in 1715, died at the Bicêtre hospice in Nivôse, Year XII, at the age of ninety-nine.

On these points, which have been discussed at great length by historians of Mme. du Barry, see the *Gazette des Tribunaux* for December 5th, 1828, and the *Recueil général de Sirey*, 1832, p. 25.

CHIEFLY ABOUT MADAME DU BARRY

tion about the civil condition of the alleged Comtesse du Barry.¹ M. de Riquet-Bourepos, like a cautious courtier that he was, had abstained from replying before obtaining the new favourite's consent. And that was how it came about that Jean du Barry, hastening to avert the danger, had taken the mail-coach for Toulouse. It was necessary that the girl Bécu should be officially transformed within a month into an authentic Comtesse du Barry, otherwise the enormous profit which the family might derive from the situation was definitely compromised. Guillaume—heaven be thanked!—was still a bachelor, and therefore the appointed saviour. All that would be required of him would be the signing of his name at the bottom of a contract and on a parish register, and a shower of gold would reward his quite platonic devotion.

Such was the substance of Jean du Barry's discourse, and his words produced a sensation. The dull minds of his listeners, which up to then had been sufficiently interested by the gossip of Levignac, were made dizzy by this huge plot. The King, the Count of Versailles, intrusion into the mysteries of royal love affairs, favour, and money—these were things which would have intoxicated cooler heads, and tempted less voracious appetites. It is probable, however, that objections were made. For instance, who were these Bécus? Jean unravelled their lineage. The mother had had two illegitimate children,² and had therefore been obliged to leave her native village of Vaucouleurs, at the other end of France, and hide her faults in Paris, where she had married a man named Ranson, the meanest of farm labourers. Her uncles, Charles, Baptiste, and Nicolas Bécu, were all valets; her aunt Marie Anne had a baker's shop; her aunt Marguerite kept an inn; and another aunt, who was unmarried, had had her hour of celebrity under the name of the "Beautiful Hélène." These details somewhat

¹ *La Société Toulousaine à la fin du XVIII^e siècle*, by Paul de Casteras.

² Jeanne, born on August 19th, 1743, the celebrated courtesan; and Claude, who was born on February 14th, 1747. The existence of this brother of Mme. du Barry, who doubtless died when he was a child, since no trace can be found of him at a later date, is revealed by the Vaucouleurs parish register.

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

chilled his audience, and the noble lady of Levignac, in particular, was horrified at such a plebeian family. But Jeanne was almost a queen; the King was deeply in love with her; and she promised to be so generous that their scruples were overcome. Moreover, the Roué, with his communicative ease, undertook to falsify the documents by filling them with high-sounding titles, so that they would be presentable and honour would be safe—at any rate on paper. That decided the question.

A light covered conveyance and a cob were hired the next day, and the whole family set out for Toulouse. The mother, who consented to her children dishonouring themselves so long as it cost her nothing, signed a procuration at the office of M. Sans, the notary, authorising Guillaume du Barry “to contract a marriage with anyone with whom he thought fit, on the express condition that the said lady gave nothing to her son on the occasion of the said marriage.”¹ The document having been signed, they embraced, and wished each other success. Jean du Barry quickly pushed his brother into a berlin and took coach with him back to Paris, in company with Chon and Bitschi, who might be useful.

Since d’Artagnan and Cyrano, both of romantic memory, many Gascons thirsting for fortune and adventures have bent their steps towards Paris; but never, doubtless, was there such an exodus as that of the Du Barrys towards their new life.

Passive and indifferent as facts show him to have been, Guillaume must have meditated on the unknown woman with whom he was to be united, and whose image, so seductive that a *blasé* King had entirely lost his head, he attempted to evoke . . . Chon and Bitschi must also have reflected; and nothing is more astonishing than the case of these two women, until then resigned to living a dull but virtuous life in the lonely manor of their ancestors, blindly accepting a *rôle* in this cynical comedy, and asking for employment at the mere mention of which the day before they would have been insul-

¹ For the complete text of this procuration, see *Curiosités sur le règne de Louis XIII., Louis XIV., et Louis XV.*, by A. le Roi.

CHIEFLY ABOUT MADAME DU BARRY

ted. As to the Roué, he had only one idea—reach Paris, and quickly! So he hurried the postilions, doubled their perquisites, and rode the horses to death in his fear that delay would spoil everything. It took a fortnight in those days to make the journey from Paris to Toulouse and back, and he trembled at the thought that during this time the “hussy,” deprived of his tutelage, might have committed some irreparable stupidity.

It was in his brother's apartment, in the Rue Neuve des Petits-Champs, that Guillaume met his betrothed for the first time. Her radiant beauty doubtless touched him; for he appears from that hour to have conceived a passionate hatred against her—the rancour of a man who is conscious of his baseness. Besides, the introductions were shortened, and were perhaps, rather cold. Notwithstanding Jean's art of juggling with difficulties, the situation remained a delicate one. But things were done as quickly as possible, and Me. Garnier-Deschênes immediately read the marriage contract. This took place on July 23rd, only eight days after the mother had given her consent in Toulouse. The “period of betrothal” was reduced, in short, to a minimum. Only one article of the contract was, however, of importance, and this the notary read as follows: “The future wife will bear all household expenses: food, rent, wages, table linen, maintenance of horses and carriages, and education of children born of the marriage. . . .”

Children were out of the question, and for the very good reason that Guillaume du Barry was to remain the lady's “future husband” perpetually. As soon as the contract was signed she courtesied to him and returned to Versailles. But they saw each other again on the occasion of the religious ceremony (then indispensable for the validity of a marriage), which took place at Saint-Laurent, on September 1st, at five o'clock in the morning. On leaving the church Jeanne Bécu could officially call herself the wife of the “high and powerful Messire Guillaume, Comte du Barry,” and in that quality bear arms, which she did not neglect to do. She imagined an escutcheon composed of a jay and two roses surmounted by the letter G, which was placed there to recall the name of

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

her father, the monk Gomard. This man, seeing that his daughter was "turning out well," had suddenly recollected her, and signed as a witness to the marriage, styling himself "priest almoner to the King," a title to which he had no right. A still more piquant detail is that he figured at the ceremony as the bearer of the procuration of Ranson, the lawful husband of Anne Bécu, the mother of the new Countess. Ranson probably knew everything and was not jealous of his wife's past.

The Roué had kept his promise. Everything in the marriage contract—names, Christian names, titles, ages, and position of the contracting parties and witnesses—was false; and the lawsuits to which its wording gave rise lasted until 1833.¹

It has been said that Comte Guillaume, immediately after the nuptial ceremony, received, with a brevet for a pension of £200, an order to return to Toulouse, where he was to keep quiet. But this tradition is incorrect. Mme. du Barry's platonic husband was, as he himself said, "as broad as he was long"; and he does not appear to have been in a hurry to return to the provinces and face his compatriots' reception. He chose a fine apartment in a house in the Rue de Bourgogne, furnished it, and settled down. No sooner had he done this than, much to his astonishment, an unexpected number of unknown relatives and new friends poured in upon him, some cousin after the Brittany—or Gascony—fashion making his or her appearance daily. Flattered at the idea of being able to show his wealth, Guillaume did not ask to look at their pedigrees but put them all up, thus forming a kind of court in the midst of which he strutted.

In a modest room, opposite the windows of his house, there lived a poor work-woman, named Mme. Diot, who had been reduced to poverty by premature widowhood. Imagining that she also might be a distant relative of her hospitable neighbour, she called one morning on the Comte du Barry, with many excuses for not having come sooner, and attributed her discretion to her deplorable pride. She

¹ *Gazette des Tribunaux*, July 4th, August 5th, 11th, 27th, 1833.

CHIEFLY ABOUT MADAME DU BARRY

was accompanied by her young sister, Mlle. Madeleine Lemoine, a charming girl of nineteen. "She was a lively brunette," writes a woman who knew her at that time.¹ "Her large, almond-shaped eyes were surmounted by two jet black eyebrows, which looked as though they were drawn by an artist's brush. She had a most pretty mouth, her teeth were as white as snow, and in her figure, carriage, and look there was an imposing nobleness." . . . But it was far, however, from intimidating the Comte du Barry, who, delighted to discover so pretty a cousin, immediately invited Mlle. Lemoine to share his luxury. And so instilled was he with a family spirit, so attentive a relative did he show himself, that one year afterwards, on November 2nd, 1769, Madeleine made him the father of a son. He sent the mother and child to Toulouse, and joined them there a few months later. Chon and Bitschi remained at Versailles, in order to watch over Mme. du Barry, encourage her to show effective gratitude towards the noble family to whom she owed her coronet, and extract as much money as possible from her.

The count and his friend received an icy reception at Toulouse. But M. du Barry did not dream of taking it amiss: he relied on circumstances to aid him, and as chance would have it they did so.

The excessive dearness of bread at the beginning of 1771 having caused a sort of riot at the Corn Exchange, a market woman struck the Capitoul J. Esparbès, who was trying to calm the popular tumult, across the face. The offender, imprisoned at the town hall, was about to be hanged, when Comte Guillaume, adopting this means of winning popularity, jumped into his carriage, ordered his men to clear a way through the crowd which had collected in front of the Capitole, burst open the doors, and succeeded, by earnest requests, backed up by a threat to bring "his influence" into play, in calming the magistrates' anger, and in obtaining from them an order for the liberation of the already condemned woman.² Du Barry returned to his house amidst cheers and

¹ A Toulouse biography.

² *Souvenirs d'une actrice*, by Louise Fusil.

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

applause. But, though this adventure won for him, for a time, the people's esteem, it closed to him for ever the doors of the Toulouse aristocracy. For this, however, he cared little. He lived in great retirement with Madeleine Lemoine and their two children, either in his house in the Rue du Sénéchal, where he studied conchology, or at the ancestral manor of Levignac, which, after his mother's death, he occupied himself in restoring.

The rain of gold predicted by Jean did, in fact, pour down on the entire family. In 1772 Guillaume was once more in Paris, pleading for a separation from his wife the countess—a rather skilful piece of blackmailing, since the King's mistress had every interest in avoiding the scandal of judicial proceedings. They called each other "infamous," and threats were exchanged; but the countess ended by paying, and M. du Barry returned to Toulouse the possessor of an annuity of £2,400. Jean, who, without a doubt, was the instigator of this new scheme, was not forgotten. As the price of his services, he obtained the earldom of Isle-Jourdain, with an annual revenue of more than £4,000, which he immediately set about squandering.

He determined to build a palace "in the latest style of the capital" on a part of the Place Saint-Sernin, which was then called the Place Saint-Raymond. One fine day a number of masons arrived at Toulouse from Paris by the mail-coach, and immediately set to work. But the completed building did not please its owner, so the workmen pulled it down and started on another. This strange building still exists, and to-day forms part of the Benedictine convent. A few symbolical garlands of flowers, carved on the pediments over the tall windows, and some equally symbolic cornucopias are the only remains of its former decoration.

Never did the raving of a conceited citizen equal the vain fancy of this *parvenu* who claimed to have at his disposal "the finances of a kingdom." Arthur Young, who visited the Du Barry mansion in 1788, recognised that he had only one merit—that of showing how far folly can go. "On an acre of ground," he writes, "there are hills, cardboard mountains, canvas rocks, abbés, cows and shepherdesses,

CHIEFLY ABOUT MADAME DU BARRY

lead sheep, monkeys and peasants, stone donkeys and altars, beautiful ladies and blacksmiths, wooden parrots and lovers, mills and cottages, shops and villages. . . ." A terracotta bear kept guard at the bottom of a hillock decorated at the top by a miniature mill, towards which a miller and his ass appeared to be climbing. Two tigers lay in waiting in the meadow, and tropical vegetation was represented by large palm trees painted on wood. The house properly so called contained a red marble gallery; an accumulation of pictures, statues, mirrors, and objects of art of all sorts, and furniture which was as sumptuous as it was eccentric. On ringing at the door of this astonishing residence, a wax Abbé emerged from a Gothic chapel, and, by means of an ingenious mechanism, advanced to open the door to the visitor.

There, Jean du Barry gave magnificent *fêtes*, which, generally, only needed guests. Women especially abstained from attending, the master of the house affecting "so singular a tone and such free ways that they did not know what to reply to him." He was everlastingly referring to "his friend" the Duc de Richelieu, and boasting of his feats of gallantry. The gallant marshal was his hero and model; he imitated his careless, semi-dialectical manner of speech; and when he had occasion to speak of the king he familiarly called him *frérot*.

Guillaume had simpler tastes. He divided his time between the city and his Reynery estate, a comfortable country house, buried in trees, where he spent the summer keeping house with Madeleine Lemoine, giving his neighbours country entertainments, and looking after the education of his two sons. The last-named must have been somewhat astonished at seeing, in the place of honour in their mother's drawing-room, the bust of a beautiful and amply *décolletée* lady, who wore on her forehead the crescent of Diana. It was no other than the portrait of the real Comtesse du Barry, the one whose duties at the Court kept her at Versailles.¹

An unexpected event—the death of the King—brought

¹ *Mémoires* of the Toulouse Académie des Sciences, Inscriptions et Belles-lettres, vol. x.

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

trouble on these calm lives. The news of Louis's illness and death reach Languedoc simultaneously, and threw the Du Barrys into a state of confusion, somewhat resembling the scattering of a flock of pillaging sparrows. Comte Guillaume packed his portmanteau and disappeared, tradition says, amidst the hoots of his fellow citizens; Bitschi, on the other hand, hastened from Louveciennes to hide herself in Toulouse; Jean, who was at Versailles, took coach for Geneva; and Chon, persisting in her rôle of matron, accompanied her sister-in-law to the Abbey of Pont-aux-Dames, where the fallen favourite had been banished by a royal order. "The coopers are at bay," said the Marquis de Bièvre, "*and all the barrels are leaking.*"

But the storm was soon over. The debonnair Louis XVI. did not bear any malice, and before two years had gone by the beautiful Countess had left the convent and found a successor to her good graces. Her husband, still philosophical, had returned to Reynery; Chon, living with Bitschi in Toulouse, had taken a house in the Rue de la Pomme¹ for her sister and herself; and the Roué had addressed such touching appeals to the ministers from abroad that he also was allowed to return to his "folly" on the Place Saint-Raymond. They all of them then entered upon a luxuriant and uneventful life. Jean du Barry, the most restless one of the family, did not consider, however, that the time for his retirement had come. Having lost his wife, he looked out for a second one, determined, this time, to find a very young and very pretty noblewoman. Mlle. de Rabaudy-Montoussin possessing all these qualities, he married her. Quite certain, in case this fresh union turned out as lucrative as his relations with Jeanne Bécu had been, that he would not be obliged to divide the profits with a third person, he brought his young wife to Paris. But he had to come down in his pretensions. Honest Louis XVI. was proof against a certain form of temptation, and it appears to have been handsome Colonne who profited by Jean du Barry's fresh find. Besides, the Roué had lost his former skill. A new society, in which he felt out of his element, had arisen, and

¹ *La Société toulousaine à la fin du XVIII^e. siècle.*

CHIEFLY ABOUT MADAME DU BARRY

his stays in Paris, where his wife lived, consequently became rarer and rarer.

At the beginning of the Terror, the whole of the Du Barry family was at Toulouse, and on the first sign of trouble it was easy to foresee that their day of settlement was drawing near. As he was stepping into his carriage to go to the Bagnères waters, the former Comte Guillaume was arrested and put into the Visitation prison, in the Rue du Périgord. A fortnight later his brother joined him there. Madeleine Lemoine, denounced as a suspect, was imprisoned in the former convent of the canonesses of Saint-Sernin. On October 10th it was Chon and Bitschi's turn—"women of immoral disposition," said the gaol-register, "and who much regret the former *régime*." Thus the members of the Convention on a mission in the Haute Garonne were able to write to the Comité de Salut Public on October 14th: "The Du Barry family is in our hands. We considered that a single arrest did not meet the case of such scandalous squanderers of public money."

Jean du Barry, who was self-indulgent and anxious to pass his last days in comfort, took with him to prison a complete suite of furniture, a feather-bed, plate, and a massive silver toilet service. Guillaume was more indifferent, and contented himself with the prison *régime*. Nay, he even sacrificed his last savings, amounting to £28, so that his brother might have the pleasure of eating good food up to the end of his life.¹ But in spite of all this the Roué was anxious; his health was declining; and inaction was fatal to him. "To get up in the morning and go to bed at night," he said, "is a very monotonous kind of a life for a man accustomed to great intrigues."

He confessed that he was discouraged and "weary of the struggle." All that remained of his immense fortune was an annuity of £80, and his debts amounted to £17,300. His fine residence was sequestered, his collections confiscated, and his furniture sold.

¹ *La Société toulousaine à la fin du XVIII^e siècle.*

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

The Toulouse revolutionary tribunal held its first sitting on January 17th, 1794. The next day two guards called at the Visitation prison for the Roué and transferred him to the Conciergerie. A sybarite to the very end, he had all his furniture brought with him, and installed himself in his new prison as though he were going to be there for several months. But he did not delude himself as to his fate. "A little sooner or a little later—what does it matter!" he said. "They are going to deliver me from my infirmities."

Guillaume, who remained at the Visitation, anxiously awaited the verdict. A turnkey, named Adam Moulis, went from one prison to another, retailing news. At half-past nine o'clock on the morning of January 17th, he returned with a contented air and announced: "He is sentenced, and the execution is to take place to-day."

The city was in an uproar. It was not the first time that the guillotine had been seen at work there; but the spectacle was still new to the inhabitants of Toulouse. Moreover, they were curious to see how the Roué "would take the thing." The crowd proceeded in a body towards the Place de la Liberté, where, in front of the Capitole, the scaffold had been erected. About three o'clock, Guillaume, who was intently listening in his cell for every noise in the street, heard a distant and prolonged roll of drums. . . . A little later, Adam Moulis reappeared, looking very satisfied, and related the details of the execution. In short, Jean du Barry had shown courage. When the men came to fetch him from prison, they found him distributing small souvenirs to his fellow prisoners. He gave to M. de Chinian "a bottle of volatile spirit"; to M. de Luppé some diamond buttons; and to M. Pouvillon a tortoise-shell box ornamented with a gold circle.¹ . . . Then, seeing the executioner—a strong young fellow, named Varene—he laughed and said: "He'll be finely taken in when he seizes me by the hair, for my wig will come off in his hands."²

They left the prison. The Roué was deadly pale and so

¹ *Mémoires* of the Toulouse Académie des Sciences, Inscriptions et Belles-lettres, vol. x.

² *Mémoires de Mallet Du Pan—Miscellanea*, vol. ii, p. 496.

CHIEFLY ABOUT MADAME DU BARRY

bent that he appeared to be a hundred years old. At the foot of the guillotine he showed momentary weakness and wept; but he recovered and hoisted himself on to the platform. Deep silence followed. He was seen to salute the crowd, and as Varenne pushed him towards the guillotine plank, he cried: "Farewell, friends; farewell, dear fellow citizens!" . . . The bound body heaved forward, the knife fell, and in the midst of the horrible splashing of blood which struck the crowd dumb and stupid, a dreadful sight was witnessed. A man who was lying under the platform caught the warm blood in his hands as it streamed from the planks and raised it to his lips!¹

The history of this family ended with Jean du Barry; his majestic cynicism contrasted so strangely with Guillaume's indolence and passiveness, that when the former was dead, the latter, no longer of any account, was forgotten.

Time passed and the prisons were emptied. Madeleine Lemoine was the first to be released. A little later, Chon and Bitschi saw the doors of their prison open. But they were without a roof over their heads. Their house in the Rue de la Pomme was being used by the commissaries, and the house and grounds on the Place Saint-Raymond were occupied by the executive of the military carriage department. When M. du Barry was himself set free, he calculated that he and his family had lost in eighteen months a yearly income of about £8,000. On the other hand, he was a widower, the Parisian guillotine having freed him from the beautiful Countess whose honorary husband he had been for twenty-five years.

The first thing he did was "to assure his name to the woman who was united to him by the respectable bonds of gratitude and esteem," and on Thermidor 7, Year III, he married Madeleine Lemoine. Of his two sons, one, Victor, had been killed whilst with the Army of the Pyrenees; the other . . . But should not history end when useless revelations begin?

On visiting Levignac he found that there also the tempest had caused widespread havoc. Everything, even the beds,

¹ *Le Tribunal révolutionnaire de Toulouse*, by Alexandre Duboul.

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

had been sold. M. du Barry succeeded, however, in collecting a few scraps of his former wealth. The last years of his life were peaceful, his compatriots, whether out of indifference or pity, appearing to have forgotten his past. He died on November 28th, 1811.

His sisters survived him. The Chon and the Bitschi of former times, the bosom friends of Jeanne Bécu, the familiars of the little boudoirs of Versailles, were transformed into two austere, peevish, and very dignified old women, whose somewhat haughty severity and over-susceptible prudishness was the only reproach which their rare friends could bring against them.

II

ZAMOR'S END

IN the Louvre is a water-colour by Moreau representing the large dining-room of the Pavillon de Louveciennes on the evening of a *fête*.

Louis XV. is dining at Mme. du Barry's. Lackeys move around the table waiting on the guests: fine ladies with very low cut dresses and noblemen dressed as Knights of the Holy Ghost. Behind the favourite, a person in livery carries in his arms a pretty greyhound, which attracts the admiration of a group of guests. It is the Countess's little dog, and its appearance is quite an event. Amidst the general joy, only the King remains unmoved and sad. He speaks to no one; there is a vague look in his eyes; he sits in a depressed attitude; and his hand rests listlessly on the table. . . . He feels dull.

In the foreground a beautiful marchioness is stuffing with burnt almonds a young negro, who wears a white turban with feathers, a little pink coat, and black high-top boots. This is Zamor, the favourite page, who was brought from Bengal when quite a child by an English captain. Mme. du Barry, considering that this seven-year-old blackamoor would cut a fine figure in company with her dog, her sky-blue parrot, and her white monkeys, attached him to her household.

The child appeared intelligent; he was taught how to read; and, his beautiful mistress acting as godmother, was

CHIEFLY ABOUT MADAME DU BARRY

baptised in the midst of great pomp. Henceforth he was present at every *fête*. His coats were "numerous and magnificent"; in summer he was clothed in thin white cotton, and in winter in velvet. The King, whom nothing amused, sometimes deigned to smile at the playful tricks of Zamor, who was permitted to take any liberty whatever.

Now, if you are fond of contrasts, leave Moreau's dazzling water-colour, with its candelabra, its marbles, and gilded canopies, and, by way of the quays, reach that labyrinth of ancient streets which wind from the Place Maubert to the old Tournelle. One of them, the Rue Maître-Albert, formerly called the Rue Perdue, is darker, more dreary, and more hideous than the others. Stop when you come to No. 13, a wretched, lofty building without shutters, with mildewed walls and damp porch. . . . It was there on February 7th, 1820, on the second-floor, looking on to the courtyard, that Zamor died.

There are few studies more fascinating than that of the lives of the men who, after playing a *rôle* in the Revolution, survived it. They have the air of shipwrecked persons cast by a storm on an unknown shore. We can see from their attitude that their work has disappointed them; the command of the terrible engine which they set in motion has slipped from their control; and they hide themselves underground, stupefied, distrustful, and embarrassed, at the same time appearing to become indifferent to the meannesses of life, as though existence had given them in a few years the sum total of the emotions which a human being can support.

Zamor did not escape from this lassitude. Yet he was somewhat of a personage under the Terror. Appointed secretary to the Watch Committee for the Versailles district, where he took up his residence on Mme. du Barry's arrest, he was called as a witness when she appeared before the revolutionary tribunal. Their positions were reversed; it was now he who, with a word, perhaps, could save the life of his benefactress. But he did not even make the attempt. He remained disdainful and unmoved in the presence of the poor woman's anguish, and gave evidence against her, as he

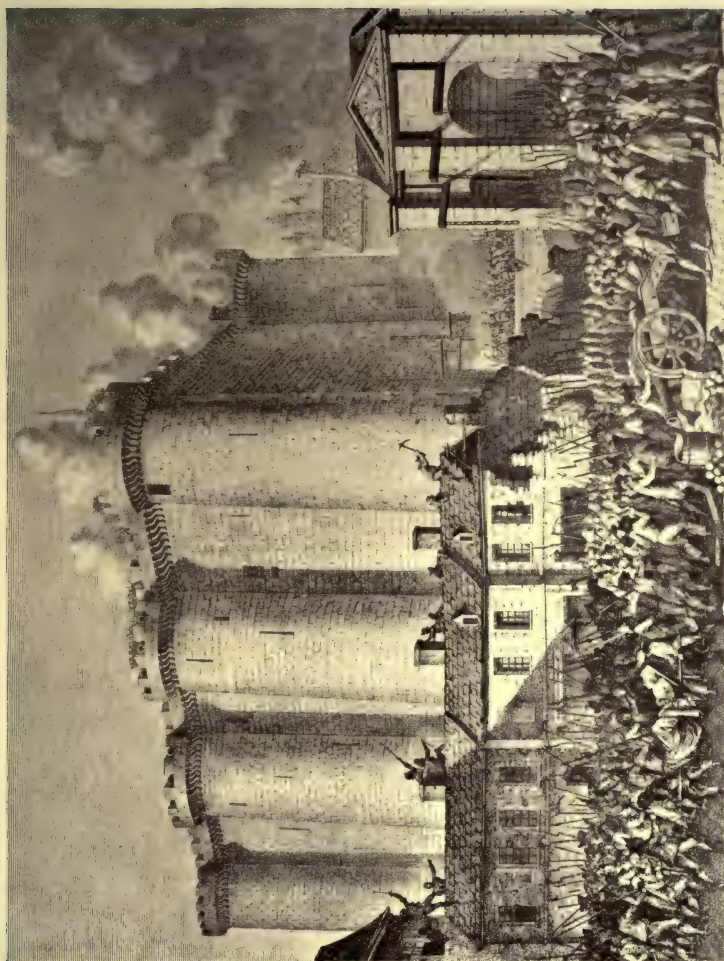
ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

would have done in the case of a person quite indifferent to him. Whether prompted by cowardice or rancour, this ingratitude did not do him much good; for, less than a month later, he was himself imprisoned. Claimed by "the honest patriots who frequent the Café Procope, where he is esteemed for everything which is estimable," he was released after six weeks' imprisonment, and then disappeared. . . . We do not meet him again until twenty-five years later—sad, poor, and worn out by life—crouched in the wretched hovel in the Rue Perdue.

But a few years ago the old inhabitants of the quarter remembered this sickly and melancholy-looking little man. Age had faded his complexion, his skin having turned to a disagreeable yellow. His nose was slightly flattened, and his hair was frizzy and grey. He came to live in the Rue Perdue about 1815. The street was admirably suited to a man who wished to live in retirement, for the Rue Perdue was then, as it is now, under the new name which it has borne since 1844, one of the most unknown and least frequented of Paris streets. And Zamor was then fleeing from the world. It is related that he fell in love with a pretty mercer who had a shop in the Palais-Royal, and that his small fortune, which he had entrusted to her keeping, was quickly squandered. The poor negro was embittered by this mortification, so he lived alone, allowing no woman to cross his threshold and doing his own house-work. His room, consequently, was only moderately clean. He was, however, exceedingly polite and "raised his hat to everyone whom he met on the staircase."

A person who in his youth lived in this house at the same time as Zamor related, some seventy years ago, that he spoke but little of the former century. When pressed and unable to defend himself, he did so in bitter terms, saying that, though it was true the beautiful countess had brought him up, it was only to make him into her plaything. She allowed him to be humiliated at her house, and he was everlastingly the object of the raillery and insults of the familiars of the château.

Strange to say, Zamor was well read. He was saved from the guillotine in 1793 by the plea that "a deep study of



THE TAKING OF THE BASTILLE.

CHIEFLY ABOUT MADAME DU BARRY

Jean Jacques and Mably had preserved him from the corruption of an infamous Court,"—and that was no mere declamatory statement. This negro was a lettered man and prided himself on having "always been a philosopher." He kept the pure revolutionary doctrine intact; he hated the old *régime*. On the walls of his small bedroom were the portraits of Marat and Robespierre, and on a white wood shelf were ranged, amongst other books, the works of his favourite teacher, Rousseau. He expressed himself correctly in French, and gave elementary lessons for a living in reading, writing, grammar, and orthography to a few children in his quarter.

Study of the philosophers, however, did not mollify his character. A contemporary, sixty years after his death, related to M. Charles Vatel, the indefatigable historian of Mme. du Barry, that "Monsieur" Zamor was a hard and cruel man. His landlady, Mme. Poullain, entrusted him with the education of one of her young nephews, the lessons being given in the negro's rooms on the second floor. But Zamor boxed his pupil's ears so roughly that Mme. Poullain, who lived on the third floor, "could hear the sound of the blows through the ceiling," so the child was taken away and sent to school. This incident was noised abroad in the quarter and got the professor a bad reputation; he rapidly lost his pupils and was reduced to poverty.

The Rue Maître-Albert, which appears to be the last refuge of the legendary vagabonds of the Place Maubert, driven from their old haunts through the making of new streets, is somewhat sinister yet singularly picturesque. The height of its houses makes it seem longer and narrower than it really is. Their dirty, mildewed, irregular façades stretch out in line, leaning over and supporting each other, their ground floors daubed with crude colours. The general effect is disquieting and suspicious-looking. Nevertheless, for Zamor's sake, I love to stroll down this street. Not because he himself is very attractive, but on account of the mystery which surrounds him. This man saw and knew so many things, yet he died without telling us anything. We can see

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

him, in imagination, returning at twilight to his gloomy lodging, enveloped in a patched overcoat, lean, hollow-cheeked, and his grey hair protruding from under his cap. Shivering and in a dream, he creeps under the shadow of the walls . . . What were Zamor's day-dreams in his old age?

Without doubt he once more saw himself, dressed in a red velvet hussar's coat, embroidered with silver, a little sword at his side, and a bearskin cap with a heron's feather on his head, drawing aside the green silk curtains, embroidered with bouquets of roses, which enclosed his beautiful mistress's alcove, and putting a pair of flame-coloured satin slippers on her pretty feet. This old negro, at whom the street-boys laughed, had seen the King of France face to face, had eaten at his table, had been his plaything and his confidant. A prince of Bourbon blood had acted as his godfather, and he had received the homage of obsequious courtiers. Must he not also have had his flatterers? Humbler than he had had them, for the King of Sweden was allowed the favour of passing a diamond necklace over the neck of the favourite's greyhound!

Zamor had other thoughts as well. It is said that he followed through the streets the tumbril which bore to the scaffold the woman whom he had known almost as a goddess, and perhaps he recollected the cry as of a terrified animal which she uttered when she felt her white neck enclosed in the horrible *lunette*, moist with blood. All these things must have haunted him as he lay stretched that February night on his pallet in the Rue Perdue, dying of cold and hunger.

On his bedside table were found three francs. As he was without friends or relations, Mme. Poullain gave information of his death to the police commissary, who undertook the preparations for the funeral. The neighbours refused to attend, and when, the next day, the bare coffin was exposed to view at the entrance to the house, people looked on without any feeling of sadness, remarking: "It's Zamor, the negro who betrayed Mme. du Barry."

Nobody followed the hearse, which proceeded straight to the Vaugirard cemetery, without stopping at the church.

TALLIEN IN HIS OLD AGE

CAN you picture the Rond-point des Champs Elysées as it was a century ago?

It consisted of a circular space carpeted with grass and surrounded by trees, somewhat resembling the cross roads in a royal forest. Crossing it was the main road to Neuilly, a narrow ribbon of large paving-stones. Not a house was to be seen. The huge triangular piece of land at the bottom which extends as far as the Cours-la-Reine roadway was entirely given up to market-gardening, and was covered with glasshouses, wells, frames, and salads carefully arranged in rows. This market-garden was crossed by two avenues of trees. One, a sort of mall, ever deserted and almost run to waste, was nameless, and led nowhere. To-day, it is the Avenue d'Antin. The other, a very long avenue, led to the Chaillot fire-station, and had tall, twisted elms, which were protected against the possible collision of carriages by massive barriers dating from the time of M. de Marigny. The road was overgrown by grass intersected by narrow foot-paths made by passers by, gardeners, laundry-maids, or growers of the Chaillot vines, which began there. The place was so desolate, isolated, and peaceful that, after being called the Allée des Soupirs, it received the name of the Allée des Veuves, and, in 1812, Tynna still wrote: "This avenue at the bottom of the Champs Elysées is really suitable for widows who experience true sorrow at the loss of their husbands." It is now the Avenue Montaigne.

At the end of the Allée des Veuves, near the Seine, there stood in 1795 a house of rustic appearance called the Chaumière, fronted by a large garden and surrounded by

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

poplars and lilac-bushes. Owing to a caprice of Mme. Tallien, this rarely-explored corner of Paris had become fashionable. She had had the house painted to look like a stage farm, with a careful imitation of dilapidated bricks and worm-eaten woodwork. Flowers climbed to the very roof, which was ornamented with a picturesquely moss-grown thatch. This pretty woman, who was credited with the political change which took place at Thermidor, was then the idol of Parisians. She was no longer called the Marquise de Fontenay, her first married name, and was seldom called Thérédia Cabarrus, her maiden name, but was generally named Citoyenne Tallien, which was the name of the man who had twice saved her from the guillotine, and to whom, out of gratitude, she had given herself. As a matter of fact, she officially became his wife on December 26th, 1794. The same evening she opened her *bergerie* in the Allée des Veuves, and all fashionable Paris hurried there. Thérédia's beauty accomplished the miracle of attracting to this Champs-Élysées desert, in the depth of winter, dandies in *chiné* stockings and *merveilleuses* in gauze dresses.

The men present included Garat, Fréron, Barras, Sieyès, Cherubini, Méhul, Carle Vernet, and Chénier; among the ladies were Citoyennes Beauharnais, d'Aiguillon, Château-Regnault, and Cambys. But the charms of the latter paled in the presence of Thérédia's dazzling beauty. "When she entered her drawing-room," said Auber, who, when very young, attended the *fêtes* at the Chaumière, "she brought day and night with her—day for herself and night for others."

Tallien adored her. But this Parisian *gamin*, who was the son—at least officially—of an honest *concierge* in the Rue de la Perle, did not get over his good fortune. Fate had reserved for him the strangest of destinies. Springing from nothing, and suddenly raised to such a greatness that he once thought he was the saviour and master of France, he found himself the envied possessor of the most graceful and pretty of Parisian ladies, and as he wished for nothing more, the era of political storms appeared to him to be definitely at an end.



TALLIEN.

TALLIEN IN HIS OLD AGE

His revolutionary colleagues had derived various profits from their connection with public affairs. Boursault obtained possession of Brunoy; Fouché, of Ferrières; Barras, of the princely estate of Gros-Bois; and Merlin, of the wealthy monastery of Mont-Valérien. Tallien had been awarded this charming woman; she was his share and his prize; and he pronounced himself satisfied—which was the cause of his destruction.

She was, in fact, more astonished than pleased at her fate. As a tyrant in Bordeaux and a demagogue in Paris, Tallien had fascinated her; but if, in the glare of the footlights, he had appeared to her to be not without grandeur, this indifferent terrorist, now deprived of a *rôle*, was no longer a man of the day. Others were far more up-to-date, as, for instance, handsome Barras, who was almost a king, or Ouvrard, whose millions made him all-powerful. Thérédia, who was fascinated by success, was not long in finding the cottage in the Allée des Veuves very mean indeed.

One fine day she did not return, leaving Tallien under the thatched roof of the Chaumière, which she exchanged for a more comfortable residence, buried in the verdure of a park, at the bottom of the Faubourg Saint-Germain. As one of her courtiers—was it Barras or Ouvrard?—was showing her over this estate, she could not help exclaiming:

“How beautiful it is! Happiness, I should think, must dwell here!”

Her companion, who was only waiting for this opportunity, gallantly replied:

“Madam, here is the key!”

Ah! what a charming city Paris must have been before the disastrous organisation of that admirable public thoroughfare department which every city in Europe has had the misfortune to copy from us, before our streets were daily raked, weeded, swept, and watered, which makes them so marvellously dusty, disagreeable, hot, and grim. Where is the wild grass which covered the footpaths, and the large branches which arched over the heads of the passers by? Can you picture the old Rue de Babylone as it was in those days, running between two walls with their bases carpeted

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

with grass? The ruts made by rarely passing coaches gave it the appearance of a country roadway; it was strewn with acacia blossoms, and the chestnut trees in the large parks made it shady and cool. Here and there were tall escutcheoned gateways, flanked with pillars, entwined with honeysuckle and wistaria. The silence, the scent, and the calm of the country were within a stone's throw of the Rue du Bac.

The carriage entrance to the estate where Mme. Tallien took up her quarters was almost opposite the Babylone barracks. When the gates were open one could see into the shady depths of a beautiful park—extensive fields dotted with clumps of trees and framed in dense thickets, behind which could be dimly seen the white façade, slate domes, and triangular pediments of a small, one-storied palace standing in the midst of lawns. The estate was apparently limitless, other parks—those of the Biron, Rohan, and Matignon mansions—enclosing it with their shade and broad fields extending it as far as the Rue de Varenne.

This fine residence had a history. Built in the eighteenth century by a Marquis de Barbançon who used it as his "little house," it was sold at the time of the Revolution as national property, then put into a lottery, and won by an old dame who, without even having the curiosity to visit it, put it up for sale. It was thus that the mansion became the property of Thérédia Cabarrus.¹

Contrary to the belief of a historian of Mme. Tallien, the ancient "little house" of the Marquis de Barbançon still exists. True, its large park has disappeared; but the mansion itself, surrounded by modern streets and flats, the innumerable windows of which indiscreetly look on to the little garden which is all that remains of former thickets, is still there, hidden beneath a clump of chestnuts, the green shade of which caresses its white front, its fluted columns, and its pediments enframing astonished Minervas. It is a sort of amiable Trianon, rather sad and somewhat sullen-looking, as though it owed a grudge against the quarter for having usurped the broad lawns in the midst of which it was enthroned. Over

¹ Archives of the Administration des Domaines and information supplied by the Marquis de Chanaleilles, the present owner of the house.

TALLIEN IN HIS OLD AGE

one of the porticos are the words "Hôtel de Chanaleilles," the name of the owners who have occupied it since 1840, and the neighbouring street has been named after it. This pretty retreat has remained as it was at the beginning of the last century, and the flooring even is so beautiful that Visconti dreamed of endowing the new Louvre with it.

It was there that Mme. Tallien lived when she obtained a divorce from her husband; there that she became a princess and married her daughter. During the Consulate she gave *fêtes* there which were attended by the faithful circle of admirers who had formerly been attracted by her beauty to the Chaumière in the Allée des Veuves.

In December, 1802, a foreigner on a visit to Paris was invited to spend an evening at the little palace in the Rue de Babylone. In a letter to a compatriot he described the goddess of the place, as "a beautiful, tall, and opulent person, who does not look her age. A small head with delicate contours makes her appear taller and stronger than she really is. Her magnificent black hair, arranged in large coils, were, that evening, twisted around her head from the forehead to the neck, and interwoven with strings of small pearls. Her white satin dress was covered with beautiful lace.

"Mme. Tallien flitted amongst the card-tables, staking five or six louis on a card, and sometimes lingering to lay a wager; but always *en passant*. When, in the course of the evening, she knelt down, clasping her beautiful hands, before a young lady to beg her to sing a romance, and remained in this attitude, her large wide-open eyes fixed on the singer and her trembling lips apparently repeating the melody, she was a perfect picture."¹

The principal apartment of the house consisted of a spacious drawing-room connected with a large bedroom and a boudoir. A magnificent ebony bedstead in the bedroom was ornamented with pretty gilded bronzes; its very large and high tester, in the shape of a round tent, was supported by the beak of a gilded pelican,—a style brought from

¹ *Un hiver à Paris sous le Consulat*, d'après les lettres de Reinhardt, by A. Lequiant.

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

Egypt; and its white and crimson curtains, trimmed with gold fringe, fell on the floor in ample folds. The entire room was decorated with pretty bas-reliefs.

At this time, Thérédia Cabarrus,—she had resumed her maiden name since the divorce,—was Ouvrard's titular friend. He lived with her discreetly,—at least in appearance,—for regularly once a year Citizen Baudelocque, accoucheur, was called in, and a birth was celebrated at the Hôtel de Babylone. In 1800 Clémence Isaure Thérédia was born; in 1801, Jules Joseph Edouard; in 1802, Clarisse Gabrielle Thérédia; and in 1803, Stéphanie Caroline Thérédia. These events, however, did not cause great joy. Baudelocque and Schodelet, the concierge of the house, acted as witnesses at the Mairie, and the babe was immediately put out to nurse with a man and his wife named Choisel, on the Boulevard des Invalides, who brought up children. Nay, among their boarders at this time was a bantling who bore the name of Emile de Girardin.

There was no baptism in 1805, but a marriage instead. Thérédia Cabarrus married a M. de Caraman. She was then thirty-two years of age and recommenced life for the fourth time.

And what about Tallien?

Since the flight of his "Calypso," the poor man, disconsolate, sank lower and lower. Thinking that he might be able to drown his sorrow by travelling, he begged to be allowed to follow the Egyptian expedition. He was attached to it as a savant! However, regarded unfavourably by military men, tired, and hoping, perhaps, to meet Thérédia once more, he soon returned, and attempted to get into touch again with life. But he was penniless and had to beg for employment. He was appointed Consul at Alicante! He there fell ill, and on his return to France his face was covered with an eruption and he had lost an eye. At forty-four years of age,—discouraged, suffering, and forgotten,—he hid himself and saw nobody.

At the beginning of the Restoration he occupied, in winter, a small apartment at 4, Rue Chabanais; but as soon

TALLIEN IN HIS OLD AGE

as the first fine days made their appearance, he went to live in the Allée des Veuves, where the recollection of Thérédia irresistibly attracted him. He no longer inhabited the Chaumière, as has been stated, the property having increased in value and been cut up. He took a small house with two front windows standing in a market garden, much nearer the Rond-Point, and there he lived with a servant, no longer either writing or reading, merely dreaming of the past.

People met him under the elms in the avenue, walking with the slow gait of a gouty person, and leaning on his stick. He proceeded as far as the Seine, where he stopped to gaze at the former Chaumière, then transformed into a public-house, bearing the sign, "A l'Acacia," after an old tree which survived from Thérédia's garden. The place was frequented only by carters or washerwomen, and nobody knew either who this melancholy promenader was nor at what he was looking.

He reflected over the fact that before that *perron*, now crowded with drinkers, the horses of the blood-red coach which was familiar to all Paris had formerly pranced. Once more he saw Thérédia at his side "clothed in a cloud," a white and smiling image, and the object of much silent homage. His thoughts carried him still further into the past, back to the first time he had seen her, before the Revolution, in Mme. Lebrun's studio. She was already a marchioness, whilst he was a common workman dressed in the white blouse of a compositor. It had been a case of love at first sight with him, but what hope was there of their union?

At Bordeaux four years later they again met. He was an all-powerful Proconsul, armed with the tremendous powers of the Comité de Salut Public; she, wishing to escape the scaffold by embarking for Spain, was in prison, in her turn humble and trembling. With her first glance she had disarmed him, and with her little hands had turned aside the lightning which was setting the Gironde ablaze.

Then she flashed across his memory, riding at his side, dressed in a long habit, and on her black hair a hat trimmed with tricoloured feathers; or, again, dragged along in a

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

chariot, robed in a thin peplum, in one hand a pike, and the other gracefully placed on the Proconsul's shoulder, enchaining with her white arm the lion whom she had tamed. How pretty she was, and how the grateful people of Bordeaux cheered her!

Afterwards came their return to Paris and Robespierre's jealousy. She was thrown into the Force. Half insane with terror and not daring to beg for her liberation for fear of drawing the executioner's attention to her, he prowled around her prison, situated in that Marais quarter where he was born and which he knew so well. His aged mother found a means of renting from a woman, a concierge like herself, an attic from the window of which he could see Thérézia strolling in the prison courtyards, and throw letters assuring her that he thought of her and would always love her.

Finally he recollected Thermidor, and the receipt of a poniard wrapped in a terrible letter bearing the following words, traced in the beloved hand: "They kill me to-morrow. Are you but a coward then?" Once again he saw himself with his eyes ablaze, boiling over with anguish and fever, amongst the stupefied representatives, carrying with him the astounded Convention, seizing Robespierre by the throat, pushing him to the bottom of the tribune, and—without thinking about it, or perhaps knowing it—saving the Republic, France, and the world in order to save the woman he loved from death.

She was now a princess; she had forgotten these things; nay, she had forgotten her former self. When one of the artists, millionaires, or great noblemen among whom she reigned at her Chimay court gallantly alluded to early days, she smilingly replied: "What a romance my life has been! I no longer believe it!"

Tallien, however, saw her again. When their daughter, whom they had named Thermidor, in memory of the crisis in their lives, was of a marriageable age, he had to be invited to the wedding. She married Comte de Narbonne-Pelet, and, although it was thought proper, in view of the obligatory presence of the former member of the Convention, to keep the

TALLIEN IN HIS OLD AGE

ceremony as private as possible, he who had had Paris at his feet played the *rôle*, among the noble guests, ironical or scornful, of a "poor relative." He figured there as a pariah, a disdained and conquered man—and what is worse, a regicide. Those who knew all whispered in each other's ears that he earned a wretched livelihood by rendering services to the police. Even his little Thermidor, pretty and proud, did not dare to look at him. . . .

As to the princess, she was perfect, and when leaving the church she even offered, since she was going that way, to drop him in the Champs Elysées. Thus for the last time did he find himself alone with her in her gala carriage, just as in the distant days on which people in the street stopped to applaud the triumphant couple.

He returned to his small house in the Allée des Veuves. In his bedroom on the first floor he had collected together a few relics of the past. His bed was draped with ample yellow taffetas curtains; similar ones hanging at the windows. On a mahogany chest-of-drawers he kept a clock which had struck happier hours; and another clock under a glass shade stood on the mantelpiece between two gold-lined china vases.

The short inventory drawn up in 1820 by the *juge de paix* of the 1st arrondissement mentions, in addition, a few engravings or framed pictures, a backgammon table, a card table, and "a bookcase, in the form of a wardrobe, containing a few volumes."

These words "a few volumes" are heartrending. Tallien, who was an enthusiastic booklover, had amassed a fine collection of revolutionary documents, but, forced by necessity, he sold it to Charles de Lacretelle. When his old servant, Rosalie Martineau,¹ asked him for money for household expenses, Tallien heaved a sigh, rose painfully from his arm-chair, and walked sadly to the room where he kept his books. Rosalie saw him go out with a packet under his arm and reach the Champs Elysées.

He crossed the Place de la Concorde,—what tragic memories it revived! it was there that they had all died—

¹ Archives of the Mairie of the 8th arrondissement of Paris.

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

skirted the Terrace of the Tuileries—the palace where he had reigned supreme!—and, on reaching the Quai Voltaire, stopped before the boxes of the second hand book-dealers.

Then he sadly returned with empty hands to the Allée des Veuves and handed a couple of crowns to his housekeeper.

One day in 1820 when Baron Pasquier was strolling along the Quay, he perceived an old man, humble, bent, and almost deformed, haggling with a bookseller over the price of a heap of books which he was offering for sale.

He glanced at the volumes and saw that they formed a complete set of Tallien's paper, *L'Ami des Citoyens*. As he surreptitiously raised his eyes towards the old man, he started with astonishment.

"Monsieur Tallien!" he exclaimed, bowing.

"I do not deny it," replied the former president of the Convention.

There was a silence, and a feeling of restraint on both sides, but especially perhaps on the Minister's part.

"For a long time past," continued His Excellency, not without a shade of embarrassment, "I have been looking for the *Ami des Citoyens*, for my library of revolutionary works does not contain your paper."

"I am happy to be able to offer you the last copy," resumed Tallien, with a gentleman's polished grace.

The Minister bowed, took the volumes, and was putting his hand in his pocket to pay Tallien—but did not dare to do so.

"Monsieur," he gravely said, "I shall do myself the honour of calling at your house to thank you."

The baron related the anecdote at the King's gathering that evening. Louis XVIII. had a sense of humour, and particularly of that kind of humour which is not exempt from a spice of cruelty.

"Pasquier," he said, "go and thank M. Tallien, and beg him to accept a pension of a hundred louis from my privy-purse."

What a revenge for the brother of Louis XVI.! Tallien accepted, for he was dying of hunger. But he did not

TALLIEN IN HIS OLD AGE

enjoy it long: he died on November 16th of this same year 1820, at six o'clock in the morning, in the sole presence of his servant. Thermidor, whose husband was then general secretary at the Prefecture of the Orne, did not appear at the house in the Allée des Veuves until twelve days later to claim, as sole heir, her father's meagre household goods.¹

The *Journal des Débats* of November 17th undertook to write the deceased's *mea culpa*, as follows:—

“M. Tallien died this morning in Paris. We would mention the fact that he was a member of the Convention, but merely in order to recall the justly celebrated date of the 9th of Thermidor. . . The immense service he then rendered his country was a pardon for a vote which, moreover, he expiated by twenty-six years of regret. . . M. Tallien died in poor circumstances. We are in a position to assert that he would have been reduced in his last years to the direst distress but for the assistance of an august Benefactor.

“The funeral service will be held at the church of Saint-Pierre de Chaillot on Friday next.”

¹ Archives of the Mairie of the 8th arrondissement (1820).

AN UNKNOWN LATUDE

IN the *Correspondance Secrète* relating to the French Court, the original manuscript of which is preserved in the Imperial Library at St. Petersburg, you will find the following note, opposite the date of February 17th, 1787:—

“On arriving at the Opéra last week the Queen was warmly applauded, and, according to custom, thrice courtesied to the public. At that very moment a shrill whistle was heard in the crowd. Although this piece of impertinence could only be the act of a lunatic or an abominable man, Her Majesty appeared to be deeply affected by it. She drew back into her box, and it is alleged that she stated that in future when she came to the theatre, the doors should be closed, and only her suite admitted.”

The spectator who was guilty of this act of impoliteness was neither “a lunatic” nor “an abominable man.” His name was the Marquis de Saint-P——. He was simply one of those philosophical young noblemen who prided themselves on condemning the society in which they lived, notwithstanding the fact that they were entirely at their ease, and who, apparently without foreseeing the rude lesson which was in store for them, earnestly desired the reign of “equality and reason.” Such was the snobism of those days.

So M. de Saint-P——, either out of bravado or as a kind of joke, had decided on this vulgar demonstration, and interrupted the courtesies of the poor astounded princess by whistling. Needless to say, he was expelled from the pit in the twinkling of an eye, pushed into the lobbies, handed over to the police-officers, dragged to the police-station, and from

AN UNKNOWN LATUDE

there taken to the Châtelet, where, in all probability, he underwent an examination, though, as a matter of fact, I have been unable to find any trace of it.

Although convinced that I should never learn the sequel to this rather typical little incident, I made a note of it. One day, however, when turning over the pages of the *Gazette des Tribunaux* for 1838, my eye caught the following heading :

CIVIL TRIBUNAL OF THE SEINE.—1ST CHAMBER.

Presidency of M. Rigal.

Sitting of May 14, 1837.

Irreverence towards Marie Antoinette.

My first thought was that there must be a printer's error. Was it possible that the tribunal of the Seine, in the reign of Louis Philippe, forty-four years after the death of the pretty Queen of Trianon, could be concerning itself over an act of disrespect towards her? Evidently, the compositor had inadvertently set up the name of Marie Antoinette for that of Marie Amélie.—But no!—glancing over the article, I recognised that no mistake had been made. The person who was being tried in 1837—a little more than fifty years after the demonstration at the Opera—was no other than M. de Saint-P——!

Under the old *régime*, imprisonment did not constitute a penalty; it “assured” the life of an accused whilst he was awaiting judgment, and a prison-cell, in case of condemnation, was but the antechamber to the galleys or the scaffold. For well-born people, however, this rule had some advantages. When it was simply a question of repressing the pranks of a son, or of putting the brake on some young spendthrift or over-gallant old man, recourse could be had to *maisons de santé*.

These were comfortable retreats, situated in the faubourg, and surrounded by large gardens, and, on payment of board and lodging, compromising relatives could be isolated there

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

for some time. The best-known of these establishments—some of which still exist—were those of Dr. Belhomme, at the top of the Charonne hill, of Mlles. Douay and Lacour, at Nouvelle-France, of the Dame de Sainte-Colombe, at Picpus, and of the surgeon Escourbiac, in the Rue de Chemin-Vert.

Ordinarily, admission was accorded on the simple request of the parties concerned. In this case, the sole object of confinement was to prevent the "prisoner" being shut up in the Bastille, and it was not of long duration. The cost of board and lodging was heavy, and the inmate's relatives did not continue to pay any longer than was strictly necessary. But when the doors of these private prisons closed on a boarder who was admitted "by order of the King," things took their course administratively. The expenses were paid by the State, and as nobody had an interest in bringing the imprisonment to a close—with the exception of the prisoner, who was not consulted in the matter—the poor fellow ran a great risk of being forgotten. Strange documents are to be found in certain *dossiers* of these *maisons de santé* at the National Archives, as witness a "petition to M. Bailly, a Paris mayor, dated 1790, relative to the disappearance of Stanislas Guyonnet d'Andrenos, who was arrested by virtue of a *lettre de cachet* in June, 1773, and whose whereabouts have never since been ascertainable." I have also come across a "petition addressed by a man named Poupet to the National Assembly in May, 1791, in regard to the fate of the Rev. Father Luc d'Argent, a Theatine monk, who was arrested in December, 1767, by order of the King, but whose place of imprisonment is unknown."

Saint-P——'s family had thus succeeded in snatching the young man from the Bastille, and as it was necessary to find a pretext in order to obtain this favour, it made out that he had already shown signs of eccentricity, as, for instance, playing, when quite a child, "at celebrating mass with a little tin chalice." This futile pretext was sufficient to justify the King's clemency, and the young Marquis was lodged in a *maison de santé*.

The establishment in which he was placed was most comfortable, the table excellent, the gardens superb, and the

AN UNKNOWN LATUDE

attendance discretion itself. It was a most agreeable place to live in, as is proved by the fact that Saint-P—— was delighted to be there. Hardly had he been separated from the world than he thought it would be well to occupy his enforced leisure, and as he was not without a taste for literature, he plunged into a study of Greek and Latin historians. So deeply did he become absorbed that he did not notice how quickly time passed. One by one his fellow-prisoners left the institution, and as he thus obtained greater quietness for his work and more space for his walks, he did not complain at being alone. The director of the institution even sold it to a successor, but Saint-P—— was in no way affected. Momentous events were following one upon the other in the outside world, but he never thought of inquiring into them. Provided that his board was paid for,—and, judging by the attention which he received, he could not doubt that this important matter was attended to—he looked upon himself as the happiest man in the world.

For three years, in fact, his family regularly paid his bill. On the outbreak of trouble they emigrated, thinking that the storm would soon be over. But, as everyone knows, it was prolonged, and, like many others, the Saint-P——s disappeared after ten years' absence from France. When a stipulated time had elapsed, the nation seized their property, and, managing their fortune, appointed itself as the Marquis de Saint-P——'s trustee. He was no longer considered as a prisoner, but as an "incapable," and the management of national property continued to pay out of the sequestered revenues for the board and lodging of this new Latude. It should be said, however, in the administration's favour, that the prisoner never asked for liberty, and that the successive proprietors of the *maison de santé* continued to sell him with the institution, swearing that he had become a dangerous lunatic, and that the mere sight of a visitor would cause a terrible outbreak of madness. And there you have the story of how the Marquis de Saint-P——, about the middle of the reign of Louis Philippe, came to be still under lock and key for having whistled at Marie Antoinette fifty years before.

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

Had he been a god-child of the fairies, Saint-P——'s good luck could not, however, have been more extraordinary. Think of the catastrophes which would have threatened him if, instead of enjoying the calm and prosaic life with which Fortune had favoured him from the downfall of the old *régime* to the unheroic yet sure days of the Citizen Monarchy, he had remained in the midst of the struggle! Had he whistled but two years later he would have become the people's idol. Hot-headed and fault-finding, I can imagine him first of all playing the Jacobin with such noble democrats as Antonelle, Hesse, Saint-Fargeau, Cloutz, and company—unless, out of good manners, he had renounced the brutal joys of popularity and taken a place among the “Chevaliers du poignard.” Supposing that he had neither been killed on August 10th, nor butchered in September, nor condemned by Fouquier-Tinville, he would have had a choice (for nobody in those days had either the inclination to or the idea of remaining quietly at home) between emigration to Calonne or Chouannerie with Charette; and would not this have inevitably led to death by starvation in Germany, or by drowning at Nantes, or by cannon at Quiberon? If a piece of unhopèd-for good-luck had saved him from these dangers, we should have found him insurrecting in Vendémiaire or conspiring with Cadoudal, and this would have meant transportation to Sinnamary or military execution at Grenelle. Weary of further opposition, he would have followed the example of others in rallying to the Empire, just in time to die of cold in Russia, or return thence with frozen feet to criticise the Bourbons, sing Béranger's songs under the windows of the Tuileries, and plot for the return of “The Other”;—with the result of a trial, imprisonment at Sainte-Pélagie, and execution on the Place de la Grève. Such, in fact, is the summary of civic rewards which were reserved for all who, out of love for social harmony, played a part in the great political hurly-burly which lasted from 1789 to 1830. Through uttering his note a few bars too soon, Saint-P—— lived these forty years like the young heroes in the tales of *Mother Goose* whom powerful genii preserved from mishaps. In that revolution in which, in a

AN UNKNOWN LATUDE

sense, he was the first actor, he played the part of the *Sleeping Beauty*. Are there many stories so striking in their irony, and can you call to mind anything more improbable, than the adventure of this man who, living in the Faubourg Saint-Antoine, where revolutionary storms were brewed, was totally ignorant of the tempest which was raging, and heard nothing—from the cannon of the Bastille to those of the *Trois Glorieuses*? Real life is truly more romantic than the most daring of fictions. “Imagination,” said Sandeau, “feeds only on the remnants of reality.”

I have searched in vain in the office of Me. M——, the successor to Me. Laboissière, the lawyer who, in 1837, looked after Saint-P——’s interests before the Cour de Paris, for any legal document likely to throw light on the manner in which his term of imprisonment was spent. But I have learnt in what way chance brought it to an end.

For a long time past he had given up all thought of liberty. One day, however, having completed a comparative study of the historians of the Greek decadence which seemed to him to be full of present interest, he was struck with the idea of dedicating the work to the King, as was the custom in the days of his youth. He succeeded in having the printer who was in possession of his manuscript summoned before him, in order to settle the arrangement of the dedication and title-page.

M. de Saint-P—— read it aloud as follows :

“Dedicated to His Majesty Louis XVI., King of France and Navarre, by his most humble, devoted, and obedient”——

“Pardon me for a moment, Monsieur le Marquis,” interposed the printer. “But wouldn’t you prefer to dedicate your work *to the memory* of Louis XVI.? That would appear more judicious.”

“What! the King is dead then? Did that happen recently?”

The visitor, who knew he was in a *maison de santé*, was not unduly astonished at the question; but he prudently moved back on his chair, and made sure, with a glance, that, if need be, he could rapidly make for the door.

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

"Very well, then," said M. de Saint-P——, "we'll put Louis XVII."——

"But Louis XVII. is also dead."

"Dear me! Surely there's a Louis XVIII.?"

"There was one, but he has gone to his ancestors. Monsieur le Marquis has doubtless been withdrawn from the world for some time?"

"Yes, for a few years, but I really haven't counted. What a lot of things have happened in so short a time!"

"There has, indeed, been no lack of events."

"Who reigns over France then? I don't read the newspapers."

"Louis Philippe, and he's been on the throne these seven years."

"What year are we in now?"

"1837."

"How time does pass! This Louis Philippe must be the great-grandson of Louis XVI."

"Indeed, I couldn't really say! . . . We've seen and heard so much, and kings have been so often dethroned, restored, exiled, and recalled that I'm somewhat confused. . . . Especially as a certain Napoleon has been mixed up in all this. . . . But it would be too complicated to explain it to you, so we'll postpone the subject."

Thus, in an hour's conversation, did the Marquis de Saint-P—— learn the whole history of France from the time of the States-General to that of the Charter of 1830, and at the same time the interdiction which had been pronounced against him in 1796. Only one member of his family was living, Comte de C——, to whom he made himself known, and who showed great zeal in proving before the courts the incidents of Saint-P——'s resurrection and the swindle of which he had been a victim.

The magistrate charged with the examination of the Marquis de Saint-P—— found him to be a man "of great presence of mind and soundness of judgment." He had but a vague recollection of the incident at the Opéra—or perhaps he did not wish to remember it?

AN UNKNOWN LATUDE

The report of the proceedings, doubtless written by a "classique," mentions that one of the most conclusive proofs which the appellant gave of his soundness of mind was "the preference which, as a writer of good taste, he had for Racine and Boileau over the Romantic poets." A man who showed such sound literary judgment could not be insane, and the Tribunal, without even hearing Me. Laboissière, agreed with the arguments of M. de Gérando, the King's Advocate, and relieved the Marquis de Saint-P—— of the interdict pronounced against him. However, in view of his great age and his ignorance of the new world into which he had been called, he was provided with trustees.

I may add that, should this story appear to overstep the limits of probability, you will find an authentic recital of it in the serious *Gazette des Tribunaux* for Sunday, May 20th, 1838.

PAPA PACHE

TOWARDS the close of 1790, a modest employee in the Post Office, named Gibert, was well received in certain middle-class *salons* where people talked politics. Somewhat insignificant in himself, he had succeeded in making a reputation by boasting of an illustrious friendship from which he derived glory. He reminds one of La Bruyère's *Celse*, "who had little merit, but who knew people who had a great deal." In all ages, human comedy has had these supernumeraries, whose sole part consists in walking in the shadow of great men, and forming a sort of personality after their model.

Gibert's great man was named Pache. He was never seen—and for a very good reason; for he lived over 300 miles from Paris. But Gibert was everlastingly talking about him, and as regards his virtues was inexhaustible. Should some discontented person express the opinion that "everything was going to the bad," Gibert, sighing, would say: "Ah! if only my friend Pache were here!" Or if fear as to the future were expressed, and the weakness of people in authority were blamed, Gibert would hint that "We want someone like my friend Pache."

And, without waiting for a reply, he would enter upon the history of this "man of nature," a title which, in the eyes of that section of society, fanatically enthusiastic over Rousseau as it was, and steeped in an undigested knowledge of *Émile*, was equivalent to an apotheosis. Like Rousseau, Pache was a Swiss, and born of poor people. He had started in life by being the teacher of the children (again like Rousseau) of a nobleman for whom his father was janitor. Helped on by his compatriot Necker, he had risen to be Comptroller of



J. M. ROLAND.

PAPA PACHE

Finances. Then, like a veritable philosopher who is unattracted by greatness, he had resigned his post and salary, and returned to his native mountains, where he lived with his wife, whom he adored, and his children. He spent his days botanising with his son Jean—once more like Rousseau; and when evening came he gave lessons on the harp to his daughter Sylvie, an art in which he excelled. Provided that he had periwinkles in his garden, black bread and milk-food on his table, and romances to play, this wise man wished for nothing more. Thus spoke Gibert, and the tender-hearted snobs of those days were ready to die with joy over his narratives, in which everything was so charming, for periwinkles had become the fashion since the publication of *Les Confessions*, romances since the issue of *Pauvre Jacques*, and a milk-diet since the establishment of Trianon.

Now, when Louis XVI., in March, 1792, played poor Roland the nasty trick of making him a minister, this new official took possession of his department with the conviction that he was going to assure the happiness of humanity in a very few days. A week later, however, he saw that things were not moving so quickly perhaps as he had expected. It was the fault of the "offices," which were filled with agents of the old *régime* who were secretly hostile to the new one. Much as he would like to have dismissed this swarm of employees, the step was out of the question: however high he estimated his own merit, Roland hesitated to disorganise the great machine, of the mechanism of which he knew so little. So he consulted his wife, Manon, who, in turn, consulted Gibert. Gibert knew but one solution for everything, his advice being: "Call in the assistance of my friend Pache." And so the Roland household, glad to share a responsibility which was a little heavier than it had foreseen, joyfully welcomed the proposal.

Fortunately, Pache was in Paris at the time. His patriarchal habits did not prevent him thinking sometimes of his material interests, and he had come from Switzerland in the hope of increasing his little fortune by purchasing national property. He had made an advantageous speculation by

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

acquiring the ancient Priory of Thin-le-Moutier, in the Ardennes, which had been confiscated as property held by the Rheims seminary. Thus assured of an income of 3,400 francs, Pache took up his quarters in the Rue de Tournon. Friendly with Meunier and Monge, who were both members of the Academy of Sciences, he had founded in the Luxembourg section a popular society before which he gave lectures in the evening on civism. Introduced by Gibert to Mme. Roland, he immediately showed the greatest eagerness "to work for the public good," but on the express understanding that neither title nor salary would be imposed upon him. It was a noble beginning, and Gibert exulted over it.¹

Every morning, on the stroke of seven o'clock, Pache could be seen crossing the courtyard of the Ministry. He entered the Minister's office, sat down at his table, and commenced work. Attentive, prudent, zealous, and silent, he remained at his desk all day. At ten o'clock he drew a hunch of bread from his pocket and had his luncheon; at three he rose, bowed, and returned home. He stubbornly refused to remain to dinner or to accept anything. He was the model of factotums, and the Rolands, in chorus with Gibert, were loud in their praises of his disinterestedness. So much so, indeed, that their friend Servan, who was losing his head at the Ministry of War, begged that this unique man be lent to him to reduce to order the chaos of his department. Pache willingly consented to this change, and thus it was that, incognito, he directed the whole policy of the Girondin Ministry during the most terrible crisis that France had ever experienced.

He did not glory in the fact, however, but remained as calm and reserved as ever, never appeared at a meeting, and never went to the theatre. When his day's work was over he returned to his modest flat in the Rue de Tournon, kissed his children and took his harp, which seems to have been the only *confidante* of his mysterious ambitions.

After August 10th, and Valmy, there was a *coup de théâtre* in the form of the resignation of Servan, who was definitely

¹ *Mémoires de Mme. Roland.* Portraits.

PAPA PACHE

overwhelmed with work. Who was to replace him? Roland, who wanted one of his own men in the position, thought of Pache. But what hope was there of getting him to accept it? Had not this modest and "respectable friend" just refused the management of the *Garde-meubles*? Manon Roland, who knew she was irresistible, undertook to write to him; and after much pressing he accepted. Without showing the slightest disquietude at the load with which he was burdened, he installed himself at the Ministry, and immediately began to exercise his authority. It was a case of Sixtus V. after the Conclave over again. From the time of the first council meeting he imposed silence on Roland's loquacity; put the poor, angry Manon in her proper place; took the advice only of wild enthusiasts; received Chabot, Fabre, Hasenfratz, Cloutz, and Vincent, and dined with them; filled his offices with their dependants; and gave his daughter Sylvie, who was sixteen years of age, to Audouin, an unfrocked vicar, whom he had made his general secretary with a salary of 19,000 francs.¹

Hébert, "Père Duchêne," signed the marriage certificate as a witness. Pache juggled with millions; appointed his periwig-maker, "a blackguard of nineteen," muster-master-general; and when he finally relinquished office, after an administration which was "more fatal to France," says Mercier, "than a foreign enemy," the Commune, exclusively composed of his friends, entrusted its destiny to him. . . . Behold him, Mayor of Paris. He had at his disposal an army carefully recruited by Héron's cut-throat ruffians and Maillard's "Tape-Durs." The Girondins were stupefied at having harboured this bird of prey, and indignant at the thought

¹ January 15th, 1793, marriage certificate of François Audouin, general secretary of War, aged twenty-eight years, born at Limoges, domiciled in Paris, Maison de la Guerre, Mont Blanc section . . . and Marie Silvie Pache, aged sixteen, born in Paris in the parish of Saint Germain l'Auxerrois, domiciled at the Maison de la Guerre, daughter of Jean Nicolas Pache, minister of War, and Marie Marguerite Valette, deceased . . . witnesses: Antoine Joseph Santerre, forty years of age, major-general, domiciled in Paris, Grand Rue du Faubourg Saint-Antoine; Nicolas Maurice, cavalry officer, brother-in-law of the bridegroom; Jean Baptiste Beamier, major-general domiciled in Paris; Jacques René Hébert, deputy-procurator of the Commune, domiciled in Paris, Rue Neuve de l'Égalité."

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

that such a man—so worthy of praise when following in their train—should have the pretension to be somebody. Hypocrite that he was! Manon especially did not lose her anger. But Pache felt that he was invincible: he had the great Commune behind him, and it was he who, in his frigid tone, presented to the Convention the address of the sections demanding the deposition of the twenty-two deputies of the Gironde. Silence was established. It was he, also, who stood up in defence of the assassins of September, and signed the odious *procès-verbal* of the Temple which sacrificed the Queen's head. The Terror was personified in this mild-mannered man, who, in the evening, at the end of the day's work, played the harp as a means of relaxation after his sinister labours. Alone he was the rival of the Convention; he became all-powerful, and his partisans already began to point him out as the great magistrate, the supreme chief of the universal republic whose advent they so much desired. The crowd itself was infatuated. His paternal air, slow manner of speech, and mealy-mouthedness imposed a sort of familiar respect on the wild populace, who named him "Papa Pache."

But this period of success was short, for nothing in those days lasted very long. Papa Pache fell with the Hébertistes. His popularity saved his life even in Thermidor; but when the decimated Gironde once more became a power, it thirsted for vengeance, and determined to punish this "Tartuffe of the Revolution,"—this man, formerly made so much of, whom it could not pardon for having betrayed its confidence,—for his defection. The expiation was terrible. Dragged from brigade to brigade to the Fort of Ham, thence transferred to the Chartres prisons, and secretly confined in an *oubliette* for one hundred days, Pache was finally sent for trial, with his son-in-law Audouin and Héron, the only surviving members of his party, to the Criminal Tribunal of the Department of Eure-et-Loir. He remained a prisoner for eighteen months. The scaffold was already erected when a general amnesty was voted, whereupon prison-doors were thrown open, Pache left Chartres, and disappeared.

At the conclusion of that strange and feverish book in

PAPA PACHE

which Georges Avenel has related the follies of Anacharsis Cloutz, the writer says: "As to old Pache, who had retired to a village near the frontier, he often sat on the edge of a stream, at the foot of an oak, and, watching the flowing water, mused and smiled over the stories which were told about the French Revolution. Suddenly, however, he would think with emotion of that great good city which, without being either an orator, or a writer, or a rich man, or an intriguer, he had administered,—and in his heart he would glorify it." That is almost all we knew of Pache's history. His end was a mystery. So well did he know how to escape from inquisitive eyes, so sullenly had he buried himself, that for a long time we knew neither the place nor the date of his death. As to his old age, we were in total ignorance.

But is it possible to escape from historical investigators? An erudite inhabitant of the Ardennes, M. Pierquin, has for several years been passionately engaged in collecting the slightest traces of Pache's sojourn in the village where, long after the Revolution, his astonishing career was brought to a close. He has laid notaries' archives, parish registers, inventories of Justices of the Peace, and reminiscences of old inhabitants under contribution, and obtained, by means of this minute inquiry, a sheaf of documents which are full of interest. Not ten lines had been written on the subject of the last years of the former mayor of Paris, whereas we now possess an entire volume.¹ This work not only constitutes a fortunate contribution to history, it is also an example to be followed. How many similar secrets lie buried in provincial archives, and what a precious harvest historians could reap there!

One night in November, 1795, the tenant-farmer of the Priory of Thin-le-Moutier heard a knocking at his door. Late though it was, he opened it, and found himself face to face with a man in a horse-dealer's smock and broad-brimmed hat. It was Pache. The former Minister of War had crossed Paris hidden in a cart filled with straw, and proceeded

¹ *Mémoires sur Pache*. Charleville, E. Jolly. On sale in Paris at 14, Rue Le Goff.

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

on foot to this out-of-the-way spot in the Ardennes,—the only place in the world where he was certain of an asylum.

Although he had several times been at Thin since the purchase of the Priory in 1791, the peasants were ignorant of the past of the man who had taken refuge among them, and his arrival was unnoticed. He was able to take up his quarters secretly in an old building of the ancient Abbey called the "Recette," and he remained there the whole winter almost without showing himself.

Only in the spring of 1796 was he to be seen in the village streets. He walked out into the country and sat down in deserted spots. In the declining evening his tall silhouette could be seen moving here and there over the fields. He was invariably dressed in a long grey overcoat, and there was an air of sadness on his regular features.

Do you remember the old member of the Convention whom Victor Hugo introduced into the first book of *Les Misérables*? That melancholy man, after passing through the furnace of the Revolution, and being tracked, persecuted, and cursed, takes refuge in the corner of a wild valley, and spends twenty years in contemplation. Such was Pache's fate.

He spoke but little, and never of the past, which, in his endeavour "to extinguish himself," he strove to drive from his thoughts. A few months after his arrival at Thin, he was joined by his aged mother, a good and simple-minded woman, born during the Regency, and whose whole life had been spent in the most humble circumstances, who certainly never understood the causes of her son's sudden elevation or the disasters which had ensued. These things had passed over her like an already forgotten cyclone. She no longer remembered—she was perhaps ignorant of the fact—that he had commanded all the armies of France against allied Europe, and presided over the destiny of Paris when it was convulsively struggling under the ruins of the old world. Now that the horizon was narrow and calm, now that she was living with "her child"—as she used to call him—and could share his joys (as, for instance, on the day when the

PAPA PACHE

secretary of the Charleville Agricultural Society informed him that he was included in the list of favoured persons who were to receive trial samples of "Lapland turnip-cabbage seeds"), she felt that she was once more a mother.

Pache had again taken up botany, interested himself in methods of gardening, gave advice to his neighbours, lived in the fields, and, when evening came, sat down to write, with the same hand which had signed the document outlawing the Girondins and the terrible deposition of the Dauphin against his mother, a report on the "Propagation of Fruit-trees in certain parts of the Department of the Ardennes." Thus years passed by. After attempting to forget everything, he subscribed to a "patriotic" newspaper, seized with a desire to know the sequel to the mighty drama in which he had played a part.

One summer evening—it was in August, 1803—a magnificent berlin, the arrival of which made all the more sensation as it was known that the First Consul, for some days past, had been visiting the forts of the district, drew up on the public place at Thin-le-Moutier. A footman jumped down from the box and opened the door for a man with a fine bearing, who, on stepping out of the carriage, asked to be directed to the house of M. Pache. It was pointed out to him, and the excited village children followed on his heels to the door of the old Priory. Peasants standing at barn doors bowed low and glanced curiously at the visitor as he passed, and whispered :

"Who is it?"

It was Monge, who had come with Bonaparte to Mézières. As was his custom, the Consul had made inquiries as to the notable persons of the district and the part which they had played during the Revolution. Pache's name had been given to him. Wishing to attach the former Mayor of Paris to his administration, or perhaps merely curious to know the man who, in 1792, had dared to assume the terrible responsibility of managing the Ministry of War, he sent Monge to make certain offers to him.

The conversation which took place that night between the

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

two friends, who had not met since the days when they lectured on civism in the Luxembourg section, must on both sides have been somewhat embarrassing. Their ways had been so divergent! Only its conclusion became known, for, when morning came, Monge set off again, Pache accompanying him as far as the way out of the valley, about half-way between the Géronval windmill and the village of Warby. There they remained for a moment clasped in each other's arms, and Monge, for the last time, endeavoured to convince the disabused philosopher.

"No," replied Pache, "I do not wish it."

With these words they parted, never to see each other again. Monge stepped into his carriage, and Pache, after following it with his eyes for some distance, turned on his heels in the direction of his cottage.

This incident did not disturb his serenity for a moment—the same day he resumed his occupations: he taught botany to the young men of the village, wandered in the fields with his vasculum slung over his long overcoat, or else travelled backwards and forwards in the Commune, the cadaster of which he had undertaken to draw up. One of his favourite pupils was a young girl, named Mlle. Stévenin, whom he had engaged as nurse-maid. For Pache, who had been a widower for some time, was a grandfather. His daughter Sylvie and Audouin had had two boys and two girls, and these came every year from Paris to spend a few months at Thin. To these children the ex-minister became once more "Papa Pache." He took them for walks in his garden, bending his tall figure as he explained the various plants to them; he took pleasure in their games, and at meals, which were almost exclusively composed of potatoes and brown bread, seated them at his table. On rainy days the old man remained indoors, where everything was continually in indescribable disorder, to play the old-fashioned and tender airs of his youth on the clavecin.

One of these children—Marie Sylvie—was the object of special care on the part of "Papa Pache." Feeble in health, yet pretty, she reminded him of the woman he had loved, the

PAPA PACHE

woman with whom he had spent his happiest years in the mountains of Switzerland. Marie Sylvie died at Thin in 1821. In the preceding year Pache had lost his daughter. His old mother, at the age of ninety-four, was also dead.¹ Infirm, melancholy, and desolate he remained alone.

Almost helpless through rheumatism, he dragged himself on sunny days to his threshold and sat down on a bench. He remained there for hours together, in silence, his forehead resting in his hands, buried in thought and recollections. Since the return of the Bourbons, the red spectre of '93—frequently evoked—haunted the imagination of the Thin peasants, who now knew the terrible part which had been played in the Revolution by this placid man.

He had no longer any friends; his political illusions were dead; and his son-in-law, Xavier Audouin, the former Hébertiste, the friend of Père Duchêne, had become an ardent Royalist. Sadder still, his son, Jean Pache, ashamed of his name, called himself Baron Jean—for he was a Baron—and this renunciation so pleased Louis XVIII. that he decorated him with the cross of Saint-Louis! Baron Jean often went to visit his friend, Comte de Broyes, at the Château de Jandun, near Thin-le-Moutier; but he took good care never to call upon that old revolutionary, his father, as that would have compromised him in good society.

Pache became helpless and spent the whole summer of 1823 in bed. Mlle. Stévenin never left him. He died in the afternoon of November 13th, and at four o'clock next day Curé Beuret, preceded by a crucifix, came to remove the body, the former terrorist having expressed a wish to be reconciled with "the religion of his fathers."

The funeral, which was attended by hardly fifty people, took place without any display, on one of those beautiful autumn days, full of melancholy, which constitute what is called a Saint-Martin's summer. When the usual prayers had been said at the grave-side and the pall had been removed, the new pitch-pine coffin appeared quite crimson in

¹ "Year 1819, January 10th, death of Jeanne Lallement, age ninety-four, widow of Nicolas Pache, daughter of the late Jean Lallement, domiciled at Verdun, and of Marie Guincourt his wife."

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

the rays of the setting sun. In the eyes of the simple-minded mourners this seemed to be a miraculous symbol, and for many years to come the people of Thin related, with a shudder, that the remains of the old "Septembrist" had stained the coffin which enclosed them the colour of blood.

COUTHON'S BATH-CHAIR

THERE is one point in Couthon's life which has remained obscure. Couthon, the Dictator—Couthon, one of the *triumviri*, the confidential friend of Robespierre, the Attila of Lyons, the man of the Law of Prairial—Couthon, as everyone knows, was a cripple. Disturbed by a jealous husband whilst he was engaged in a gallant escapade, he had passed an entire night in a cesspool up to his neck in water. He escaped at dawn, cured of a love of adventure, but crippled for life. Dr. Cabanès, who has included him among his retrospective patients, has diagnosed his ailment as a case of "chronic pachymeningitis of the dorso-lumbar regions primarily localised at the roots of the plexus sacro lumbalis."

Couthon was, in fact, entirely deprived of the use of his lower limbs.¹ In spite of this, his activity was extraordinary, and this paralytic was one of the most energetic men of the Convention. Unless he was at the Saint-Amand waters, or confined to bed by his malady, he assiduously followed the sittings. But how did he get there? That is the problem—not a very exciting one, some will say, and I readily admit that many writers are absorbed in questions of greater moment. However, history—like our boulevards—has its idlers, who are amused by a mere nothing and interested by a minor detail, provided it constitutes a picturesque and

¹ Couthon was already infirm when, on January 16th, 1787, he married Marie Brunel, daughter of the lieutenant of the bailiwick of Orcet (Puy-de-Dôme). They had two children: Antoine François Xavier Couthon, born at Clermont, December 17th, 1787, and Jean Pierre François Hippolyte Couthon, born at Clermont, January 21st, 1790. The latter disappeared in Paris at the time of the 9th of Thermidor.

Couthon's elder brother was notary at Orcet. He was born in 1752 and died in 1818.

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

truthful contribution, ever so slight though it may be, to the story of great events.

From September 1791 to July 1794, the duration of his stay in Paris, Couthon lodged near the Convention. He first of all took up his quarters with his colleague Soubrany, "at M. Girots, Rue Saint-Honoré, almost opposite the Capucines." This residence, he wrote in October 1791, "will be very convenient for me, inasmuch as it is quite near the Assembly, and will enable me *to walk there*." "With the aid of a stick or two crutches," he could still walk at that time. But soon his sufferings increased and his legs refused to carry him any longer. "When my pains allow me to go to the Convention," he recorded in May 1792, "I am obliged to have myself carried right into the sanctuary." He was then living at 97 Cour du Manège. A report, dating a little later, speaks of "his Passy habitation and that which he had near the baths, a short distance from the Pont Neuf." Finally, in 1794, we find him at 366 (now 398) Rue Saint-Honoré—the Maison Duplay which Robespierre occupied. But perhaps this was only an official address where Couthon received his letters. Perhaps, also, he took possession of the rooms vacated by Charlotte Robespierre when she thought it prudent to place some distance between her brother and herself.

An exceedingly precious document gives us particulars as to Couthon's home life. In the absence of a full-length portrait, which does not exist, the following lines trace his physiognomy with a picturesqueness which, unfortunately, is too often lacking in narratives of the period.

One of the Deputies whom the Convention sent into the provinces on a mission, and who were called Proconsuls, had declared the judges of the tribunal of a town near Paris as suspected of moderation. The critical position of these magistrates, who were thus threatened by the guillotine, inspired their fellow-citizens with the greatest interest, so one of the leading men of the district undertook to go to Paris in the hope of obtaining protection for them. The report of the steps which he took, found twenty years later among



COUTHON'S BATH CHAIR.
(In the Musée Carnavalet, Paris.)

COUTHON'S BATH-CHAIR

Fouché's papers, contains a finished picture of the famous cripple: it is a picture of "Couthon at Home," painted by a man who, ten years later, still shuddered at the recollection of what he had seen.

"I arrived in Paris and ventured to call at the Convention. But the Deputies with whom I was in relations were without influence, and only looked after their personal safety . . . A lady, who had had relations with Mme. Couthon, proposed to introduce me to her, and advised me, if we succeeded in approaching the husband, to plead the cause of my unfortunate compatriots.

She succeeded in overcoming my repugnance, and soon in even making me regard the signal favour of being admitted to the presence of this influential member of the Committee of Public Safety as a Heaven-sent blessing.

We arrived . . . Couthon had a kindly face and rather distinguished manners, especially for a time at which the most coarse language and most grotesque ways were common. He occupied, near the Tuileries, a fine apartment, the furniture of which showed great elegance.

He wore a white dressing-gown, and on his arm was a young rabbit which he was feeding with clover. His son, an angelically beautiful boy of three or four, alternately stroked his father's hand and the pretty white animal. These innocent surroundings and Couthon's great affability charmed me.

'In what way can I be of service to you, Monsieur?' he asked. 'A gentleman who is recommended to me by Madame is entitled to my warmest regard.'

So I related the misadventure which had befallen my poor judges, and asked what advice I could give them.

'Acknowledge that the Convention,' said Couthon, 'is to be pitied for being forced to send into the Departments men who are incapable of distinguishing the real enemies of Liberty! These madmen will end by making all Frenchmen hostile to us. As regards your judges, it is probable that they have been warned and are no longer at home. Let them remain hidden. Judging by the good character which

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

you give these honest men, no great search will be made for them. They will escape imprisonment . . . ’

After a momentary silence, he continued :

‘Your magistrates are interesting. On reflection, I have given you dangerous advice. They will come to Paris to hide ; the police will discover and arrest them ; and, remember, Paris prisons are unsafe. Tell them to return home. The authorities will not refuse to allow a gendarme to be at each of their houses, and I will willingly endeavour to make this inconvenience as short as possible.’

Persuaded that Couthon was sincere I said to him :

‘Monsieur Couthon, you who are all-powerful on the Committee of Public Safety, are you aware that the Revolutionary Tribunal daily condemns unfortunate men who are accused of the same crime as these magistrates? This very day, Monsieur Couthon, sixty-three prisoners are to be executed under this pretext.’

This reflection produced an indescribable effect on Couthon : his face became distorted and assumed a tiger-like expression. . . . He made a movement. The rabbit was overturned and the child, weeping, rushed into his mother’s arms. . . . Couthon had seized the bell-rope, but the person who had introduced me threw herself upon him and held him in his arm-chair.

‘Escape!’ she exclaimed, with an emotion which chilled me with fright. Then, lowering her voice :

‘Go and wait for me in the orangery!’

I descended with lightning-like rapidity, and reached the end of the Terrasse des Feuillants at the top of my speed. As soon as I saw my guardian angel approaching in the distance, I rushed towards her and asked for an explanation of what had just happened.

‘The wretched man,’ she replied, ‘merely wanted to discover your inmost thoughts. Your cutting reproach was like a dagger-thrust in his heart. I, like yourself, thought that he was sincere! . . . Couthon, like all the members of the Committee of Public Safety, has five or six guardsmen stationed at his house,—and he was about to summon them when I held him in his chair. You would have been placed

COUTHON'S BATH-CHAIR

this very day in the fatal tumbril with the sixty-three victims of whom you spoke! . . . Fortunately, I have succeeded in making him ashamed of the crime which he was about to commit against one whom I had introduced to him in confidence. I attentively followed everything you said. He is ignorant of the fact that you do not live in Paris. . . . Return home quickly, but, for fear you are recognised, do not travel by the ordinary route. And, finally, profit by this lesson.'

I set off there and then without seeing anybody in Paris. The judges remained immured until the death of this man Couthon, of whom I cannot think without shuddering.¹ . . . ”

However that may be, Couthon was carried from place to place. But by whom, and how? Neither memoirs nor narratives give us any information. No full-length portrait, as has been said, exists of the member of the Convention, so that up to the present we have been reduced to hypotheses. Some have said that he was carried in a back-basket, whilst others have supposed that he travelled on a man's back; and a few reports, when mentioning Couthon's name, do, in fact, speak of "his gendarme" in such a way as to lead one to believe that this soldier was the cripple's vehicle.

On the other hand, the accounts of the Committee of Public Safety for Germinal Year II. mentions "supplementary fodder for Citizen Couthon's two horses." But that is merely matter for inference.

Now, in July 1899, a young woman called at the Carnavalet Museum and asked to speak to the Curator. She gave her name and made known her genealogy. She was Couthon's great-grand-daughter, and she had come to offer to the City Museum the bath-chair which her great-grandfather used during his stay in Paris, and which, since the 9th of Thermidor, had been preserved with the family furniture.

M. Georges Cain receives all visitors to the Hôtel

¹ The original manuscript of this fragment, which is in M. Victorien Sardou's collection of autographs, bears the following title: *Couthon's character. This memorandum was written by the person who presented himself at Couthon's house, and has been handed to the Duc d'Otrante, at his request.*

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

Carnavalet with invariable affability. All the same, I cannot help thinking that his welcome is all the warmer when he guesses they are donors, and foresees that his beloved museum is about to be enriched with some fresh relic.

Couthon's descendant soon discovered, therefore, how thankfully the gracious offer was accepted, and, a week later, her great grandfather's arm-chair on wheels—delivered by the railway company and unpacked in the Carnavalet courtyard—appeared once more under a Parisian sun, the same sun of Thermidor which had not warmed its ancient wood-work since that tragic day 105 years before.

There you have the solution of the problem—Couthon propelled himself in this arm-chair upholstered in lemon-coloured velvet, now very much faded. He set it in motion by means of two cranks fitted to the arms, a gearing arrangement transmitting movement to the wheels. Without being as light as a tricycle, the machine which is still intact, can attain, with a little effort, a fairly high speed.

We can now imagine the infirm Couthon—suffering from extremely violent headache, shaken by nausea and almost perpetual hiccoughs, enervated by frequent baths, fed almost exclusively on veal-broth, prostrated by pain and undermined by caries—being placed in his mechanical arm-chair, and, by a prodigious effort of his will, his hands grasping the cranks like those of two coffee-mills, setting off alone in the direction of the Convention, outdistancing able-bodied men, and manœuvring amongst the traffic in the Rue Saint-Honoré and over the large paving-stones of the Carrousel. It must indeed have been a terrible sight to witness this wreck of a man rolling along with the noise of a rattle, his arms in perpetual horizontal rotary movement, his body bent forward, and his lifeless legs covered with wraps, perspiring and shouting “Look out there!” as he was carried by his machine through the crowd, which made way stupefied and disconcerted at the contrast between the invalid's pitiful appearance and the terror which his name, more feared, perhaps, than that of Robespierre, inspired. “It is Couthon!” murmured the people beneath their breath. “It is Couthon!”

Our astonishment is none the less when we recollect that

COUTHON'S BATH-CHAIR

a man could, under such conditions, play a leading *rôle* in that revolutionary drama in which all the actors were so energetic and full of life, and whom we picture to be ever in movement, rushing into the tribune, boiling over with patriotic anger, and hurrying from one end of France to the other to increase the tempest which was to destroy the old *régime*. This invalid in a bath-chair, who wished to contribute to the storm, appears amidst this outburst almost grandiose in his tenacity and energy.

For now that we are acquainted with this accessory, we must replace it amidst the scenes of Thermidor.

We will start with the Convention. The two Robespierres, Saint-Just, and Lebas have been outlawed, and are thrust to the bar. But who looked after Couthon, who shared their fate, and who, during the storm, necessarily remained motionless on the bench at the foot of the tribune with his eyes riveted on his poor rickety legs?

His gendarme, doubtless, hoisted him on his shoulders and carried him out of the prætorium, where the bath-chair was unable to enter. And when the deputies' arrest was decreed—when Robespierre was dragged to the Luxembourg prison, his brother to the Force, Lebas to the Conciergerie, and Saint-Just to the Ecossais—who, again, escorted Couthon to the former Convent of Port-Royal—Port-Libre—which was fixed as his place of imprisonment? Can we imagine him crossing the city in his bath-chair, propelling himself to prison?¹

When rioting broke out in Paris, Couthon was, then, in prison. Robespierre and the others were set free by an order of the Commune; but Couthon was at first forgotten,

¹ *Letter of the Concierge of Port-Libre concerning Couthon:—*

“10 Thermidor. Notwithstanding the Government's recent order not to receive men, this prison being reserved for women, I considered, by virtue of your warrant, that I ought to admit Citizen Couthon, deputy, and put him in close confinement.

“Citizen Couthon having been placed on a bed in my office, Citizen Jergot, the director, and one of his colleagues, after asking me and my clerks to withdraw, cross-examined him for about a quarter of an hour. About one o'clock in the morning, a municipal officer, accompanied by a clerk of the court and some gendarmes, came to claim him by virtue of a police order, which is in my possession.”

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

and it was not until about one o'clock in the morning that his friends summoned him to the Hôtel de Ville. He was again placed on his machine and, in the midst of a torrential rain, at once set off on his journey, descending the steep slope of the Rue Saint-Jacques at full speed, with the two gendarmes who had been sent to him running at his sides. The official reports give their names : Muron and Javoir.

The Place de la Grève was covered with "men, bayonets, pikes, and cannon." The howling and anguish-stricken crowd dispersed before the diabolical apparition, in the thundery night, of this drenched cripple, who, with his body bent forward, his teeth clenched through effort, his elbows raised, and his fists wildly gyrating, at last drew up before the steps of the Hôtel de Ville, the tall and luminous windows of which stood out in the darkness.

Someone hoisted the member of the Convention on his back and carried him to the first floor. Here we possess the narrative of a spy who was there, and who relates Couthon's entry as follows : "The two Robespierres were in the Council Chamber, one by the side of President Lescot-Fleuriot, and the other near Payan, the national agent. Couthon was carried in a moment afterwards, and it is to be observed that he was still accompanied by his gendarme. On arriving he was embraced by Robespierre, . . . who also took the gendarme's hand, saying to him : 'Worthy gendarme, I have ever loved and esteemed your body. Go to the door and continue to incense the people against the factionists.'"

The advice was doubtless good, but Robespierre thereby did Couthon a bad turn, for, deprived of his bearer, he was at the mercy of the first comer. When, an hour later, the Hôtel de Ville was invaded by men of the Convention—when, in the midst of the disturbance which followed Merda's pistol-shot, Robespierre the younger threw himself out of the window, Lebas blew out his brains, and Henriot rushed into a courtyard without an exit, the wretched Couthon, without weapons or assistance, and incapable of even rising from the seat on which he had been placed, let himself slide to the floor, and, using his hands as crutches, succeeded in dragging himself under a table. Someone, however, discovered him in his hiding-place,

COUTHON'S BATH-CHAIR

and he was pitched like a bundle on to the landing at the very edge of the topmost step. A movement which he made caused him to roll to the bottom of the stone staircase,¹ and he was found next morning, with a deep cut in his forehead, stretched in a small back courtyard to which he had crept. Motionless and his face pressed to the wall, he "feigned death"; but when the men shook him to make him stand up he tried to stab himself with a pen-knife which he held open in his hand.

Couthon was bound to a stretcher and carried to the Hôtel-Dieu, where surgeon Dessault dressed his wounds, after which he was taken to the Tuileries by way of the quays. He was left on the litter at the foot of the staircase of the Committee of Public Safety, under the porch of the courtyard, a group of citizens forming around him. It was then nine o'clock in the morning.²

Already for six long hours had the wounded Robespierre, stretched on a table in the Committee's Council Chamber, been slowly dying. Payan, Saint-Just, and Dumas were also there, seated in a window-recess. An order came to conduct these vanquished men to the Conciergerie, and the tragic procession was formed. First of all came Robespierre, who was carried in an arm-chair by four men. A bandage was wrapped round his face and head; his blue frock-coat was split right up the back and the right sleeve was torn; he was without shoes, his calves were bare, for his stockings had descended to his ankles; and his unbuttoned trousers revealed a blood-stained shirt. He frequently opened his eyes and had not lost his strength, for he gave one of his bearers a violent blow on the neck as they were descending the staircase.³

Couthon's bearers followed immediately after, and behind the litter walked Dumas, recognisable by his long, black, cassock-like frock-coat made of a light material, Payan faultless in his grey coat and white collar, and finally, Saint-

¹ Minutes of Couthon's examination at the Hospice de l'Humanité.

² *Report made in the name of the Committee . . . delivered by Courtois on the 8th of Thermidor Year III., Document XLI.*

³ Notes relative to Robespierre when he was carried to the Committee of Public Safety.

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

Just, "scrupulously well-dressed in summer attire: buff coat, white waistcoat, trousers of greyish-white cloth, and a smartly tied cravate."

This procession does not seem, however, to have greatly affected Parisians. A few inquisitive people followed, but there was nothing of a crowd. On Robespierre's bearers reaching the *terre-plein* on the Pont Neuf they stopped to take breath and set down the arm-chair opposite the pedestal of the destroyed statue, whereupon the "tyrant" looked at the people who surrounded him and very distinctly shrugged his shoulders.

About four o'clock in the afternoon the twenty-two condemned men of the day, including Couthon, were led to the scaffold. The cripple was sitting in the third tumbril, with his legs hanging down, a bandage over his forehead, and a dismayed look on his livid face. On reaching the Place de la Revolution, two of Sanson's assistants seized him by the arms and legs to carry him on to the platform. He was the first to be executed. Owing to the impossibility of attaching him to the plank of the guillotine in the usual manner, he was placed on it "vertically" (?); but his atrophied body would not lend itself to the various movements to be gone through, and the experiment lasted a quarter of an hour!—a quarter of an hour of terrible anguish, during which the victim uttered piercing screams, which were drowned by the shouting of the mob. At last he died. Robespierre the younger followed him, then came nineteen others, and then Maximilien. The last to place his neck under the knife was Lescot-Fleuriot.

Couthon, who, it will be admitted, had no luck, was fortunate, however, in having a good son.

In 1787, before he was paralysed, he had married Marie Brunel, the daughter of the lieutenant of the bailiwick of Orcet, and they had two children. The eldest, Antoine François Xavier, was nearly seven years old when his father died; the younger was born in 1790 and, consequently, was only four.

What became of the latter child in the storm of the 9th of



GEORGES COUTHON.

COUTHON'S BATH-CHAIR

Thermidor? Did the frenzied mother lose her younger son in her journeys about Paris? Was he stolen or killed by some woman whose son had been beheaded by Couthon? We cannot say. All we know is that he disappeared.

Couthon's widow¹ took up her abode at Orcet with her son Antoine—a step which required no little courage; for the townsfolk, who had adulated the member of the Convention when he was in power, relentlessly attacked his memory. The Municipal Council decreed that his birth certificate should be effaced from the registers of the Commune. "Let us destroy the remembrance of this infamous seductor," ran the decision; "let us consign the portrait of this abominable monster to the flames. We hope that the nation will ignore his birthplace, and that the sorrowful names of the martyrs of liberty will pursue his fugitive shade even into the gloomy abode of the dead!" Two engraved portraits of the cripple were discovered in the Commune and burnt on the public square, all the young men of the district dancing a farandole around the bonfire. So stupid was the reaction after Thermidor that it makes one almost sympathetic towards those who succumbed at that period of French history.

The contempt which Antoine Couthon felt for such acts of cowardice as these, inspired at a very early age a deep veneration for his father's memory.

At the age of seventeen he enlisted, and took part in all the wars of the Empire. Inscribed on the order of the day at Moscow, when still a non-commissioned officer, Napoleon summoned him to his presence and offered him a commission "on the condition he changed his name." But Antoine Couthon refused, stating that he could not disown his father—and thus it was that he remained a mere sergeant. At the Restoration, he returned to Orcet, and, setting prejudice at defiance, lived there for twenty years.

Opinion changed in his favour, however, in 1848, and his fellow-citizens began to find that Couthon "had some good in him." Not knowing by what means to apologise to the

¹ She married Louis Charreyre, a medical practitioner, and had two daughters. She died at Clermont on September 17th, 1843.

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

son of the man whom they had so readily disavowed, they gave him a banquet over which he consented to preside.

He was a rough, tenacious, and rather gloomy man. "The name of Couthon," he once wrote to a Royalist journalist who had severely criticised his father, "was for a long time hard to bear. Now that it is beginning to be respected and that discussion is allowable, I shall no longer permit it to be attacked."

Antoine Couthon died in 1867. Napoleon III. made him a Knight of the Legion of Honour. He had a son who died from cholera in Italy, leaving two infant daughters. . . . And thus we return to the donor of the bath-chair in the Carnavalet Museum.

No relic presents a character of more absolute authenticity than this bath-chair. It originally came from the Château de Versailles, where it was used by the "wife of Charles Philip Capet"—otherwise known as the Comtesse d'Artois; and it was lent to Couthon by the administrators of the national furniture warehouse. After Thermidor, the Garde-Meuble claimed the arm-chair, "in order to restore it to the national dépôt for machines" in the Rue de l'Université. This claim, the minute of which is still in existence, is dated Messidor Year III. There can be no doubt that at that time—nearly a year after the death of Couthon and his companions—his widow had returned to the village of Orcet, taking her furniture and the remaining souvenirs of her husband with her. The chair was, therefore, never returned, and it remained in the Auvergne until recent years. Couthon's widow did not die until 1843; her son, as I have said, lived until 1867. Both were unexceptionable witnesses. They had preserved a lively recollection of the scenes of Year II.; they had seen Couthon in his bath-chair; and this curious piece of furniture, preserved among the city collections, will remain one of the most picturesque and surest elements of that revolutionary chronicle which the galleries of the Carnavalet Museum narrate in so striking a manner.

LEBLANC

THE "man in the cloak" occupied a prominent position in the reports which daily accumulated in February, 1804, on the desk of M. Réal, the head of the police of the Republic.¹

This mysterious person had been seen prowling about the Champs-Élysées. One informer had perceived him at night on the boulevard near the Madeleine; whilst another, at the same hour, had met him in a deserted street in the suburbs of Saint-Médard. He was reported to have entered a *café* with a woman on a certain evening, or else had dined with an unfrocked monk. Unfortunately, the identity of the "man in the cloak" was a mystery. Some said he was assuredly one of the leaders of the band of ruffians who had come over from England to assassinate the First Consul, but others suggested he was a Bourbon Prince. Which one, however, could he be? The Duc d'Angoulême was in Courland; the Duc de Berry and the Comte d'Artois were in London; the Duc d'Enghien lived in retirement in the Duchy of Baden; and all were so closely surrounded by spies that it seemed improbable that one of them could have left his retreat without the French Government being informed of the fact.

Costly though Bonaparte's police undoubtedly was, it must be admitted that it well earned its money. At no other period had the art of spying upon its fellow-citizens been carried to such a degree of perfection. Réal had a very large staff at his disposal,—a strange collection of former Jacobins without resources, spies of revolutionary committees who had lost their employment, and ex-functionaries who

¹ *Mémoires de Mme. d'Abrantès*, vol. vii.

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

had been dismissed for showing themselves too warmly in favour of one or other of the ephemeral governments which France had possessed during the past fifteen years. It also contained a fair number of *chauffeurs*, amnestied *chouans*, or deserters—strange figures with which Paris was swarming, and who could be met walking in groups, recognisable by their traditional cudgels, beaver-hats with buckles, close-shaven faces buried in high, soiled neck-cloths, and the butt-ends of pistols which bulged out their long, threadbare frock-coats, buttoned right up to their chins.

Notwithstanding this army of spies, the Government's enemies went hither and thither, held meetings, and travelled on the roads with astounding freedom. Paris, the wide area of which makes it so favourable for romantic adventures, and in which a person is undiscoverable through the simple fact that he walks about its streets, had become a centre for an important body of *chouans*, who passed through the city gates without let or hindrance, possessed comfortable halting-places from Saint Denis to the sea, had themselves measured for military uniforms at well-known tailors in the Palais-Royal, and frequented haunts of pleasure with impunity. The police heard of their frolics, but could not succeed in arresting a single one of them.

On February 13th, however, a definite piece of information was learnt. A Royalist—imprisoned but a short time in the Temple—considering that he was in a very dangerous position, hanged himself by his cravat to the bars of the window of his cell.¹ Hearing groans, a jailer rushed in and cut him down. As soon as the prisoner, who was nearly dead, had been brought round, he was seized with a fit of trembling, and, in the midst of incoherent exclamations, revealed everything. "The head of the conspiracy was Georges; Moreau belonged to it; and the man in the cloak was Pichegru. . . ."

The "man in the cloak" was, in fact, Pichegru, the conqueror of Holland and Hoche's rival in the Army of the Rhine—Pichegru who had never known whether he was a Royalist or a Republican, and whose uncertainty had brought

¹ His name was Bouvet de Lozier, and he was entrusted with the correspondence with the Princes.

LEBLANC

him misfortune. Courageous and loyal, although he had disappointed the hopes of all parties; dying with ennui since the Directory had banished him from France; placing his hope in political craft of which he knew nothing; and trusting in the first comer, he had allowed himself to be drawn into this adventure by men of relentless fanaticism—like Georges—or of undecided and embittered ambition—like Moreau.

No sooner had he returned to France than Pichegru saw that everybody had deceived him. With the good sense of a native of Franche-Comté, he immediately decided that a struggle under such conditions was bound to be fruitless, that the old and the new society were irreconcilable, and, maybe, he was one of the first to have an intuition of the great misunderstanding from which the whole of the nineteenth century was to suffer. So, careless of his own life, he broken-heartedly abandoned himself to the current of events, no longer possessing the courage to drag himself away from Paris, which he loved so well, and preferring its clandestine places of refuge to the insidious hospitality of England.

The scene of the conspiracy was planned with surprising skill. Among the strange characters who figure in the police reports of the period, a man named Spin calls for special mention. Spin was a churchwarden at the Eglise Saint-Laurent and by trade a contractor, and he was charged to construct secret places where the accomplices of Georges and Moreau could lay in hiding until the time had come for their *coup de main*.

He went about the city on the look-out for vacant apartments in modest-looking houses in little frequented streets; visited them; took them under a false name if they were suitable for his purpose; shut himself up with his tools under the pretext that certain repairs were indispensable; and, in a few days, had arranged "a good hiding-place." He then lodged there some honest housewife whom he had recruited from among the cooks of his acquaintance, informing her that she would have to take a "boarder."

This "boarder," as one can well imagine, was a conspirator, who lived in clover, went out as little as possible, and disappeared at the slightest suspicious noise into the

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

hiding-place which Spin had revealed to him alone. The titular tenant of the apartment was told nothing of this *cachette*, and saw her boarder appear and disappear a dozen times a day without being able to discover the secret of his invisibility.

Spin felt a sort of *amour propre* in this singular calling. He was proud of having succeeded in contriving in the apartment of one of his friends, a tailor named Michelot, who lived in the Rue de Bussy, a hiding-place of which Michelot himself, forced by his business to be absent from home for long periods, did not suspect the existence, and in which two men armed to the teeth were huddled. When the tailor was out seeing customers the two ruffians stretched their legs in the apartment; but as soon as they heard him mounting the stairs they darted back to their den; and honest Michelot, who was a fervent admirer of Bonaparte, did not suspect that he was harbouring "British agents" until the day on which the police came to arrest him and his tenants.¹

Pichegru, preferring the illusion of liberty, showed but a moderate liking for these necessarily exiguous retreats. His wanderings about Paris can be reconstituted almost completely, with the exception of a few nights spent at the risk of a meeting, and several of which cost him, it is said, from ten to twelve thousand francs,—a good price; but the walls were covered with white posters announcing that "harbourers of assassins would themselves be regarded as assassins." It was a case of death for anyone who granted asylum to one of these men, even for twenty-four hours, without denouncing him to the police; and houses which were ordinarily most hospitable remained obstinately closed to every unknown person.

Pichegru, who entered Paris at the Saint-Denis gate in Georges' cabriolet, spent his first night at Denand's, a wine shop at the corner of the Rue du Bac and the Rue de Varenne. This was the Chouans' great meeting place, their terminus, whence they proceeded to the various houses assigned to them. He then lived for a couple of days in the Rue

¹ National Archives, F⁷ 6405.

LEBLANC

Carême-Prenant, in one of Spin's apartments; and we next find him at Chaillot, in a comfortable riverside house, which had been rented for six months past in readiness for the prince whose arrival the Royalists anticipated, but who declined to cross the sea. This Chaillot house was Georges' headquarters, and he gave up his room to the General for a few nights,—a fine room with two windows opening on to a terrace. The curtains were of plain white dimity, and the lacquered furniture was upholstered in blue and white velvet.¹

Pichegru then lodged at the Hôtel du Cercle, in the Rue Richelieu, kept by a contractor for the army, named Rolland. The proscrip occupied a bedroom, the glass-topped partition of which illuminated a corridor. The door, which was provided with a very thin curtain, was also partly of glass, and as Pichegru was accustomed to read in bed until a very late hour, people passing along the corridor could see him as distinctly as if he had gone to bed in the street. He therefore left the Hôtel du Cercle for the Hôtel du Commerce, where he remained, however, but three days, his friend, ex-General Lajolais, having taken, under a false name, an apartment in the Rue Culture Sainte-Catherine, where he was in safer hiding. He also lived for a few nights with an employee of the National Debt Department, named Verdet, who occupied a first-floor apartment in the Rue du Puits-de-l'Ermite, opposite Saint-Pélagie. He next lodged, but only for forty-eight hours, with a young milliner, named Suzanne Gilles, in the Rue des Noyers. Suzanne, discovering his identity, was seized with alarm, and turned him out.²

Yet all this time patrols of police and gendarmes were on guard in every street, and troops of the Paris garrison were stationed with loaded arms along the outer boulevards. Nobody was permitted to leave the city at night under any pretext whatever, and, as the cemeteries were outside the fortifications, police commissaries on duty at the gates had received orders to open any of the coffins passing through, if they had the slightest suspicion of the sincerity of the tears of those who accompanied them.³ Parisians, whose habits

¹ National Archives, F⁷ 6395.

² National Archives, F⁷ 6391 to 6405; and Procès de Georges, *passim*.

³ Archives of the Prefecture of Police.

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

were deranged by these measures, dare not grumble, but they laughed in their sleeves, fully persuaded that the conspiracy was "an invention of the police," and that Pichegru had not set foot in France for the past ten years.

In a house in the Rue Vivienne, almost opposite the Rue Colbert, there lived at this time a commission agent named Treille. Two years before he had married a widow, Mme. de Caux, who, by her first husband, had a daughter, then sixteen years of age. Pichegru had been on intimate terms with the De Caux family at the time he was General-in-Chief of the Army of the North, and Mme. Treille had retained an almost maternal affection for him. She knew that he was in Paris, so when Mlle. Gilles closed her door in his face, Pichegru appealed to his friend. Sounded on the matter, Treille agreed to receive the proscrip, and on February 26th, at sunset, Pichegru entered the house in the Rue Vivienne. He was put by Mme. Treille into a bedroom adjoining her own, and after the warehouse door had been closed at the usual hour they all sat down to dinner.¹

Treille had as partner and daily messmate a business agent named Leblanc, a man in whom he had the most absolute confidence, having made his acquaintance, several years before, at a masonic lodge of which they were both influential members.² Leblanc apparently led a most regular and honourable life. He had been something of a military man, and never given much attention to politics; and he lived alone in a small apartment, quite near the Opéra, which was then situated on the present site of the Square Louvois. He dined that evening with the Treilles and Pichegru, whose identity they did not seek to conceal from him. The company talked at great length; the night passed without incident; but, on the following day, it had to be confessed that the premises offered the general no security, the apartment being composed of a suite of rooms, encumbered with goods, which during the day were open to all comers. The proscrip himself was of the

¹ *La vérité dévoilée par le temps ou le vrai dénonciateur du général Pichegru signalé.*

² *Dénonciation au roi et à l'opinion publique d'iniquités et d'attentats commis sous le préfet de police Dubois.*

LEBLANC

opinion that in stopping there any longer he would compromise his hosts without any advantage to himself, so Treille undertook to find him a safer refuge. He consulted with Leblanc, who very cordially placed his rooms at Pichegru's disposal, it being agreed that the general should go there at nightfall. The day went by without any alarm. These people took their parts in the tragedy which was being enacted with extraordinary unconcern, apparently never suspecting that they were playing with their lives, and that the entire police of the Republic were lying in wait for the man whom they entertained again and again with disconcerting tranquillity.

On the 27th, on sitting down at Treille's table, Leblanc warmly thanked Pichegru for the honour which he did him in accepting his room, but made an excuse for its lack of comfort, though he assured him it was a safe hiding-place. As on the previous evening, the conversation was unconstrained, and Leblanc appeared happy and even amused at being mixed up in the adventure.

What happened in this man's heart as he sat at dinner? We know nothing of his antecedents nor of his financial position, and consequently nothing as to his morality. The papers which undoubtedly contained these particulars have disappeared from the Archives, and in the enormous mass of documents relating to the case of Georges and his accomplices, his name is not once mentioned. We know, however, that in the middle of dinner on the evening in question, his cheerfulness gave place to very visible anxiety. Questioned as to his trouble, he alleged that he had an urgent piece of business on his mind—an interrupted sale which he was anxious to conclude, so, making his excuses, he hastily left the company.¹ From that moment he was criminal. Hurrying to the house of General Murat, the Governor of Paris, he asked to speak to him. His intention was to inform him that Pichegru was going to sleep under his roof that very night, and to fix the price of his treachery—100,000 francs. But Murat was absent or could not receive him. Leblanc, unwilling to confide his secret to anyone else, stated that he

¹ *La vérité dévoilée par le temps . . .*

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

would return in the course of the evening. Hurrying back to Treille's, where the family and Pichegru were still at table, Leblanc resumed his seat, stating that the transaction which had been worrying him was now happily completed. He had quite recovered his good spirits, and the evening was passed in pleasant conversation. About nine o'clock they all rose from the table, and, like people who are happy to prolong a familiar gathering, decided to accompany Pichegru to his new residence. Treille, his wife, and even Mlle. de Caux, were of the party. By way of the Rue Colbert, passing under the massive arcade of the Bibliothèque, they reached the Rue Richelieu. When the Opéra was closed, as was the case that evening, the vicinity of the theatre was ill lit and deserted. But who, however, would have suspected a group of people, including a woman and a girl, chatting freely as they walked along?

The Rue Chabanais, towards which the little party directed its steps, did not continue to the Rue Rameau, as it does to-day. It commenced at the Rue des Petits-Champs, meeting in its path a high building, now pulled down, and continuing at right angles, by way of the street now called the Rue Cherubini, until it reached the Rue Sainte-Anne. It consisted, properly speaking, of two blind alleys, meeting at right-angles, and the open space at their juncture, surrounded by enormous seven-story buildings, pierced by innumerable little windows, was extremely dark and solitary.

That was where Leblanc lived. The house in which he had his small apartment was No. 39—now No. 11. The courtyard, common to two buildings, has certainly not changed during the last hundred years: it is a sort of well, gloomy in appearance, from the semi-obscurity of which, in the finest summer days, arises the stagnant odour of a cellar.

Leblanc mounted the staircase, followed by Pichegru and Treille, who expressed a wish to "install" the General. A little ceremony was displayed on both sides when it was discovered that the room contained only one bed; but Leblanc cut it short by saying that he would sleep at a friend's house. He commended his guest to his servant as one of Treille's

LEBLANC

relatives, who had come to Paris on business, and, after Pichegru had warmly shaken hands all round, wished him good-night. The door was then carefully locked and the key handed to the servant, who slept on the upper floor, with final orders that "the gentleman" was to receive every attention on waking the next morning. Leblanc descended with the Treille family and they separated in the street. Before parting, however, Mlle. de Caux, greatly moved, threw her arms round Leblanc's neck, and, "with tears in her eyes," exclaimed :

"Oh! guard well this treasure which friendship has confided to your keeping! God will bless you, and man—some day, perhaps France herself—will be grateful to you!"¹

I should not like to affirm that this young lady expressed herself in such noble terms; but such were the words which were reported to the Prefect of Police, and I have taken care to record them accurately.

Whilst his friends quietly returned to the Rue Vivienne, Leblanc directed his steps towards the Rue des Petits-Champs.

Ah! if only it were possible to follow the progress through the streets of this man who, in cold blood, was about to commit the most cowardly of acts! What was the subject of his thoughts? Doubtless the money he was going to receive. Or did he try to exonerate himself by imagining that he was saving France? Did a feeling of anguish grip him by the throat when he entered the porch of the house of the Governor of Paris? How did he support the inevitable waiting in the ante-rooms, and what pretext did he give for wishing to see the Governor at so late an hour? Then, in what tone did he speak when in Murat's presence? Had he the audacity to "fix his price"? And in what manner was he listened to? There we have the elements of the drama, but one which will never be known. All we know is that at one o'clock in the morning everything was arranged, and Leblanc left the Governor's headquarters accompanied by Commissary Comminges, a few policemen and six gendarmes

¹ *Dénonciation au roi et à l'opinion publique . . .*

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

commanded by Lieutenant Noireau and Quartermaster Gillet.¹

On this little body of men reaching the turning in the Rue Chabonais, Leblanc knocked at the door of his house, and, on it opening, stealthily mounted the staircase followed by the men. He left the gendarmes on the landing outside his apartment, and, ascending a floor higher, awakened the servant, who, hastily putting on a petticoat, appeared with a candle in her hand.

“The key,” said Leblanc. “Give me my key!”

The affrighted girl obeyed, and mechanically descended with her master. On seeing the motionless, sinister silhouettes of the police drawn up on the staircase she nearly fainted. Comminges took the key, listened for a few seconds, and then, hearing no sound in the room, rapidly unlocked the door. But it was barricaded by a chest of drawers. At a sign, the men rushed forward and burst it open, and a confused hand-to-hand fight immediately commenced. Pichegru was not asleep, he was reading in bed, and at the first alarm he rushed to his pistols. But one of the gendarmes reached him and overturned the table on which the light was standing, whereupon a furious struggle took place in the dark. The policemen hurled themselves on the naked colossus, but could only succeed in getting hold of him by chance; they stumbled over furniture and were crushed by blows from his huge fists in their wild endeavour to seize his legs and throw him on to the floor. This pugilistic encounter, interspersed with oaths, engaged in a small bedroom, in the dim light of a flickering candle held by the servant-girl,² who had remained on the landing with Leblanc (who was doubtless afraid to enter the room), was a terrifying scene. The house was awakened and in the half-opened doors appeared the astonished faces of people aroused from their sleep. . .

The fight lasted for more than a quarter of an hour. At last one of the men brutally seized hold of the general's

¹ National Archives, F⁷ 6393.

² In the Cabinet des Estampes at the National Library is a somewhat rude but, from a documentary point of view, very precious engraving of the period, representing Pichegru's arrest.

LEBLANC

abdomen, and, under the excruciating pain, he fell with a groan. In an instant they were upon him, and, smothered under bed-clothes, had bound him hand and foot. . . . The deed was done and Leblanc had earned 100,000 francs.

An inquisitive crowd, concerned by the presentiment that some great drama was being enacted, had collected in the street. The gendarmes were hustled when they appeared on the threshold of the house, but the disturbance was quickly repressed. The police were then seen to come out carrying with great effort an enormous bundle of linen from which protruded two bruised feet. Pichegru, tightly rolled in his sheets, was in this way carried to the Chief Justice's house on the Place Vendôme, and thence to police headquarters in the Rue des Saints-Pères. Still bound, he was placed on the carpet in Réal's office, and on the covering being removed a swollen and apoplectic face, with closed eyes and clenched teeth, appeared to view.

Legal formalities having been carried out, Pichegru was placed on a stretcher and carried across the city to the Temple. Escorted by twenty gendarmes, this litter, on which was stretched a white form momentarily convulsed by a last outburst of revolt, must have been a tragic sight for the rare foot-passengers at that late hour.

At three o'clock in the morning, Réal received the following bulletin: "Report of the concierge of the Temple. Night of the 8th to 9th of Ventôse, Year XII. General Pichegru has been brought to this prison, placed in close confinement, and is under strict surveillance. He is calm."¹

At the same hour, Comminges and his men knocked at Treille's door in the Rue Vivienne, invaded the apartment, broke open the drawers, examined the cupboards, and searched even in the bed in which Mlle. de Caux was lying. Treille, his wife, and step-daughter were dragged off to prison, where they were put through an examination, threatened, and finally made to sign a declaration, which, trembling with fear, they were too agitated to read. They were then set at liberty. What did this statement contain?

¹ National Archives, F⁷ 6391.

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

No one knows, for Treille's *dossier*, like that of Leblanc, has disappeared from the Archives. "It merely mentions 'gendarmes ordered to arrest a man and two women living in the Rue Vivienne and accused of complicity.'"¹

On the following day the *Journal de Paris* published an official note stating that a person named Treille, after procuring a hiding-place for Pichegru at the residence of his friend Leblanc, had denounced the general to the Chief Justice's agents. "Leblanc," added the newspaper, "is at present in flight and is being actively sought for." Such was the ingenious method which the traitor adopted to save his honour. He alone was in a position to disclose Treille's name. The unfortunate man remained exposed to this odious accusation for ten years; no paper dared to insert his protest; and it was not until after the Empire that he was able to exonerate himself.

As to Leblanc, he was by no means "in flight." He received his 100,000 francs on March 1st, and on the very same day dared to show his face at the Bourse. But as he was hooted he abstained from reappearing there. He remained, however, in Paris, and so deadened was his conscience that, on Pichegru committing suicide in the Temple, he asked for the Cross of the Legion of Honour.² The reply to this was an order to leave France immediately. He lived for some time at Hamburg under a false name;³ then went to Lyons, where he started business again; and in 1814 we find him at Saint-Jean de Maurienne "engaged in a not very honourable calling," probably that of a police-spy. I have not been able to discover for certain what his end was. However, among the secret agents who were engaged in spying upon officers of the staff at the time of the first Restoration there was a certain Leblanc who seems to me to be the man who betrayed Pichegru. He excelled as an *agent provocateur*. "He wears a moustache," says a police note, "and often decorates his buttonhole with a red ribbon so as better to deceive those with whom he comes into

¹ F⁷ 6393.

² *Mémoires de Bourrienne.*

³ *Recherches historiques sur . . . le duc d'Enghien.* By Nougarede de Fayet.

LEBLANC

contact." In consequence of a libellous report on an officer whom he attempted to blackmail, this Leblanc was dismissed. It is believed that he went to Spain and died there.¹

This tragedy had a terrible sequel.

In 1815, the political weathercock having veered round, Pichegru's memory was honoured as that of a hero. It was even decided to erect a statue to him. This, as must be confessed, was a rather fictitious renewal of glory, but, at the same time, the change in public opinion marked a very sincere revival of disgust for the betrayer.

Now, at that time, there lived at Clermont-Ferrand—this was after the disbanding of the Imperial army—a lieutenant in the 2nd regiment of mounted Chasseurs named Antoine Leblanc. He was a Knight of the Legion of Honour. Someone declared that he was the son of the man who had sold Pichegru, and the rumour gained credit. It was further stated that, as his regiment was crossing Paris on June 29th, 1815, after Waterloo, he had killed with his sword, on the Boulevard Poissonnière, a locksmith named Rainfray, who, on seeing Bonaparte's conquered soldiers pass by, had unfortunately shouted "Long live the King!"

A writ was issued against Antoine Leblanc, and the police sent to arrest him brutally ill-treated him—just as others, twelve years before, had ill-treated Pichegru. They pleaded "that the son should be made to expiate the crime of the father." Handed on from brigade to brigade, with the information that he was the "son of the man who sold brave Pichegru to Bonaparte," Antoine Leblanc's journey to Paris was a perfect martyrdom. Crowds collected in the towns through which he passed and hooted him. Falling ill at Moulins, a chemist, to which the gendarmery applied for a remedy, attempted to poison him to avenge the conqueror of Holland! The unfortunate man remained for a month hovering between life and death. Finally he reached Paris, was taken to the Abbaye prison, and brought up for trial. The locksmith Rainfray, who was still living, appeared in court, but could not identify the prisoner as the man who had wounded him.

¹ *La police dévoilée*, by Froment.

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

Nevertheless, Leblanc was sentenced to be put into irons for life.

He was degraded, in the presence of the troops of the Paris army, on the Place Vendôme, at the foot of the column on which the white flag had replaced Napoleon's statue. Awaiting the departure of the convicts, he was then sent to Bicêtre. September 3rd, 1816, had been fixed as the date on which he was to be "ironed"; but he obtained a reprieve. Louis XVIII., moved by his sufferings, asked for the papers relating to the case, and on January 30th, 1817, Leblanc was informed that the King had commuted his penalty into one of five years' imprisonment. A few months later he was definitely pardoned.

Then only was he free to speak. On three occasions he published a *mémoire*¹ which is one continuous cry of despair, a truly eloquent appeal for pity. He solemnly declared that the only thing he had in common with "the individual whose hands were formerly soiled by the price of blood" was his name, and that his father, "a venerable octogenarian, covered with wounds received in the defence of his country, had never seen or known General Pichegru." A controversy on this subject was waged between the *Minerve* and the *Journal de Paris*. However, there remained a doubt. If the "venerable octogenarian" was really the man who sold Pichegru, he assuredly concealed his odious celebrity from his son, as from others. The documents have disappeared from the Archives and the problem cannot for the moment be solved.

The by-paths of French history abound in such insolvable enigmas. The case of Antoine Leblanc was, however, worth relating. It was the revenge for the night of February 28th, 1804—a blind, cruel, and unjustifiable revenge; but can we not imagine what Pichegru's betrayer must have thought, if he were still living and the facts came to his knowledge, when, after so many years, he saw his crime rebound on an innocent man, and thereby, perhaps, became conscious of the horror which his ignominy inspired?

¹ *Mémoire pour A. Leblanc (de Besançon, Doubs), Chevalier de la légion d'honneur, lieutenant au 2^e Bataillon du 2^e régiment de Chasseurs à Cheval de l'ex-garde impériale, 1824.*

SAINT-JUST AT BLÉRANCOURT

AT the first turning of the road from Noyon, which stretches as straight as a dart for more than six miles, you enter Blérancourt, a quiet and well-to-do French village. Here and there you meet open barns, or obtain glimpses through gates of flowery gardens, and the air is redolent of stables. As you advance the village becomes almost a town. The Soissons road, descending a hill, meets a triumphal arch, a vestige of the manorial residence of the Marquesses of Gesvres. The market, the *café*, and some shops cluster together in the centre of the village, near the Mairie. Large waggons are standing outside the inn. Then the houses spread out, the country starts again, and the road continues towards Coucy through level fields intersected by hedges.

At the end of 1776 there settled in this village, then very similar to what it is to-day, a certain M. de Saint-Just, the native of a neighbouring village, which he had left in his youth to enlist in the gendarmery. Military life had kept him away from the district for a very long time. He had married at Cusset,¹ and a son had been born to him at Verneuil, near Decize,² where he was in garrison.

¹ "On May 10th, 1766, the marriage was celebrated of *Messire Jean de Saint Just de Richebourg, écuyer*, knight of the royal and military order of Saint Louis, cavalry captain, quarter-master in the De Berry company of gendarmes, son of the late Maître Charles de Saint-Just, burgher, and the late Dame Marie François Adam, of the town of Namplesse in Picardy, in the diocese of Soissons, at present quartered in the town of Cusset, in the Auvergne; and *Demoiselle Marie Anne Bobinot*, daughter of Maître Léonard Bobinot, king's councillor, chief of the salt-house of the town of Decize, and the late Dame Houdry of this parish . . ."

² "*Parish of Verneuil*. August 25th, 1767, baptism of Louis Antoine, born to-day, legitimate son of Messire Louis Jean de Saint-Just de Richebourg, knight of the royal and military order of Saint Louis . . . and Dame Jeanne Marie Bobinot. His godfather is Jean Antoine Bobinot, curé of Verneuil, and his godmother, Dame Françoise Ravard, who herewith signed their names . . ."

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

As promotion was slow in coming, he became discouraged, sent in his resignation and returned to his native district. His father's recent death at Nampcelle, near Noyon, left vacant the post of land-steward to M. de Buat, lord of Morsain, Richebourg, Evry, and other places. The ex-gendarme inherited this modest position, which accorded with his tastes, and he retained it for eight years. Tired of the work, and having saved a little money, he purchased a house, situated at the far end of Blérancourt, near the fields, at the corner of the Rue aux Chouettes, from a grocer named Lefebvre, and removed there with his wife, who was twenty years his junior, his son, and his two little girls.¹

M. de Saint-Just immediately became a man of importance in this village of agriculturists. His position as a former officer in the army, his ribbon of Saint Louis,² and his small income gave him a certain weight. He had a long serious face with a huge nose, spoke but little, never laughed, and spent his days either attending to his kitchen garden, or reading, seated under a hornbeam hedge planted along the border of a streamlet which bounded his property. He did not, however, long enjoy this quiet life; for he died on September 8th, 1777, less than a year after his arrival at Blérancourt.³

His son was then ten years of age. Freed from his father's severe tutelage, this insubordinate and hot-headed boy in future did exactly as he liked, spending his time in galloping about the streets in command of bands of village boys. Some people were amused and others exasperated by his audacity, but all were agreed in recognising that Mme. de Saint-Just, "would have a good deal of trouble with that boy." The poor woman was a gentle, passive, and rather inactive creature. Moreover, out of her element in Bléran-

¹ Louise Marie Anne Saint-Just, born at Nampcelle (Aisne) September 12th, 1768, and Marie Françoise Victoire Saint-Just, also born at Nampcelle. November 10th, 1769.

² He was decorated on May 28th, 1762 (Archives of the Ministry of War).

³ He was born at Morsain (Aisne) on November 8th, 1715. His father, as I have already said, was land-steward to M. du Buat, lord of Richebourg, hence the name which he added to his own in order to distinguish himself from his nine brothers and sisters.



MONSIEUR DE SAINT-JUST PÈRE.

(From a portrait in the possession of the family of the former member of the Convention.)

SAINT-JUST AT BLÉRANCOURT

court, where she knew nobody, she led a very retired life, straitened in circumstances. Uneasy, however, over her child's love of independence, she made a sacrifice by placing him as a boarder at the Collège Saint-Nicolas, at Soissons, then under the management of Fathers of the Oratory.

The legends concerning him date from that time. His panegyrists have represented him as a school-boy of superior intelligence—dispassionate, reserved, meditative, and already pondering in his mighty brain over the institutions with which he was later to endow his country; whilst his detractors have made him out to be an intractable pupil, who made "impious verses," stirred up a revolt, inflamed the college, and who was once told by one of his masters, before the whole class, that he would become an "illustrious scamp." Both versions are doubtless incorrect, the still living memories of him at Blérancourt enabling us to dispense with all hypotheses.

He returned home in the holidays with the conceit of a townsman who is flattered by a comparison between himself and the "good people" of the country. As he grew older his affectation increased. Having learnt how "to draw heads," he passed at Blérancourt, where artists were not numerous, for being a talented draughtsman; and his paltry rhymes likewise earned him the uncontested reputation for being the best poet in the village. This priority flattered him. He was, moreover, a handsome youth, and knew how to give his regular features an air of impassiveness, which, thanks to his curly, silky hair, made him resemble Antinous, whose head he had seen at the drawing-class. He wore starched cravats in accordance with the latest fashion at Soissons. Finally, he had arranged his name in a manner to make it presentable, calling himself Monsieur le Chevalier Léonard Florelle de Saint-Just de Richebourg. . . . He had made a journey to Paris to learn fine manners, and he gave people to understand that a place was reserved for him in the King's body-guard.

In addition to his cravats and pedantic air, he brought back from the town a taste for debauchery. He hinted that "great ladies" had readily undertaken his education in the

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

art of love, and this procured him much success amongst the women of Blérancourt. But he showed such little discretion when profiting by their precepts that the village was soon ringing with complaints. Fathers and husbands did not know how to guard their households against his amorous enterprises.

Weak Mme. de Saint-Just listened to these complaints and moaned. What else could she do? She adored her spoiled child and considered it quite natural that he was irresistible.

There then lived at Blérancourt a rich tabellion, named Me. Louis Antoine Gellé, royal notary to the bailiwick of Coucy-le-Château, who had a daughter, a fair, freckled, and sturdy girl. Louise Sygrade Gellé, who was older than Saint-Just, was only moderately good-looking; but her dowry, on the other hand, was most tempting. Suitors were numerous, so the father kept a sharp eye on his daughter. However, the baptism of the child of a Blérancourt leather-dresser furnished Saint-Just with the opportunity for which he had been waiting. Appointed to act as god-father, he chose Mlle. Gellé as his fellow-godmother, paid his addresses to her, and so dazzled the poor girl, who was unable to resist the passion which she thought she had inspired, that she became his mistress. In the presence of this fact, the "Chevalier" hoped that his extreme youth, lack of fortune, and the age of his "conquest" could no longer be objections to their marriage. But he was greatly mistaken. Another was to be the victor in the tournament in which the prize was the notary's fortune and office, and on July 25th, 1786, Mlle. Gellé was married to M. François Thorin, son of the registrar of the canton. There is a unanimous tradition in the district, however, that this marriage did not put an end to the idyl, and that Mme. Thorin was no less tender towards Saint-Just than Mlle. Gellé had been.¹

¹ "The existence of these relations appears to be undeniable, although they are contested by M. Ernest Hamel. Tradition affirms them so energetically at Blérancourt that it would be impossible to find a single divergent opinion, and the surviving members of the Saint-Just family have themselves no difficulty in supporting the general testimony."

Saint-Just et Mme. Thorin, L. Abel-Patoux (Saint Quentin, 1878).

SAINT-JUST AT BLÉRANCOURT

This time there was a great scandal—so great that Mme. de Saint-Just, anxious over the consequences of the intrigue, thought it best to send her son to Paris for a little while. He therefore left Blérancourt. Before a fortnight had elapsed, however, he was back home again, declaring that he was a changed man and truly repentant, and the poor mother was too overjoyed at the return of her prodigal son not to credit his good resolutions.

One morning—it was on September 15th, 1786—Saint-Just did not appear at breakfast at the usual hour. His mother went to his bedroom, but found that it was empty and had not been slept in overnight. Going through the house in a very uneasy state of mind, she suddenly uttered a cry on discovering that the cupboard in which she kept her silver had been broken open. The few precious articles which she preserved had disappeared: a silver porringer marked with her monogram, a silver-gilt drinking-cup which had belonged to her uncle, the Curé of Verneuil, and three silver cups. . . . Softly weeping, for she feared to let the terrible suspicion which haunted her be seen, she visited her other cupboards. . . . Alas! her unworthy son had taken everything: two gold-mounted pistols, some packets of silver braid which had been on his father's old uniforms, even a ring set with a rose-diamond, and some small silver articles without any other value than the family memories which they recalled.¹

On the following day, Saint-Just arrived in Paris, took a room at the small Hôtel Saint-Louis in the Rue Fromenteau, and sold the stolen articles to a Jew, in a *café*, for 200 francs. But at the end of three days not a farthing was left. Somewhat abashed and not knowing which way to turn, he sent his mother a long letter in which he attributed his disgraceful action to a feeling of delicacy. "His blood had been *burnt up by study*" and had brought on a very dangerous headache, so he had gone to Paris to consult a famous specialist. The fee "amounted to 200 francs," and in order not to alarm his mother by revealing his curious

¹ On the subject of this dishonourable escapade of the future member of the Convention—an escapade which Edouard Fleury has doubted and Ernest Hamel has energetically denied—see M. A. Bégis' pamphlet, *Saint-Just, son emprisonnement sous Louis XVI.* . . . Paris, 1892.

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

malady he had taken what he needed to pay the doctor. He assured her that, seized with remorse, he had wanted to take Orders, but that the priests had received him very badly. Penniless and in despair, he was on the point of walking to Calais to embark on board ship, although he knew very well that "the voyage would inflame his blood still more, and that he would die *en route*. . . ."

The trick was somewhat too apparent, and this time Mme. de Saint-Just did not allow herself to be deceived. Great as was the "Chevalier's" surprise at not receiving from Blérancourt the pardon and money he had anticipated, it was nothing compared to his astonishment when a police-officer called at the Hôtel Saint-Louis, seized him by the collar, and led him off to a M. Chenon, commissary at the Châtelet and Royal Censor. At the request of Mme. de Saint-Just, the official had the young scamp shut up in a *maison de santé* in the Faubourg Saint-Antoine—that strange, fine old house, now abandoned, the high windows with strong bars and ruined terraces of which can still be seen, behind thick walls, at the corner of the Boulevard Diderot and the Rue Picpus.

It was there that Saint-Just wrote *Organt*, an erotic composition evidently inspired by his pretension to imitate Voltaire's playful tales. Taine called *Organt* a filthy work, and the estimate is correct. But the absolute banality of this crude production is much more disconcerting than its obscenity. There is not a piquant saying or a flash of wit in all its twenty cantos! *Organt* was not a solution: the future remained threatening for Saint-Just, and his mother, disconsolate and ill, deprived herself in order to pay for his maintenance. She daily learnt of some fresh piece of folly, as, for instance, that he had sold his entire wardrobe; and she spent part of her time in making shirts for him, asking that only two at a time should be given to him "for fear," she wrote, "he sold the others."

At last, on March 30th, 1787, he came out of prison. Me. Dubois-Descharmes, Procurator at Soissons, offered to take him into his office as second clerk, undertaking to board and lodge him for an annual payment of 500 francs. Saint-Just,

SAINT-JUST AT BLÉRANCOURT

by no means mastered, but embittered and overflowing with hatred, returned home. Unless I am mistaken, he remained but a few hours at Blérancourt, leaving immediately for Soissons, where, however, he did not stop very long. The Revolution was breaking out, and the turbulent schoolboy threw himself into the movement with the audacity of a man who had never doubted his own superiority.

Ah! what stirring times were then experienced in Blérancourt!

Saint-Just was more than ever the cock of the village, and obtained the support of all envious people. "Three shouting women," said the old Marquise de Créquy, "make more noise than a hundred thousand silent men." There we have the secret of many revolutions.

During the entire duration of the Constituent Assembly, Saint-Just speechified on the squares of Chauny, Coucy, and Soissons. He frequented the clubs, mounted platforms, and spoke of his conscience, his soul, "which was steeped in liberty," "the strictness of his mission," and "the noble illusion of virtue." He assured his listeners that he "was on the watch for heroic examples in order to profit by them," and that his desire was "to avenge humanity and the poor." Phrases from Mably and Machiavelli, culled from the newspapers which he received, flowed appropriately from his lips. The good people of Blérancourt and Chauny listened to him open-mouthed, and fell into ecstasies over his learning! The young demagogue quickly gained a great reputation. He displayed particular care in arranging his stage-effects. One day, for instance, when the inhabitants of Blérancourt had assembled on the village square to burn a counter-revolutionary document, Saint-Just, recollecting his *De Viris*, rolled up his sleeve and placed his naked arm over the burning paper.¹ Serious people shrugged their shoulders;

¹ M. E. Fleury, Saint-Just's historian, has contested this incident, yet there can be no doubt of its occurrence. Mention is made of it in the Blérancourt municipal register, in the following words:

"The entire meeting, justly indignant at the abominable principles which the enemies of the Revolution seek to circulate among the people, decided that the *declaration* should be torn up and burnt on the spot. This was done there and then, M. de Saint-Just placing his hand over the flames

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

others were astounded; and when it was explained that this strange action was in imitation of a famous Roman named Mucius Scævola, their enthusiasm knew no bounds. Such ancient deeds were fashionable.

Saint-Just had now become a lieutenant-colonel in the Blérancourt national guard and an elector of the department. Rushing hither and thither, haranguing the people, he already pictured himself as the deputy in the coming legislature.

The elections having been fixed to take place between August 25th and September 5th, 1791, voters of the canton met on August 23rd to select candidates. On his name being called out, Saint-Just was about to reply, when a voice shouted: "Saint-Just hasn't the requisite age!" Dumfounded, the candidate turned his eyes towards the objector, and recognised Notary Gellé, the father of Mme. Thorin. Saint-Just's partisans, strong in number, received the lawyer's motion with hoots. But he held his ground and, winning over two honourable electors, a M. Labbé and the surgeon Massy, all three, in spite of hoots and threats, opposed the placing of Saint-Just's name on the register. The meeting, however, took no notice of them. Determined to have his revenge, the notary appealed to the Chauny district and proved, documents in hand, that as Saint-Just was born on August 25th, 1767, he was barely twenty-four on August 23rd, 1791. The result was that the district severely blamed the Blérancourt electors, and forbade Saint-Just to appear at preliminary meetings or exercise the rights of an elector until he had reached the age required by law.

Falling from his pedestal, his rage was extreme, and an entire year of enforced abstention and humiliating retirement only increased it. His position at Blérancourt became intolerable; he was without resources and without credit; and the leading men of the neighbourhood regarded him—the fanatic whose supporters were recruited from amongst the altruists and mischief-makers—with feelings of dread.

However, the Legislative Assembly dissolved, and the

and swearing that he would die for his country and the national assembly, and perish by fire . . . rather than forget his oath." (*Bulletin de la Société historique de Soissons*, 1852.)

SAINT-JUST AT BLÉRANCOURT

electors were again convoked to nominate deputies to the Convention. Voting took place on September 2nd, 1792, in the Saint-Gervais Church at Soissons. Eleven deputies were to be elected. The preliminaries of the ballot lasted two days—two days of anguish for Saint-Just, who was then playing his final card. At last, on September 4th, he was declared to be elected with 349 votes.

On appearing in the enclosure he was greeted with a burst of applause. He advanced dispassionate and thoughtful, overflowing with joy and satisfied pride, and from that moment assumed an air of imperturbable impassiveness. He expressed his gratitude in a tone of feigned modesty, and took the oath, whereupon the bells of the old church immediately pealed forth in honour of the author of *Organt*.

He returned to Blérancourt intoxicated with success. It was in the evening, the village was in a tumult, and a sort of crowd had assembled in front of his house. On the people cheering him, he appeared, briefly thanked them, and distributed a few hand-shakes. . . . This house still exists. The door and one of the windows of the old façade have been walled up, and nettles have overgrown the for-ever-closed threshold from whose two steps—still distinguishable under their growth of weeds—he spoke that evening to his fellow-citizens,—that threshold which he had formerly crossed, on another September night, as he fled from home with his mother's possessions! . . .

Surely stones assimilate something of the lives of the people whom they shelter. Does a sort of fluid which has emanated from them still float, long after they are dead, around the walls within which they have lived? Otherwise, whence the powerful attraction of these things? How is that there, more than anywhere else, we can establish a mysterious communication with the past? At night-fall and in the silence of the deserted street, this house where Saint-Just was brought up, where he suffered, was consumed with anger, and experienced the joys of triumph, attracts and disquiets one. The closed bays give an air of blindness to its decrepit façade, but an opening in the gable enables you to enter what was

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

the dining-room—now turned into a cart-shed. Behind some carts can still be seen, against the wall and on a level with the former flooring, the wooden mantelpiece, painted black, as well as the framework of the pier-glass. Otherwise the house is unchanged. Even the hornbeam hedge at the bottom of the garden, along the border of the streamlet, is still thick and green. People call it “Monsieur Saint-Just’s Alley.”

Among the inhabitants of Blérancourt who made their exodus to Paris in the hope of profiting by the glory of their compatriot was the daughter of Me. Gellé—Mme. Thorin. She still loved Saint-Just, who had become still greater in her eyes owing to the prestige of his political position. Trusting in the vows which they had formerly exchanged—in the days when her dowry was disposable—she believed that he still loved her, so, seized by the spirit of infatuation which turned all heads, she fled from her husband’s house to Paris.

Saint-Just refused to receive her. She persisted, hoping to move her former lover, and put up at the Hôtel des Tuileries, in the Rue Saint-Honoré, near the Convention. But her illusions were soon dispelled. On seeing that she had sacrificed her future, tarnished her honour, and spoilt her life for this man who brutally repulsed her, she wearily turned her steps towards Blérancourt. She returned there at the end of September, 1793, after an absence of two months. Doubtless, when she once more beheld, from afar, the comfortable house whence she had fled and which she did not now dare to enter, she felt a despairing regret at the familiar life which had appeared to her so dull and colourless. . . . With what happiness she would have resumed it, now that disdain had killed her love, and what envious looks she must have cast on her lost paradise! But M. Thorin would not pardon, and demanded a divorce. Recognising that she had committed a fault and must expiate it, she courageously bore her punishment. She settled down in Blérancourt, and lived there in close retirement—proud, speaking to no one, and poor—until her death on January 16th, 1806.

The recollection of all these things has remained alive in

SAINT-JUST AT BLÉRANCOURT

the little village of Blérancourt, where, doubtless, similar events have never since occurred. The adventures of the handsome Proconsul and the daughter of Notary Gellé form the chronicle of the place, a chronicle which, though it is repeated over and over again, is ever new to the narrators and always indulgent towards the characters.

Saint-Just's sisters lived for a long time at Blérancourt,¹ and the memory of the member of the Convention has benefited by the dignity of their lives. But do the people there know his real character? They seem intentionally to close their eyes to his "errors"; he is the hero of the place; and it appeared to me that they love him and are proud of him. The severest critics consider that "Paris and bad acquaintances" ruined this too hot-headed and over-credulous youth. Robespierre, I was told, was the cause of everything.

I spent a few precious hours at the house of the great-niece of the member of the Convention, a lady who is honoured and loved by everyone. On one of the walls are some souvenirs of him: on a shelf a prize volume which he won at Soissons; a head of Antinous drawn by himself; and his portrait in pastel, representing him with a high cravat, powdered hair, and a sad, dreamy look in his eyes.

"Poor uncle Antoine!" exclaimed Mme. X——, as she showed me these family relics. By "pauvre oncle Antoine" she meant Saint-Just . . . ; and these words, falling from the lips of this gentle and venerable woman, appeared to me to be an absolution.

¹ Mme. de Saint-Just survived her son. In the municipal register, opposite the date 24 Brumaire, Year III., reference is made to the delivery by the Committee "of three keys coming from Citoyenne *veuve* Saint-Just's after seals were affixed at her house." As to her daughter, the elder was married twice: first to Adrien Bayard, Justice of the Peace at Chaulnes, and then to Emmanuel François André Decaisne; the younger married Jean Michel Nicaise de Lassières.

M. LE COMTE DE FOLMON

DURING the closing years of the reign of Louis XV. there lived in Paris a strange personage who, invariably dressed in a black velvet coat and hat pulled down over his forehead, was fond of following certain promenaders in the Tuileries and on the boulevard, and mumbling in their ears predictions of their future. It was in this way that he predicted to the future Mme. du Barry her elevation and tragic death. He also appeared to the Comtesse d'Adhémar and related to her the full details of the catastrophes which were about to overcome the French Court. It may even be pointed out on this occasion, that if so many noblemen allowed themselves to be guillotined during the Revolution, it was certainly not through surprise or for want of warning; for the Terror was no sooner over than a multitude of writers, headed by La Harpe, hastened to declare in print that they had long predicted it, and that everything had happened as they had foretold and described in detail.

The man in black velvet figures very often in the apocryphal memoirs which abounded at the time of the Restoration—indeed, he appears nowhere else—which leads one to think that he existed only in the imagination of a Comte de Courchamps or of a Marquis de la Motte-Langon. In any case, it is very regrettable that he was not in the courtyard of the coach-office on a certain day in September 1792 when an honest professor of law named Rouzet, who had been elected by his compatriots as a member of the Convention, got down from the Toulouse stage-coach.

Rouzet arrived in Paris full of illusions in regard to the men and things of the Revolution, which he knew as yet only

M. LE COMTE DE FOLMON

in its agreeable and sincere aspect. As he belonged to an old and much esteemed family of Quercy, his fellow-citizens had appointed him procurator-syndic of the Commune of Toulouse, a post which he had filled to their general satisfaction. He was a perfect model of an upper-class citizen of the old *régime* : liberal-minded, somewhat censorious, voluble, a great reader, marvellously crammed with Latin, and possessed by only one passion—a passion for a parliamentary *régime* and the English Constitution.

That is why it would have been extremely lucky for him if, on first setting foot in Paris, he had met an honest fortune-teller to prognosticate what was in store for him. “Listen, Rouzet !” he might have been heard to say. “You are about to realise your dream of sitting in the French Parliament—the reward of fifty years’ study and virtue ; and you will not have been there more than two months before you are convinced that the famous galley in which the son of Gerontius so unluckily ventured was, in comparison, a bed of roses. As you are a wise man and your profession of faith, for others as well as for yourself, is summed up in the words *liberty in order and order in liberty*, you will be scoffed at, vilified, stigmatised, driven forth, imprisoned, and cursed, and the guillotine will put you in its larder with seventy-two other troublesome persons of your stamp. Having come from your province to establish an austere Republic on the lines of those of Greece and Rome, you will return hidden under the petticoats of a princess to whom you will devote your life. And after your death, alone of all the children of men who have not been born on the steps of the throne, you will repose in the royal vault, restored to receive your remains.”

We can imagine the air of profound disdain with which M. Rouzet, who possessed a methodical and well-balanced mind, would have received such an extravagant discourse. This serious juriconsult did not appear destined to experience romantic adventures ; but the Revolution was so fruitful in them, that there was enough for everybody, and as we shall see, Rouzet had his share.

Whoever did not belong to the “dominant party” had a

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

bad time at the Convention. He had to keep silence and vote, or submit to the invectives and hoots of the purists of the Mountain. A brazen-faced chatterbox, if only he had strong lungs, could give himself the pleasure of astonishing learned men by his assurance, and ignorant ones by his knowledge; but laborious moderates were unable to obtain a hearing in the tribune. Reduced to idleness and silence, their only diversion, as common as it was lugubrious, was to cross the Tuileries gardens and, at the execution hour, reach the place where the guillotine was erected, in order "to familiarise themselves with death." Dulaure, Rouzet's colleague and political friend, tells how he used to go to the foot of the scaffold to take lessons in deportment in the presence of death, and "to saturate himself with the sensations which those who were about to be beheaded must experience!" It was, however, lost labour; for he himself confesses that he failed in his object.

Rouzet, who had not voted in January for the death of the King, signed, in June, the protest against the arrest of the Girondins, an act of impenitent independence which caused him to be outlawed.

At the close of the cruel sitting of October 3rd, at which Amar read to the Convention the long list of deputies who were to be handed over to the revolutionary tribunal because of their Girondist sympathies, Rouzet, whose name was given a good place in that funereal document, left the assembly and quietly went home. He lived at the Hôtel de Virginie, in the Rue Saint-Honoré, which was kept by one of his compatriots named Foughasse. Without undue haste, he packed his trunk, ordered his servant to place it on his shoulder, and handing the key of his room to Mme. Nolin, the doorkeeper of the house, informed her that he was going to be absent from home. Two days later, when a police officer came to arrest him, he had to be content with affixing seals on empty drawers and cupboards.¹

Rouzet succeeded in escaping arrest for nearly six months; but on May 18th, 1794, Héron, the savage factotum of the Committee of General Safety, who was everlastingly

¹ National Archives, F7, Dossier Rouzet.

M. LE COMTE DE FOLMON

thinking of denouncing suspected persons, met him by chance in a street in the Marais quarter and seized him by the collar. An hour later the Deputy was shut up in the Carmes prison in the Rue de Vaugirard. Unhappy times had begun.

The prison—or, as it was called, the Carmes barracks—was full to overflowing. Rouzet was first of all placed in a small room “crammed with twenty-two beds.” After a few days he was given a small bedroom in the attic, where, at least, he was alone, and, seated on his pallet, could write. He there addressed to the Convention a series of letters, the easy temper of which showed complete ignorance of the political situation. The Terror was at its height, and the Committee of Public Safety, which received these epistles, held the knife over the heads of the “seventy-three,” whose only hope of salvation lay in their being forgotten. But Rouzet never ceased informing his “dear colleagues” of his little infirmities. One day he confided to them that he was suffering greatly from inflammation of the eyes. A few days later he described his rheumatism and complained of the sharp draughts from his window. He stated “that he had served in the 1756 war both on sea and land”—he was then fourteen years of age—“and that Republican frugality had been his lot since childhood”; but really the Carmes barracks were most uncomfortable, and he expressed a wish “to go to Dax or Bagnères for the baths.” However, he did not wish them to be unduly anxious over his condition. “Fortunately, I have never abused my constitution, and having always conducted myself in such a manner as never to require, all my life, even a cup of herb-tea, I may hope that a regimen and the prosperity of my country will somewhat restore my strength.”¹

His “dear colleagues” were Robespierre, Billaud, Saint-Just, Collot, and Couthon, and one can hardly imagine what they could think of this calm man who, at a time when the heads of so many prisoners were falling, tranquilly put forth the idea of going “to Dax or Bagnères for the baths,” whichever they might choose.

¹ From the prison of the Rue de Vaugirard. (National Archives, F⁷, Dossier Rouzet.)

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

On the advent of the 9th of Thermidor, Rouzet, in lieu of a more distant country residence, obtained permission to be transferred to Dr. Belhomme's house at Charonne¹—the Eden of which, as of a place of refuge, the ten thousand prisoners huddled in the Paris prisons dreamed.

The owner of this establishment occupied himself neither with medicine nor with politics. Connected with some of the powerful men of the day, he had used his influence in obtaining tacit protection for his house; the prisoners confided to him, under the pretext of re-establishing their healths, were assured—as long as they paid—against falling into the clutches of Fouquier-Tinville. His boarders were hardly watched over, and nothing would have been easier than escape; but, as you may well imagine, not one of them ever dreamed of attempting it.

Among the inmates were Talleyrand-Perigords, Gramonts, Rochecouarts, and Nicolaïs. This noble company was amused by the prettiest actresses of the Théâtre-Français, Mlles. Lange and Mézeray,² who, even in captivity, had their opulent admirers. Every evening numerous carriages stood outside the door of the Belhomme prison. Inside there was acting, music, and laughter. At the end of each month, however, accounts were settled and the rate of payment for the next month decided upon, and the prisoners then came into Belhomme's office to bargain over their cost of living. It was curious to hear the gaoler transacting business with great ladies.

"Really, Monsieur de Belhomme," said the Duchesse du Châtelet to him on one occasion, "you are unreasonable, and, to my deep regret, it is impossible for me to satisfy you."

"Come, my beauty," replied Belhomme, "be a good girl! I'll knock off a quarter."

But even at that price the Duchesse du Châtelet was unable to pay for her board. She and her friend the Duchesse de Gramont had to leave the establishment, and, a few days afterwards, died on the scaffold. This tragedy

¹ Archives of the Prefecture of Police.

² Gaol-book of the Maison Belhomme. (Archives of the Prefecture of Police.)

M. LE COMTE DE FOLMON

caused great consternation at Belhomme's. He himself was affected by it, though at the same time he remarked, so that it might serve as an example, "that these ladies were victims of misplaced economy."¹

For a long time and most carefully I searched in the Archives and on old plans of Paris for a precise indication of the site which this strange prison occupied in the Charonne district. But neither police documents nor the most detailed topographies furnished me with any information on this special point, and I had abandoned the inquiry—much to my vexation, for nothing is so interesting as knowing how things were—when one day, chancing to walk down the Rue de Charonne, my eyes lighted upon a high Louis XVI. gateway ornamented with a marble tablet, on which were very legibly engraved the words "*Maison de santé du Dr. Belhomme.*" Somewhat abashed, I thought of the hours which I had stupidly wasted in searching for a piece of information which, for a hundred and twenty years, has so ostensibly solicited the attention of passers by. But does not chance play a great part in all discoveries? This particular discovery was all the more precious, as the building has remained unchanged since the happy days which were spent in it at the time of the Terror. There is the same courtyard, and the original small adjacent houses, built in the discreet and pleasant manner of the dependences of Trianon. Close by is the old Hôtel Chabonais, which Belhomme turned into an annex when "his business" extended, and the garden, as spacious and quiet as a park, still surrounds the two buildings. Alone among the forty prisons of the Revolution has this one remained standing, as though the fact of it having been the sole refuge for pleasures and tender adventures, at a time when tears and blood flowed in profusion, had gained for it the absolution of posterity.

Belhomme's gaol-book itself escaped during the destruction of the archives of the Prefecture of Police. It contains the name of "Citoyen Rouzet, deputy, who entered on the 4th of Vendémiaire, coming from the Carmes barracks"; and on the

¹ *Portraits de famille*, by A de Saint-Aulaire.

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

preceding page can be read that of "Citoyenne Marie Louise Adélaïde Penthievre, who entered on the 28th of Fructidor."

Citoyenne Penthievre was none other than the Duchesse d'Orléans, widow of Philippe-Égalité and mother of three young princes the eldest of whom was to become King Louis Philippe. Although she was over forty at that time, she was still the most charming and agreeable of women. One fact will suffice to show her almost angelic purity. She daily recited the Holy Office, "in case," she naïvely declared, "my poor husband, who, as a Knight of the Order, is under an obligation to say it, should sometimes forget." God alone knows if he often "forgot" it! The princess, who, poor woman! had had such little joy in life, was very happy in prison. Besides, in the conduct of life she showed that sort of resigned cheerfulness of which good-hearted people have the sole secret.

After the Hades of the Rue de Vaugirard, it was like entering Paradise to Rouzet to cross the threshold of Belhomme's establishment. The house was spotlessly clean; the garden was already wrapped in autumnal melancholy; and the table was spread "with profusion and delicacy." The inmates met at twilight in an elegantly furnished drawing-room, provided with gaming-tables, a clavecin, and a small library from which newspapers and political works were carefully excluded.¹ In this reposeful atmosphere good M. Rouzet surprised himself taking an amazing interest in life, to which, however, he had always had a leaning. After Thermidor there was such a general feeling of happiness at having escaped the terrible storm that the most serious men allowed themselves to do all sorts of foolish things. An epidemic of romance set in, and Rouzet did not escape contagion. Either because his ardour for equality had somewhat calmed down, or because the proceedings of the *sans-culottes* had, by comparison, given him a taste for the aristocracy, he was unable to live side by side with the sweet and sad Duchesse d'Orléans without feeling deep sympathy for her.

¹ For further particulars of the Belhomme prison see the paper entitled "Belhomme."—Translator.

M. LE COMTE DE FOLMON

From an early date he respectfully and tenderly worshipped her—worship into which there entered as much pity for the noble woman's misfortunes as admiration for the charming philosophy with which she bore them. Everyone had such need of affection at that time that she did not take offence at his discreet homage, which caused the back-biters at Belhomme's to say that "the member of the Convention was in love with the princess."

Need I affirm that no document authorises us to place their love, which was perhaps most pure and disinterested, on a level with a common-place *liaison*? Everyone, from what follows, can form an opinion on this delicate point. The beauty of their story lies wholly in the fact that Rouzet and the Duchesse d'Orléans loved each other tenderly, and, what is more, all their lives. Their affection was all the more touching as the serious legislator and the august princess made every effort to keep a serious face and save appearances, whilst a "mischievous god," Love, seemed to laugh at their decorum and suggest escapades before which lovers of sixteen would have recoiled.

The decree of the 17th of Frimaire having re-opened the doors of the Convention to the "seventy-three," Rouzet had to resume his seat in that detestable parliament of which he had retained such a sorrowful recollection. Never before did a man shed so many tears on leaving a prison. His only consolation on leaving his friend was the hope of being able to serve her more usefully near his colleagues than he could have done by remaining with her; and, in fact, he strove so hard, and his heart inspired such warm arguments, that he succeeded in obtaining the removal of the sequestration and the restitution of the furniture of the condemned to their heirs. The Duchesse d'Orléans, still imprisoned, had a little more ease, but did not long enjoy it. Although Rouzet, who had been re-elected a deputy to the Council of the Five Hundred, proposed to his colleagues that all prisoners should be liberated, Philippe-Égalité's widow remained at Belhomme's, and was only to leave it when she went into exile.

After the 18th of Fructidor, the Directory, feeling that it was not sufficiently strong to tolerate the presence of this inoffensive

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

woman on French territory, decreed the banishment both of the "widow Orleans" and her sister-in-law, "Citoyenne Bourbon." An agent of the Directory named Jaunet undertook to take the Government's order to Charonne. Rouzet was there to break the shock. Everything had to be done very quickly, and at two o'clock in the morning of the 26th of Fructidor the proscrip't got into her carriage and left Paris surrounded by an escort of gendarmes. Rouzet was unable to follow her. Their adieus were heart-rending.

It was an heroic journey. The *convoy* was composed of several carriages into which had been hastily crammed so many packets and such a quantity of provisions that there remained hardly any room for the passengers. In addition to her maids, the Duchess took with her Mme. de la Tour du Pin, Mme. de Chastellux, M. Gueydan, her doctor, and a few faithful servants. They travelled by short stages in old berlins formerly belonging to the Court—vehicles which had long been used by the members of the Convention when on missions, or by envoys of the Committee of General Safety. The cushions were hard and the doors fitted badly. At every posting-house a trace had to be readjusted or a wheel consolidated by the use of much string. Then, amidst the cloud of dust raised by the escort, they set off again as well as they could. And this Odyssey lasted eighteen days!

At last the travellers passed through Perpignan. They were to leave France by way of the Col de Pertus; but, before crossing the frontier, had to submit to a formality. Asked to descend, the officials made sure of their identity, and, whilst this was being done, customs-house officers examined the berlins. Suddenly, cries were heard and there was a struggle. Underneath a heap of band-boxes and cloaks in the Duchess's carriage a man had been discovered—perhaps a thief—and was dragged forth very much out of countenance.

On being questioned, he stammered out his name and title—“Jacques Marie Rouzet, member of the Council of the

M. LE COMTE DE FOLMON

Five Hundred." Unable to remain in Paris for more than a week without his friend, he had jumped into a cabriolet and, at full speed, overtaken her near Cahors. He confessed that he had neither an authorisation to leave France nor a passport, and was not on regular leave of absence. So the authorities dragged him off to the Fort of Bellegarde, an ancient feudal structure perched on the rocks five hundred feet above the road. Hours slipped by and the Duchess showed great distress. She refused to continue her journey. Finally, she decided to walk up the mountain. On reaching the fortress, the military authorities informed her that they had determined to retain the fugitive, whereupon the unfortunate woman so supplicated and wept that she finally fainted. Profiting by this, she was carried to her carriage and an order given to the *cortège* to cross the frontier.¹

The letter which poor Rouzet, in his despair, wrote to his colleagues from Bellegarde is truly touching. He informed them "that, if the act of loyalty and generosity which had impelled him not to abandon the illustrious victim, whose defence was so dear to him, was not compatible with his quality of deputy, they could consider his letter as a resignation." The Five Hundred, the majority of whom had need of so much indulgence, understood every failing, so they passed to the order of the day in secret committee, and Rouzet was free to join the illustrious proscrip.

After a few weeks' stay at Figueras, where she awaited her friend, the Duchesse d'Orléans took up her residence at Sarria, near Barcelona. Her only resource was a small pension which she received from the French Government; but she had reason to hope that the King of Spain, as much out of family considerations as by reason of anti-revolutionary solidarity, would not leave her in want.

This Sarria villa, which was situated a quarter of a mile from the town, was an old house, over-run with rats and vermin, with cracked walls, crumbling joists, and disjointed windows. The distribution of the rooms was as incon-

¹ *La Mère du Duc d'Enghien*, by Comte Ducos.

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

venient as they were small. The Duchess's apartment, situated on the first floor, consisted of a bedroom, no larger than a dressing-room, and a drawing-room furnished with a few cane chairs and a table which the coachman had made from the sides of a box. King Charles IV had indeed sent his cousin a few pieces of furniture, such as an old cane arm-chair and a small bed without curtains; but his liberality had been so limited that, with the exception of this dilapidated bedstead, the Duchess's bedroom was practically unfurnished. Her candlestick was the bottom of a broken glass!

As a true princess, ignorant of practical life, the noble woman was imposed upon in her destitution. She had complicated her life by taking with her a regular suite of parasites and useless servants, twenty-one persons living at her expense in the little house at Sarria. The women lived in the garret on the second floor; the men, with the exception of three, who, feeling too cramped, had set up households in the village at their mistress's expense, had taken up their quarters in a loft.

But what had become of Rouzet, and where was he lodged? The Abbé Lambert, former chaplain to the Duc de Penthièvre, who, in his *Memoirs*, gives details of the rudimentary installation of the Duchess's residence, is silent on this interesting point. It is certain, however, that the former member of the Convention had not left the Duchesse d'Orléans. He had become her chancellor. Nothing was done in the villa without his authority, and, as in former days of splendour, visitors were met on the threshold of the proscrip't's wretched room by this personage, dressed in an embroidered satin coat and wearing on his breast the Cross of the Order of Malta and the broad ribbon of Saint Charles of Naples. Rouzet had become "Monsieur le Comte de Folmon,"—name, orders, and titles all being due to the munificence of the King of Spain, who, at his cousin's request, had showed all the more haste in ennobling and decorating this excellent man as it cost hardly anything—a fact which leads one to believe that his catholic majesty

M. LE COMTE DE FOLMON

“was less niggardly over the granting of a piece of parchment than over the purchase of a pair of curtains.”¹

However, Rouzet and the Duchesse d'Orléans considered themselves the happiest of mortals. Henceforth they are without a history. They were never to be separated; they fled together when the French army invaded Spain; they went to Mahon together; and together they returned to France. On landing at Marseilles in 1814, the Duchess took up her residence at the Château of Ivry, and it was there, in 1820, that Comte de Folmon died. The good princess wished the body of her old friend to repose near the tomb which she had prepared for herself.

Her first thought, on returning to France, had been to unite the ashes of her father and the princes of her family, whose tombs had been violated during the Revolution, under one sepulchre. Pious persons had collected and hidden these bones, which had been taken in Year II. from the vaults of the old collegiate at Dreux. The church itself was destroyed and the ground sold. In 1817 the Duchess ordered a new chapel to be built, and thus arose that curious royal basilica in which the Gothic, Lombard, and Greco-Roman styles contribute so strangely to an *ensemble* which is lacking neither in grandeur nor in picturesqueness. The crypt was completed in 1820, and in it the Duchess had had constructed, side by side, two white marble tombstones, exactly alike. In one of these was placed Rouzet's body; the other was to receive the princess's remains.

They were not long separated. After her friend's death, the Duchesse d'Orléans—sad, weary, and discouraged—lived in close retirement at Ivry, surrounded only by her doctor, her confessor, and a little dwarf for whom she had taken an affection, and concerning herself merely with the verification and completion of her will. It may indeed be said that, from the day Rouzet left her, this excellent woman occupied herself wholly with dying. She died a few months later, and

¹ *La Mère du Duc d'Enghien*, by Comte Ducos.

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

her body, in great pomp, was taken to Dreux and placed in the tomb she had prepared quite near that in which her friend lay at rest.

This, however, did not please everybody, and many people pretended to be shocked at this posthumous display of so faithful an affection. Certain courtiers doubtless considered that, in a country in which the strongest monarchies do not last twenty years, Rouzet de Folmon's tenacious fidelity and disinterested devotion was an example not to be imitated; and an underhand war was declared on this dead man, whom they would much like to have expelled from the royal sepulchre. Louis Philippe, like a true constitutional king, hit upon the golden mean. Around the little chapel built by his mother he raised a huge church, in which all the tombs brought up from the crypt were placed—all, save one, that of the Comte de Folmon, which remained in penitence under the building. Even the marble tombstone covering his remains was removed, a simple tablet bearing the following lines being placed on the wall :

*Jacques Marie Rozay, Comte de Folmon, décédé à Paris,
le 21 Mars 1820.*

The public who are admitted to visit the church never descend into the crypt, which contains but this one body and this one name. Has this been wrongly spelt on purpose? Has someone sought by this means to create confusion and consign to oblivion the memory of a situation which was somewhat incorrect? It is said that Louis Philippe himself presided over these arrangements. When the removal of his ancestors' remains to the upper chapel was in question, those undertaking the work found themselves in the presence of a heap of bones which had come from tombs violated in 1793. These had to be collected together and classified—a pious piece of work in which the king would not accept the assistance of any of his servants.

“These poor dead people,” he said, “have already been sufficiently tormented. Leave me alone with them!”

M. LE COMTE DE FOLMON

Shut up for a good part of the night, he laid out the bones on cloths, measuring, examining, and sorting them by the light of a lamp. . . .

If I were a painter, I verily believe that that, among all the scenes of our revolutions, is the one which would inspire me—the picture of that old man, who had become a king after such majestic catastrophes, handling the dust of his ancestors. . . . It is equal to Bossuet's *Erudimini*.

MADAME SIMON

I

THOSE inhabitants of the Rue des Cordeliers who, on Tuesday, May 20th, 1788, came to their house doors to watch the passing wedding of shoemaker Antoine Simon and Marie Jeanne Aladame, the charwoman of the corner of the Rue de Touraine, followed by their witnesses, Houette, a currier of the Cour du Commerce, M. Leroi, a citizen of the Rue des Quatre-Vents, Advocate Séjean, and Delamare, an ex-grocer,—those who saw this procession proceeding to Saint-Côme, an old, dark, and crookedly built church at the end of the street, never for a moment suspected that they were assisting at one of those events which history would some day be bound to record. The whole quarter, besides, had long known the newly married couple, and took an interest in their union. From Saint-Côme they proceeded, according to immemorial custom, to the Chapel of the Brotherhood of Saint Crispin, the patron saint of shoemakers, who had his altar at Notre-Dame, then most neatly white-washed, with a gigantic Saint Christopher at the first pillar to the right and ancient captured flags hanging in line from the high, vaulted roof. On leaving the church, M. and Mme. Simon undoubtedly finished the day at Saint-Bonnet, near la Rapée, a hamlet of public-houses which was famous for its *matelotes*, and whither plebeian wedding parties invariably resorted at the conclusion of the religious ceremony.

Simon was a jaded man of fifty-two years of age, slightly

MADAME SIMON

deaf,¹ and had never received any other lessons than those which are learnt in an up-and-down life full of mishaps, abortive enterprises, and mistakes.² He had not the reputation for being a bad man. Son of a Troyes butcher,³ he had come to Paris in his youth, and was one of those

¹ At the inquiry held at the Temple on the 13th of Frimaire, Year II., on the subject of suspicious noises heard in the Queen's apartment, Simon stated "that he was rather hard of hearing."

² Beauchesne describes Simon as "above the average height, robust and square-shouldered, with a tanned complexion, hard face, and long, lank black hair."

He may have obtained these details from surviving eye-witnesses, but he does not say so, and it is also possible that the portrait is an imaginary one.

Among Gabriel's sketches at the Carnavalet Museum is a portrait of Simon which seems to be fairly faithful. I here reproduce it, together with a fragment of an unpublished picture by Boilly, which is much more interesting, and the resemblance and authenticity of which cannot be doubted.

It is, in fact, very probable that Boilly, who was interested in scenes from revolutionary life—he had painted the triumph of Marat—had the curiosity to visit the Temple and make a sketch of Simon and his wife. Later, when the touching legend concerning the Dauphin came into existence, the painter returned to his sketch, and, without changing the attitude of the Simons, composed a picture including a third figure, that of the royal child. The son of Louis XVI. is represented in a scarlet carmagnole, dull, fatigued, and sickly-looking—the traditional "Petit Capet." It looks as though he had been placed there conventionally, and it is not astonishing that Boilly, at the time of his visit to the Temple in 1793, was unable to obtain permission to make a sketch of the child from life. But the two principal figures are of paramount interest. Boilly, who fell into conventionalism when painting the Dauphin, has not committed the same error in depicting the Simons. Why? Because he was evidently working on the basis of an authentic sketch. There can be no doubt that had he painted the entire group from imagination, he would also have given us the legendary Simons: the husband in a fur cap, with a shoemaker's jacket and leather apron—a dirty-looking man besotted with drink; the wife a bare-breasted shrew, repugnant in appearance.

Everything leads one to believe, therefore, that the Simons sat for their portraits, and that Boilly, in afterwards painting his picture, restricted himself to dramatising, by the addition of the Dauphin, portraits which had been carefully painted from life and which, alone, seemed to him to be lacking in interest. On studying the work in detail, we find in Simon's features all the characteristics to be seen in Gabriel's sketch: the large eyes, the round, strong nose, and one can even recognise the grey (*merdove*) coat mentioned in the bill of the butcher who attended to the shoemaker's wardrobe. Mme. Simon has evidently been flattered and made to look young; but, apart from the fact that the descriptions which we possess of her "pimpley" face are unsupported by any official document, is not this gallantry on Boilly's part an additional proof of authenticity? Moreover, in certain curves of the lips and in the hardness of expression in the eyes we can detect the "hard, masculine features" which are mentioned in narratives of the period.

³ Office of Me. Cousin, notary in Paris.

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

poor fellows who, having striven hard and failed, make parade, with a species of cynical raillery, of the poverty which they cannot conceal. After serving his apprenticeship with a shoemaker, he had obtained his papers as a master; but, being neither skilful nor obliging, remained a simple cobbler. In November 1766 he married a widow named Marie Barbe Hoyau, who brought him as a dowry, apart from a big girl of fourteen, the stock in trade of her first husband, Frédéric Munster, a master shoemaker.¹ As customers did not come, Simon decided to turn his hand to something else, and opened a cheap eating-house in the Rue de Seine. Adding a few furnished rooms, he provided both "food and lodging." The enterprise lasted several years, but finally failed through his want of order. His account book was kept in such a way that, on an inventory being drawn up at his house on the occasion of a seizure, neither claims nor debts could be found, "owing to its confusion and the impossibility of recognising sums which could be recovered." At the last extremity, Simon first of all borrowed a thousand francs from Me. Gallien, a bailiff and auctioneer of the Rue de la Vieille-Draperie, then another thousand "from M. le Président Boulanger," and, finally, five hundred "from M. le Marquis d'Hacqueville."² His furniture distrained and sold, he was obliged to leave the lodging-house in the Rue de Seine and return to his last.

After his bankruptcy, we find him in the Rue des Cordeliers, on the second floor of a house, owned by a dentist, Michon Delafondée, near the School of Surgery, his apartment consisting of a single room looking on to the street, and two small dining-rooms without windows. Simon and his wife took up their quarters there with that strange medley of useless articles which compose the household goods of those who do not possess any—four frying-pans, a perforated picture, a sack of rags, some iron rods, an old tapestry representing verdure, a parasol, six cane chairs without bottoms, and a coat made of cloth of gold. Before

¹ Office of Me. Cousin, notary in Paris.

² *Id.* Inventory drawn up after the death of Marie Barbe Hoyau, femme Simon.

MADAME SIMON

this disaster, Marie Barbe's daughter had become the wife of a tailor, Maître Tortevoix, and on his death, shortly afterwards, married another tailor, Maître Vanhemerlye, of the Rue des Mauvais-Garçons. She did not get on well with Simon, to whom she probably refused to lend money.

The cobbler was in the depths of poverty in his wretched lodging. He had pawned two gold watches at the Mont-de-Piété, and his wife's clothes went in the same direction. She fell ill, was taken to the Hôtel-Dieu, and died there on May 11th, 1786, after forty days' illness. On that day, either because he did not wish to see the woman who had been his companion thrown in the common grave, or, perhaps, because he felt a need of drowning his sorrow, Simon pawned, for twenty-one francs, the remainder of the deceased's wardrobe: a chintz petticoat, a Siamese calico skirt, and a white night-dress.

Simon was then without resources and without the means of re-establishing his credit. His working-stock, value 38 francs, was sold to a workman-cobbler, named G. J. Potier, to whom he still owed 52 francs; the clothes were at the Mont-de-Piété; and, in addition to the 2,500 francs which he had borrowed, he owed 200 francs to Houette, the currier, for goods supplied, 330 francs to Pizel, a baker, and 72 francs to the grocer. He owed money to the butcher, the fruiterer, the milkman, and to all the tradesmen in the quarter; he was three quarters behindhand with his rent; and, to complete his disasters, the paternal house at Troyes, of which he was a quarter owner, was razed to the ground without it bringing him in a penny. According to an inventory, drawn up in 1786 at the request of Mme. Vanhemerlye, daughter of the deceased, Simon's debts amounted to more than 5,000 francs, whilst his assets consisted of exactly 1 franc.¹

It was under these conditions that, fifteen months after the death of his first wife, he thought of marrying again. His choice fell on Marie Jeanne Aladame, charwoman to a Mme. Fourcroy, recently deceased, in the same house in which Simon himself lived. Marie Jeanne was, therefore, without a situation. She was a native of Paris, the daughter

¹ Archives of Me. Cousin, notary in Paris.

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

of a carpenter, and had been left an orphan at an early age. In 1788 she was forty-three years old, a "thick-set" woman with an opulent figure and "hard masculine" features. She was, moreover, a good woman and much esteemed by people of the quarter who had known her "ever so long." Her attractions consisted in the reputation for being an excellent housewife, and also in a small annuity which Mme. Séjean, a wine-shop keeper in the Rue de Cordeliers, for whom she had long worked, had bequeathed her. But the marriage-contract mentions only a sum of 1,000 francs, whether in cash or in clothes, as the property of the "future wife," whilst Simon's sole possessions consisted of a wardrobe valued at two hundred francs.¹ As soon as they had set up their household, the newly-married couple, without leaving the Rue des Cordeliers, went to live on the third floor of one of those houses, to-day still standing, bordering the Boulevard Saint-Germain, and which formerly faced the Fontaine des Cordeliers and the tall arched gateway leading to the Cour du Commerce Saint-André. It was there that the Revolution surprised them.

It is difficult to imagine what a quarter of Paris was like a hundred and twenty years ago, when the majority of people lived and died in the houses which their parents had occupied before them, and who left their native streets but once or twice a year to see the firework display on the king's fête day, or pay a visit, after the rigours of Lent, to the gingerbread fair. The narrow horizon of a *carrefour* sufficed for these shopkeepers of former days, and each quarter, each street thus formed, in the immense city, a kind of small town in which everybody, as in a village, had known each other for many years back. The constitution first of districts and then of sections, and the organisation of the National Guard further strengthened this intimacy by giving the inhabitants the same electoral interests and the same political occupations. They went together to the sections, met at the clubs, and were on duty at the same military posts. Cohesion was the sole strength of these Parisian committees, before which the Convention itself was to draw back.

¹ Office of Me. Cousin, notary in Paris.

MADAME SIMON

The Cordeliers section—the most thickly populated in the Saint-Germain quarter, a compact city of printers, advocates, men of letters, and actors, the land of the Café Procope and the Théâtre Français—was admirable ground for the propagation of revolutionary ideas. . . . Simon's windows¹ were opposite those of an advocate who, from the beginning of 1790, was celebrated from Saint-Côme to the Abbaye—M. Danton. Dr. Marat lived in the Rue des Fossés-Saint-Germain, in a house called the Hôtel de la Fautrière, quite near the old Comédie; further away in the direction of the new theatre, Camille Desmoulins was lodged; Fabre d'Églantine was not far away; Legendre, the butcher, had his stall almost at the corner of the square; quite near, there lived two patriotic and eloquent printers, of whom one was later to become Marshal Brune and the other, Momoro, was the husband of the future goddess of Reason; and, finally, Chaumette lived in the Rue du Paon, quite near the Fontaine des Cordeliers. . . . The agglomeration of so many hot-headed men communicated to the whole quarter a fever which developed into delirium when, on August 10th, Danton was appointed as a minister under conditions which made him almost king of France.

To think that this advocate, with such little pride, who had a friendly shake of the hand for everybody, who thee'd and thou'd his neighbours, and was adored by all street arabs was a minister! This unexpected honour, falling on the section, gave its members an exalted idea of their importance, and everybody suddenly became somebody or something. Simon himself, who, without the slightest doubt, had many times soled these gentlemen's shoes, was pitchforked into the position of Commissary of the provisional Commune. When many others hesitated to risk

¹ "Municipality of Paris. List of the 144 citizens elected by the 48 sections to compose the general council, body and municipal bureau of the city of Paris: Simon Antoine, shoemaker, No. 32, Rue de Cordeliers."—*Almanach Nationale*, 1793.

According to Vatin's *L'État* (1788), No. 32, Rue des Cordeliers was the last house on the left before reaching the Odéon square. This indication agrees with the recollections of an old Parisian published by *L'Intermédiaire des chercheurs et des curieux*. (See *Table générale* under the name of Simon.)

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

themselves in the *mêlée*, he, having nothing to lose and not a great deal to do, became one of the most zealous. He was a member of all committees, and was one of those who carried the resolution of the General Council of the Commune to the Assembly.¹ On September 2nd he was sent to Bicêtre and La Salpêtrière to attempt to stop the massacres, and returned at four o'clock in the morning, declaring that he "could gain no ascendancy over the mind of the people."² He was later deputed to draw up an inventory of the effects of the prisoners who had been brought from Orleans and massacred on their way through Versailles.³ Mme. Simon also showed great activity. She took up her residence at the former Franciscan Convent, then transformed into a hospital for the natives of Marseilles who had been wounded on August 10th, and showed her qualities as a hard-working housewife, a true woman of Paris who, partly out of vanity at the idea of playing a slender *rôle* in a tragedy, but a good deal because of her charitable disposition, did not mind what trouble she took when face to face with suffering. She even contributed her item to the history of the Marseilles affair in the following picturesquely spelt document, in which, imposing silence on

¹ "Appointment by the General Council of the Commune of eight commissaries (including A. Simon) for the purpose of attending the Assembly to ask for the withdrawal of the decree on the subject of the national high court and the removal to Paris of prisoners in detention at Orleans."

August 23rd, 1791, *National Archives*, C 157, No 316.

² Report of the visit of MM. Michonis and Simon, commissaries of the Commune: First, to Bicêtre, where the people had assembled with the object of killing all the prisoners in the dungeons and those in La Force, and of freeing two hundred individuals imprisoned in the church,—thieves for the most part, who were locked up again with great difficulty. Second, to La Salpêtrière, where they found a tribunal, appointed by the people, before which the women were brought in one after the other and sentenced to death. The said commissaries declare that they could gain no ascendancy over the mind of the people. September 3rd, 1792, at four o'clock in the morning." *National Archives*, F⁷ 4408.

³ "Report and inventory of the effects of the Orleans prisoners, to be found in the storehouses of the town house, drawn up by Citizens Hennissart, Massé, and Simon, commissaries appointed by the General Council of the Commune on November 30th, 1792, the said effects being represented by Michonis.

December 1st, 1792, inventory of letters and papers of the Orleans prisoners drawn up by Citizens Hennissart, Simon, and Massé commissaries deputed to make a report on and an inventory of their effects."

December 10-16th, 1792. *National Archives*, F⁷ 4427.

MADAME SIMON

her modesty, she claims the amount of her expenses from the authorities :—

“Batalion marseillais note dais federe marseillais ala faire ou dix aoust 1792 lan premier de la republique francaise que jai traite.

“Savoire soixante blesce dangereusement ataque donc le commandant du dit batalion ou netoit un sure lequel il yia trante homme qui me doive leure vie par les bon soein que jai leure ai aporte eles bons remedes que jai leure ai fourni sure lequel jai touche six sant livre donc ces six san livre me fure donne pour faire mais simple (*mes simples*).

“Mais la somme netoit pas dans le cast de suffire poure les simples, il me falut vendre le plus beau elemeliere demais zefet. . . .

“Cest aumomant que jai me voi depourvu detout que jai me sant hoblige, sitoyen, etc.”¹

Chaumette supported the petition; an inquiry was ordered; and, on wounded men declaring that “this worthy citizen, through her patriotism and surgical knowledge, had succeeded in curing a large number of brothers in arms,”² the

¹ *L'Amateur d'Autographes*, Feb. 16th, 1862.

“Marseilles Battalion. Account for the Marseilles Fédérées, wounded in the affair of August 10th, 1792, in the First year of the French Republic, who have been under my treatment.

“To wit, sixty dangerously wounded men, including the Commander of the said battalion, thirty of whom owe their lives to me, thanks to the care which I have shown and the good remedies with which I have furnished them. For which purpose I received six hundred francs; therefore these six hundred francs were given me to make simples.

But the sum was insufficient for my simples so I had to sell the finest and the best of my clothes . . .

“Deprived of everything, I am compelled, Citizens, etc.”

² *National Archives*. T. 604—605. Papers seized at Chaumette's house.

Citizen Grand, who was wounded on August 10th, and taken to the Royal College Hospital, wrote to Chaumette on November 26th, 1792, as follows :

“Here is the first fact which has come under my observation, and to which I would swear in the presence of the whole world. Perhaps some member of this Assembly knows Citoyenne Simon—that woman who through her patriotism and surgical knowledge, has succeeded in curing a number of our brothers in arms, the brave men of Marseilles who were wounded in the affair of August 10th. Well, this respectable citizen has done for humanity what we all ought to do. I was a witness of the request which she made about a month ago to a certain M. Gafiteau—namely that he should bleed one of our companions in arms who was lying in bed a few yards from the College of Surgery. Although Citoyenne

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

Convention granted her a provisional aid of two hundred francs.

These details, which have hitherto been neglected, doubtless because they were regarded as too insignificant, show, nevertheless, how Simon advanced towards the duties to which he owes his celebrity. Historians tell us that he was protected by Marat and Robespierre. But how and why? It is true that Marat, after August 10th, came to live in the Rue des Cordeliers; he was one of the doctors who attended "the brave federates of the Marseilles battalion," and it is possible that his support was of some use to Simon. But I can find no trace of it. As to Robespierre, he was in no way in touch with Simon; he was a *monsieur*, little inclined to allow cobblers to have anything to do with his politics, and whom, moreover, the choice of a guardian for the Dauphin in no way concerned. On the other hand, it appears to me very evident that Simon owed his position to Chaumette, his neighbour of the Rue du Paon, who in December, 1792, became Procurator of the Commune, and, in virtue of that position, had authority over the Temple prison.

Besides, one need have but a slight acquaintance with Chaumette's picturesque figure to understand how much the idea of making a cobbler the instructor of the King of France must have tempted him. An anecdote is told which shows us exactly the kind of man he was. On a certain occasion, at the time of the trial of Louis XVI., the King, after a long examination, was about to step into his carriage, when he saw a grenadier belonging to the escort take a piece of bread from his pocket and divide it with the Procurator of the Commune. Approaching that official, he asked him for a morsel. "Willingly," replied Chaumette. "Here you are, break it in two. It is a Spartan lunch. If I had a root I would give you half of it . . ."

Such is the diagnostic. Chaumette believed that he was an ancient. He had renounced his honest Christian name of

Simon offered him a proper fee, Citizen Gafiteau refused, as usual, to perform this urgent operation. Quite confused at this reception and overwhelmed with insults, Citoyenne Simon applied to another surgeon." November 26th, 1793.

MADAME SIMON

Gaspard in order to assume that of Anaxagoras, "a famous Lacedemonian," he said, "who was hanged for his republicanism," though, if we are to believe biographical dictionaries, Anaxagoras got off cheaper and simply died in exile. Chaumette, who had been a little of everything—monk, cabin-boy, artisan, copyist, steersman, and procurator's clerk—found employment in the Revolution for his peculiar aptitude. He was born to be a Spartan.

If he chose Simon, it was, first of all, because he had read in Jean Jacques that Émile "honoured a shoemaker much more than an emperor"—a statement which flattered Anaxagoras, who was himself the son of a Nevers shoemaker.¹ And do we not also read in the paradoxical gospel of philosophic education: "I had rather my pupil was a shoemaker than a poet?" That went straight to the heart of Chaumette, who, deputed to watch over Capet's son, took much interest in the *louveteau*—"the cub." "I wish to give him some education," he said, charitably. "I will keep him away from his family so as to make him lose the idea of his rank."²

The desire to bring up the prince "to a manly calling" by teaching him a trade was equally as captivating to this philosopher. It must also be pointed out that his responsibility was at stake. The rescue of the Temple prisoners was the object of all royalists, the dream of every conspirator in France; the fair head of the infant-king was the stake in the terrible game which Europe was playing with cannon-shots; and it was extremely difficult to find a man who was both sufficiently devoid of prejudice to assume the work which Chaumette wanted doing and sufficiently patriotic to resist all temptations. Now, Simon had shown what he could do. Frequently on guard at the Temple, both before and since the death of Louis XVI., he was one of those very rare men who never seemed to be moved to pity by contact with the

¹ Nevers Mairie. *Extract from the register of births for the year 1763.* On May 24th was born and baptised Gaspard, son of Pierre Gaspard Chaumette, master shoemaker, and Jeanne Rousset, legitimately married. The god-father was Gaspard Dard and the god-mother Geneviève Viault de la Harde, both of whom signed (parish of Saint Étienne)."

² *Dernières années du règne de Louis XVI.*, by F. Hue, p. 459.

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

prisoners. Above all, he had just frustrated—single-handed—a plot for their deliverance which was on the very point of succeeding.¹

To this last decisive fact was added a further consideration. Simon was married to an active and devoted woman, whose attentions were materially indispensable to the child. The whole quarter had seen her at work at the Hôpital des Cordeliers, and knew she was a good, clean work-woman, an accomplished housewife, and could, if need be, look after a sick person. There, undoubtedly, you have the whole secret of an appointment to which historians, more concerned over poetry than truth, have devoted so many touching and indignant pages. To declare that Robespierre and Marat—whom the matter did not concern and who hated each other—put their heads together to discover a brute who was capable of torturing the young prince day and night is one of those easy statements which are as ridiculous as they are difficult to eradicate. The idea came from Chaumette, who thought it both sublime and sure; it was not the act of atrocity of a Nero, but the conception of a Homais.

This idea was realised on July 3rd, 1793. The shoemaker, informed two days before, proceeded to the Hôtel de Ville, wearing most certainly "his fine blue coat, the national colour, lined with scarlet, and freshly turned." We possess the bill of the botcher Peigné bearing the mention of "pieces of cloth furnished to mend it all over." Mme. Simon, in a very joyous mood, could not resist telling a neighbour, Mme. Dablemont. "I'm going to have a good situation," she said. "They'll fetch me in a carriage, and perhaps even better than that." When Marie Jeanne left her house for the Hôtel de Ville, to which she had been summoned, the gossips of the street honoured her with an ovation. They carried her in triumph—an honour which greatly affected her. But much

¹ This was an attempt to rescue the Queen, Madame Elizabeth, Madame Royale, and the Dauphin—an attempt which failed owing to Simon's vigilance, and also through a lucky chance which assisted him in discovering the plot. It is said that in one of the courtyards of the Temple he found a piece of paper in which the attempt was announced—an anonymous denunciation which enabled him to hurry to the Hôtel de Ville and change the guard, though not before Batz, Cortey and others, who were at the head of the conspiracy, had had time to escape.

MADAME SIMON

less, doubtless, than the good news she received there—that her husband was to earn 6,000 francs a year by doing nothing and that she herself was to have 4,000. It was a river of gold in assignats.

At nine o'clock at night the child was awakened from his sleep, dragged from his mother's arms, and handed over to his new guardians, whom he must have regarded as two wild beasts.

Simon's investiture, by no means intentionally cruel, was terribly so in its results. To realise them we have but to open one of those pretty *Almanachs de la cour*, bound in red morocco and embellished with gold arabesques, and read therein the names of those who composed the *Maison de Mgr. le Dauphin* before the days of the Revolution—great names of duchesses, marchionesses, and beautiful ladies—names of governesses and assistant-governesses, lady-attendants and chamber-maids, ladies of the bed-chamber and dressers, rockers and under-nursemaids—a multitude of women whom we picture so elegantly refined, so full of respectful attention for the child entrusted to their keeping. To the boy who familiarly treated the majestic queen of Trianon and the Tuileries as his adored mamma, the very appearance of Marie Jeanne necessarily inspired terror. The hands of this woman of the people, reddened and cracked in kitchen-sinks, her common voice, thick speech, clumsy figure, and especially her caresses—these constituted his torture. The heart of this poor little fellow must have been filled with a feeling of repugnance of which the Simons could not even conceive the possibility. What to him was a sinister prison and a penitential diet seemed to them the height of comfort and good fare. They were quartered on the second floor of the Tower, in the apartment which had remained vacant and furnished since the death of Louis XVI., and never had they sat in such soft armchairs, or eaten such dainty morsels. The small yard of the Temple, planted with sickly trees, seemed to the Simons to be real country, accustomed as they were to the foul smells of the dark courtyards and damp alleys of the Rue des Cordeliers; but it saddened their prisoner, haunted by a recollection of Versailles, with its

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

infinite prospects of chestnuts in flower, and its distant woods lost in the blue horizon. It can, indeed, be declared positively that the guardians' barbarity and the child's punishment resulted from the clash of these two contrasts; whereas there is nothing to lead us to believe in systematic torture, in blows with sticks and andirons.

But worse remains to be told, and certainly the authentic anecdotes which writers have failed to relate for fear of dispelling the atmosphere of idealism with which the young King has been surrounded are infinitely more tragic than the sublime and legendary words gratuitously put into his mouth in reply to his torturer's blows and oaths. Here is one, undeniably genuine, which was recorded by Daujon, an eyewitness, a Commissary of the Commune, a very honest man and a stern Republican. With the exception of one word, too brutal to be printed, I give it as he related it. "I was playing with him (the Dauphin) one day at a little game of bowls. It was after his father's death, and he was separated from his mother and aunt. . . . The room where we were was beneath one of the apartments of his family, and we could hear a noise as of people jumping and dragging chairs about. On hearing this commotion above our heads, the child exclaimed, impatiently: 'Haven't those confounded trollops been guillotined yet?' Not wishing to hear the rest, I left the game and the place."¹

Those who understand children, those who know how unerringly they remember what they ought not to hear, and how they are constantly on the watch for new words, here see the Dauphin striving to reach the pitch of his surroundings, by giving himself the airs of a man, and playing at being a bold fellow. . . . It is a terrible anecdote, and what it leaves us to guess is sadder still. But, in fact, we know nothing of the Temple; it is a closed story which legend has invaded at leisure and transformed into a tearful complaint, which, perhaps, is the very opposite of the truth. Thus, among the rare deductions to be drawn from known facts, it is proved that Simon carried out his duties unwillingly. Fear of a

¹ *Daujon's original narrative.* M. Victorien Sardou's Cabinet of Autographs.

MADAME SIMON

reaction which everyone foresaw doubtless brought about this unexpected change. The bravest knew very well that some day or other "the wind would turn," and kept an eye on a side exit by which to escape. Robespierre himself kept a tight hold on documents which Courtois discovered and utilised, later, at the time of the Restoration. Simon was no more of a Brutus than the others. A report addressed to Lord Granville by an agent of the British Government, who was in Paris in 1794, asserts that "Simon, who at first was very useful (to the royal cause), is so terrified at the danger which he is running that his whole object is to leave his present position."¹—What danger is here referred to? That of being suspected of complicity with Royalists?—The only thing we know for certain is that the shoemaker suddenly resigned and, after a stay of six months, left the Temple.

This determination, the causes of which are unknown, is one of the obscure points of this mysterious affair. It is said that Simon, called upon to choose between his post as Capet's guardian and that of commissary for his section, decided in favour of the latter position; but this, on the part of a man whom writers have endeavoured to represent as a drunken brute who took a pleasure in ill-treating the young King, was an act of heroic disinterestedness which appears hardly probable, for commissaries received no remuneration.² Besides, Mme. Simon was no longer in a condition to resume her old calling. Anxiety over her responsibilities, want of exercise, and the change in her way of living had, in December, 1793, "upset her" and brought on a serious congestion of the liver; she was confined to bed, and Dr. Naudin—recommended by the second husband of Simon's daughter-in-law, the tailor Vanhemerlye, whose customer he was—came to the Temple several days in succession to visit the sick woman, who was on her feet again

¹ *Historical Manuscripts Commission. The MSS. of J. B. Fortescue, Esq., preserved at Dropmore, p. 528.*

² From September, 1793, citizens "who had no other resources than those resulting from their daily work" could claim an indemnity of forty *sous* for each meeting of the section. But this sum was paid only to those who attended "during the whole of the meeting, which began at five and ended at ten o'clock." It must also be added that the sections met but once or twice a week.—See Mellié's *Les Sections de Paris, passim.*

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

at the beginning of 1794. The Simons, therefore, voluntarily exchanged a situation worth 10,000 francs a year without counting food, clothes, and heat, for certain destitution. Was the recently decreed interdiction against plurality of offices the cause, as has been asserted, of the cobbler's resignation? No, since I find him, shortly after he had left the Temple, *and when he was still a commissary of his section*, appointed "to replace Grépin (?) as inspector of carriages."¹ There was another reason, therefore, for his departure. What was it?

Whatever may have been the cause, the fact remains that the Simons, on Sunday, January 19th, 1794, removed. The weather was dull, with a lowering sky and a damp, mild fog, and the snow was thawing. The whole day there was an unusual amount of going up and down the Tower staircase. Marie Jeanne—the doors of her rooms open—counted her linen; descended to the guard-house and said farewell to everybody; trotted about the slushy courtyards, and heaped her clothes on to a cart; and, wheezing asthmatically, again and again mounted the steps as quickly as her excessive stoutness would permit. It was not until nine o'clock at night that they were able to find time to occupy themselves with the child. He was presented to the commissaries on duty, four new-comers—Legrand, Lasnier, Cochefer, and Lorinet, who signed a receipt, certifying that "Simon and his wife had produced the person of the prisoner Capet, in good health, calling upon them to undertake the custody of the said Capet and grant a provisional release. . . ." ² As to the separation we know nothing; not a detail exists; not even a word as to the adieus and the child's bearing in the presence of the new commissaries. Was he asleep? we do not know. It is indisputable, however, that at dawn next day he was imprisoned, and that nobody was to see him again for six months. Only some words of the young Dauphine, who was imprisoned with Madame Elizabeth on the upper floor, record the commotion which the departure of the Simons occasioned in the Tower. "On January 19th,

¹ *National Archives*, T 905. Papers seized at Simon's house.

² Temple Papers—Charavey Sale, *Catalogue*.

MADAME SIMON

1794," she wrote, we heard a great noise in my brother's room, which made us conjecture that he was leaving the Temple, and we were convinced of this when, on looking through the key-hole, we saw packages being carried out. On the following days we heard the door opened and the sound of walking in the room; but we always remained persuaded that he had gone. . . . "

At an advanced hour of the night—a sinister and densely foggy night—the Simons caused the Temple gates to be opened, moved away from the guard-house, and disappeared with their cart in the mist.

II

WHERE did they go?

Who would think that Simon, who was so anxious to return to his section that he threw up one of the most lucrative of appointments, would abstain, as soon as he was free, from going back to the Rue des Cordeliers, where, however, he had kept his apartment, and would instal himself, with his wife, in an outhouse adjoining the Temple walls? What need had they of a cart for so short a distance? Why did they not simply ask one of the ever-unoccupied prison-staff to carry their clothes and bundles of linen to the new lodging which they had rented, some forty yards from the Tower, in the old stable buildings, already inhabited by Piquet, the concierge, Gagnié, the cook, and various other employees? ¹

¹ The following document clearly establishes the situation of the building which Simon occupied. "The 13th of Thermidor, Year II. We, the undersigned, members of the revolutionary committee of the Temple section. . . . proceeded to an apartment adjoining the Temple containing the effects of one Simon (the name, like the remainder of the report, is almost illegible; but the indications which follow leave no doubt as to the identity of the person in question), an *ex-municipal officer who died by the law*. On being shown into a room looking on to the courtyard of the stables, we affixed our seals on a window of the room at the back, secondly on the window of the bedroom, thirdly above the kitchen window, and fourthly above the door of the apartment. We appointed as guardian of these seals Citizen Piquet, doorkeeper, who alone is authorised, and who declared he could not write his name. Bonnet, Commissary; Dau, Commissary; Cachepoire, Commissary."—*National Archives*, F⁷ 4775¹⁹.

The name of Piquet, the doorkeeper at the entrance to the enclosure of

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

Other questions occur to us. The Commune had decided that Capet should no longer have a resident guardian, but that all the commissaries of the section should take turns, two by two, in spending a day with the prisoners. Simon, however, never reappeared. Why? Was he forbidden to set foot in the prison? If so, what was the reason for this ostracism?—Did he refuse? And in that case, why?

Marie Jeanne and her husband were, therefore, living in the Temple when the latter, on April 6th, 1794, was appointed Inspector of Carriages.¹ What were the duties connected with the post, and did he long retain it? I cannot say. He did not return to the Cordeliers section until the beginning of July, and—another anomaly—instead of taking up his quarters in the small apartment which he occupied before he went to the Temple, and the lease of which he had not cancelled, he rented two bedrooms, at sixty francs a year, on a lease of three, six, or nine years, at the former Franciscan Convent,² at the same time retaining the apartment in the Temple stables. In Messidor, Year II., he was, therefore, in simultaneous possession of three residences in Paris.³

the Temple where the courtyard of the stables was situated, is again to be found in a document dated June 18th, 1794, five months after Simon's resignation and departure from the Tower,—a document which Beauchesne, without paying attention to the date, quotes in support of an incident which occurred in September or October 1793, when the Simons were still the Dauphin's guardians. This document, unintelligible in the case of the year 1793, becomes important in June, 1794: it proves that the cobbler and his wife took lodgings in the courtyard of the Temple stables not only for the purpose of storing their effects but to reside there.

"The 30th of Prairial, Year II., June 18th, 1794. Commune of Paris, Council of the Temple. Citizen Lelièvre, steward . . . declares that the mother or mother-in-law of Citizen Gagnié, instead of going out by the ordinary door leading into the Rue du Temple, rather frequently goes out by the stable door, which ought to be closed to everybody . . . (and which) provides an exit on to the Temple enclosure, by which the mother or mother-in-law of Citizen Gagnié, as well as Citoyenne Simon and other persons residing on the same premises, obtain a way out . . ." etc.

See Beauchesne, *Louis XVII.*, vol. ii, p. 86, note.

¹ *National Archives*, T 905.

² *Archives of the Seine. Domaine.* Register of National Property; *Rue des Cordeliers.*

³ The apartment in the Temple; the rooms recently rented at the Franciscan Convent; and those which he and his wife occupied at 32, Rue des Cordeliers, before their appointment,—rooms which they had retained, since, on the 11th of Brumaire, Year III., seals were placed on them. *Archives of the Seine. Domaine.*

MADAME SIMON

He had now abandoned the cobbler's hand-leather, and, having become a politician, signed himself "Simon, ancien Cordonnier." He lived at the very headquarters of the fiery Marat section (formerly Cordeliers') his small apartment in the convent being, in fact, situated on the first floor, on the corridor adjoining the refectory, now the Dupuytren Museum. It looked on to the large garden under the shade of whose trees, arranged quincuncially, was Marat's tomb.

Simon had not been there more than a fortnight when the 9th of Thermidor came. About five o'clock on that day he proceeded from the Convent to the Hôtel de Ville, reappearing in the evening in a very excited state, and accompanied by two colleagues, at the section which had assembled, with its full complement of members, in the refectory, where its sittings were usually held.¹

In the courtyard were piled arms; some twenty men "walked backwards and forwards, formed themselves into groups, and separated after exchanging a few words in an undertone"; a bell at the School of Surgery was sounding the alarm, and drums beating to arms could be heard passing along the Rue de la Harpe. The crowd, tightly packed in the room, was becoming impatient. Simon and his companions—in all probability Wouarmé and Laurent—hoisted themselves on to the platform, and, in the name of the insurgent Commune, called upon the people to go to the assistance of Robespierre, who, outlawed by the Convention, had taken refuge at the Hôtel de Ville. But though they spoke long and vehemently it was without success. Seeing that the audience was wavering, a journalist named Fiévée, who had entered the meeting because he had nothing better to do, delivered a much-applauded speech in which he silenced the three apostles of insurrection and ordered their

¹ "The Watch-Committee of the section, awaiting the preparation of a room, which is nearly ready, in the large refectory, uses the Salle Saint Michel for its general meetings. The military committee occupies a room and an office on the ground-floor to the left as you enter from the garden. The Charity Committee has a room called the little refectory, the entrance to which is in the Cour des Cuisines. Finally, the Section, at its own expense, has made a guard-house on the Rue des Cordeliers, in another courtyard also called the Cour des Cuisines. No rent is paid." *Les Sections de Paris*, Mellié.

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

immediate arrest. Simon and his two companions, hooted and mobbed, tried to make for the doors, but were seized and thrown into the prison of the section.¹ On the following morning, when the triumph of the Convention became known, they were taken to the Conciergerie, and, the same day, accompanied Robespierre to the scaffold. Everything was



SIMON.

(From a sketch by Gabriel in the Musée Carnavalet,² Paris.)

done so rapidly that Marie Jeanne was only just beginning to be anxious at her husband not returning home when she learnt that he was dead.²

Paris, in fact, was ill-informed as to what happened that day. Politics no longer interested anybody but men "of the party," and people were getting tired of becoming excited

¹ *Mémoires de Fiévée and Courtois' Report to the Convention*, the 9th of Thermidor, Year III.

² Simon's death certificate has been published by Jal.

MADAME SIMON

over events the meaning of which they did not understand in the slightest. Good citizens certainly heard a little more noise than usual during that famous night of Thermidor. But who was still astonished at the beating of drums, at calls to arms, or at the ringing of alarm-bells? The event caused such little excitement that, at about two o'clock in the afternoon of the 10th, a number of ballet-girls of the Opéra, dressed in muslin skirts and pink tights, were seen to arrive at the Pantheon, in the best of spirits, to take part in the apotheosis of Bara and Viala. They were astounded to hear that "something had happened," and that the *fête* was postponed.

What for a long time contributed to mislead the public was the fact that, whilst the end of the Terror was being glorified, the prisons opened merely to receive fresh inmates. Among these were Mme. Simon, who had been arrested in the early days of her widowhood, and whom the authorities "tormented." However, at the end of August (the 7th of Fructidor) she was liberated.¹ She returned to the apartment in the Rue des Cordeliers, the rent of which had been paid in advance for a year, and, having become very timid, kept herself out of sight. Months passed by, and she was without resources. On the 3rd of Messidor, Year III., she received from Citizen Taupin, agent of the State Property Department (Domaines), three shares of 90 francs in the Lafarge tontine—shares sequestrated after Simon's death,² and which represented the whole of the savings of himself and his wife. A month later, on the 4th of Thermidor, the Commission of National Revenues restored her husband's effects, valued at 70 francs.³ This, with her very small annuity, constituted the whole of Marie Jeanne's fortune. Exceedingly ill—she suffered from daily fits of vomiting, which so exhausted her that work was impossible—she lived on in a state of dire poverty. To crown her misfortunes, the Justice of the Peace informed her, in December, that she would have to leave her apartment in the Rue des Cordeliers,

¹ *National Archives*, F⁷ 6806. *Dossier* 1366.

² *Archives of the Seine*. *Domaines*, 126.

³ *National Archives*, F⁷ 6806.

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

as it was required by the School of Surgery for an annex.¹ Without a home, the poor woman decided to ask the Government to take pity on her. She informed the Relief Committee that "during her stay at the Temple, when guarding the Petit Capet, who had been confided to her care by the National Assembly, she had contracted several most cruel and incurable infirmities. Consequently, without any source of income, driven from her apartment, and in a state of infirmity and suffering which prevented her providing herself with a new home, she asked the favour to be admitted to the hospital for incurables, so as to end her days in peace."²

Surgeon Naudin, who was attending her, supported the petition. But it was a long time before it had any result. Mme. Simon succeeded in remaining in the Rue des Cordeliers until April 1795. Expelled at that date, she found shelter in a house near the School of Medicine, where, distrustful, reflective, and haunted by some recollection or other, she lived for a year. In spite of her asthma, she frequently crossed the city to visit one of her cousins, the janitress of a house on the Place Vendôme, the masters of which were emigrants. The two women conversed in a low voice, and a certain word upon which they had agreed enabled them to understand each other "without a third person who might be present being able to know what they were talking about." They chattered of the Dauphin, whose death in the Temple had been announced by the newspapers, though not without a certain reticence and vague hints, in June 1795. The word which they exchanged so mysteriously, accompanied by easily imagined winks and such exclamations as "goodness gracious, would you believe it!" which enter into every conversation between women of the lower classes, was *Astikot-Morlingot*. Such was the title which these two gossipers—the only people in forgetful Paris who still concerned themselves over the Dauphin—gave to the young prince who had been born to wear the French crown.

¹ *Archives of the Seine. Domaines.* Register of National Property, Rue des Cordeliers.

² *Amateur d'autographes*, February 16th, 1862.

MADAME SIMON

On April 12th, 1796, Marie Jeanne at last received the letter admitting her to the Incurables, and on the same day she presented herself at the hospital, situated in the Rue de Sèvres, in those picturesque buildings with pointed roofs which are now used for the Laënnec Hospital.

The establishment held about 440 inmates.¹ All slept in dormitories; but those who occupied the long rooms on the ground floor were privileged in having narrow closets at the head of their beds,² and in these recesses (their "drawing-rooms"!) they were able to preserve part of the wreckage of their past lives.

Mme. Simon enjoyed the much envied favour of possessing a bed with a closet, and this, with the remains of her household furniture, she turned into a private apartment. She was extremely clean in her habits, and every day carefully covered her eiderdown with a red quilt, strewn all over with little blue and white flowers, which she had brought from the Temple. The regulations of the hospital were not at all strict. Inmates were free to go out at certain hours of the day. Those whose wardrobes were presentable, dressed as they thought fit; others wore grey swanskin skirts, linen kerchiefs, and black tulle caps over cambric headbands. Linen was supplied by the establishment.³

Marie Jeanne's arrival produced but little commotion among this assembly of old women, who, disabled by life's hard knocks and buffets, were, for the most part, crossgrained and talkative. It was the same at the Incurables in those days as it is at the Salpêtrière to-day. These castaways quickly became intimate with their dormitory companions, repeating over and over again the story of their lives, and indulging in disclosures, almost similar to confessions, which invariably ended in cries and disputes.

¹ *L'assistance publique pendant la Révolution*, by A. Tuetey, iii., p. 229.

² *Idem*, p. 231. "Some of the paupers live in dormitories, whilst others have private rooms at the side of their beds. They are supplied with linen at the expense of the establishment. Several pay for their own clothes." *Rapport sur les hospices*, Year XI.

³ See Tenon's *Hospices de Paris*, Liancourt's *Visite des hospices*, and *Rapport de Camus sur les hospices*, Year XI.

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

When it became known that the new-comer was the widow of the legendary cobbler there was a storm of exclamations, prompted at first merely by curiosity, but afterwards by a feeling of indignation. The reproaches and maledictions which were heaped upon Marie Jeanne put her in a state of "great anger." At first she only muttered to herself. But, one fine day, she burst into a rage, declaring that "the child was alive," and that she herself "had contributed to its escape." Once her tongue had commenced to wag, she spoke with the "rapidity of the wind," and, with the eagerness of simple people, always on the same subject. She called the Dauphin "her Charles," and never mentioned him but with tenderness.

"You are young, Sister Lucie," she said to one of the nurses; "and you will see him on the throne. But I'm too old for that."

Sister Marianne would never listen to her and "always sent her to her superiors";¹ but Sister Catherine, who was either more complacent or more inquisitive, allowed Mme. Simon to tell her how she had seized the opportunity presented by her removal from the Temple to hide the Dauphin in a "cart filled with clothes." On going out the guards wished to examine the contents of the vehicle; but Simon had "flown into a passion," had jostled past them, and, swearing that it contained his dirty linen and that nobody should poke his nose into it, had passed through the gates. A child, hidden in a paste-board horse,—doubtless one of those skirted steeds which will hold a full-grown man,—had replaced the prisoner in the dungeon.

This invariable story at first astonished but, as years passed, wearied those who had heard it. Mme. Simon, was, moreover, "an intelligent and good-hearted" woman. The nurses did not find that she was the terrible vixen whose portrait historians were beginning to paint in so unflattering a manner: she was gentle and sober, and "regularly, devotedly carried out her religious duties." Ten witnesses agree on all these points.

¹ Statement made in 1848 by the Sisters of Saint Vincent de Paul. *La Restauration convaincue d'usurpation*, by M. Savigny.

MADAME SIMON

One day, at the end of May, 1805, as Mme. Simon was repeating her story for the thousandth time, accompanying it with her usual lamentations, such as, "Ah! if only I had my little Charles, I should not be so unhappy!", a tall, dark, foreign-looking lady, who was visiting the hospital, slipped to her side, and, "touching her with her foot, as a sign to be silent," said "Don't worry yourself." Six weeks later a young man, accompanied by a negro, entered the room and passed in front of Marie Jeanne without stopping. But he raised his hand to his heart and saluted her, at the same time making a sign that she was not to speak . . . Deeply moved, "she recognised the Dauphin," who at last approached her bed and, drawing aside the quilt, said: "I see that they have not deceived me."¹

Mme. Simon related this incident in the evening to her nurse. "My little chub-faced Charles is alive," she said, "for I have seen him . . ." As the faces around her expressed doubt, she lost her temper and exclaimed: "Yes! indeed I saved him. He is living, and I'm sure of it. I would stake my life on it. I have spared him many ills and rendered many great services."² This unknown young man reappeared several times, and the entire hospital followed the adventure with amusement. Dr. Rémuzat, one of the house-pupils, questioned Mme. Simon at length and obtained a very definite statement.³ Dr. Bouchet, another house-pupil,

¹ *National Archives*, F⁷ 6806.

² *La Restauration convaincue d'usurpation*, Savigny.

³ "In 1811 I was house-pupil in a hospital where there were a large number of sick people. One day, on coming on duty, I saw a woman named Simon, and heard her complain of the hospital diet. She said: 'If my children were here, if they knew I was here, they would not leave me without assistance.' I replied: 'I do not see what assistance they could give you, other than that which you receive.'—'Ah!' she exclaimed. 'But you do not know to what children I refer. I mean my little Bourbons, whom I love with all my heart.'—'Your little Bourbons?'—'Yes,' she replied, 'I was governess to the children of Louis XVI.' I was astonished at this, so she repeated what she had said. I then said: 'But the Dauphin is dead!' She replied: 'No, he isn't.' And she proceeded to relate that the Dauphin had been rescued. But whether he was carried off in a bundle or otherwise I cannot exactly say. I put other questions to her, but that was all I learnt. I then went downstairs, and on questioning the Chief Medical Officer about this woman was informed that she was the wife of the jailer of the Temple. This was in 1811. I believe she is dead. I have heard nothing more of her." *Gazette des Tribunaux*, November 3rd, 1834.

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

received a similar disclosure. Gradually the story was noised abroad, but without passing beyond the boundaries of the quarter. In this astonishing city of Paris, however great may be a man's genius or, however important an event may be, both will pass unobserved unless they are aided by that mysterious something which brings universal recognition.

Recollections of the Terror were very much out of fashion under the Empire, and this explains the silence with which Marie Jeanne's revelations were received. But what a change took place on the return of the Bourbons! The tragedies of the Temple were all the rage: it was the fashion, among people of a certain class of society, to have been almost guillotined; and at least a million persons discovered from one day to another that they owed their lives to the 9th of Thermidor. Their desire to live again those horrible days made for Mme. Simon's success. Visitors flocked to see her—enthusiastic Royalists for the most part, but also many ladies and a few military men. General du Fays, Mme. Digney, a woman named Marie Graux, and Mme. Chauvet de Beauregard have left almost identical accounts of their conversations with the former guardian of the Petit Capet. Greatly flattered by her importance, she received them in her closet, or, as she called it, "her drawing-room." She appeared to everyone to be very sincere; common in speech, it is true, but clean and prepossessing. Until a fit of asthmatical coughing interrupted her narrative, she chattered unceasingly. And people left her little room greatly troubled—convinced for life; but filled with that delicious conviction which is tinged with doubt and whence mysteries derive all their charm.

Those who are unaware of the discreet and methodical traditions of French administrative departments will perhaps be astonished at the fact that the police of Louis XVIII. did not think of intervening. It possessed the *dossiers* of all the survivors of the Revolution and the Empire, and these people were spied upon, tracked, and arrested at the first suspicious word. How is it that this old woman was allowed to propagate so harmful a story? For a very simple and wholly administrative reason. The police, at this time, were

MADAME SIMON

busy watching a woman named Giraud, living at Toulon, who was no other, her *dossier* affirmed, than the re-married widow of the cobbler Simon. Mme. Giraud, according to numerous witnesses, gloried in her alleged sojourn in the Temple, and boasted of the ill-treatment which she said she had inflicted on the Dauphin. Her cynicism so revolted the Royalists of Toulon that the General Commissary of Police for the Var sent letter after letter to his Minister to inform him of the anger which this vixen was arousing, and of the threats which were being uttered against her. A petition, covered with the signatures of townspeople, begged the Chamber of Deputies to ease the public conscience by classing the widow of the cobbler Simon amongst regicides. . . . The Minister, whilst approving the purity of these sentiments, tried to avoid a scandal, and advised his agent to request Mme. Giraud to leave Toulon, and, under a false name, to hide in some distant department where she would be under the eye of the police.² But to finish with this incident, let me say that Mme. Giraud's maiden name was Ledroit, that she had never been the wife of any person named Simon, and that she had not been in Paris since 1789.² This wretched woman, the victim of a pitiable farce, was most certainly on the point of being forced to find another place of residence when, on June 9th, 1816, the report of a secret agent was received at the detective department, affirming that "Mère Simon had been for a long time at the Petites Maisons and the Incurables, and that it would be well to question her if she were still there."

An absolute rule of all good Governments is that an administration cannot make a mistake. Accordingly the police examined but reluctantly into the hypothesis that there was a Parisian Mme. Simon. The one in Toulon seemed, in the main, to be more dangerous. However, as

¹ *National Archives*, F⁷ 6806, Dossier 1366.

² Other legends about the Simons have since sprung into existence. Some people have made out that the cobbler lived until 1830, and that he was a swineherd at Joinville. According to this version, he died in that year at the Joinville Hospital. As to Mme. Simon, it has been alleged she died at Béthencourt (Haute-Marne) in 1860, which would have made her 115 years of age. See *L'intermédiaire des Chercheurs et des Curieux*, Vol. ix, pp. 613—670—698, etc.

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

the incidents at the Incurables threatened to develop into a scandal ; as people with the most exalted titles, noble ladies, and ambassadors followed each other into Marie Jeanne's drawing-room ; as the Duchesse d'Angoulême herself had been so imprudent as to go there—disguised, it was affirmed, but nevertheless immediately recognised by Mme. Simon—something had to be done.

On November 13th, 1816, an order went forth "to MM. les officiers de paix to verify this information" and to make the old woman speak "about the fate of her unfortunate prisoner." The report of the two police-agents who undertook the work, Dussieux and Joly, is dated the 15th. They confirmed the existence of a Mme. Simon at the Incurables and her identity with the guardian of Louis XVII. "She boasts," they said, "of having participated in His Majesty's escape ;" but they hastened to add, in order not to displease the authorities, "she appears not to possess her entire reason and her faculties are impaired."¹

On November 16th an "equipage" called at the hospital for Marie Jeanne, who, this time, must have imagined that Fate had some splendid surprise in store for her. She was driven to the Ministry of Police, in the Rue des Saints-Pères, where she was questioned by personages whose identity remained secret. Contrary to all usage, the official report is signed only with her own name.²

This document is a precious one. In it the cobbler's widow showed herself to be full of common sense and prudence. She said only what she wished to say, and evidently understood quite well that that was not the place to reveal the whole of her secret. She declared her entire conviction that the prince did not die in the Temple Tower—"a conviction so deep that nothing could persuade her to the contrary ;" but when pressed to explain the circumstances of his escape she began to be reticent. It is evident, if we compare these vague allegations with the precise statements of her preceding narratives, it is evident, either that she did not wish to speak, or that it was thought prudent not to transcribe her words. She alludes to a laundress's cart,

¹ *National Archives*, F⁷ 6806.

² *Ibid.*

MADAME SIMON

seen by chance, and in which the young prince "might have been" concealed.

It is most regrettable that Mme. Simon was so laconic in her replies to the questions of the authorities, whereas she spoke with such prolixity to her bedroom companions. Her officially recorded declarations—attenuated though they might have been through the prudence of the police—would have been infinitely more welcome to historians than the gossip which has been amplified and commented upon by her auditors. We do not, therefore, possess, in her own words, the story of how the prince escaped. However, it is possible to a certain extent to make good this break in her narrative. In fact, the young man who, in the spring of 1805,—I accept the date given by Mme. Simon, without either discussing or certifying its accuracy,¹—came to see her at the Incurables, and whom she recognised as "her Charles," was later to come forward, in competition with others, as the son of Louis XVI. He is known in the history of the Dauphins as Baron de Richemont. Now Mme. Simon, believing her visitor to be her much regretted "little Bourbon," must surely, in the course of her conversations with him, have related, without the slightest reticence, the whole story of the escape. He, on the other hand, naturally wishful to obtain information, must have encouraged her to open her heart. Moreover, when he published, thirty years later, the account of his interview with Mme. Simon, he would take great care to reproduce the good woman's story with the strictest fidelity, without either adding to it or detracting from it, for fear of contradicting the statements which he knew she had made before the police of Louis XVIII.

We may, therefore, consider De Richemont's narrative as proceeding from Mme. Simon herself. Briefly it is as follows. The child who was smuggled into the Temple in a pasteboard horse on January 19th, 1794, was a mute, rendered insensible by means of a narcotic, and dressed in similar clothes to those in which the Simons had that day attired the Dauphin. The driver of the cart—a royalist agent, she said, named Jenais Ojardia—carried the horse to the second floor of

¹ *National Archives*, F⁷ 6806.

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

the Tower and, profiting by the absence of the guards, whom Simon had led away to the canteen, while Marie Jeanne kept watch, withdrew the mute from the plaything and set him down, fast asleep, on a chair. He then seized the Dauphin, rolled him in some bedclothes and linen, and, under pretence of assisting the complaining Mme. Simon, whose husband left her all the trouble of the removal, carried the whole bundle down to the cart. This happened at a late hour—nine o'clock at night. On the arrival of the new commissaries, who had not seen the Dauphin for a very long time, if, indeed, they had ever seen him, the child was handed over to them; but they showed no astonishment at finding him asleep on a chair. After signing the discharge required by the Simons, they placed the boy, who did not awake, on the bed, without undressing him, and never for a moment suspecting his identity. But on the following day there was a change. The child had to be examined and an attempt made to question him—with the result that the substitution was discovered. What was to be done? Where was Simon to be found? Before whom was a complaint to be laid? And on what ground? Their discharge had been signed and delivered. They alone were guilty, and the guillotine awaited them within twenty-four hours should they be found out.

It was then that the commissaries decided to wall up the prisoner in his room (an inconceivable proceeding unless one admits there was urgent necessity); to bury him in a filthy place “without either fire or light,” says Beauchesne, “a room lit only by the glimmer of a lamp suspended opposite a grating.” For the door was fastened with nails and screws, and henceforth the child was only visible through the barred wicket which was used for the passage of his food. . . . Such great haste was shown in carrying out this arrangement, says the same author, who is above suspicion, that it was “decided upon and undertaken during the day (January 20th), the work being completed the same evening by lantern-light.” And not a word of complaint nor a cry is reported to have been uttered by the child whom they were thus so cruelly immuring!

If Mme. Simon did not relate these details to the police of

MADAME SIMON

the Restoration, she said enough, however, to inspire some disquietude, since, added to the official report of her examination two days afterwards, we find the following note, which gives us food for thought:—

“The police discharged the woman with orders to say nothing on this subject in the future, under pain of the severest punishment. Nevertheless, Mme. Simon, who appears to be in possession of all her senses, continues to relate the same things to those who come into contact with her.”

As regards the final statement, this note is incorrect, for the poor old woman was terrified when she left the Ministry. She thought she had been taken to the Tuileries, and was, moreover, so ignorant of the situation that she almost imagined the King was going to give her back her position of governess to the royal children of France. Her hospital companions saw her return in a state of consternation, and apparently for ever cured of her love of chattering. When inquisitively questioned as to what had transpired she replied: “Don’t speak to me any more about that, for my life is at stake.” It was noticed that henceforth she was “engrossed in thought and very gloomy.” On an attempt being made “to rouse her up,” she would murmur: “I can say nothing more—nothing more.”¹

Mme. Simon, who retained her fixed idea, experienced painful days. Some time after her examination, on it being announced that the Duchesse d’Angoulême was to visit the

¹ “At the Hospital for Incurables, between 1810 and 1815, I was well acquainted with Mme. Simon, upon whom I used to wait. I have often heard her say what she said to everybody—*i.e.*, that the Dauphin was not dead, that she had assisted in his escape, that she was quite sure he was still alive, and that he would some day be seen on the throne. . . . She was several times taken to the Tuileries. The last time she was fetched in an equipage, and on returning she replied to those who spoke to her about the Prince: ‘Don’t speak to me any more about that. I can say nothing more, for my life is at stake.’” Statement of Mme. Marie Graux. *L’Inflexible*, Dec. 16th, 1849.

“All the Sisters agree in stating that, . . . during the Restoration, a Lady came to the Incurables and took away Mme. Simon, who remained absent part of the day. When she returned and was questioned as to where she had been, she replied: ‘I can say nothing more—nothing more.’ From that time it was noticed that she was sad . . . etc.” *La Restauration convaincue d’usurpation*.

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

hospital—this time officially—she “got ready to speak to her.” But in order, doubtless, that the daughter of Louis XVI. should not be saddened by the sight of a woman whose mere name called up so many sad memories, Marie Jeanne was seized at the very moment her Royal Highness’s carriage entered the courtyard and thrust into a small room called the Capharnaüm, where she was kept locked up during the visit. When set free, Madame was already far away. “What a misfortune!” exclaimed the distressed prisoner. “I had a great secret to confide to her!”

Hope returned, however, when the trial of the pseudo-Dauphin Mathurin Bruneau opened at Rouen—a case nowadays quite forgotten, but one over which France was then divided into rival camps. The poor old woman—she was then seventy-two—daily expected to be called as a witness, a judicious hope, moreover, which was shared by everyone around her. She had made ready her slender baggage and, tricked out in her best shawl, sat for hours on her bed, with her eyes fixed on the door, waiting for them to fetch her.

“I know many most serious and important things,” she said, “but I shall only speak of them in a court of justice.”¹

The authorities took good care not to call her, and that was her last disappointment. A few months later she took to her death-bed. On the morning of June 10th, 1819, she piously received the sacrament. Two nurses—Sister Catherine and Sister Augustine—were present during her last hours. The former knelt at the foot of the bed, whilst the priest prepared to administer extreme unction. When he asked the dying woman “if there was anything on her conscience,” Sister Catherine heard Marie Jeanne utter these words: “I shall always say what I have said.”

Sister Augustine also declared “that in the presence of death and the sacrament, the woman Simon wished to confirm the testimony which she had always given in regard to the escape from the Temple and the existence of the prince who had been entrusted to her keeping.”²

¹ *National Archives*, F⁷ 6806.

² Statement of M. Jean Noyer, a Paris doctor. *Mémoires d'un Contemporain*, 2nd edition, p. 60.

MADAME SIMON

On that day Mme. Simon died. The poor woman's funeral procession, as it emerged from the courtyard of the hospital on the following day, attracted the attention of idlers even less than the passing of Simon and Marie Jeanne had done, in the Rue des Cordeliers, when proceeding to Saint-Côme on their wedding-day. Her common name was, however, for ever attached to the recollection of the royal tragedies of the Temple, and the passers-by who, indifferent, raised their hats in the presence of this coffin, which was being taken to the common grave at the Vaugirard Cemetery, little suspected that with her was to be buried, perhaps irrevocably, the answer to one of the most bewildering enigmas of history.

P.S.—My sole object in this essay has been, by the aid of original documents, to draw the portrait of the guardian of the Dauphin, and I make no pretence whatever of solving the problem of the death in the Temple or of the survival of the son of Louis XVI., a problem the bibliography of which already includes more than a thousand volumes or pamphlets, and which, nevertheless, in the present state of the question, cannot furnish a historian who confines himself exclusively to facts with fifty serious lines. In my opinion it is now proved that Mme. Simon spoke the truth, since we find, on checking her statements by means of documents which she could not have known, that she is in accord with these on every point. A mystery remains—that Jenais Ojardia, the chief actor in the escape, whose trace and very name have never been found elsewhere than in Marie Jeanne's narratives, and whom one might believe was a purely mythological supernumerary, created by the good woman's imagination for the needs of the cause. But, at the moment of concluding this study, an obliging correspondent informs me that this personage really existed. His name was not Jenais Ojardia, as given by Mme. Simon—who had heard the name pronounced but little troubled herself about the way it was spelt—but Genès Ojardias. He was born in 1761 at Thiers, Puy-de-Dôme, in the parish of Saint Genès, and he had two brothers named Amable and Jacques. The last named, a priest and an emigrant, later became Superior of the Thiers seminary.

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

Genès, who left Auvergne in 1786 to seek his fortune in Paris, was put on the list of emigrants and his property was sold by the State. Up to the present time the date of his death is unknown. Here, again, the important point is that Mme. Simon spoke the truth, and that as regards the name of the agent whom she alleged assisted in the escape of the Dauphin, as well as regards the other details of her narrative, her memory was infallible and her veracity unimpeachable. The enigma, however, remains unsolved, and those who have studied the question will agree in recognising that these new data appear, at first sight, to make the solution still more remote.

BAPTISTE

IN the life of Dumouriez there are sufficient war adventures, political intrigues, and love affairs to stock a dozen novelists with plots. His grandfather, who was one of Molière's lackeys, had thirty-two children, twenty-four of whom were sons, a fact which to begin with is out of the common. The eye loses its way among the Jeans, Pierre Françaises, Marie Annes, Anne Edouardes, Léons, and Nicolases in the genealogical table formed by this multitudinous offspring. After the birth of the twenty-first child—we cannot trace all of them—the father's ingenuity in finding fresh names was visibly exhausted, so he gave the thing up as hopeless and called all the boys François. How bewildering it must have been in such a family! ¹

It was from one of these Françaises that Dumouriez sprang.² He also received the same Christian name, which was not, as one might think, his only patrimony. All these fine fellows had worked so hard that they had attained most honourable positions and were in easy circumstances. Thus, in 1760, when twenty-one years of age, the future general, after brilliant feats of arms during the war in Hanover, found himself a captain decorated with the Cross of Saint-Louis,³ which

¹ On the subject of this genealogy, see Chapters VI and VII of M. Georges Monval's learned and curious work *Le Laquais de Molière*.

² He was born at Cambrai on January 26th, 1739. He had two sisters, born between 1734 and 1738. One, Nicole Amélie, died Abbess of Fervacques, at Saint-Quentin; the other, Anne Charlotte, married, in 1767, Baron Jean Ferdinand César de Schonberg, a Saxon, who was brigadier of the King's armies and died a lieutenant-general in the service of France.—*Le Laquais de Molière*.

³ *Mémoires de Dumouriez*.

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

was not a bad beginning for the grandson of a man who had appeared on the boards in the livery of Monsieur Jourdain.

At the close of the campaign the young officer reached his garrison at Saint-Lô by short stages, and arrived at Pont-Audemer at the house of one of his aunts, who was married to Messire J. J. Léonard Legris de la Potterie, Civil and Criminal Lieutenant of the Bailiwick. By a former marriage with a M. de Fontenay, this lady, one of the thirty-two children of Molière's lackey, had an exceedingly pretty daughter who called herself Estienne de Boissi. It must be explained that the members of this family, so closely connected with the stage, tricked themselves out, according to the custom of the times, in all sorts of fancy names, a fact which did not simplify their genealogies. The mother of the future conqueror of Jemmapes, who was also the daughter of an actor named Patissier, became Mlle. de Châteauneuf. The name even of the grandfather, Du Mouriès, became a pseudonym for that of Dupérier.

Captain Dumouriez did not waste his time at Pont-Audemer—he fell passionately in love with his beautiful cousin Estienne. The mother, naturally tender and romantic, looked with a kindly eye on the lovers; but M. Dumouriez, senior, who detested his sister and niece, exercised his authority by forbidding the marriage. Supplications, tears, resolutions to commit suicide, plans for an abduction, long, passionate epistles in the style of the *Nouvelle Héloïse*, which was used as a model by all lovers of those days, and, finally, confinement of the young lady in a convent, such were the vicissitudes of this stormy incident. The officer left Normandy in despair and disappeared for ten years, during which he found time to carry out two or three secret missions in Genoa, Madrid, and Lisbon, to become acquainted with Mme. du Barry's brother-in-law, to undertake the conquest of Corsica, to rouse Hungary to revolt, to arm a squadron of pandours on his own account, to excite Poland to insurrection and fight against Suvaroff, to set Gustave III. at loggerheads with the Swedish aristocracy, and, finally, to be arrested at Hamburg as he was landing with a small army to conquer Scandinavia. There was nothing uncommon in such exploits in those times.



BAPTISTE.

*(From an engraving in the Cabinet des Estampes at the
Bibliothèque Nationale.)*

BAPTISTE

Frenchmen of that generation were consumed with an extraordinary desire for adventure and novelty, a fact which explains how they so cheerfully broke up the old world and conquered affrighted Europe. These daring fellows must, indeed, have amused themselves immensely.

This prologue to the life of Dumouriez concluded, like everything at that time, with the Bastille, whence, at the end of six months he was transferred, as a prisoner of State, to the Château de Caen. He came out of prison on the death of Louis XV., and having nothing to do in Normandy decided to see his cousin Estienne de Boissi. He found her much less pretty than in former years, but still faithful to the vows which they had exchanged. So their marriage was celebrated at the Saint-Ouen church, at Pont-Audemer, on September 13th, 1774.¹

So we find Dumouriez settled in Normandy,—as settled, at any rate, as such a man could be. He had obtained the post of Governor of Cherbourg, with the title of “Colonel à la suite,” and frequently went to Pont-Audemer to rest with his wife’s family.² One day it happened that his *valet de chambre* left him, so he asked his mother-in-law to find him a trustworthy servant who could accompany him on his travels from place to place. She recommended a young man of seventeen whom she had taken into her service when quite a child. He was born in the neighbouring town of Brestot on October 1st, 1768, and his name was Jean Pierre Louis Renard, though, like all *valets de chambre*, he was known by that of Baptiste.¹ He was a steady, neat, careful but quite insignificant servant, and had nothing in common with the Frontins of the old comedy except his exterior: up-turned nose, light eyes, and beardless face. Baptiste was

¹ “This marriage was not a happy one. Yet it was the occasion of a double sacrifice on the part of the future General. In spite of the fact that his bride was disfigured by small-pox, he insisted on marrying her, and at the same time sold five thousand volumes of his library. The couple separated after fourteen years of married life.”—*Le Laquais de Molière*.

² *Mémoires de Dumouriez, passim*.

³ Renard was born on October 1st, 1768, at Brestot, in the arrondissement of Pont-Audemer, of very poor parents. He was sent to Pont-Audemer at an early age to find employment, and was at first one of the servants of the president of the Court of Assessors of Subsidies of that town.

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

delighted to wear the Colonel's livery. But he little suspected, poor fellow! that Fate had placed its pitiless hand upon him, and that forthwith his life would be spent in the midst of the most tragic adventures.

Baptiste accompanied his master to Cherbourg, Dumouriez having been promoted, in 1787, to the rank of brigadier-general and, shortly afterwards, to that of major-general.¹ He came with him to Paris, where Dumouriez settled at the beginning of the Revolution; he followed him to the Champagne Army and was a humble actor at the battles in the Argonne.² Up to that time Baptiste was without a history. His duties consisted in looking after the cage of two yellow canaries to which Dumouriez was so attached, and which he carried about with him everywhere—even on to the battlefield.³ Presumably, however, events resulted in Baptiste's promotion from the rank of *valet de chambre* to that of brusher, a position which sometimes enabled him to leave the baggage and join the General's escort. And thus he chanced to play a part in the action at Jemmapes.

In order to appreciate the true value of Baptiste's heroic act on this famous day we must possess other documents than Dumouriez's own account. If we are to believe the General's *Memoirs*, it happened that the Drouin brigade, marching to attack the village of Jemmapes, about eleven o'clock in the morning, hesitated before a column of the enemy's cavalry, and, seized with panic, took refuge behind a group of houses. Baptiste, who was following his master on horseback, witnessed the disorder, set off at a gallop, put

¹ "I entered the service of ex-General Dumouriez in 1785 when, at the most, seventeen years of age. My duties were so much the less burdensome as I had succeeded in obtaining his esteem and confidence, and in this respect my position as a servant was everything that was agreeable." *Petition drawn up in the name of Baptiste Renard* by Crochon, former representative of the people on the Council of the Five Hundred.—*Revue de la Normandie*, March 31st, 1869.

² "In 1791 General Dumouriez was despatched to take command of the Army of the North. I followed him, and, truly, it would have given me pain to abandon him, whatever might have been the danger. Although *valet de chambre*, I was present at all the battles which he fought, and on this point I call to witness all the corps which then formed part of the Army."—*Petition drawn up in the name of Baptiste Renard*.

³ *Les Allemands à Vulmy*, by A. Thenaud, Rheims, 1889.

BAPTISTE

Drouin to shame for his want of courage, rallied the brigade, brought it into line again, and recommenced the fight. He even took the initiative of ordering seven squadrons to support the movement and thus decided the fate of the battle.

We have no reason to doubt this act of bravery, since nobody has contradicted Dumouriez, whose narrative, accordingly, has assumed a certain amount of authority. Tradition, moreover, has accepted it.¹ Michelet, in perpetuating it, observes that the battle of Jemmapes resembles that of Waterloo, "with the difference that the steep declivity at Jemmapes presented far more difficulties than the little hill on which the Empire was shattered." That is almost equivalent to saying that Baptiste was a greater genius than Napoleon. So let it be. Nevertheless it must be recognised that Dumouriez on this, as on other occasions, is terribly unreliable. He is cruelly unjust towards his lieutenants. Ferrand, he says, lacked presence of mind, Dampierre was not at the head of his corps, and Beurnonville only thought of retreating. . . . Now, Ferrand and Dampierre showed an intrepidity which decided the victory. Indeed, their courage was such that, when the French troops entered Mons on the following day, Dampierre shared with the General-in-chief the crown awarded to the conqueror. This was insupportable to Dumouriez's embittered pride, so, rather than mention his generals' names, side by side with his own, he preferred to

¹ "Some columns hesitated, and an entire brigade, remaining in the rear, broke the line. Disorder and confusion were about to seize the army when a young man in Dumouriez's service, named Baptiste Renard, inspired, says the General, by a heroic impulse, proceeded to the scene of disorder, rallied the infantry, advanced seven squadrons and recommenced the fight . . ."—*Victoires et Conquêtes des Français*, Vol. VII.

"A brigade, seeing the Austrian Cavalry issue through the opening, fell back and exposed the flank of our columns. At that moment young Baptiste Renard, a mere servant of Dumouriez, inspired by a courageous and intelligent impulse, dashed to the general of the brigade, reproached him with his weakness, pointed out the danger, and brought him back to the opening."—*Révolution Française*, Thiers, Vol. III.

Dumouriez expresses himself as follows in his *Mémoires*: "The success of this battle was principally due, first . . . fourthly, to the General's *valet de chambre*, Baptiste Renard, who, with astonishing presence of mind and courage, repaired General Drouin's error, and rallied both the brigade of the latter and the cavalry, which had been brought to a standstill through a momentary hesitation."

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

exaggerate an incident of the fight and disdainfully remark : "It was my *valet de chambre* who won the battle." This is only an inference, but, considering the General's extraordinary egoism, how probable it is. The art with which he improvised a leading rôle for this unenvied supernumerary is, to begin with, strong presumptive evidence.

In fact, the day after the victory, on November 7th, Baptiste left Mons in company with Lieutenant-Colonel Larue and took the mail coach for Paris, carrying with him an address from Dumouriez to the Convention. They made the journey in thirty-six hours.

The Assembly opened the sitting of the 9th at ten o'clock in the morning, under the presidency of Hérault de Séchelles, He was proceeding to examine the former Minister of Marine, Lacoste, who had been impeached the day before,¹ when one of the secretaries, Jean Debry, was seen to hurry across the floor of the House and mount the Tribune. In his hand was a letter, a short report from Dumouriez on the Mons victory, which he proceeded to read, frequently interrupted by applause from all benches.

Hardly had Debry finished when Larue appeared at the bar.

"I am only a soldier," he said, "and not an orator. I am merely going to relate a heroic deed, for a soldier of the Republican army should never open his mouth except to tear open his cartridge. I present to the legitimate admiration of the Assembly, Baptiste Renard, the *valet de chambre* of General Dumouriez, who dashed, with sword in hand, into the midst of the fight, rallied a regiment of dragoons and four battalions of volunteers, placed himself at their head, rushed on the enemy, was the first, with Dumouriez, to jump into the trenches, and decided the capture of an important position. When asked by the General what reward he desired, Baptiste replied : 'The honour to wear the national uniform.'"²

This short speech electrified the Convention. Larue made a sign, the door-curtain was drawn aside, and Baptiste, dressed in livery, and doubtless a little out of countenance,

¹ *Archives parlementaires*. Sitting of November 9th, 1792.

² *Moniteur*. November, 1792.

BAPTISTE

advanced to the bar in person. Throwing himself into his arms, Larue several times pressed him to his heart. The entire Assembly, which had risen to its feet, wept with enthusiasm. When the President had obtained comparative silence he invited the hero to enter "the temple of Laws." The bar was then drawn aside and Baptiste, hat in hand, crossed the house in the midst of loud applause. Philippeaux requested "that the president give a fraternal kiss to this brave man," a proposal which Hérault de Séchelles carried out amidst general transports of joy. Handsome Barère, wishful of obtaining a share in the ovation, was heard above the uproar to shout, with his Gascon accent, "that the Romans commanded great and noble actions with an oak leaf," and "that honour was the treasure of the ancient republics."

"Well!" he concluded, "let us draw from this treasure a military equipment for this brave citizen."

Sergent improved on this by proposing that a rank should be bestowed on the confused Baptiste, who already pictured himself leaving the Convention with the position of Minister of War. The proposal was immediately voted, in the midst of loud and repeated applause, the Assembly decreeing that Baptiste should be armed, equipped, and mounted at the expense of the Republic.¹ In addition, General Dumouriez was requested to give him a position on his staff. Baptiste then saluted and went out, whilst the members still applauded and the Convention proceeded to resume its examination of poor Lacoste who had been set on one side during this interlude.²

¹ "A few moments later the president announced that the Minister had just sent him the Official Account of the battle. He immediately read it, as well as the following letter: 'I venture to recommend to you Citizen Baptiste, my *valet de chambre*, who conducted himself with the greatest intrepidity and intelligence by rallying a regiment of dragoons and two battalions of national guards. He simply asks to be allowed to wear the uniform of a national guard and will be perfectly happy.'" *Moniteur*, November, 1792.

² Baptiste's own impressions, which we find summed up as follows in the already quoted *Petition*, must here be given:—

"... by a happy chance, I succeeded in rallying two battalions of infantry and a squadron of cavalry which had just been put to rout by the enemy. I rallied them, as I say, and, charging afresh at their head, the victory turned in favour of the French. The next day, the 7th, the town

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

I do not know where Baptiste, who was doubtless in a hurry to cast aside his livery, procured an officer's uniform ; but he was not long in finding one. Barely an hour had elapsed from the time of his first appearance than Calon, one of the inspector-commissaries of the Assembly, asked to be allowed to speak.

"The Convention," he said, "decreed that Citizen Baptiste Renard should receive a national uniform. Behold him wearing it!"¹

Baptiste advanced in the midst of a fresh storm of bravos. The president begged him to come forward, pressed him to his heart, handed him a sword of honour, and requested him to take a seat among the legislators. Larue, who was greatly animated by his oratorical *début*, continually embraced his companion and shouted to the spectators: "This is the brave man who, with Dumouriez, was the first to jump into the enemy's trenches," a statement which threw the entire house into a state of joy and redoubled the applause.

Seated in a chair near to that of the president, Baptiste remained until the conclusion of the sitting, which lasted until four o'clock. He left the parliament-house with his head in the clouds. Never had glory been so suddenly thrust upon a man ; never had a Frenchman been the object of such honours ; never had so quick a change taken place in a man's career. A valet the day before, Baptiste saw himself, as though by magic, adulated, applauded, and promoted to a rank which entitled him to command in his turn. It was permissible for him to dream that the most extraordinary fortune was in store for him and, doubtless, he did not miss

of Mons was in our hands. General Dumouriez immediately despatched his aide-de-camp Larue with orders that I was to accompany him and carry the news of the success to Paris. Consequently, he sent the president a letter in which he informed him of the part I had taken in this affair. I was granted the honour of attending the sitting, received the president's fraternal kiss, and was asked by him what I desired as a reward. My reply was simple,—that I desired the honour of wearing the national uniform. This demand was immediately granted me, and the Convention decreed that I should be appointed Captain Aide-de-Camp to General Dumouriez. It also decreed that a sword, bearing the following inscription, should be handed to me: 'Donné par la Convention à Baptiste Renard, pour la récompense de la prise de Mons.'

¹ *Archives parlementaires*, November, 1792.

BAPTISTE

the opportunity. Paris put the finishing touch to his intoxication by the reception which it accorded the hero. He was applauded in the streets, and on leaving the theatre or the galleries of the Palais Royal crowds of people gathered around him. For three days Baptiste was lionised ; he was the man whom it was fashionable to have seen and upon whom every woman doted. His portrait, even, was engraved, forming a pendant, in the same oval, to that of Dumouriez.

On once more setting off along the North road, dressed in his smart captain aide-de-camp's uniform, and accompanied by two horses and a servant, Baptiste must have felt that he was the happiest man on earth.

Alas ! he had not even time to wear out his first tunic, nor was given an occasion of unsheathing the sword which the Republic had presented to him. The poor fellow returned to camp only to be present at his former master's lamentable end. He was a witness, at the Saint-Amand headquarters, of the arrest of the Commissaries of the Convention and their surrender by Dumouriez to the enemy, and was one of that little group of faithful followers who accompanied the general, hooted by his troops and followed by French bullets, to the Austrian camp. This strange escort was composed of a prince, two women on horseback, and a few officers, including Baptiste, who lost his two horses in the scrimmage.¹

He escorted his chief to Brussels. But his position there became critical, Dumouriez no longer needing an aide-de-

¹ "It was on the 4th or 5th of April, 1793, that my never-ending misfortunes began. My general, overwhelmed with disgust, formed, without my knowledge, the plan of deserting the cause of liberty. A numerous escort, of which I was one, was ordered to accompany him. All were ignorant of his intentions ; all, like myself, knew but how to obey. Accompanying the general, we soon passed through all the lines of the army, when, suddenly, a battalion (that of Deux-Sèvres) discharged a round of musketry among us. We then no longer doubted that an unfair advantage had been taken of our submission to the orders of a superior. But how were we to go back ? It would have been difficult, and as a second volley of bullets awaited us our destruction would have been certain. Besides, we could only, at that time, have a suspicion of the general's intentions. Soon, however, we could no longer doubt what they were. We escorted him to Brussels, where we spent a few days. We all wondered what was going to happen to us. Proposals to enter foreign service were made to us, but were received by the majority of the escort with disdain." *Petition drawn up in the name of Baptiste Renard.*

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

camp and his resources being so low that he could not afford to keep a valet. Baptiste was, therefore, without employment. Nevertheless, if we are to believe a letter published in the *Moniteur* for May 17th, 1793, he followed his old master to Stuttgart. "Ex-general Dumouriez," writes the correspondent, "has been met in this town. His carriage contained eight loaded pistols, and in his hand was a stick armed with a dagger. His aide-de-camp Baptiste never leaves him. . . ."

However, he did at last leave him. Baptiste, who could support poverty and the loss of his illusions without a complaint, was unable to put up with exile so joyfully. He was seized with a desire to see his native village of Brestot once more. He knew that his compatriots, on hearing of his deeds at Jemmapes, had improvised a patriotic *fête* in his honour and had carried his aged mother in triumph. Also that when the national agent who presided over the ceremony had asked the good woman "what the country could do for her" she had replied: "Since you are so good, I would gladly accept a petticoat to replace this very old one."¹ Baptiste, a deserter in spite of himself, a traitor through fidelity to his master, an emigrant against his will—three crimes, the least of which would have sent him to the guillotine—hoped to meet with sufficient sympathy in Brestot to enable him to lie in hiding there until better days should arrive. So, notwithstanding the dangers which awaited him in France, he set out for the frontier. Dumouriez, on saying farewell, divided the whole of his fortune with him—two gold pieces.

Baptiste set off on foot and was seven years on the road!² He travelled without a passport, begging for work in the towns through which he passed, or living on charity. His sad and eventful travels are briefly related in the petition which he later sent to the First Consul. When crossing the Rhine he met a body of Bavarian troops, who arrested him as a spy and threw him into prison for three months.

¹ *Revue de la Normandie*. Article by M. A. Cassel. March 31st, 1869.

² All the details of this journey are taken from the petition which Baptiste, later, addressed to the Minister of Justice, or from recollections published in 1869 in the *Revue de Normandie*.

BAPTISTE

Renouncing the plan of reaching Normandy by land, he then determined to make the attempt by water, and courageously undertook to cross the whole of Germany in order to reach Hamburg. On arriving at the port he was dying of hunger and worn out, and had no other resources than a few worthless assignats. Chance throwing him in the way of an upholsterer, named Jaunelle, he became his apprentice. Baptiste remained in Hamburg until the Year VIII, when home-sickness once more made him chafe with impatience.

"The desire to see my native country," he wrote, "manifested itself to such a degree that I determined to face any danger in order to satisfy it. So I called upon Citizen Quiétric, vice-Commissary of the French Republic at Hamburg, and informed him of my plan, which was encountered by many obstacles. But by dint of prayers, and having declared that I wished to enlist in the army which was being formed at Dijon, he at last decided to grant me a passport to that place. . . . I determined to obtain news of my unfortunate family when on the way. . . ."

This time his journey lasted four months. At last he passed through Rouen, and at Bourg-Achard he slept for the last time before reaching home. The date was January 18th, 1800. At noon he would be at his mother's house. With a light heart, he stepped along the well-known road winding through the familiar landscape. On reaching the hamlet of La Chapelle, only a quarter of an hour's walk from his destination, he turned into a wine-shop to expend his few remaining pence over a bottle of cider and a hunch of bread. Hardly had he crossed the threshold, to continue his journey, than he found himself seized by the collar by two gendarmes. Two days before, not far from that place, a band of robbers had attacked the diligence, which was carrying public money, and an order had been given to arrest all suspicious travellers. Now, Baptiste was an eminently suspicious character. He stammered, dare not tell his story, and the only reference he could produce was the passport viséed for Dijon. So the gendarmes took him off to the village of Rougemontiers, where he was thrown into prison.

In such an extremity as this he decided that the slightest

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

reticence would be fatal. The unhappy man succeeded in proving so victoriously that he was not a highwayman, but the famous Baptiste, the conqueror of Jemmapes, Dumouriez's aide-de-camp, that the local authorities, in view of the prisoner's importance, determined to send him, under a strong escort, to Paris. On February 26th he was imprisoned in the Abbaye.

This time, however, his imprisonment was short. Baptiste succeeded in getting a former member of the Council of the Five Hundred, named Crochon, to take an interest in his case, and this influential man drew up for him the petition from which I have already quoted a few passages. Moreover, Baptiste was no longer "dangerous." Hebetated by so many misfortunes, he had become a gloomy, habitually silent man, buried in deep reverie. Set at liberty by order of the First Consul, he resumed his journey, by short stages, to Brestot, where he found his mother still alive. For a short time he lived with her, but their life in common becoming insupportable, he took up his quarters, hermit-fashion, in an old, abandoned bakehouse on the outskirts of the village of Cauverville. Although only thirty-five, he had the appearance of an old man, so weary was his step, so bowed his head and so dull his look. His neighbours often tried to get into conversation with him. They recalled his happy days, questioned him about Jemmapes, and on the subject of his triumph at the Convention; but "he never replied in a precise and affirmative manner; he appeared not to care for this subject of conversation, and was never the first to mention it."¹

Thus did he vegetate for more than twenty years. Having neither a pension nor resources of any kind, he became a

¹ "Baptiste Renard, wrote one of his former neighbours to us in 1861, lived at a quarter of an hour's distance from the place which I then inhabited, and came to my house several times a week. I often questioned him about the splendid act of courage attributed to him and his consequent presentation to the Convention, but he never answered me in a precise and affirmative manner. He appeared not to care for this subject of conversation and was never the first to mention it. His conversation was, moreover, unconnected, and his ideas were not over-lucid. According to what I have been told, his faculties became impaired during his imprisonment." *Revue de la Normandie*, March, 1869.

BAPTISTE

barber. But his strange, wild look was disquieting, and customers were few and far between. So he chose another calling—that of an itinerant painter. Those who employed him gave him a few pence out of charity. Soon he got tired of travelling about the country, with his paint-pot on his back, and tried the profession of chair-mender. Seated on a stone, in front of the door of his bakehouse, he could be seen plaiting the cane with his clumsy hands; or else he remained idle for hours together, motionless and with fixed gaze, as though he were crushed under the weight of a bitter disappointment.

One day his door remained closed. Entering the hovel, the neighbours found it deserted. On inquiry it was found that Baptiste had been seen the day before walking towards the valley of the Risle, in the direction of Corneville.

The next day—May 10th, 1827—a Manneville thatcher, named Louis Barbey, when fishing in the river near Roys Mill, perceived a body sticking in the reeds. He called for help, some one ran up, and the body of poor Baptiste, who had drowned himself during the night, was drawn out of the water. Before me is his death certificate, stating that “Jean Baptiste Renard, ex-soldier and recently chair-mender, bachelor, died yesterday in this commune of Manneville, near Roys Mill or Bacquets’ Inn. . . .”

He was buried in a corner of the cemetery, and no one thought of carving a name upon the tomb.

BARON GÉRAMB

ON April 20th, 1810, there arrived in London, on board the English frigate *Italienne*, bound from Cadiz, a man who was as remarkable for the beauty of his features as for the singularity of his dress. He had a straight nose, a high forehead, dark hair flowing on to his neck, blue eyes, a dull complexion, and a long fine hussar-like moustache. He wore a Hungarian frogged jacket, a fur pelisse fastened across his breast by a silver death's-head, Wellington boots, tight-fitting breeches, gauntlet-gloves, and on his head an astracan colback with an aigret of heron feathers. His belt contained a perfect arsenal of weapons: sixty cartridges, six small pistols, a life preserver, and a dagger. At his side swung a large scimitar, as well as a sabretache on which, on a black velvet ground, again figured a skull and cross-bones. The people of London—not easily astonished, so accustomed were they to all sorts of eccentricities—were simply astounded by this masquerader.

It was rumoured that this fantastical person was no other than Murat, whose reputation in the United Kingdom equalled that of Durow, a clown at the Astley Circus who supported, at arm's length, a platform on which eighteen grenadiers performed manœuvres. But on inquiry being made, it was found that the visitor was a Hungarian officer, named Baron Géramb; and that he had come to submit to the British Government a sure way of crushing Napoleon's power in five months.

The pandoor took up his quarters in a fine house at Bayswater, and began to live in the most expensive fashion. As he



GENERAL FERDINAND, BARON DE GÉRAMB.

BARON GÉRAMB

had been seen at the houses of Cabinet Ministers, and was continually boasting of his connections, he succeeded in obtaining credit on all sides, and was thus able to provide himself with splendid horses, a fine livery, and costly furniture. He seemed to be a man who had long been accustomed to luxury, one to whom money was no object, and this raised him still higher in the estimation of his tradesmen.

Baron Géramb was received by Lord Wellesley, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, and explained "his plan" to him. A good and voluble speaker, possessed of unbounded self-confidence, he talked loudly and at great length, representing himself to be an important individual and unhesitatingly posing as a personal rival of Napoleon. He had made a solemn vow, he said, to oppose the invasion of the French whenever he encountered it. His hatred of Bonaparte had inspired him with the idea of detaching all the foreigners, including Hessians, Dutch, Illyrians, Poles, Saxons, Spaniards, and Piedmontese, who had been enrolled by force in the imperial armies, of supplying them with the means of landing in small bodies in England, of adding to them the enormous number of refractory conscripts who, from Rome to the mouths of the Elbe, were hunted by the entire gendarmery of the empire, and of thus forming a tremendous army which could be landed on the Normandy coast. As a personal contribution, Géramb offered the Coalition 24,000 Croats, whom he would equip and arm at his own expense and deliver in London at cost price, plus the freight.

England was then the great centre for everything which was hostile to Napoleon. As the Government appealed for every assistance, Lord Wellesley accepted Baron Géramb's proposal. Not that he had any intention of considering his wild scheme, but in order to allow time for the police which the Cabinet maintained on the Continent to make inquiries about the man and find out in what way he could be employed.

The particulars supplied were unfavourable. The police did not at first succeed in discovering Géramb's native country. He himself said that he was an Austrian, but the general opinion was that he was born in France. Others

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

affirmed that he was a Hungarian Jew, and that having married the widow of a genuine Baron Géramb he had exchanged his ill-sounding name for that of his wife's first husband. However, authentic or not, Baron Géramb had always been a hot-headed man. As far back as his mysterious life could be traced he was found to be a vain, boastful fellow, ever eager to thrust himself forward. He had climbed the dome of St. Peter's at Rome at the risk of breaking his neck, in order to write his name on the bronze ball which surmounts it; he had fought a duel on Mount Vesuvius during an eruption; and he had been seen at Vienna, on the occasion of the Fête-Dieu procession, to tear off his coat and throw it at the feet of the Empress, who hesitated to pass over an uncarpeted portion of a thoroughfare. This gallant act decided Géramb's fortune. Admitted to the Court and promoted to the office of Chamberlain, he begged to be granted "the favour of dying for the Austrian Monarchy"; and as this happened in 1809 and Napoleon, after Ratisbon, was advancing on Vienna by forced marches, he was authorised to raise a corps of volunteers. Géramb at once took up his quarters in a fine house, appealed to the young nobility and the wealthy middle-classes, and on the first day sold eighty lieutenants' commissions. He frequented the cafés on the Graben in a brilliant uniform escorted by "his aides-de-camp," who were no less magnificently dressed. For a fortnight they were to be seen everywhere, but at the end of that time they suddenly disappeared. Napoleon was at the gates of Vienna, so Géramb, accused of stealing military supplies and degraded from his rank of Chamberlain, prudently hid himself.¹

He was next heard of at Palermo, introducing himself to

¹ Such, at any rate, are the assertions of the police. But allowance must be made for their traditional exaggerations and things restored to their true magnitude. It appears most improbable that Géramb could have been shamefully degraded in March 1809, under an accusation of theft, since three months later, on July 19th, 1809, the Emperor of Austria made him a baron, which was then a high title and much sought after. According to a family tradition, Géramb was removed from Vienna for showing too great a gallantry towards the Empress; but there was nothing dishonouring in his disgrace.

(Private Information).

BARON GÉRAMB

Queen Mary Caroline on behalf of the Emperor of Austria, "who consented," he stated, "to deprive himself of his services in favour of the Sicilian Court." Mary Caroline, who had a weakness for handsome men, was fascinated by the Baron's long moustache and light blue eyes. At the end of six weeks Gérard, covered with decorations and more beplumed than ever, was reviewing the troops, accompanying the Queen on her drives, appearing in the royal box at the theatre, and showing a familiarity which shocked the inhabitants. When the favourite passed, all heads remained covered, and there was much murmuring. Perceiving that a storm was gathering, Gérard did not wait for it to break, but, loftily announcing that the Cortes called for his presence, at once left for Spain. He landed at Cadiz at the end of January, 1810; called upon the Austrian *Chargé d'Affaires* as the envoy of Metternich; offered to raise a legion of deserters at his own cost, which obtained him the rank of general, a few more embellishments for his pelisse, and a passport for England; and, finally, sailed for that country, to float a loan and "solicit the support of King George."

Gérard had had many other adventures; but such, in short, was the course of his life.

As soon as these particulars, true or false, reached London and enabled the Government to form an opinion of Gérard, he was discreetly watched by the police. He, on the other hand, was convinced that he had dazzled the practical English people, who then held the purse strings of the world, and that he had attained the height of his fortune and renown. Yet he had failed to bring about a *rapprochement* with the *émigrés*. The Duc de Berry, having seen him at a meeting, disdainfully decided that "this charlatan was rather a general for the Jacobins than a general against them." Moreover, Gérard, ill-disposed people declared, was a little too lucky in gaming houses; and he spoke of his 24,000 Croats as though they were about to land and already triumphed over Bonaparte's downfall.

When Lord Wellesley, who never entered upon a thing thoughtlessly, had ascertained the baron's true value, he summoned him to the ministry, and, handing him a hundred

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

guineas, advised him to leave British territory within three weeks. Géraumb replied in a very high-handed manner, first of all claiming payment of his travelling and living expenses, as well as the cost of the equipment of the 24,000 Croats who would, he said, have started on their journey. He declared that all his French friends in London would oppose this robbery of a man who had ruined himself for the Coalition. On the impassible Secretary of State asking him to mention "these friends," he named "M. Dubost, a Lyons painter—a young man from Bordeaux whose name he could not remember—and a certain Deshayes, a dancer at the King's Theatre." He swore, moreover, that he would never leave British soil until he had received £50,000, the amount of his disbursements.¹ Returning home, he barricaded himself in his house; placed a placard on the roof bearing the words "My home is my castle!"; and turning his servants into the street told them to announce that he had five hundred pounds of gunpowder and provisions for two months, that he was prepared to undergo a long siege awaiting the 24,000 Croats, who could not fail to arrive shortly, and that he would blow himself up, with his house, horses, and the whole of Bayswater, rather than capitulate.

A small body of policemen blockaded the house, and, as can

¹ The *Journal de l'Empire* for April 28th, 1812, published Géraumb's protest against the "crimes" of the English people. A few lines of this choice specimen of eloquence, which is all the more astonishing as it was sincere, are worth quoting.

"When I think of what I have done for it (the British Government), my soul is roused to indignation, and tears of blood fall from my eyes. I repent of what I have done and make amends in the presence of Europe. I shall leave this country as soon as I have satisfied all my creditors, for I would rather die than leave behind me anyone who could complain of my delicacy. I arrived in London with £8,000 in cash and a legitimate claim on the Government of more than £20,000. To-day I am stripped of everything and afoot, carrying with me but my sword, my uniform and the bitter recollection of the infamous treatment which I have received. I shall proceed to the sea shore and engage some fishing boat to land me on the shores of a country where, in spite of the calumnies of the pamphleteers in the pay of British Ministers, I shall be received with the generosity which was always the character of a great people. At the sight of me people on all sides will shout: 'Behold how England rewards foreigners who are so blind as to devote themselves to her service!'; and this cry of indignation will resound throughout the whole continent."

BARON GÉRAMB

easily be imagined, crowds of people assembled to watch the bellicose baron at the windows, armed to the teeth, rolling his eyes, sharpening swords, charging blunderbusses with grape-shot, making threatening gestures, and defying King George and his cowardly satellites. Whilst he was engaged in this theatrical display, Inspectors Hamilton and Craig made their way to the back of the house, broke open the garden gate, and boldly entered the den of the terrible pandoor, who, to everybody's disappointment, allowed himself to be arrested with the meekness of a lamb. The same evening he was embarked at Harwich, with an order that he was to be landed on the territory of Frederick VI., King of Denmark, the most faithful ally of France; and, so that Gérard should not arrive on the Continent without a recommendation, London newspapers played him an awkward trick by publishing, simultaneously, the story of his irreconcilable hatred of Napoleon and the announcement of his banishment.

Consequently, three days later, the police bulletin which was daily submitted to the Emperor, contained an abstract from an English newspaper relating Gérard's adventures. "We congratulate the public," said the journal, "on the fact that this mustachioed parasite has been expelled from England. The wretch who is at present on his way towards the French Empire, where he will be in his natural element, is a German Jew who has assumed the name of a Hungarian gentleman. . . ." Then followed an account of the 24,000 Croats and the siege of the house in Bayswater. This testimonial had a sure effect. Ever since the rupture of the Treaty of Amiens, the English Cabinet had exercised its wits in sending on to the Continent secret emissaries, who, in the words of a police-agent, "employed all sorts of disguises and tricks to conceal their perfidious designs." Now, the conspicuous manner in which the London police had got rid of Gérard appeared particularly suspicious. There could be no doubt in the minds of the authorities that the object of this comedy was to facilitate the passage into France of a noted conspirator—perhaps a second Cadoudal. Accordingly, we

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

find the following note written on the margin of the bulletin in the studious handwriting of a secretary :

“Returned to the Ministry of Police with instructions that this intriguer be arrested should he come on the Continent.”

“Saint-Cloud, April 14th, 1812.”

Underneath these words is the master's terrible autograph N—a distorted, impetuous, tyrannical initial, similar to forked lightning—the cabalistic sign which Europe obeyed for ten years.

It is astonishing, as we read the official reports, to see how this brief order, which appears to have been heard at the utmost limits of the Empire, was immediately put into execution. Notification to arrest the described adventurer was despatched the same day to the Chiefs of Police at Amsterdam, Madrid, Hamburg, Leghorn, and Ragusa, and by them the order was passed on to diplomatic agents, consuls, harbour watchmen, district commissaries, and simple custom-house officers, so that by the end of the month Baron Géramb was awaited by every frontier agent from the mouth of the Elbe to the confines of Bosnia.

Meanwhile, the frigate which bore him sailed towards the Continent. After a short stay at Heligoland, a boat, on the night of April 24th, landed the former favourite of Queen Caroline on the coast of Schleswig-Holstein, in the neighbourhood of Husum. Danish custom-house officers found him at dawn on the sea-shore, boiling over with anger and shaking his fist at the English boat, which had remained in the open. That night Géramb slept at the Husum prison, and sent the King of Denmark the following rather clumsy flattery of his powerful ally :

“God has granted that the veil of error which covered my eyes when, as a general of Spanish Cavalry, I served with the British Army should at last be torn aside . . .

“Sire, the English are, fortunately for humanity, execrated on the banks of the Tagus, as on the walls of Cadiz, and, in spite of their presence, cries of ‘long live the Emperor Napoleon’ are heard on all sides. On this great name being pronounced with general enthusiasm, the British Army, pale and trembling, is like

BARON GÉRAMB

a great criminal, who has come to be sentenced to death, and who waits in agony for the moment at which his Majesty the Emperor will order his execution . . .”

He concluded with a prayer to be allowed, at his own expense, to erect on the beach where he had been landed “a symbolical monument to the crimes of the British Cabinet, a monument which would cause any foreigner who was so blind as to wish to direct his steps towards an island where the Government protected only traitors, libellers, incendiaries, and cowardly assassins, to recoil with horror.”

The news of the proscrip't's arrival, diffused by the English newspapers, produced rather lively curiosity in the provinces of the Elbe. D'Aubignosc, chief of the district police, applied to the Danish authorities for the prisoner's extradition, which was obtained; and on May 7th GÉRAMB was handed over to French agents¹ and immediately imprisoned, ill, nervous, and penniless, in the Hamburg prison, the Winser-Baum. Yet he played his part very well indeed. From the time of his first examination he overwhelmed d'Aubignosc with a torrent of words.² He feverishly

¹

“Hamburg, May 7th, 1812.

“MONSEIGNEUR,

“Baron de GÉRAMB was conducted to me this morning by two Danish officers. His papers were at the same time handed over to me and sealed. I have had him shut up in the debtor's prison, where the police, up to now, have placed prisoners of a certain class. . . .

“G. wears a moustache and the cross of a Commander of the Order of Malta. He speaks French with fluency and correctness, and has quite the air of a man accustomed to big adventures.

“He has cheerfully accepted his fate and promised to be sincere in his replies. I have had to submit to a recital of the importance of the position which he claims to occupy in the world. . . .” *National Archives*, F⁷ 6506.

²

“Hamburg, May 12th, 1812.

“MONSEIGNEUR,

“I went to the Winser-Baum prison yesterday to examine Baron GÉRAMB, and herewith enclose Your Excellency the original interrogatory.

“At each question I had to submit to a multitude of details. There was not a single one which did not enable him to tell some anecdote or other in which he played an invariably romantic part.

“This man has a mania in which he is everlastingly indulging, that of thinking he is an important personage, one upon whom the eyes of Europe are fixed.

“He always introduces crowned heads into his conversation, and the interest which several monarchs have taken in him.

“He is ill and very fatigued.

“D'AUBIGNOSC.”

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

narrated his whole life and tearfully confessed his errors : his hatred of Napoleon which was but a case of disappointed love, the great people who had taken advantage of him, Queen Mary Caroline "who wished him well," Metternich, the 24,000 Croatsians, his carriages, his diamonds, his livery, his aides-de-camp, and his horses. . . He renounced his past, and begged to be allowed to cast himself at the Emperor's feet and supplicate His Majesty to include him among his subjects.

On the following day he handed d'Aubignosc, who had hardly recovered from his astonishment, a long *Memoir on England* which he had written during the night.¹ In the evening he produced a second and more detailed *Memoir*, and

¹ The following report from the chief of the Hamburg police to the Minister is valuable as showing, not only the fascination which G6ramb exercised, even over the most apprised interlocutors, but also, perhaps, his real temperament :

"Hamburg, May 9th, 1812.

"MONSEIGNEUR

"Baron de G6ramb has just sent me the *Memoir* which I have the honour to place before Your Excellency. This document does not appear to me to be veracious except from the point of view that it indicates the chronological order of the traveller's movements and life since the French Revolution started him on his adventures.

"Nevertheless, it shows him to be a hot-headed man, who has taken advantage of a few natural gifts and the rush of events to endeavour to reach a position in conformity with the vehemence of his passion. Ever full of wild ideas, and possessed of great effrontery, Baron de G6ramb carries all sorts of projects about with him, identifies himself with the part he wishes to play, and believes that he always appears in the position in which his imagination has placed him. Indifferent as to the means he adopts, he aims only at success. . . .

"But soon a fresh plan replaces that which he has marked out, and with this new conception he becomes another man.

"When he figured in the levy of 1809 he was devoted to the Emperor of Austria. He was sincerely attached to the English and the Spaniards when he offered an army of Croatsians to the former and a legion of deserters to the latter. At the present time he is the Emperor's servant.

"I am convinced that G6ramb has been sincere at all these periods of his life . . .

"No Power having seriously tested his abilities, it is impossible to know if he would have continued steadfast had he met with success. . .

"He will never be able to resist the fascination of the latest product of his imagination. . . ."

On the margin of this report the Minister of Police has written :—

"Acknowledge receipt, and point out that he has passed over circumstances which might have given a very unfavorable opinion of the man and which show that he can only be regarded as an intriguer, who, by his impudence and importunity, has made dupes." *National Archives*, F7, 6506.

BARON GÉRAMB

the next day a third and a fourth *Memoir*. On the day he drew up the fifth an order was received to conduct the prisoner to Paris, which appeared somewhat to lessen his assurance. He anxiously inquired "if they were going to hand him over to Austria." A postchaise, escorted by three gendarmes, took him direct to the capital, where he arrived on June 24th. He was set down at the Ministry of Police, and then, under a strong guard, was shut up, awaiting an inquiry, in a *maison de santé* kept by a lady named Mme. Théodore Dupeyron. Up to that time it had been a quite peaceful establishment, but on Gérard's arrival it suddenly became a perfect hell upon earth. The baron lived in a state of continual rage. If his companions in captivity appeared ever so slightly to disagree with his enthusiastic admiration for Napoleon, he relieved his feelings by smashing the furniture. He even nearly set fire to the entire building, on August 15th, by too brilliantly illuminating his attic window. Having ordered a picture, in which he was represented kneeling in the vestibule at the Tuileries, asking the Emperor for justice, he sent the canvas to Marie Louise with an autograph petition in eleven languages! Although a prisoner, this strange man still found a means, in this city where he knew nobody of making acquaintances, and from these he borrowed small sums, which he used, said Mme. Dupeyron, "for creating disorder in her institution." As she refused to harbour so turbulent a boarder, Baron Gérard was one fine evening carried off to Vincennes and placed in close confinement in the castle dungeon.¹

At this point the baron retired into the background.

¹ Archives of the Prefecture of Police. Register of the Donjon de Vincennes.

"Paris, August 21st, 1812.

"The Minister of Police of the Empire orders the Commander of the Donjon de Vincennes to receive Seigneur de Gérard (François Ferdinand) accused of political intrigue.

"De Gérard (François Ferdinand) born at Lyons, forty years of age, Chamberlain to the Emperor of Austria, coming from M. Théodore's *maison de santé*.

"Height 1^m. 75, hair and eyebrows light chestnut, eyes blue grey, nose long and well-formed, average size mouth, chin round and slightly prominent, round cheeks, full face, wearing a moustache."

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

Having him safely under lock and key, the police set to work to unravel the mystery of his life. He had declared that he was a native of Lyons, and the authorities had, in fact, found a record in the registers of the birth, on July 14th, 1772, of Ferdinand François Gëramb, son of Julien Ferdinand Gëramb and his wife Marie Magdeleine Lassause. Mme. Gëramb was, indeed, still living, and the Lyons police found her modestly living in a faubourg. She had been a widow eight years, and, being without news of her son, was unaware if he were still alive and "whether he were an employee or a soldier." M. Gëramb, an Austrian, had settled in Lyons to take part in the silk industry, but in 1790 had returned to Vienna with his wife and three children—two daughters, both widows, who then lived in an Austrian convent, and Ferdinand François, the fiery "baron," who had himself been married and was the father of several children. After the Revolution his mother had returned, alone, to Lyons, where she wished to end her days.¹

A general observation should here be made. Police reports are invariably unfavourable. The men who draw them up wish to please the authorities and make themselves useful; if they ferreted out people with only stainless characters their assistance would quickly become superfluous; and that is why these documents should be consulted only with extreme caution. As a matter of fact, the Gërambs were a perfectly

¹ The report of the inquiry which the Police made at Lyons on the subject of the Gëramb family contains some interesting particulars.

"Lyons, June 13th, 1812.

"I had rather a difficulty in obtaining details from Mme. (widow) Gëramb, his mother. I could not get her to speak except in a general manner.

"The Gërambs are Austrians and belong to the nobility, but being members of a younger branch they came to France to seek their fortune. They established themselves at Lyons as silk commission-merchants. One of them, Julien, married Mlle. Lassause, and had two sons and two daughters. Another lives at Vienna on his income, and it appears that it is from him that Mme. Gëramb receives her revenues.

"M. Julien Gëramb died eight years ago, and since that time his widow has heard nothing of her son Ferdinand François. They had had discussions over the father's inheritance. Ferdinand François' two sisters were married at Vienna and are widows. He himself is a widower and has several children. It appears that they are protected by M. de Gëramb, a relative, who is Governor of Scheimnitz, in Hungary.

"Mme. Gëramb did not say what career her son had adopted. He is possibly a soldier or an official." *National Archives*, F⁷, 6506.

BARON GÉRAMB

honourable family, and being of undoubted nobility held an enviable position at the Viennese Court. The eldest of the family, François Julie Antoine, who was baptised on May 20th, 1726, at the Metropolitan Church in Vienna, came to Lyons with his two brothers to found a bank and establish a silk business. On September 23rd, 1763, he obtained municipal privileges, and purchased the Château de Gigny and its lands, one of the largest estates in Burgundy. His only daughter married a Lyons gentleman, named Jean Raphael Durant, who, during the famine of 1789, at the beginning of the Revolution, gave 10,000 francs to the poor of the town, an act of charity which immediately made him an object of suspicion and later contributed to his being sent to the scaffold.¹

The nephew of François Julie Antoine, our Baron Géramb, was mixed up in adventures at a very early age. His family had lost sight of him, but had never thought of renouncing him. Noisy personage though he was, he lacked neither courage nor mental ability. However this may be, the reports sent from Lyons said nothing of these things, and the Minister of Police was still in doubt.

Was the Vincennes prisoner connected with these quiet people, or ought he to be regarded as an adventurer who had assumed an honourable name? The police thought of bringing the aged mother to Paris to confront her with the accused—a step which was all the more necessary as his *dossier* was from time to time enlarged by fresh denunciations. One of these was sent in by an officer, named Cavero, of Genoa, who declared that Géramb had proposed to the Queen of Sicily that he should go to France and assassinate Napoleon. He had even fitted up in his apartment at Palermo a pistol shooting range, the target of which was a portrait of the Emperor of the French.²

¹ Private information.

² "Copy of an undated letter handed by a M. Cavero, ex-major in the Austrian Army (April or May, 1812), to the General Commissary of Police at Genoa.

"Sir,

"Having taken an oath of fidelity to His Majesty, I am bound to reveal everything which may be against the State . . . Therefore I take

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

But the Malet affair and the Moscow disaster diverted the attention of the authorities. Months passed by, and G eramb, who, however, was unresigned, was forgotten. For a long time past he no longer counted the days; he was ignorant of everything that was going on in Europe. Suddenly, one evening, the prison doors were thrown open and he was called by name; there was a great commotion in the castle, and much scrimmaging on the staircase landings; the guard seized their arms, pushed G eramb towards the clerk's office, and thrust him into a cab which was standing under the porch of the damp, flagged courtyard at the base of the castle. In the vehicle were two gendarmes and another prisoner, an old man with bent back, white hair, and haggard look. They set off, the old man continually muttering prayers. Suddenly he addressed this unintelligible phrase to G eramb:—

“This presages that the Allies are near.”

“What Allies?”

“Why—the Austrians, Prussians, Russians. . . .”

G eramb turned away his head. He quite understood—his companion had lost his reason through long captivity. The cab rolled along the muddy road, passed through the gates of Paris, entered the Faubourg Saint-Antoine, and at last stopped at the door of the prison of La Force. G eramb and his “insane” companion were conducted to the clerk's office, where their names were taken down. The baron stated his

the liberty of sending you my observations on a certain G eramb who has arrived in Denmark from London, and who cries out a good deal against the English.

“This man G eramb is a real scoundrel. During the year 1807–1808 he lived several months at Palermo, where his wife died, and courted the Queen's favour. I am told by reliable persons that he proposed to the Queen that he should go to Paris to assassinate the Emperor. He had a portrait of Napoleon in his bedroom, and used to amuse himself by firing at it daily with pistols. . . .”

To Caverio's letter was added the following description:

“G eramb is about forty years of age.

“Big and stout.

“Height about 1 m. 65.

“Black hair.

“Moustache and thick whiskers.

“When seen at Palermo in 1808 he wore the uniform of a Hungarian Hussar, and was decorated with several orders, said to be Russian. He had, in addition, a Chamberlain's key, and a silver death's head on his coat.” *National Archives, F7, 6506.*

BARON GÉRAMB

titles and rank ; the old man in the most natural tone in the world declared that he was Bishop of Troyes and Chaplain to His Majesty, the Emperor. He was decidedly a lunatic ! They were shut up in the same cell, and as G eramb threw himself on his bed he watched his dangerous companion out of the corner of his eye.

Yet this "lunatic" was, in reality, Mgr. de Boulogne, consecrated prelate in 1809 in the chapel at the Tuileries and imprisoned two years later for the crime of ultramontanism. He was correct in his conjecture : the evacuation of the Donjon de Vincennes presaged the approach of the allied armies.¹

When they had been at La Force for six weeks, G eramb and Mgr. de Boulogne found themselves at liberty.² The Empire had fallen ! The worthy bishop, who knew where to go, did not wait for the invitation to be repeated ; but poor G eramb was more embarrassed. Without a penny in his pocket, without a friend, without other connections than creditors in the great fever-tossed city, he felt that he was irretrievably shipwrecked. How was he to live, what was he to do, and where was he to lodge ? Up to then, as a political prisoner, he had received a sum of four francs a day, from which the cost of his food, etc., was deducted. Now that he

1

"February 8th, 1814.

"The Minister of Police of the Empire orders the Commander of the Donjon de Vincennes to deliver to the bearers of the present order the prisoners Fontana, Gr egorio, de G eramb, Pedicini, de Boulogne, and Grangeard, who will not be reintegrated.

"Signed : Duc de Rovigo."

² It would seem that the Police, before the fall of the Empire, thought of employing G eramb. In a report to His Excellency the Minister of Police, dated February, 1814, we find, after a *r esum e* of the life of this extraordinary man, the following information :

"During his stay in Austria and in the course of his numerous journeys, he has been in intimate relations with a host of important personages, such as ministers, courtiers, leaders of intrigues, etc. The large number of particulars which he has supplied since his arrest proves that, in spite of his natural instability, he has kept his eyes well open. His power of observation has been aided by an excellent memory, and it has been noticed that in his communications with the general police he has shown all the frankness and open-heartedness of a devoted man.

"M. de G eramb, on account of his abilities and the recollections with which he is filled, would render great services under the present circumstances. It is proposed that he be released and placed under supervision in Paris." *National Archives*, F⁷, 6506.

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

was free, he was deprived of this subsidy, so was obliged to ask the provisional Government for a month's pay.¹

His request was granted. With this sum of 120 francs in his pocket, he then disappeared, and he was not heard of again for some time to come.

Two years later, his name incidentally reappeared in a report from the the Prefect of the department of Mayenne to M. Decazes. The prefect had heard that a "certain Gérard," formerly a prisoner of State, had presented himself at the Trappist monastery of Port-Salut; and he had himself received a visit from the personage in question, whose conversation "had not appeared to him to be that of a penitent, but which, nevertheless, was full of good feeling towards the King and France." It was rumoured that the former prisoner of Vincennes had taken a vow that, should he leave the sinister dungeon safe and sound, he would consecrate to God that mental activity which earthly kings had not known how to employ. And, indeed, he entered the monastery, put on the frock, and became a servant to the monks.

Father Bernard, Prior of Port-Salut, had at once to moderate the neophyte's zeal and austerity. He had adopted the name of Friar Marie Joseph, and had painted on the walls of his cell a skeleton, with the words "Cette nuit peut-être—Perhaps to-night," and, lower down, "Se taire, souffrir et mourir—Be silent, suffer, and die." He took his first vows on April 13th, 1817, and was then promoted to the dignity of Frère hôtelier, whose duty it is to receive strangers.²

¹ "Sir,

"I have had the terrible misfortune to have been a State prisoner for two years.

"They made me travel from Hamburg at my own expense, shut me up in a *maison de santé* at my own expense, and ruined me.

"Placed in a dungeon, I received four francs a day, which was regularly paid me, even at La Force, where I was last imprisoned.

"I was set free on April 1st.

"Pay for the month of March is therefore owing.

"Having to return home and being without resources, I take the liberty, Sir, of asking you to order that this money be promptly handed to me.

"Paris, April 10th, 1814.

"Baron Gérard."

National Archives, F⁷, 6506.

² *Biographie générale du Clergé.*



REV. PÈRE DE GÉRAMB.
PROCUREUR GÉNÉRAL OF THE ORDER OF TRAPPISTS.

BARON GÉRAMB

The monastery of Port-Salut was poor, and as it was found to be necessary to purchase land, build a church, etc., Friar Marie Joseph was sent to the neighbouring *châteaux* to ask for assistance. His success was prodigious. To find that under the rough dress of this mendicant monk there was a most amiable and learned man of the world caused universal surprise.¹ He cheerfully related his adventures, played on the piano with skill, discoursed in every European tongue, and sang songs with a feeling which brought tears to the eyes of the least tender-hearted of his listeners. Moreover, he had lost nothing of his vivacity and bellicose manner. M. de Chéverus, who met him at this time, summed up his impressions by saying: "I've seen a barrel of gunpowder under a cowl."

After assuring the prosperity of the Trappist monastery of Port-Salut, Father Géramb—his incognito was quickly revealed—left for Alsace, where the Trappist monastery of Notre Dame du Mont des Olives was situated. Then, after the Revolution of 1830, he undertook a journey to Jerusalem, a journey which he has described in a charming book. His good humour, simple piety, and good-natured fervour gained him a veritable popularity. Two things astonish us. Father Géramb did not receive orders, not even the four lowest, and he carefully concealed his birthplace. Although he showed a preference for Lyons, where he gladly used to stay—Mme. Géramb having died in 1815—he declared that he was not born there.

The mystery of his early years and the strangeness of the adventures of his youth added fresh lustre to his glory. When he came to Rome, in 1837, he so turned everybody's head that Pope Gregory XVI., fascinated like others by the Trappist's eloquence and amiable air of importance, delicately remarked:—

"There are now two Popes,—*il padre Géramb ed io.*"

Friar Marie Joseph returned to France with a golden candle which the Pope had sent to Queen Marie Amélie. He was seen to mount the staircase at the Tuileries in the full dress of an Abbot, with mantle flowing from his shoulders, and small mitre resting on his head. And the pious Queen

¹ *Souvenirs du Directoire et de l'Empire*, by Mme. la Baronne de V——.

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

must have been not a little astonished to recognise, in this imposing monk, the gallant pandoor whom she had formerly known at the Sicilian Court. . . . The Rev. Father Géraumb took a delight, moreover, in insisting on the contrast.

A portrait of him was engraved in which he is represented in his monkish robes, with a long beard, a rather bald head, spectacles, his eyes raised towards a crucifix, and his hand resting on a skull. It bears this legend: "Grand Dieu, au nom de Jésus-Christ, miséricorde." He died Procureur Général of the Order of Trappists, at Rome, on March 15th, 1848.¹

¹ *Mémoires de tous. Biographie générale du Clergé.*

A PRECIOUS TRIO:

GREIVE, BLACHE, AND ROTONDO

I

GREIVE

LOUVECIENNES is a charming place. Apart from a few houses of rustic simplicity, clustering around the church, it is a village entirely composed of gardens, tall chestnut trees as majestic as Louis XIV.'s periwigs, and orchards which resemble, when they are in blossom, the powdered curls of worldly abbés. It is a country of latticed pavilions covered with climbing roses, and ancient padlocked gates festooned with wistaria. At the turning of every lane you obtain a view, between clumps of trees, of those lovely hills which have been called the Alps of the Seine-et-Oise; and, surmounting everything, the noble arches of the Marly aqueduct give this pleasant landscape the Italian air of a piece of scenery by Hubert Robert.

Louveciennes formerly possessed an extensive chestnut-grove, a few ancient trees of which still remain. During the closing years of the reign of Louis XVI., the villagers used to assemble there on fine days, and Countess du Barry who, by kingly favour, remained usufructuary of the little estate which she occupied when favourite, did not disdain to go and see the people dance. Followed by beplumed Zamor, her black page-boy, she gracefully swept along under the trees—a still slender and desirable woman, although approaching her fiftieth year. She was “the lady” of the district, beloved by

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

the peasants whom she assisted most munificently; she was good natured and of very easy access, in spite of the porter, attired in the scarlet uniform of the royal guard, who acted as sentinel at her *château* gates. Some forty years ago the old inhabitants of Louveciennes could recollect—and relate to M. Victorien Sardou—having seen “the Countess standing on the steps of her house teasing two white monkeys which jumped about after her handkerchief.” These same old people never tired of speaking of her charity and kindness.

She was known to be enormously wealthy. Her *château* was reputed to rival Aladdin’s grotto, everything it contained, even including ordinary furniture, being, it was said, of gold, precious stones, or rock crystal. There were drawers full of diamonds, rooms filled with silver plate, and a sufficient stock of cloth of gold and silk to dress a regiment of soldiers. Through hearing so much said about these marvels the peasants had become indifferent; they chatted about them, but were by no means envious. They were likewise unoffended by the unmistakable intimate relations which existed between the lady of the manor and the Duc de Cossé-Brissac, who was often to be seen at the *château*, where he sometimes stayed a whole week.

In short, it seemed as though nothing ought to trouble the perfect harmony which reigned between the villagers of Louveciennes and the occupants of the *château*; and as this peaceful hamlet of one hundred and twenty-four families, none of whom complained of their lot, was out of the way of the main roads and therefore protected against noisy, ambitious folk, it was eminently presumable that no incident would ever disturb its rustic tranquillity.

Now, in the early days of the Revolution, a stranger appeared in the village, through which he slowly promenaded. He was again seen in the evening on the Cœur-Volant road, and two days later in the royal park at Marly, but this time escorted by a companion, who had accompanied him half way between Voisins and Louveciennes. The stranger returned to the village, and, as he remained unseen for some days, people were beginning to think no more about him, when they learnt that he had been lodging for some time past with the inn-

A PRECIOUS TRIO

keeper, François Renault—à la *Louve ancienne*. (Such punning sign-boards, over which simple-minded people went into raptures, were then all the fashion.) The man boarded there, saw nobody, and, at any rate, in the daytime did not go out. All that Père Renault knew about him was that he was an Englishman named Greive or Grieve¹ who spoke French perfectly, and delivered little discourses of the subject of which the inn-keeper knew little, but which he compared, as regards purity of language and elevation of thought, to the sermons of the parish curé.

Greive had been living at Louveciennes “for some time past, without becoming known in the Commune,” when, on the morning of January 11th, 1791, a rumour threw the whole district into a state of alarm. Taking advantage of Mme. du Barry’s absence in Paris, where she had gone to spend the night with Brissac, burglars had broken into the *château* and carried off her diamonds—“the Golconda treasure,”—including ring-cases, cameos, ancient emeralds, necklaces of a hundred and sixty brilliants, strings of a hundred pearls, solid gold chandeliers, opera-glasses, precious boxes, and even “a reliquary of purest gold.” In all, jewels to the value of two million francs had been stolen!

Whilst messengers were hastening to Paris to inform the Countess, the peasants set about an inquiry. The *château* had a large staff. In addition to Salanave, the butler, Denis Morin, the valet, and the three trustworthy women, Fresnoye, Couture, and Roussel, there were the negro Zamor, the lackey Frémont, the hair-dresser Prétry, the postilion Augustin, the floor-polisher Deliant, the navy Picard, the door-keeper of the pavilion Guéguégoïn, and many others, who were as surprised as they were dismayed. None of these could be suspected; but they had neglected to keep a close watch over the property, and people expressed great astonishment that thieves had been able to enter a house inhabited by so many persons. They had got in by breaking the venetian blind and a window-pane of the ante-room, which they reached by means of a ladder. In this room was the piece of furniture containing the jewels. As to the scarlet

¹ *Dictionary of National Biography.*

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

clad porter who was supposed to keep guard at the *château* gates,—a young soldier of eighteen, named Badou,—he had disappeared. During the day, however, he was found at some distance from Louveciennes, still drunk, and without a recollection of anything, except that men whom he did not know had enticed him to a wine-shop.

The Countess, accompanied by Denis Morin, who had gone to Paris to fetch her, appeared during the afternoon in a carriage and four horses, escorted by fifty Swiss grenadiers whom she had requisitioned on passing through Courbevoie,¹ and found the whole village assembled in front of her park gates. A Versailles detective, named Barthélemy Piles—a clever man, who, later, arrested Lesurques' double, Dubosc, the murderer of the driver of the Lyons mail,—was making a preliminary inquiry. But, in spite of his perspicacity, the day went by without any serious clue being discovered. The case was wrapped in mystery, and it began to be rumoured not only that "the robbery was a bogus one," but that the Countess herself was playing a comedy, in order to guard against a possible confiscation of the best of her jewels.

This suggestion was due to Greive, who that evening, for the first time, held forth to the villagers of Louveciennes. He revealed his relations with Zamor, who "abandoned by the whole world, had cast himself on his bosom to seek protection against his enemies and the consolations of friendship"; he called the Countess "a Bacchante crowned with ivy and roses"; and when, three days later, a reward of two thousand louis was offered for the discovery of the thieves, he modified the effect of this tempting offer, anxious as he was that a search should not be made, by reading an article in the *Révolutions de Paris* in which the burglary of January 11th was treated as a pure legend. This article, which was anonymous, was undoubtedly written by Greive himself, who circulated it in the village and lectured the peasants so thoroughly that, a week later, nobody in Louveciennes believed any longer in the reality of the burglary. On February 15th, however, it was learnt that the Countess had

¹ *Révolutions de Paris*, No 81.



MADAME DU BARRY.

(From a coloured print by DAGOTY.)

A PRECIOUS TRIO

left for London, where her jewels were said to have been found, and this somewhat disconcerted people. But on Greive being consulted—he had become the oracle of the district—he declared that “the comedy was complete, and that the Bacchante had discovered an excellent means of emigrating, after having skilfully removed her fortune abroad.” Zamor chimed in by stating that “the robbery was an idea which had not appeared natural to him.”

Greive is a mystery. Most of Mme. du Barry’s historians ignore this personage, who does not figure officially in any legal proceedings ; some mention his existence, but, utterly ignorant of his birth and antecedents, are led into erroneous conjectures as to his motives. One of them even supposes that he was seized with a violent passion for Mme. du Barry, and that because she rejected his advances he revenged himself by persecuting her. Another regards him as an apostle of Jacobinism, who took a delight in attacking the woman who best personified “the dishonour of the old *régime*.” But perhaps the truth is more prosaic.

George Grieve, who was neither lover nor Jacobin, was forty-two years of age when he came to Louveciennes. His father, Richard Grieve,—such is the correct orthography of the name,—was an attorney in the town of Alnwick, in the neighbourhood of which the Dukes of Northumberland possessed a magnificent residence. Since the days of the grandfather Ralph, registrar of Alnwick, who was expelled from the town council in 1694, the Greives had been constantly at loggerheads with the lords of the manor. George inherited this characteristic and gave full play to his mental independence. He lost his father in 1765, and on the occasion of his inheritance brought an action against the State. Dissatisfied with the decision of the judges, he urged the workmen of Alnwick to revolt, placed himself at their head, broke down the toll-bars, was prosecuted, and fled. Returning to put his affairs definitely in order, Greive rapidly squandered his heritage as a democrat, an unremunerative profession in England, and, reduced to great straits, crossed the Atlantic. He offered his revolutionary ardour to Young

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

America;¹ he was seen at the houses of Washington and Franklin; he spoke in a high tone and showed himself a good deal; but did not succeed in finding employment, though he tried to give a journey which he made in Holland during the winter of 1783 the air of a diplomatic mission.

At its very outset, the French Revolution appeared to men of this type to be an admirable field for operations.

What a prey this noble and sincere country, France, an admirer of all sorts of utopias, a believer in every form of falsehood, and a patient sufferer of every form of servitude—what a prey this country, overflowing with enough marvels to flood the universe, was to be for the vagabonds and cut-throats of the entire world! Greive cast his eyes on Louveciennes, where there was a defenceless woman,—isolated by reason of her past, a handful of simple-minded peasants, and treasure which could easily be stolen. . . . It was a first-class “job,” and in order to carry it out successfully Greive took two other scoundrels into partnership. The first of these was a man named Blache, alias Dumas, a common spy who worked in the suburbs of Versailles but particularly in the Canton of Marly. He was one of those men who, without any other mandate than the title of “order bearer,” or “revolutionary agent,” arrived one fine day in some small town, set themselves up as powerful officials, who requisitioned, imprisoned, and terrorised the inhabitants, and then suddenly disappeared before people had dared to ask them on whose authority they acted. The other accomplice was an Italian named Rotondo, who said he was a professor of Latin, English, and Italian, and that he had kept “a patriotic and national school of languages for pupils of both sexes at the former Priory of Saint Martin des Champs.”

Greive, Blache, and Rotondo—such was the name of the firm which took in hand what they themselves called the *affaire de Louveciennes*. The person acquainted with the true and inner history of this precious trio would know more about the Revolution than if he had learnt by heart all the official documents with which our libraries are crowded.

¹ George Tait's *History of Alnwick*. See also, *An English Actor in the French Revolution*, Edinburgh Review, October 1887.

A PRECIOUS TRIO

They divided the work between them. Blache was the bloodhound and Greive the one who put their plan into execution; whilst Rotondo, in all probability, acted as scout. As to the poor woman who was in the hands of these three scoundrels, I shall later quote a letter written by the last-named, showing the nature of her position.

It must be explained that Mme. du Barry, after spending a fortnight in London, returned to Louveciennes on March 4th. A month later she again left for England, and this second absence lasted until May 21st. But these two journeys did not result in the recovery of her jewels. The thieves had been arrested by the London police at the very moment they were selling the Countess's diamonds for a ridiculously small price to a City Jew named Simon.¹ She recognised them to be hers, and the evidence of Rouen, her goldsmith, whom she had brought with her, was sufficiently clear as to leave no doubt as to the origin of the jewels found in the possession of the thieves. These were five in number, including only one Frenchman, a native of Issoire, named Lèvet,² and they lived like fighting cocks at Newgate Prison at the expense of the Countess, who daily visited them in the hope of persuading at least one of them to confess his guilt. But they all remained immovable, knowing very well that, unless they confessed, there was not a court in England which could condemn them for an offence committed abroad. The only decision which Mme. du Barry obtained from the Lord Mayor was one ordering her to pay the Jew Simon the

¹ "On arriving in London, these five gentlemen went to an inn in the City and asked for a single bedroom, which appeared astonishing. They then ordered a good dinner, and, as their equipage did not inspire much confidence, told the landlord that they had not yet changed their money, but that they would have plenty on the following day. Having made this disclosure, they called upon a rich lapidary, named Simon, and offered him several diamonds of great value for about a sixth of what they were worth. He first of all purchased these stones for £1500, and then asked if they had any more. On receiving a reply in the affirmative, he went and gave information to the Mayor, who captured the entire band. The thieves were searched, and although they hurriedly threw the large diamonds into the fire, the greater part of their booty has been recovered. The one who acted as interpreter to this band of rascals is an Englishman, who is well known to have taken part in a large number of robberies." *Public Advertiser*, February 20th, 1791.

² *The Letters of Horace Walpole*, vol. ix.

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

reward of 2,000 louis which she had imprudently offered for the discovery of the thieves. She obeyed, but did not recover her diamonds, which, by order of the authorities, were deposited at Messrs. Ranson, Morland and Co., bankers, awaiting a definite judgment, which was never given.

Thwarted, she returned to Louveciennes, which she hardly expected to be able to recognise. Nothing proves Greive's complicity with Levet and his companions better than the implacable obstinacy with which he persecuted her after her arrival. Mme. du Barry was guilty, in his eyes, of wishing to recover her treasures, and his object, in which he was successful, was to stop her mouth. Obligated at first to show a certain amount of reserve, he did not completely reveal his hand until after August 10th. On that day he became master of Louveciennes, fiercely calling himself "the friend of Franklin and Marat, first-class factionist and anarchist, and disorganiser of despotism in the two hemispheres." Zamor, whom the Countess had to dismiss, had been led astray by him; and she daily felt that she was losing the respect and affection which servants and peasants had formerly shown her. Brissac was no longer there to give her his protection. A prisoner at Orleans, and about to be brought before the High Court, he sent his aide-de-camp Maussabré, a young officer of eighteen, with brief letters.

One day, on August 19th, a band of 250 armed "patriots," led by Xavier Audouin, marched along the Bougival road on their way to Marly. The ascent being steep and the day a warm one, they stopped, amidst much shouting, to drink. . . . Greive addressed them, proposing a visit to the "Bacchante"—"the former mistress of Sardanapolis." The band of ruffians immediately rushed off to the *château*, burst open the doors, and discovered Maussabré hidden behind a bed. He was seized, thrust out of doors, amidst hoots, thrown into a cart, and sent to the Abbaye Prison—with a first-class recommendation, since, a fortnight later, at the time people were being executed by hundreds, he was smoked in a chimney, riddled with bullets fired point blank, and, as "he would not die," finished off in the street with blows from iron bars.

It was Brissac's turn a week later. He was massacred at

A PRECIOUS TRIO

Versailles with other Orleans prisoners, and his body, hacked into pieces, was divided among the murderers. A man named Guy, *alias* Mignon, brought his parents at Buc a souvenir in the shape of "a foot of the corpse covered with a silk stocking and a new shoe." Another, named Cabouet, of Neauphle, cut off the dead man's fingers and distributed them among his friends. Three boys, aged from fifteen to sixteen, detached the head from the body, and, after fixing it on a dung-fork, moved it from side to side as they walked or thrust it, with loud laughter, into the faces of women whom they encountered, with the request—"Citoyenne, baisez Brissac!" Thus did they proceed—jesting and drinking—along the road to Louveciennes, where a fine game was suggested to them. Someone guided them to the *château*, and, as the windows were open, they hurled Brissac's head into the drawing-room.¹

It must be admitted that Greive had done everything he could to spare the Countess the sorrow of surviving her lover. He denounced her daily. On September 2nd, seeing that the people had a taste for blood, he announced in the newspapers that she was very seriously compromised and already imprisoned, hoping that this would draw attention to her. But he failed in his object, and the duel recommenced. The Countess, who did not abandon the hope of recovering her diamonds, made a fresh application to the English courts, leaving for England in October, 1792, and remaining absent for five months. Either because she was unaware of the danger, or because—as appeared later—she did not wish to lose all the treasures stored at Louveciennes, she returned there at the end of March 1793, only to find, however, that seals had been affixed on the furniture, and that Blache and Greive had taken possession of the *château*. Decreeing that such a long absence was equivalent to emigration, they had appointed themselves custodians of her treasures, and lived in her house as though they were in their own homes. However, Mme. du Barry peacefully went to reside with one of her nieces, Mlle. Graillet, whose sister, Mme. Laneuville, lived with her husband in the kitchen-

¹ *Courrier français*, September 15th, 1792.

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

garden house. But this quiet state of things was not to last. Greive was continually with the Committee of General Safety. He succeeded in having a watch placed over "Citoyenne" du Barry at her domicile,—an incomplete success which he followed up on July 3rd, when he appeared at the bar of the Convention, accompanied by five or six patriots, with an application, "in the name of morality," for the Countess's head.

But the poor woman had still one friend left, an unknown friend—perhaps a lover—named Lavallery, commissary for the department of Seine-et-Oise. He got the inhabitants of Louveciennes to sign a petition in favour of "the lady," and she was set free. Greive, furious with vexation, revenged himself on the peasants by using violence and threats. Seized with terror, all the servants at the *château*—with one exception—came over to his side. Hastening to the Committee, he at last succeeded in obtaining an order for imprisonment, and, by virtue of the same decree, a reward of 3000 francs for his patriotic efforts. On the following day—September 22nd—he returned to Louveciennes, escorted by the soldiers who were to arrest his victim. On triumphantly presenting himself at the *château*, the wretched woman, seeing that she was lost, attempted to flee. But she was overtaken at the bottom of the park, and the cries which she uttered as the men placed their hands upon her, the sobs which were heard as the carriage passed through the gates, were enough—in the words of a man who chanced to be present—"to melt the heart of a stone."¹

In the evening of the same day she slept at La Force, which she left, as we know, but to go to the Tribunal and the scaffold. There is one thing, however, which we cannot even conceive until we have examined the very *dossier* which Fouquier-Tinville had in his possession, and that is the ferocity with which Greive tracked his victim to the grave.

¹ *Private Information.* We also find the following note in Alfred Asseline's *Victor Hugo Intime*: "Père Bricard, who conducted us, told us some most interesting stories. He it was who, long ago, placed seals on Mme. du Barry's residence. The details of the poor woman's arrest are heartrending. There is, indeed, nothing on earth so ferocious as the people once they are let loose. Note that the inhabitants of Louveciennes who insulted Mme. du Barry and surrendered her to the revolutionary tribunal had until then lived on her kindness."

A PRECIOUS TRIO

During the two months which elapsed between her arrest and first examination, he did a tremendous amount of work in getting together all the elements of the case for the prosecution. He numbered and analysed documents, accumulated the counts, and classified them with an ardour "which made Fouquier-Tinville's zeal appear lukewarm in comparison." He drew up a list of witnesses, went to see them, dictated the replies which they were to make, and decided on their civic morality according to the number of counts which they could bring forward. Those whom he feared might give evidence in favour of the accused were declared, in advance, to be aristocrats and enemies of the law, and were placed on a footing with the basest malefactors. Unfaithful servants, discharged valets, and informers gorged with plunder—such were the men whom Greive would bring into court. He offered to examine them, draw up their depositions, and "undertake any work or useful inquiries" at Louveciennes or Marly. He headed the list of witnesses with his own name. . . . It is permissible to say that he supplied the public prosecutor (who, moreover, used in his speech for the prosecution "a three-page document which Greive handed him") with a head all ready for the guillotine.

But this was not the only matter which occupied his thoughts. On the night following the Countess's arrest, Greive took entire possession of the Château de Louveciennes, and remained there for more than six months. Five men, each of whom the municipality paid forty-five *sous* a day,¹

¹ " *Department of Seine-et-Oise*. Confiscated property. Versailles district, La Dubarri. Statement of money owing to the men who composed the armed guard at the house of La Dubarri from the 6th of Floréal to the 11th of Thermidor, in all three months and five days, namely:—

To Citizens	{	Héràville, 3 months 5 days	fr. c.
		at 2 fr. 5 sous	213. 15
		Lepage, " "	213. 15
		Lefort, " "	213. 15
		Tenot Junior, " "	213. 15
		Colombell, " "	213. 15

Fr. 1065. 75

Louveciennes, the 12th of Thermidor, Year II.

Signed: DELCROZ
LEQUOY."

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

mounted guard around the walls, so that no one should disturb him during his work. Assisted by Zamor, his pointer, he discovered an enormous number of costly articles hidden at random in a dung-heap, in a gardener's hut, in some sacks of bran, and in the bedroom of a woman named Roussel. These articles included a sack of rubies, a portrait of Louis XV. dressed as a Carmelite, the "famous" gold dinner-service set with emeralds, some louis d'or, and a number of precious medals. . . . Greive shut himself up with these treasures. On the *château* gates was the notice "Défense d'entrer—No entrance," and whoever disturbed the Englishman during his work ran the risk of being sent to the guillotine. His wish was to make out the inventories alone. As he had received authority from the Committee of General Safety "to arrest any person who had taken part in the conspiracy of the former mistress of Louis XV.," all her servants had been imprisoned, some at La Force and others at the Récollets, at Versailles, and could only obtain their freedom by denouncing their employer. And this they did not hesitate to do. Denis Morin was the only one who remained faithful to his benefactress, so he was guillotined. Again it was Greive who drew up the indictment.¹ A warrant was issued for the arrest of Lavallery, the departmental commissary who had shown a little regard for the former lady of the manor; but he fled, and his body was found in the Seine. Everyone whom Greive suspected might be able to throw light on the diamond robbery was to die. The Chevalier d'Escourre, a privileged visitor to the *château* who had accompanied the Countess to London; Labondie, his nephew, who might have received some secret from him; Vandener, the banker who knew better than anyone the amount of Mme. du Barry's fortune and the value of her art objects; and his son, who might also be acquainted with these facts—all were guillotined. . . . Terror reigned at Louveciennes. Greive, who had shut himself up in the *château* in the midst of an indescribable accumulation of marvels, had the peasants brought before him one by one. He ill-treated them, "twisted them around his little finger," and threatened them

¹ Dauban, *La Démagogie en 1793*. See also *National Archives*, W 303—305.

A PRECIOUS TRIO

with the guillotine unless they revealed what they knew of treasures buried or concealed by the villagers ; for valuables were being discovered everywhere. At the foot of almost every tree there was a hoard, and jewellery and watches were found even in the ornamental waters at Marly. A distracted woman—Greive had accused her of being a receiver of stolen property—cut her throat to escape the guillotine ; Deliant, a former employee at the *château*, who had assisted in hiding a gold dinner-service, died of fright on entering the Versailles prison ; and his wife cut her throat with a razor.¹ . . . Gold

¹ “Communication from the members of the commission sent to Louveciennes for the purpose of discovering the property of La Dubarry to citizens Lacroix and Musset, representatives of the people on a mission at Versailles, the 28th of Frimaire, in the 2nd year of the Republic.

“Citizen-representatives,

“Until we can give a complete account of all our operations, we send you a copy of the report of one which particularly deserves your attention.

“We had already questioned persons suspected of having hidden objects in the house. A woman and her husband had been examined several times because they would only declare articles when pressed to do so, or when betrayed by their accomplices. The woman and her mother were still in our presence, having just returned from pointing out the spot at the Marly ornamental waters where they had thrown precious articles, when several citizens, male and female, joyfully entered with a watch, enriched with diamonds, which two women had found in one of the said waters. Neither the woman nor her mother had said that this watch was among the articles which they had thrown away, although they were convicted of having hidden the chain in a dung-heap, where it had been found before our arrival, with many other costly articles.

“We cannot describe to you, citizen representatives, the scene which took place before our eyes. On the one hand was acknowledged crime, crushing the guilty couple, who sought excuses in vain, and turning pale with fear implored our pardon ; on the other was resplendent virtue, relieved of a heavy burden. A young girl was at her mother’s side, who enthusiastically shared her satisfaction ; a young woman who had assisted in the discovery was side by side with her husband, who was delighted to have a wife worthy of being held up as a model to his fellow-citizens.

“Other honest folk had come with these, but they brought only a few crystal bottles, which were also found in one of the ornamental waters. Whilst envying their more fortunate companions, they shared in the common joy. All seemed to receive rather than to give, and all were contented, with the exception of the two guilty women, who were still present, and whose grief and remorse increased in proportion to the general gaiety.

“We have decided, citizen representatives, that these two young women deserve to be introduced to you, and that you will perhaps think it fitting, in order to reward them, and as an encouragement to others to perform fine actions, to present them to the people assembled in the Temple of Reason, at the next decadi at Versailles. If you do this and present them yourselves, they and their good relatives will be well paid

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

had brought a curse upon this smiling village, formerly so calm, but every house of which had now its drama.

What became of all this wealth is a mystery. It is said that Greive drew up inventory after inventory, and bills announcing approaching sales were posted up. But time passed, and nothing was done. Nowhere can we find a reference either to regular confiscation or to an honestly conducted sale; and even the diamonds, deposited in London by order of the judicial authorities, disappeared. Big pieces of furniture remained at Louveciennes, and long after the Revolution fragments of this mighty wreck were to be found in the villagers' homes.

The three scoundrels who were responsible for this ruin met with different fates. Blache worked for the secret police; Rotondo, before the "job" was completed, committed the imprudence of returning to Piedmont, and what happened to him there we shall see later. As to Greive, he tried to reach Holland at the end of the Terror, but was arrested on the way, brought back to Marly, and in his turn taken to the Récollets Prison.¹ However, he did not remain there long, having those arguments at his disposal which will open any prison door. He departed with the conviction that he had

for their noble action, and will all the more cherish the Revolution which is already enabling the people to realise its rights, its duties and its dignity.

"Shall we inform you of the final catastrophe in this equally sorrowful and comforting scene? The guilty woman, returning home to her sick husband, passed the night in mournful silence. In the morning, finding a means of escaping the eye of her custodians, she cut her throat, after throwing other precious jewels out of the window. Her hand was arrested and the wound is not fatal. Judge, citizen representatives, and inform us of your wishes. We will carry out whatever you decide.

"HOUDON, *juge de paix*, FACQUET,
VILLETTE, HUVÉ, LESAGE,
BICAULT, *mayor*."

M. Victorien Sardou's Cabinet of Autographs.

¹ "The 19th of Frimaire, Year III. Citizen Corteminello, national gendarme at Versailles, has brought to the prison of the Department a man named Greive Georges, formerly a commissary to the Committee of General Safety of the Convention."

(in the margin) "The man herewith mentioned has been placed under the charge of Citizen Cezard, national gendarme at Versailles, by order of the Versailles Comité de surveillance. Mistrolot."—*Register of the Versailles Prison.*

A PRECIOUS TRIO

for ever escaped the suspicion of his contemporaries and even the curiosity of posterity, little suspecting that a police agent, who knew everything but who had said nothing—it may have been Blache—was to write the following words on the first sheet of the *dossier* relating to the robbery of 1791, which he had found in a forgotten portfolio :—

“The thief was an Englishman named Grèle or Graile (*sic*), who has never been suspected.”¹

It is said that Greive returned to America, where, in the philosophic-revolutionary jargon which he habitually used, he spoke of his virtue, his incorruptible soul, and his sensibility. He recalled the important part which he had played in the French Revolution, and boasted of having contributed as his share seventeen heads to the executioner. But time made him wiser, he bragged less, ended by no longer alluding to the subject, and returned to France. Doubtless he felt drawn to that paradise of mountebanks where self-assurance takes the lead of all merit. Did he feel a desire to see once more the hamlet where terror had made him master, and that little *château* on the hill buried in tall trees where he had lived amidst a dazzling array of precious stones, rare marbles, costly stuffs, and golden plate? I can imagine what he must have experienced if he ever prowled—at dusk, so as not to be seen—near these walls where the phantom of the poor creature who has left there so much of her life still hovers. Whoever passes between the out-houses of the former *château* and the closed gates of the *pavillon*, along that alley underneath the bright green grass of which lie the huge pipes of the engine, whose mournful sound cast a gloom over Louis XV., is still haunted by a thought of the unhappy woman, her cheeks ablaze and her black hair² cut level with

¹ *Dictionnaire de Jal.*

² “Yes, *black* whatever may have been said on the subject; or at least *auburn*, as the description put down at Sainte-Pélagie shows. In the following narrative, written by an eye witness, and which must be given in its entirety, it will be noticed that reference is made to the ‘most beautiful black hair.’”

“On arriving at the Pont-au-Change, I found that a fairly large crowd had assembled. I had no need to ask the reason, for an explanation was soon forthcoming. I heard piercing screams in the distance, and immediately saw the deadly cart which Barère, in one of his habitual fits of gaiety, called the *bière des vivants*, leave the courtyard of the Palais de

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

the nape of her neck, shrieking with terror in the cart which bore her to the guillotine—can still hear the hoarse appeal which made even the *blasé* Parisians of those days shudder: “Encore un moment, Monsieur le bourreau!” and the

Justice. In this vehicle, which slowly approached the place where I was standing, was a woman whose face, attitude, and gestures expressed the deepest despair. Now deep red, now deadly pale, struggling in the hands of the executioner and his assistants, who had difficulty in keeping her on her seat; and uttering those terrible cries which I have just mentioned, she alternately appealed for their pity and that of the onlookers. It was Mme. du Barry who was being taken to the scaffold . . .

“Entirely clothed in white, like Marie Antoinette who, a few weeks before, had passed along the same route, her most beautiful black hair formed a contrast similar to that presented by a pall thrown over a coffin. Her hair at the back was cut level with the nape of her neck, as is usual in the case of those who are being led to execution; but that in front fell every moment over her forehead, owing to her wild movements, and hid part of her face. ‘In heaven’s name, my friends, save me!’ she cried, in the midst of sobs and tears. ‘In heaven’s name, save me. I have never done harm to anyone. Save me!’

“The frantic terror of this wretched woman produced such an impression among the people that not one of those who had come to insult her during her last moments had the courage to utter a word. Everybody around her seemed stupefied, and no other cries but hers were heard. But these cries were so piercing that I have not the slightest doubt they would have deadened those of the crowd had it thought fit to utter them.

“I said just now that nobody had the courage to insult her. I am wrong. A man, only one man, dressed with a certain amount of elegance, raised his voice at the moment that Mme. du Barry, passing just opposite me, shouted to the people: ‘My life! my life! spare my life, and I will give all my property to the nation.’ ‘You cannot give to the nation what already belongs to it,’ replied this man, ‘since the tribunal has just confiscated your property.’ A coal-dealer standing in front of the speaker turned round and boxed his ears, an action which gave me a keen sense of pleasure.

“As we know, she continued her screams and struggled frantically to escape the hand of death, which was already upon her, all the way to the guillotine. We also know that on reaching the scaffold force had to be used to attach her to the deadly plank, and that her last words were these: ‘Pardon! pardon! Monsieur le bourreau! Give me a moment more, mister executioner! a moment. . . .’ And then all was over.” Wallon, *Histoire du Tribunal Révolutionnaire*, vol. ii, p. 235. *Black hair*. Here we have a statement which must be accepted; and the description (*auburn hair*) given on the Marly passport, in addition to that written down on her arrival at the prison, is still more unexceptionable. To say that a piece of evidence is valueless because it happens to be awkward is too easy a way of getting over a difficulty. But I do not see the slightest reason why this should trouble us. Mme. du Barry had *light* hair in her tranquil days, they were *auburn* at the time of her arrest, and *black* after her captivity. It is evident, therefore, that her hair was naturally very dark, and that she used those bleaching solutions which are almost universally employed nowadays by fashionable ladies. Numerous references bearing on this matter place my contention beyond a shadow of a doubt.

A PRECIOUS TRIO

atrocious remark to the effect that "the knife cut badly into her fat neck . . ." But Greive, in all probability, never dreamt of these things. Under the Empire he had taken up his residence in the Rue de l'Évêque at Brussels; and the "first-class anarchist" of former times had become a quiet person of independent means. He died there on February 23rd, 1809, at the age of sixty-one.¹

The recollection of his astonishing proconsulate has not survived at Louveciennes. His name, like that of Mme. du Barry, who is hardly less forgotten, is unknown there. But there are still people in the village who preserve the tradition of buried treasures, which still, it is said, lie hidden in the earth. A few years ago, some men who were searching the ground in the enclosure, near the *château*, discovered a skull buried under a few inches of sand. It was Brissac's head, which, on September 9th, 1792, had been rolled out of the drawing-room into the garden and hastily buried, level with the earth, under a grass-plot. They interred it in a hole dug outside the walls, along the Prunay road.

II

BLACHE

MORE prudent than Greive, Blache has left no trace behind him.

What was his descent, what became of him, and in consequence of what adventures did he become connected with the revolutionary police? We possess no indication, nothing but the following very indefinite note:—

"Blache, Hôtel Conty, Rue Jean Saint-Denis, near the Rue de Beauvais, was formerly a bailiff at Rennes. Sentenced there

¹ "The 24th day of February, year 1809, at ten o'clock. Certificate of the death of Georges Greive, independent gentleman, who died on the 23rd of this month at half-past five o'clock in the evening, aged 61 years, born at Newcastle, America (*sic*), living in the Rue de l'Évêque, 5th section, No. 1415. On the declaration of Josse Weverberg, aged thirty-nine, independent gentleman, neighbour, and Pierre Joseph Nicolas Voss, servant, aged twenty-one, same street, neighbour, who herewith signed. . . ."—*Brussels Municipal Archives*.

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

for forgery, he escaped to England, where he remained for six months. For the past four months he has been in Paris, without means of subsistence. He represents himself as a patriot, makes frequent denunciations to the Committee of General Safety, and obtains the publication of articles in an evening newspaper. He is possibly one of Pitt's agents. His place of residence is unknown. Make inquiries about him from Citizen Gohier, Minister of Justice, and from the Montagnard deputies of Ille-et-Vilaine.

"This man is now employed by the Committee of General Safety, and lives at the above address."¹

Investigations at Rennes show, however, that the first of these statements is erroneous. The name of Blache is nowhere to be found—neither in the registers of births, nor in those of la Tournelle, where his sentence would have been recorded.

But Blache, for some reason or other, was undoubtedly in London in 1791. Wallon states that he taught French there. He had also formed relations with Greive, who set him to watch Mme. du Barry during her stay in England. When Greive got up his case against the poor woman, and made a display of all the witnesses who could be brought forward to impeach her, he set great value on "his colleague" Blache, whom he recommended to Fouquier-Tinville in the following terms:—

"Blache, *alias* Dumas, Commissary of the Committee of General Safety to the forty-eight sections of Paris, living at the former Hôtel de Province, Rue du Temple, will prove to you all her aristocratic connections in London . . . the protection of the court and courtiers which she enjoys, and the confession made to him at Louveciennes that, in violation of the law, she was in regular correspondence with Mortemart and other *émigrés*."²

Moreover, on every page of Greive's manuscript we meet with such references as these: "Ask Blache," "See Blache," or "Blache will inform you." To use a slang expression employed by French thieves, they were manifestly *de mèche*—that is, accomplices.

¹ *National Archives*, F⁷, 4664.

² *National Archives*, W. 16 and 16_W. 300.

A PRECIOUS TRIO

Blache's deposition is, in fact, full of minute details. As soon as Greive had informed him of the Countess's arrival in London, he must have greatly neglected his pupils in order to follow "the Tyrant's" former mistress step by step. Thus, he reports having seen Mme. du Barry "get into a carriage with *la femme* Calonne the day after her arrival."

"On the occasion of this first visit," he adds, "she took rooms at the house of a man named Grenier, in Jermin (*sic*) Street. Grenier was formerly a cook to the Duc d'Orléans in Paris, and since settling down in London has been his agent and butler.

"La Dubarry's second visit to London was made shortly after her return to France. She lived in Marguerite Street, Oxford (Street?), where she received all the *émigrés* of the upper classes and continued her relations with *la femme* de Calonne.

"La Dubarry went back to France and returned (to London) in October, 1792. Saint-Fard, putative brother of the Duc d'Orléans, had just taken a furnished house in Boulton Street, Barckle (Berkeley) Square, for Bouillé; but as he did not arrive the place was made over to La Dubarry. She occupied this house with (1) Saint-Fard, (2) La Denain, (3) La Mortemart, (4) Bertrand de Molleville, and (5) Breteuil. At this period she enabled the younger La Daiguillon to emigrate by passing her off as one of her maids.

"In January (1793) La Dubarry, after Capet's death, went into mourning with the strictest observance of English custom. She was present at all the services which were celebrated in all the chapels of Powers opposed to the Republic. . ."¹

This deposition also throws light on certain points specially relating to Blache himself. Thus, we learn that, "obliged to leave England by arbitrary order of the King (it is probable that he merely did not want to lose sight of Mme. du Barry, and that he returned to London in her footsteps), he returned to France and was entrusted by the Committee of General Safety of the National Convention with several important commissions which necessitated him making various journeys to Louveciennes.

"Invited by La Dubarry to take up his abode at her house, he accepted. Conversing with her, he referred to her journeys

¹ *National Archives*, W. 16.

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

to London and district, as well as to her having often visited the above named persons; and reproached her with having corresponded with La Calonne, La Denain, La Mortemart . . . etc. La Dubarry replied: 'Yes, that is true; but we only wrote about quite ordinary matters. My correspondence maintained merely bonds of friendship, nothing more.' The deponent showed her the Law of March which punishes with death any person who has direct or *indirect* correspondence with enemies of the Republic . . . etc."¹

These texts are devoid of picturesqueness, but since they are all we possess we are amply excused for giving them. They enable us to conclude that Blache was Greive's zealous agent in the Louveciennes Affair, and that he succeeded in inspiring the Countess with so much confidence that she put him up at her house and told him of her correspondence with the *émigrés*. They finally succeeded in her judicial assassination.

This affair was doubtless not without pecuniary profit, for Blache attempted to find a similar windfall. He set to work to search the district for "La du Barry's accomplices," and his inquiry resulted in incidents which he pompously called "the Marly case."² He discovered two ladies of the former court living in one of the pavilions of the royal *château*: Mme. d'Esparbès, former mistress of "the Sybarite" Louis XV., a momentary favourite in whom Marshal de Richelieu had taken an interest; and Mme. Chastenoy. Their crime consisted, according to Blache, "in having confidence in the prophecies of Nostrodamus, a weakness which is not astonishing, accustomed as these women are to entertain absurd notions and illusions." He endeavoured to repeat the trick which had succeeded so well in the case of the Countess du Barry, and, in order to give the affair the air of a conspiracy, had arrested, at the same time as the two unfortunate ladies, various former employees on the Marly Estate: Desmarais, inspector of buildings; Soula, ex-mayor of Marly; Bains, janitor at the *château*; Belain, a servant; Viterne, captain of the Invalids; and Caussin,

¹ *National Archives*, W. 16.

² Prairial, Year II.

A PRECIOUS TRIO

Chaplain to the late king. All these people were shut up in Paris prisons, but were saved from the scaffold by the Thermidor revolution.

We can also detect Blache's hand in that horrible La Muette Case which resulted in the death of three innocent women: Mme. Chalgrin, daughter of Joseph Vernet, the painter; Mme. Filleul, janitress at the Château de la Muette, who was charged with having painted, between 1781 and 1783, the portraits of several members of the Royal family; and Mme. Filleul's mother, Mme. (widow) Bocquet, seventy-two years old. Blache, as my readers will see, only attacked women. He was the mainspring of this case.

Profiting by Greive's lessons, he concocted it, fostered it, followed it up, and handed it, all ready prepared, to the public prosecutor. The three women were guillotined on the 6th of Thermidor, three days before Robespierre's fall.¹

At this point of his history Blache disappeared. Doubtless uneasy about the way in which his services as "Commissary of the Committee of General Safety to the forty-eight sections of Paris" might be appreciated, did he decide it was prudent to change his name, or did he hide himself so well that his past was buried in silence? The police made a search for him in the year IV., and questioned a surgeon named Binet, who did not conceal the fact that Blache came to him to be cured of a disease of a particular nature. He believed that the said Blache lived by thieving, for "his patient had paid him very well, although he did not appear to have any calling."

Detectives proceeded to Blache's residence in the Rue du Chaume, at the corner of the Rue des Blancs-Manteaux. They knocked at the door, but receiving no answer sent for a locksmith. On entering the empty bedroom, they found it contained the strangest collection of articles: a violin, two fencing foils, two hand-saws, a file, some handkerchiefs, some feminine underclothing from which the names had been removed, some petticoats, a number of shawls, several pairs of spurs, a telescope, and the

¹ Wallon, *Histoire du tribunal révolutionnaire de Paris*, vol. v, p. 145.

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

mouthpiece of a brass trumpet.¹ Blache, suspected of theft, was arrested and imprisoned.

Was this man our Blache? Probably. Shortly afterwards he wrote a long and interesting report on the state of public opinion.² We then hear nothing more of him. I have been unable to find his name either in the reports at the National Archives, or in those at the Prefecture of Police, or in the records at any of our public archives. He appears neither in M. Aulard's tables of Jacobins, nor in those relating to the Thermidorian reaction, nor, finally, in M. Sigismond Lacroix's Register of Acts of the Paris Commune. In short, Blache disappeared as completely as though he had never existed.

III

ROTONDI-ROTONDO : PROFESSOR OF LANGUAGES

IF we know nothing about Blache, we know very little about Rotondo. His history had a happy beginning but a bad end—at any rate in the sense that it is without an end.

The reasons which led Parisians, in 1790, to pillage the Hôtel de Castries are, it must be admitted, somewhat forgotten nowadays. It is even rather difficult to discover what they were. Perhaps there never were any. The occurrence itself, which caused a great sensation at the time, is one of those incidents which has not been remembered. Certain events, little noticed by contemporaries, are lucky in finding a place in History, in permanently figuring in its pages, in being inserted in those Pantheons of historical facts, the Manuals. The sacking of the Maison Réveillon belongs to that category. Others, much more numerous, which are greeted by a multitude of articles, pamphlets, and pictures, and seem destined to attain glory, are not so fortunate.

¹ *Archives of the Prefecture of Police.* Reports from Police Commissaries. The 12th of Vendémiaire, Year IV. Section de l'Homme Armé.

² *National Library.* Manuscripts. *Papers of Prince Napoleon.*

A PRECIOUS TRIO

They go out of fashion, are soon disdained, and receive but brief mention in the most detailed chronicles. And so they become almost forgotten. As a case in point we have but to turn to the pillage of the Hôtel de Castries.

There is no necessity, however, to repair this historical injustice. All I need do is to state the facts as briefly as possible. On November 13th, 1790, ten thousand people proceeded to the Rue de Varenne, burst open the doors of the house, threw the furniture out of the windows, smashed the window-panes, and set fire to the pictures. It had been understood that nothing should be stolen, that the people should be content with loyally destroying everything, a task which was carried out "with that gaiety which only the populace possesses." When everything was broken, it was ingeniously remarked that the Parisians had taken less time to establish *their* Court of Cassation than the deputies, who were unendingly discussing the new judicial organisation. A jovial crowd had collected in the street to witness this free performance and applaud the amusing spectacle of furniture falling on to the courtyard pavement.

A man of forty years of age, standing on a column at the gateway of the house, followed the progress of this destruction with much interest. His name was Rotondo, and he was a well-known figure in the cafés where speechifiers congregated. "A well-shaped man," with a pronounced aquiline nose and black hair, he was to be seen wherever there was a crowd. He amused people by his unintelligible lingo, a mixture of English, Italian, French, and Flemish.¹ He said he was a professor of languages, and he rented a room at the Palais Royal for his pupils. According to a legend which he took care to uphold, since it brought him a sort of reputation,

¹ The following letter, written by Rotondo at the Châtelet in July 1791 to the president of a Committee of the Assembly, is a specimen of his pretentious jargon :—

"Rotondo, professeur, supplie avec le plus proffond respect, Monsieur le président du Comité des recherches d'avoir la degnation à la demande que j'ai foi dans cette exclu lettre cella ferai poir moi la plus grande grace que dans ma malhereuse situation d'obtenir pour une seule fois de voir un ami.

Votre rei humb ser,

ROTONDO, *Professeur.*

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

Rotondo was one of those international patriots who swarmed in Paris at the beginning of the Revolution; he passed as "an apostle of new ideas, a pioneer of liberty," and people understood that "all the tyrants of Europe were in coalition against him."

Now, when Lafayette, at the head of a small body of mounted national guards, caracolled, on this occasion, into the Rue de Varenne and attempted to force a way through the crowd, the general called out to the personage who, full of importance, was surveying the scene from the top of his column. Rotondo replied in such an unintelligible manner that the puzzled Lafayette exclaimed: "What's that you say? What's your nationality? English or Italian?" The professor spluttered in great emotion: "*Moitié l'un, moitié l'autre*—Half one and half the other." The poor man pronounced the word *moitié* as though it were *motié*, and this won for him a veritable triumph. His reply was received with a burst of applause. "There's your answer! Did you hear? Long live Rotondo!" The crowds seized him by the hands, repeated the phrase over and over again, and hooted the nonplussed horsemen. It must be explained that *motié* was Lafayette's patronymic, the name by which wags invariably called him just as they surnamed Louis XVI. *Capet*.¹

Which newsmonger—Prudhomme or Desmoulins—seized upon Rotondo's words, hawked them about, praised them, commented upon them, and held them up to general admiration, I am unable to say. Whoever it may have been, the

¹ *Révolutions de Paris*, No 75 (December 11th to 18th, 1790). "At the time of the Hôtel de Castries affair, M. de La Fayette made a military promenade in the Rue de Varenne at the head of a small body of cavalry. A M. Rotondo, who was leaning against a column, was calmly watching the troops file past, when, perceiving that the imprudence of the horsemen who were galloping in the midst of the crowd might result in injury to citizens, he called upon an officer to order his men to ride at walking pace. The officer, considering that he was insulted, rode at full speed to inform M. La Fayette that a man opposed the execution of his orders. The general came, questioned this M. Rotondo, and asked him if he were an Englishman. '*Moitié l'un, moitié l'autre!*' he replied. This piece of pleasantry, addressed to such a patriot as the general, was a bitter pill; he felt it deeply, and from that moment swore to be avenged on Rotondo. Some dull subordinates, decorated with epaulettes, undertook to carry out his vengeance, and one of them arrested the guilty man as he was passing in front of the Feuillants guard-house."

A PRECIOUS TRIO

fact remains that agitated Paris learned that a foreign patriot, "a martyr of liberty," had given Lafayette a stinging reply, and avenged the democracy for the general's retractions. The phrase "Motié l'un, Motié l'autre!" pregnant with an ironical meaning, had unmasked "the janus-faced man, the democratic marquis, the revolutionary courtier." It was greeted with a roar of laughter, an outburst of joy; it came as a huge relief to the people; it was the revenge for eighteen months' infatuation and popularity. Prints were published representing Lafayette with two faces, "a patriot by day, and a *valet de cour* at night," or symbolising him by a candle, "which burnt brightly in the presence of the people, but stank in good company." In short, Rotondo was celebrated.

Yes, he was celebrated . . . And he did not know why! Merely anxious not to get into trouble, and ignorant of the double meaning of his words, he had replied without the slightest malicious intention. He who was scoffed at as soon as he opened his mouth,—he who could not succeed in making himself understood in a shop or café,—had pronounced some memorable words. As to that he could have no doubt, having heard the applause with which they were greeted and delighted in it. But what had he said? And he remained terribly perplexed and disquieted at the thought of what he could have said, reflecting that he was the only person to whom nobody would think of explaining his witticism, and the only person also who, under the penalty of destroying his budding renown, was unable to ask anyone for an explanation.¹

¹ Notes which Rotondo has left behind him (*National Archives*, F7, 6155) clearly show that he was unaware of the import of his phrase.

"After leaving home one day, the populace, who, for I know not what reason, wished to pillage the palace of Marshal de Castries, suddenly came towards me and, placing a naked sword in my hand, ordered me to follow them. On reaching the said palace, they placed me and another at the gateway, with orders to allow no one either to enter or go out. Shortly afterwards, Lafayette, who had a large number of soldiers with him, asked me my nationality and if I spoke Italian or English. I made this famous reply: '*Je suis, Monsieur, moitié l'un, moitié l'autre.*' These words, simple as they are, had very unfortunate consequences, and are the fatal source of all the misfortunes which have happened to me in France, England, Italy, and Geneva since 1796."

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

Glory is undoubtedly a cumbersome accessory which few know how to bear with ease; but the condition under which it weighed on Rotondo's shoulders made it more embarrassing than usual. In the space of three days he became the champion of Paris and the rival of Lafayette. A handful of practical jokers perpetrated the joke, and a hundred thousand honest folk, taking it seriously, confidently admired this Italian patriot who had left his native country in order to come to France to fight for the holy cause of the liberty of nations. A hundred thousand others, who, it must be confessed, knew no more about him, anathematised this foreign *sans-culotte*, this renegade, Lafayette's guards, especially, swearing that their general's insulter should die by their hands.

On November 18th, five days after the attack on the Hôtel de Castries, as Rotondo was quietly crossing the Passage des Feuillants, someone told him that a person "was waiting for him at the Riding School guard-house." Hastening there, he found a dozen fusiliers of the Du Bouzet company, to whom he politely gave his name. No sooner had he done this than he was seized, thrown out of doors, in spite of his protests, gagged, thrust into a cab amidst a shower of blows, and driven to the Mairie. After being kept there for four hours, he was finally set free "with a severe admonition."

Rotondo was so put about by this incident "that he did not get over it for three days." On November 22nd he dragged himself from the Rue Dauphine, where he lived, to the Café *Hottot*, situated on the Feuillants terrace. Five officers of the Tuileries Guard were conversing around a table near the one at which he had taken a seat. It appears that Rotondo, on seeing them, was struck with the deplorable idea of quoting two adapted lines—bad ones, too—from the tragedy of *Brutus* :—

" Arrêter un Français sur de simple soupçons,
C'est agir en tyrans . . . nous qui les punissons !"

Whereupon the officers took offence, a quarrel broke out, and blows were showered upon Rotondo's shoulders. The louder he cried out that he had not intended to insult

A PRECIOUS TRIO

anybody, and that he was the illustrious Rotondo, the more they persisted in beating him. Glasses were shattered into atoms, a table was overturned, and the civilians present joining in the row, Rotondo appealing in his jargon for "the rights of man and of a citizen," collapsed under blows from sticks and the flat side of swords. From that day his life became a continual pugilistic encounter. Before the end of the week he was attacked one evening, in the Rue Croix des Petits Champs by "police spies dressed as national guards." He returned home beaten most unmercifully, bruised from head to foot, "assassinated"—to use his own word—declaring that he would never again venture without an escort into the streets of this cursed city, where renown exposed a man to such cruel treatment. So far was he from suspecting the reason for his misfortunes that he went to Lafayette himself to ask for "aid and protection.

The General received him at midnight. He was at first very distrustful, but was soon reassured on seeing the sorry appearance of "his rival," who showed such fear that he took pity on him and had him driven in his carriage as far as the Pont-Neuf. Ah! if only the stagers of his apotheosis could have seen Rotondo in that vehicle! . . . But they were little concerned with him. They simply used his sonorous name to create a great commotion. Each of his adventures was turned by advanced newspapers into a theme for exalting the patience of patriots and denouncing the insolence of Lafayettists, and thus, without his collaboration, the renown of the "martyr of liberty" daily increased.

When I consider to what an extent, in Revolutionary France, a prominent man's destiny is at the mercy of a caprice of Fortune, I can imagine that Rotondo might have played a brilliant part in feverishly excited Paris. Scoffed at by some people, deified by others, and extolled by newspapers, then at the height of their influence, he was in danger of becoming, like so many others, the idol of the people. With such a name as his, few scruples, and plenty of audacity, who knows where Fortune might have led him? For that reason I was curious to learn the history of the life

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

of a man upon whom mischievous Fate had bestowed a talisman of the value of which he was unaware. Surprising discoveries were in store for me.

Rotondo was a swindler. The first time that his name is to be found in the documents in our public archives is in 1784, in the gaol-book of the Grand-Châtelet prison.¹ He was then called Rotondi, but there is no doubt it is the same man. His name was Jean Baptiste, and he was born at Fallavecchia, near Milan, in 1750. Now, on September 28th, 1784, Rotondi, who had been in Paris a few months, after living for two years in London, was imprisoned for stealing a snuffbox.² Six weeks before he had passed himself off to Geneviève Barreau, a maker of linen goods, as "a wealthy Englishman," had ordered two dozen shirts and as many handkerchiefs, had "shown his pockets full of louis," had made love to her, got himself invited to dinner, and had gone off with a silver box which was on the mantelpiece. Mlle. Barreau did not see her gallant customer again until she met him by chance in the Tuileries and had him arrested. On the following day complaints began to pour in. First of all, a dancer at the Opéra, named Louise Chenneval, declared that Rotondi had "represented himself to be a rich Englishman and had offered her his protection," and that he had stolen a gold chain under the pretence of having it mended. Another dancer, Thérèse Carré, had been robbed of a gold watch in a similar way; a mercer had paid the penalty of listening to her flatterer's tempting promises by losing "a ring shaped like a dog's collar and bearing the motto: *Je ne vis que pour toi* ; and Charlotte Deler, otherwise known as *Lolotte*, leading dancer at the Comédie Française, had similarly lost her earrings and a gold ring. Thirty complaints were laid in three days by actresses and dancing-girls. We find the names of Esther of the Opéra, of the *filles* Dorival, Duparc, and Migneaux, of the *danseuses* Saint-Charles, Sainte-Marie, and Masson, of Manette de Vermont, and of many others. The "wealthy Englishman" had passed himself off on all of these as a lover ready to make any sacrifice, "fifty louis a month" being the smallest sum he

¹ Archives of the Prefecture of Police.

² National Archives, Y. 9942.

A PRECIOUS TRIO

offered ; he had jingled his gold and opened his pocket-book "stuffed with bank-notes" before every one of them ; and in each case he had robbed them of jewellery. Should one of them meet him by chance and reproach him for his behaviour, he threatened to have her arrested for blackmail, and spoke in a loud tone of "his friend Lenoir, governor-general of police, who could refuse him nothing" ; whereupon the poor women, terror-stricken, remained silent, convinced "that he was a foreign prince, or an English lord ignorant of the customs of Paris." ¹

Inspector Longpré, charged with the inquiry, was less discreet : he made a domiciliary visit to Rotondi's residence, the first floor apartment in the house of a wig-maker in the Rue Saint-Martin, near the Rue des Ménétriers ; and found that it was a veritable jeweller's shop.² There were gold and silver watches, medallions, set and unset brilliants, fragments of necklaces, dozens of rings bearing all sorts of initials, pencil-cases, comfit-boxes, gold hearts, snuffboxes, dressing-cases, waist-belt buckles, ivory and crystal rouge-boxes, and a pearl necklace. Asked to explain where all these articles came from, he pretended not to understand the question and would not reply. On the Abbé Bencirech being called in to act as interpreter, he tried to get the complainants to withdraw their charges by offering them money.

Rotondi got off with fifteen days in a dungeon and six months' imprisonment at the Grand-Châtelet. At the end of March 1785 a recruiting officer invited him to join the Berry Regiment ; but, feeling that he had no vocation for a military life, he refused. The same day he was informed that he was exiled, and three days later he left for Holland.³

Such was Rotondi's *début* in Paris. He did not return until 1790, on hearing in London of the publication of the Decree of September 11th, which simultaneously suppressed the Châtelet, judges, commissaries, and "all judicial corporations." Reappearing in this land of Cockaigne, where the old judicial system no longer existed and the new one was not

¹ Informations against Rottondy. *National Archives*, Y. 9942.

² Rottondy's interrogatory and inventory of jewellery found at his residence.—*National Archives*, Y. 9942. ³ *National Archives*, F⁷, 6155.

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

yet working, he frequented the Palais Royal gaming-houses under the name of Rotondo. Always fashionably dressed in a puce-coloured silk dress coat and brown waistcoat, he made bombastic speeches there in his unintelligible jargon. In the course of his travels he had forgotten Italian, but had not thoroughly learnt any other language, a fact which enabled him to call himself a polyglot, and especially, when need be, to retract the errors of his revolutionary eloquence. Nobody, in fact, could be more cowardly. Ten witnesses testified, in September 1790, that Rotondo had publicly called the King "*une bête puante*," and the Queen "a Messalina who ought to be hanged." He was arrested, but wriggled out of his difficulty by humbly declaring "that it was possible that, thinking he was in London, where true liberty was enjoyed, he had let slip certain political references to the King and Queen of England, and that these words, considering his difficulty in speaking French, had been wrongly interpreted by his listeners, and applied to the French sovereigns, whom he infinitely respected."¹ In the eyes of idlers who saw only one side of him, this carpet knight was a blustering patriot, a man "who held his own against tyrants"; and thus, after "his daring reply" to Lafayette, he became ready for his fate.

Misfortune crowned his glory. Tracked, beaten, and imprisoned at the Châtelet, in December 1791, for "seditious statements," but released after fifteen days, he was re-arrested in connection with the Champ-de-Mars affair on a charge of firing at his rival Lafayette the shot which was almost the signal for a massacre. He was placed in close custody at the Abbaye prison, and a host of witnesses declared that they had seen him at the foot of the altar of La Patrie armed with a pistol. His enemies nearly succeeded, on that occasion, in obtaining his head. However, he once more got out of his difficulties, and, still more important than ever, published two pamphlets in quick succession: one to hold up to public hatred "the infamous inspector of police Longpré," whom he had not forgiven for former annoyances, and the other to reveal to the public that the sacrifices which he had made in the name of liberty "had, by exhausting his resources, forced him to appeal to the generosity

¹ *National Archives*, Y. 13320 and F⁷, 4625 (Buirette-Verrières Papers).

A PRECIOUS TRIO

of patriots for the assistance which virtue had a right to expect of virtue. . . .”¹ The way he proposed to raise money was to organise a lottery, the prizes being two jewels, and the tickets six francs each.

Rotondo still had a weakness for jewellery. His fondness for it amounted, indeed, to a perfect mania. Wherever treasures were supposed to be, there you would find him prowling, and he had a faculty for discovering those which, under cover of patriotism, he could approach without risk. Do you think that he stood under the porch of the Hôtel de Castries, on the day it was attacked, merely to expose himself to injury and see the windows broken? His release from prison in January 1791 singularly coincides with the robbery of Mme. du Barry’s jewels, that mysterious treasure which fascinated the rogues of the entire world. Here we again find his traces, the following letter having been preserved among the Countess’s papers:—

“MADAME,

“You oblige me, in spite of myself, to have the honour to tell you what I think, and which I ought to have told you the first time. You are aware of the important service which I have rendered you, and I am very surprised that your manner of asking has not accorded with the nobility of mine. Believe me when I say that I feel pained to reproach you with this. The matter in which I have rendered you a service is about to revive worse than ever. I cannot call upon you a second time, being responsible to the public for my time. But I will again give you time, so that you can come to see me between eight and nine in the morning and judge to what a length I have carried my generosity and delicacy. I give you the remainder of this week to reflect. After that time any steps you may take will be useless.

“I am very respectfully, Madame,

“Your very humble and very obedient servant,

“ROTONDO : Professor.”

This letter refers to a satirically obscene play with which the “professor” threatened Mme. du Barry, and which he agreed to stop on payment of a large indemnity. It is difficult to believe that this piece of blackmail was carried

¹ *Adresse du Professeur Rotondo and Aux citoyens patriotes des sections de Paris.* Both these pamphlets are in the National Library, Paris.

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

out unknown to Greive, who, as we have seen, "had taken charge of" La du Barry, and was to serve her up "all ready dressed" to the public prosecutor.

On the occasion of the September massacres, Rotondo's patriotism again led him to commit excesses. Rings, watches, and shoe-buckles were to be picked up, as can be seen from the very summary inventory (eight gold watches, a gold chain, a Cross of Saint-Louis, &c., &c.), which the Chevalier de Dorat-Cubières, a gallant poet, former equerry to the Countess d'Artois, drew up on the spot in his elegant handwriting. Historians are unanimously agreed, though no documentary proof is in existence, that Rotondo was present at the massacres, that he went from the Abbaye to La Force, that he took part in the murder of Mme. de Lamballe, and that he was one of the men who were seen to go from wine-shop to wine-shop exhibiting the princess's head. A month later the robbery of the Crown jewels took place at the Garde-Meuble, a crime which, with regard to many points, is still obscure. In fact, Collet, one of the condemned thieves, asked, when about to mount the scaffold, to be allowed to make a serious declaration, and reveal the name of the unknown person who had "managed the job." But he was no sooner in the magistrate's presence than he refused to speak, and preferred to die with his secret. However that may be, seven of the ten accomplices who were arrested were Rotondo's compatriots. Douligny was born at Brescia; Marian, Fratin, and Berequin were Piedmontese; and the others—the shoemaker Baradel, François Depeyron, who kept the "Regent" and the "Sancy" diamonds as his modest share of the robbery, and Delcampo, *alias* Deschamps—were from Turin itself. Moreover, the last-named lodged in the Rue des Vieux-Augustins in a furnished hotel which Rotondo had occupied, and perhaps still occupied at that time, for he was in simultaneous possession of three residences.

What part does such a man as this play in history? How many crimes has political hatred attributed to the great, crimes which were committed only by men of this type? How can we presume to be acquainted with this complicated drama, the French Revolution, if we ignore the doings of

A PRECIOUS TRIO

these almost anonymous subordinates who worked in obscurity for themselves, whilst others, those who have been anathematised, heroically accepted the responsibility and risked their heads for dazzling utopias? But in what way are we to discover the traces of these freebooters, the darkness of whose designs was such a guarantee of impunity?

As regards Rotondo, it appears certain that he committed some terrible misdeed during the weeks following August 10th, 1792. Formerly, he had made people laugh; but from that period onwards he became an object of horror to all his contemporaries. He himself had only one anxiety: to set up *alibis*, which are formally destroyed by certain documents which he neglected to destroy. Before me lies the manuscript of his *Memoirs*, dedicated *alla veritate, al popolo italiano, ai patrioti di tutto l'universo*, a collection of boastful statements and untruths written to baffle a possible inquiry. Thus, he is at great pains to record a stay at Bordeaux from May to November 1792, whereas a passport found among his papers shows that that visit was made a year before.¹ I have also come across a receipted bill for 164 francs made out in his name by a Palais Royal china-dealer and dated September 3rd, 1792, at which time he professed to be far from Paris.

In relating the end of Rotondo's adventures we must, therefore, reject his narrative almost in its entirety. On September 23rd he was arrested at Rouen on the mere announcement in a newspaper of the opening of his language classes, the inhabitants refusing to have "this cut-throat in their city." He escaped from prison at night, hid himself under a bridge, and returned to Paris in disguise.² His name had again become *Rotondi*. This would appear to have been the modest form of his name, the one which he used in days of adversity, retaining the sonorous *Rotondo* for times of prosperity. He had, besides, but a very hazy idea of what was happening in the political world. This was in December

¹ His papers also included a passport made out for a journey from Nantes to Paris, dated November 24th, 1791.

² It must be pointed out that he appeared at Angers in September, 1792. He was "outrageously driven" from the city where he was known, having already stayed there in November 1791. Célestin Port, *La Vendée Angevine*, vol. ii., p. 34.

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

1792, and he imagined that his persecutor Lafayette was "at the height of his power." Moreover, he had not yet discovered the double meaning of the famous "enigmatical and mysterious, although simple and ironical" reply to which he owed his past glory. So he fled from Paris as from the plague. We next find him successively in London, Calais, Dunkirk, and Strasburg, where a practical joker made him believe that Lafayette had been elected dictator. This so terrified Rotondo that he crossed the frontier. His reputation as a Septembrist having preceded him to Geneva, he was thrown into a dungeon on his arrival and remained there for two months. One night he was embarked on the lake and taken to Nyon, in Swiss territory; but no sooner had he landed than he was attacked by a body of soldiers and citizens who were awaiting him. "I received," he says, "more than fifty sword and bayonet wounds. These men asked me for the father or brother whom they said I had murdered. This cruel insult showed me that they accused me of the assassination of the Swiss on August 10th."¹ He was dragged before the bailiff, put into irons in a subterranean cell, then transferred to Chillon, and finally handed over to the agents of the King of Sardinia as "one of the murderers of Mme. de Lamballe, Princess of Savoy." Crossing the Alps on horseback, a body of carabineers escorted Rotondo to the Grand Saint-Bernard, where the monks "refused to allow the cut-throat to enter their monastery for fear he poisoned it." On September 4th, 1793, he was placed in the citadel at Turin, and after being kept there for forty days was finally imprisoned "for life" in the Château d'Ivrée. "The blackest ink," he writes, "would be inadequate to describe the smallest part of the criminal acts which are committed in this place, and a painter's brush, dipped in poison and the waters of the Styx, could but imperfectly depict them."

However, he came out of the Château d'Ivrée. On the approach of the French armies, its doors were thrown open, and Rotondo, on December 13th, 1796, was ordered to leave Sardinia within twenty-four hours. He was without resources; he was unaware of what had happened in the

¹ *National Archives*, F7, 6155.

A PRECIOUS TRIO

world during the past three years; all he knew was that he was a pariah in the eyes of the whole of humanity. Whither could he direct his steps? His brother, a canon at Milan, had died of shame and grief. So he wandered from town to town, not daring to stay for long anywhere. At the beginning of Year VI. we find him at Pisa; a little later he was at Rome; and on returning to Milan he obtained a passport for Paris.¹ Having once more become Rotondo, he cheerfully and trustfully set off on his journey, little suspecting that he was preceded by a police memorandum reporting him to be "an ultra-revolutionary who, under the cloak of exaggerated patriotism, had been guilty of the most atrocious conduct." As a matter of fact, he was suspected of being a British agent.¹

In Paris, Rotondo again posed as a victim. He came, he said, to start an action for damages against the King of Sardinia, who had made him lose three years and ten months' lessons; he claimed an indemnity of 45,000 francs, and begged the French Government to take up his quarrel. Arriving in Paris on the 1st of Thermidor, Year VI., Rotondo was arrested on the 12th and slept in the evening in the Temple Tower. The Directory honoured him with a lodging in the celebrated State prison.

Rotondo remained there for three months, at the end of which time he was handed over to the gendarmery and sent by mail-coach to Pontarlier with orders that he was to be "expelled from the territory of the Republic." Here we lose track of him. Five years later, however, we come across the following note, dated Ventôse, Year X. (March 1802):—

To the Minister of General Police.

The First Consul has given me a *written* order to arrest J. B. Rotondi, native of the Cisalpine Republic, who calls himself a professor of languages, and who lives at the Hôtel de Nancy, Rue Helvétius in Paris, and to conduct him to the Italian frontier. This order was executed on the 17th.

Prefect of Police: DUBOIS.

¹ *National Archives, F⁷, 6155.*

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

This memorandum is but a mere indication of what the life of this man must have been, a man whose name recalled the horrible memories of revolutionary excesses, and whom all Governments rejected as too vile to remain in their prisons. This was doubtless his last appearance in France. He who was master of the country had a heavier hand than Lafayette, and it was prudent not to enter into rivalry with him. What became of Rotondo? We possess but a single indication. In the bulletin for October 18th, 1812, which the Minister of Police daily placed before the Emperor, we find this brief note: "Rotondo, Jean Baptiste, arrested in the Doire (Piedmont) on a charge of highway robbery. Lack of proofs prevented his condemnation. The Minister proposes that he be placed under supervision at Coni.—Approved."¹ In what prison did he henceforth live? In what great crime had he been the mysterious accomplice? What was the tragic phantom which followed in his footsteps? What was the manner of his death? And where and when did he die? These are questions which, perhaps, will never be answered.²

¹ *National Archives*, F⁷, 3777.

² In the absence of a *dénouement* to Rotondo's life, which I have been unable to discover, it may be advisable to reproduce the article which the *Biographie de Leipsick* devotes to Rotondo (*sic*). Various statements in it are erroneous, but as this biography was the serious work of conscientious writers, who were contemporaries of survivors of revolutionary times, it may still be profitably consulted.

"Rotondo, an Italian, was one of those foreigners who flocked to France at the time of the Revolution, and figured at the head of every mob. He especially distinguished himself on July 17th, 1791, on the occasion of the Champ-de-Mars insurrection, and the Comité des Recherches even arrested him. But he was set free when the King accepted the Constitution. Fresh crimes soon brought him into notice. He took part, when the Royal Family had been imprisoned in the Temple, in the assassination of the Princesse de Lamballe, and afterwards held the severed head in front of Marie Antoinette's window, at the same time informing the Queen that the same fate awaited her. When in England some time afterwards, he himself publicly boasted of this murder. In 1793 he went to Geneva, where he had a very violent quarrel with an Irishman, who objected to him saying that he wished the King of England would soon meet with the same fate as the King of France. At last the gallows put an end to his crimes; having been convicted of murder and robbery, he was executed in Piedmont at the beginning of 1794."

This date is evidently erroneous, since Rotondo was still living in 1812. But I am inclined to think that hanging was the logical end of such a man, and that that may indeed have been his fate if he committed the blunder of returning to Piedmont.

THE ABBÉ DE CAJAMAÑO

A MUCH astonished man was cabman Georges, when, at half-past eleven on the night of October 22nd, 1812, and during a pelting rain, he was hailed by a corporal of the Paris Guard, in full uniform. The soldier ordered the cabman to take him to the Passage Saint-Pierre, in the Marais quarter, and the driver, grumbling about the length of the journey and the bad weather, started off through the winding streets in the neighbourhood of the Halles. The old horse plodded quietly through the rain, but the cabman did not feel easy in his mind, for his fare was jumping about in a way which shook the cab and threatened to break the springs. They passed along the Rue de la Verrerie, turned along the Rue Pavée, skirted the walls of the prison of La Force, and, when they arrived at the entrance to the blind-alley of Saint-Pierre—an out-of-the-way, deserted, dark hole, as muddy as a country lane—the cabman was more astonished than ever to see emerge from his cab a stark-naked man, who with one hand offered him the thirty *sous* for the journey, and in the other carried his uniform tied up in his shirt.¹

¹ “*Prefecture of Police*, October 24th, 1812. Yesterday a cabman made a declaration to the effect that a soldier, who had hired his cab at the Place du Louvre and whom he had driven to the Impasse St.-Pierre, had stripped himself entirely during the journey and tied up his clothes in a handkerchief, and then entered a house indicated in the report. Search was made in this house, which is occupied by two private persons named Dewunsch and de Caamaño (*sic*). The latter, a Spanish priest, is very unfavourably known to the police. Both were arrested, and will be examined. A sabre and two officers’ swords were found in the well of the house.

“To M. Desmonts, head of the First Division, at the office of the Minister of Police.”—*National Archives*, F⁷, 6501.

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

The naked man strode across the gutter, leaped over the puddles, and knocked at the door of the first house in the alley, which opened at once, and closed quickly after him. The cabman looked up, and saw a lighted window on the third floor; and as he did so he thought to himself that the people up there must be having a lively time, and that the corporal was in a great hurry to join them. No doubt an orgie was going on—and having come to that conclusion, the cabman, still grumbling, drove off to change his horse.

The corporal was named Rateau, and the house to which he went was inhabited by a poor and needy Spanish priest—the Abbé Joseph Fernandez de Cajamaño, who had lived there nearly a month. The Abbé had quite a party that evening, and when Rateau entered the room he found four persons sitting round the table drinking wine, the host, Schoolmaster Boutreux, the Abbé Lafon, and ex-General Malet. The two last named had escaped, only an hour before, from a *maison de santé* where they had been confined for the last three years.

It is a great pity that the story of the Malet conspiracy has never been handled except by party-writers, who have, as might have been expected, tortured and twisted it to suit their own purposes. Malet was—according to the varying views of these writers, either a faithful royalist, moved by a desire to replace the legitimate king on the throne; or a stern republican, a pure patriot, the incarnation of “the deeply-stirred heart of his country.” But then it became necessary to colour all his accomplices to match, and some of them—ex-General Guidal, for instance—do not take either tint nicely; for a glance at the reports concerning this officer will show that he was a drunkard and disobeyed orders. He was sent, on half-pay, to Nice, and there he developed a curious and deplorable mania, unceasingly trying to enter into negotiations with the British fleet, and betray the port of Toulon into the hands of the enemy. After the Restoration, his widow obtained a pension for these strange services, on the strength of a declaration by the English Admiral, proving that Guidal had entered into communication with him, and had offered



MALET.

THE ABBÉ DE CAJAMAÑO

him his son as a pledge of the good faith with which he betrayed his country.¹

Such was "the valiant soldier whose heart was embittered by one of Bonaparte's whims"; and whom another history describes as "one of those old patriots who still kept up around them the worship of down-trodden liberty."

No one has ever done justice to Malet—it matters little whether he was a republican or a royalist—but he had a genius for dramatic effects. Napoleon blundered sadly in not finding occupation for a mind so fertile in invention. Ten years later, when he would have been obliged to employ his spare time in some other pursuit than conspiring, Malet would have been a perfect godsend to the Boulevard Theatres; for he had a wonderful knack for dramatic combinations, and alone, and in prison, where he saw nobody and had hardly any money, devised means in two hours, and without any help save that of a corporal, for overturning that formidable power that all Europe in coalition could not shake. And what an admirable picturesqueness there was about the assistants, the setting, and the staging of his drama! The escape on a pouring wet night, the spot chosen for the rendezvous—the extraordinary alley of Saint-Pierre where the

¹ *Archives of the Ministry of War.* Dossier Guidal.

"Marseille, October 3rd, 1814, rue du Théâtre-Français, No. 4.

"When Guidal was sent to the army of La Vendée, he thought the moment was favourable to reveal a project he had long had in his heart, to overturn the Revolutionary Government and restore France to her legitimate kings. He had facilities for communicating with the true royalists of La Vendée, and arranged several interviews with General Frotté and Baron de Comar (*sic*). They arranged together the plans for a counter revolution. These resolute leaders were arrested with five of their officers at Alençon in the house of General Guidal, and he himself was carefully guarded. Bonaparte had him brought to Paris, then sent him to Milan, and afterwards banished him to this department, and he was soon afterwards put on half-pay.

"During his exile, this brave Frenchman had thought over the means of bringing his plans to a successful issue. He came to Marseille, and conceived the bold idea of communicating with the English squadron in the Mediterranean. He succeeded in having several interviews, and establishing relations with the English Admirals, Sir Charles Cotton and Collingwood. Such a project required great and painful sacrifices on the part of General Guidal. Everything was ready for the execution of his plan. The king, Your August brother, was to have been proclaimed throughout the whole of the south of France, but all was discovered, and General Guidal arrested," . . . &c.

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

conspirators met, the Spanish monk who sheltered them for the night, and whose portrait has been disdainfully omitted by all historians; that night passed in the Marais quarter when all around were sleeping in peace, these men only waiting for the rain to leave off before they overturned Napoleon's empire—all these things go to make up a drama so complete, so romantic, and so highly-coloured, that we curse more than ever the political reasons which have prevented such a fine story from being treated by anybody but party-pamphleteers.

The Rue Saint-Pierre and the Rue des Douze-Portes still exist. They are now united into one, called the Rue Villehardouin, formed of two blind alleys meeting at a right angle; and the old Passage Saint-Pierre, which is hard by, has become the Impasse Villehardouin.

It takes some trouble to find, if you are not well acquainted with the topography of the district; but you are well rewarded for your pains when you do find it. The passage has never had but one side, and one house, divided into three tenements. This house gets more grimy and loathsome as you advance up the passage, and a sticky dampness oozes out of the damp wall, which is irregularly pierced with odd windows, only some of which have shutters—those of the corner house, which, being nearer the light and traffic, has been obliged to make itself respectable. The other part has certainly never been cleaned, scraped, painted, or washed since 1812. The last and lowest door in this passage serves as an entrance to an alley, so dark that you have to grope your way, and where you guess rather than see the beginning of a lop-sided, tottering, wooden staircase, which leads to a sort of ill-looking courtyard from which you can see the rear of this extraordinary building. A well, now filled up, stood there formerly.

In this alley lodged the Abbé de Cajamaño, who lived on the third floor, in the part nearest the entrance to the passage. It is very probable—as we shall see—that Malet selected this place for him, as being suitable for conspirators. The spot has never been visited or described by historians—who generally care little for scenery—but it is astonishing

THE ABBÉ DE CAJAMAÑO

that the Abbé has never attracted any of them, for he was a singular personage, and a conspirator of no common kind.

He was born at Saint-Jacques de Compostella about 1775. In January, 1808—five years before the Malet affair—he had been arrested at Chambéry, when coming from Spain, with a passport for Paris delivered by the sub-prefect of Bayonne. People who mistook their road, intentionally or not, were not much liked in those days, so the gendarmes undertook to put him in the right way, and the Abbé de Cajamaño was brought to Paris, handcuffed and well escorted, and taken before the Prefect of Police, who interrogated him.

The Abbé's replies were not satisfactory. He stated, in an almost unintelligible jargon, that he was a priest, that he had come to France in the *suite* of Prince de Masserano, the Spanish Ambassador, whom he had accompanied to Fontainebleau, and if he had been arrested at Chambéry, it was because he was on his way to Rome to be relieved from his priestly vows. Prince de Masserano, when consulted, replied that Cajamaño had never been in his *suite*; but he well remembered that, in November, 1807, "a Franciscan monk of that name came to his hotel, without a passport, and declared that he had escaped from his convent and was going to Rome for some question of conscience." The opinion of the police about Cajamaño is shown by the gradation of the terms applied to him in the official correspondence. At first, he is called "Monsieur l'abbé"; then "the Spanish priest in question"; when his Ambassador has renounced him he becomes "this foreign monk"—and when, in his last examination, he owned that he had no means of subsistence, he is called "this individual," and sent to the prison of La Force.

The house of detention in the Rue du Roi-de-Sicile was at that time the chief receptacle for all the *pègre* of France—the slang term here conveys a moral lesson, for *pègre* comes from the Latin *pigritia*. It consisted of a lot of enormous buildings, jumbled together without any plan, and separated by courtyards without sunlight, fresh air, or verdure. There were four storeys filled with thieves, loose women, Chouans,

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

swindlers, bankrupts, convicts who had escaped and been re-taken, vagabonds, and murderers ;—the “new building” alone (a terribly dark, decrepit, worm-eaten ruin) contained more than four hundred. The gaol-books of the prison still exist, and nothing can give a more correct idea of this hive of ill-doers than these enormous registers, the pages of which, covered with thousands and thousands of names, are bleached by tobacco-smoke, and limp from having been so often thumbed by the fingers of gaolers. The Abbé de Cajamaño, not having a penny in the world, had to endure all the horrors of being herded with this horrible crew. He watched, with terror, fights, mutinies, suicides, set battles, escapes, and ironings ; he heard nothing round him but the filthy slang of the hulks ; of French he learned nothing but *argot*, and this hell upon earth was all he knew of Paris, and it must be confessed that if this simple-minded priest was at all prejudiced against the revolutionary *régime* in France, his experience was not of a nature to make him change his opinion. He sent a complaint to his Ambassador, but the letter was forwarded through the police, and, in the days of Fouché, Réal, and Dubois, everything that came from that quarter instinctively inspired distrust, so the Ambassador never replied. A second petition met with no better success ; seeing which the police kept back all that followed, which went to swell the *dossier*. The poor monk, imagining that his French was not understood, drew up his petitions in Latin phrases extracted from his breviary, but they succeeded no better.

The Abbé remained at La Force four years and a half, at the end of which time he got out by means of “a postilion sent to Ireland.” “A postilion” is a note rolled up in a pellet of bread-crumbs ; and it is “sent to Ireland”—from one country to another—when it is thrown from the prison windows into the street without passing through the official channel. By this means, Cajamaño, whose conscientious scruples seem to have died hard, was somehow brought into connection with the Abbé Jean Baptiste Lafon, who had been shut up from 1809 in the *maison de santé* of Dr. Dubuisson in the Place du Trône, on a charge of “having preached

THE ABBÉ DE CAJAMAÑO

doctrines subversive to existing order." The Abbé Lafon was a royalist agent, and consequently had no great influence, but he recommended Cajamaño to the priest who came every Sunday to read Mass to the prisoners in Dubuisson's establishment—the Abbé Claude Sombardier, treasurer of Notre Dame, and formerly "metropolitan registrar." He interested himself in Cajamaño's case, and mentioned it to Count Corvetto, State Councillor, with whom he was acquainted, who procured the prisoner's release. Cajamaño left La Force on May 22nd, 1812.

With the aid of the police notes, we can follow the poor wretch's wanderings. As soon as he left the prison, he had himself conducted to the Rue du Fouarre, to the house of his benefactor, the Abbé Sombardier, who, by the way, had never seen him, and who drew back in horror when he found ensconced in his dining-room this unkempt, shirtless stranger, clad in a tattered cassock, brutalised by four years of prison, so afraid of Paris that he refused to stir out of the house, and who expressed himself in a jargon that was half Spanish, half prison-slang. The Abbé Sombardier, whose life, until the Revolution, had been passed in a succession of quiet metropolitan livings, was fond of comfort. He liked a cosy home with his books neatly arranged, his linen snowy white, and furniture well polished. He was horrified at the result of the good action he had done. Would this intruder always live with him? Must he endure for long the society of this lost sheep, who had no money, and appeared, moreover, incapable of earning any? The worthy ecclesiastic could not endure this trial more than three weeks, during which time he puzzled his brains to find some work for his *protégé*. He then turned him out, after presenting him with a bed and a letter to the Curé of Saint-Gervais, who had charitably offered to lodge the Spaniard in the steeple of his church, and employ him as an "attaché" on parochial duties. Two months later, Cajamaño had regained his independence. The duties he had performed as an auxiliary to the clergy of Saint-Gervais and Notre Dame de Bonne Nouvelle, and most probably also the discreet liberality of some royalist devotees, enabled this victim of the usurper to set up on his own

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

account. He lodged in the Rue des Juifs, and from there he went every Sunday morning to visit the Abbé Lafon, who was still a prisoner in the *maison de santé* at the Place du Trône, and there it was that Cajamaño met Malet.

There is no need to discuss at length Malet's plan, which had been in his head some years. Being a soldier, and thoroughly imbued with the spirit of discipline, he had come to the conclusion that if a cool, self-possessed man, clad in a General's uniform, appeared before a body of troops and gave his orders, they would be obeyed. That was his starting-point. The only difficulty was to get out of prison, and find a quiet spot where he could put on his uniform. When once he was outside, and dressed up, he was to present himself some night at one of the barracks, accompanied by an orderly officer to make it seem more natural—it was Rateau, who, without being taken into the General's confidence, was to play this dangerous part—and then wake up the officers and read them a "senatus-consultum" of his own manufacture, announcing the death of the Emperor under the walls of Moscow and the constitution of a new Government. After that he would cause the assembly to be sounded, the troops would follow him, and he would seize upon the Prefecture, the offices of the Ministers of Police and of War, and guard them with picked men who were themselves his dupes, and would therefore play their part better. In this way, and solely by virtue of passive obedience, he would, in less than a morning, have the whole machinery of the Government under his control. Such was Malet's plan;—a mad scheme, in which everybody except himself was to act in good faith, and which—theoretically—was bound to succeed, all the details being mapped out as carefully as the scene-plot of a play.

It is very surprising that in the minute inquiry which followed the failure of this plot, no attempt was made to find out how Malet came to be acquainted with Cajamaño. Very probably, the ex-General repeated a trick which had been tried in the conspiracies during the Regency, and made the Spaniard copy documents he did not understand—amongst others the "senatus-consultum" which was

THE ABBÉ DE CAJAMAÑO

to be used to convince various officials of the death of the Emperor and the formation of a provisional Government.¹ No doubt it was also Malet who—being anxious to find a quiet spot where he could take refuge when he escaped from the *maison de santé*, and where he could meet Rateau—advised Cajamaño to leave the Rue des Juifs, and take a lodging in some unfrequented street close to the Minimes barracks, where he intended to try his first experiment. The Spaniard searched about the Marais quarter, and, on September 26th, found the blind-alley of Saint-Pierre, and noticed there were rooms to let there. He examined the apartment, which consisted of two furnished rooms on the third floor, and settled arrangements with Dewunsch, who was the principal lodger in the house. The same evening a porter brought a box containing the effects of the Abbé, who, soon afterwards, took possession of the apartment.

After that date, the inhabitants of the Rue des Douze-Portes, and the Rue Saint-Pierre enjoyed the rare spectacle of a foot-passenger in their streets, for at all times of the day they saw this black-haired, bilious-looking priest, gaunt from enforced fasts, striding along the muddy pavement. He did not willingly speak to anyone, and walked fast, with his eyes cast down. He had no money, and Dewunsch, who, as agent for the landlord, knew something of the Abbé, could never learn where or when his lodger took his meals. Perhaps—like the hermits of the Thebaid—the recluse of the Alley Saint-Pierre lived on spiritual contemplation instead of food.

On October 22nd, about ten o'clock at night, a man knocked at the Abbé's door. He brought a trunk which he had fetched from Mme. Malet's house in the Rue de l'Université, and which contained the General's uniform and sword, as well as a complete uniform for a staff-officer, intended for Rateau. This man was Boutreux, twenty-eight years of age, and the brother of a priest who had long been

¹ There is reason to believe that the copies of the senatus-consultum and the proclamations are in Cajamaño's handwriting.—*National Archives*, Dossier Cajamaño.

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

acquainted with the Abbé Lafon. Cajamaño had never met Boutreux, but had received notice of his visit. They laid out the General's uniform on the bed. At about the same hour, the General, accompanied by the Abbé Lafon, left Dr. Dubuisson's establishment by opening a little garden-door to which he had procured a double key.¹

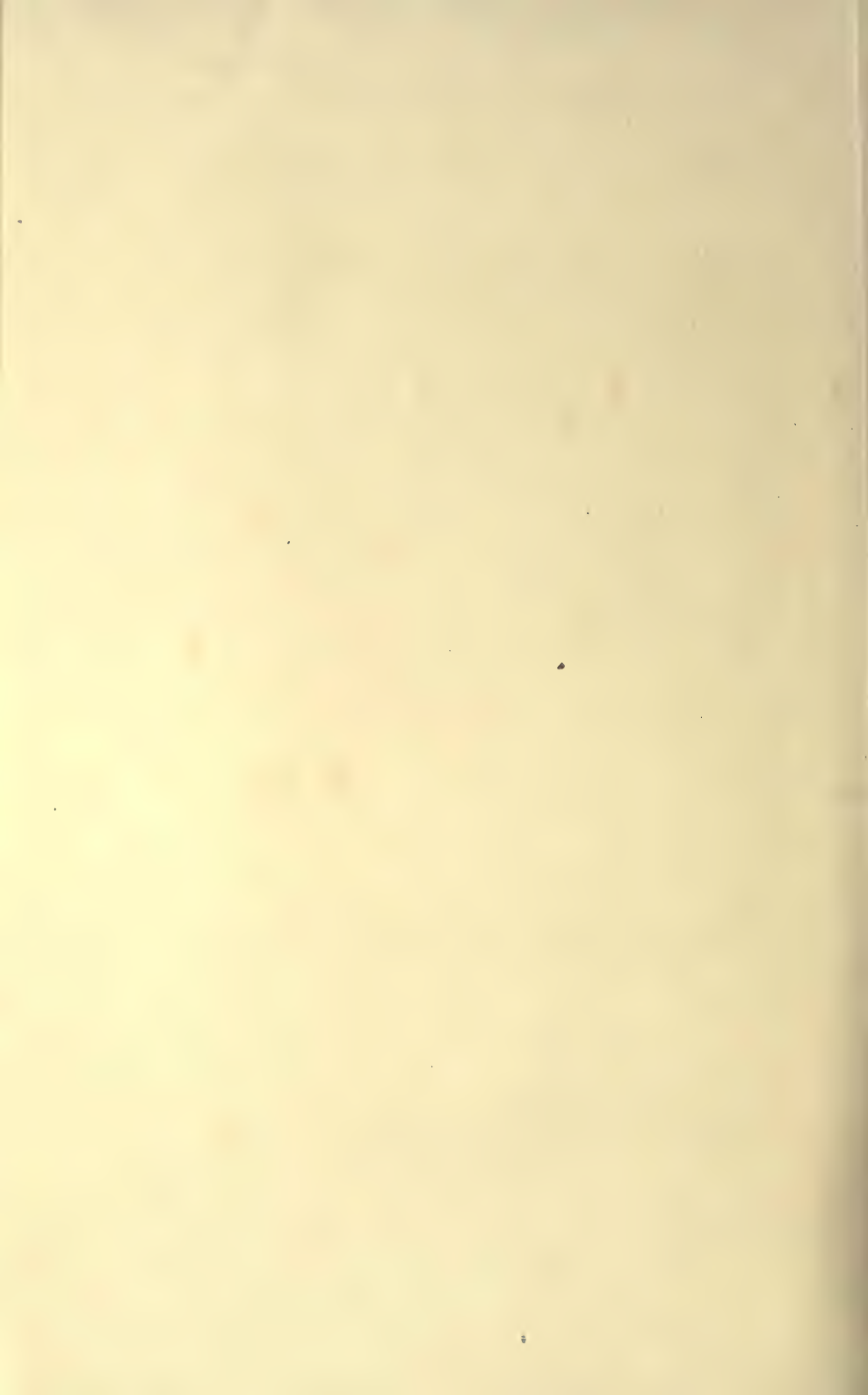
The two fugitives went along the interminably long Faubourg Saint-Antoine, walking quickly. Lafon carried under his arm an enormous portfolio, which contained all the official papers of the new Government. They crossed the Place de la Bastille, and went down the Rue Neuve Saint-Gilles to the alley of Saint-Pierre. Cajamaño and Boutreux received them, and Malet quickly put on his military costume. Rateau arrived shortly afterwards in the condition already described, so eager was he to put on his new uniform of a staff officer. Boutreux alone, who was to play the part of a commissary of police, wore a civilian's dress, over which was a tri-coloured scarf bought that day in the Palais Royal. He, Cajamaño, and Lafon busied themselves in dating the copies of the "senatus-consultum" and proclamations, and addressing them to the officers for whom they were intended.

It was one o'clock in the morning when all these preparations were finished. Malet opened the window and looked into the street; the alley and as much as could be seen of the Rue Saint-Pierre were quite deserted; the fugitives had not been followed, that was certain, but the rain was falling in torrents, and they must wait. They had supper, drank Mâcon wine, and brewed a bowl of punch—a proof that Cajamaño, who was little accustomed to such luxurious living, had been furnished with money to buy provisions. A strange and pathetic sight it must have been, this meeting of three men aiming to overturn the Empire and the two priests, their accomplices, smoking, drinking, and instinctively whispering together as though they feared to disturb the rest of the sleeping city, which next morning was to awake trembling in anguish at the tragedy they were about to play.

¹ The details which follow are taken from the papers relating to Malet and his accomplices preserved in the *National Archives*.



THE IMPASSE VILLEHARDOUIN,
FORMERLY THE CUL-DE-SAC SAINT-PIERRE.



THE ABBÉ DE CAJAMAÑO

It was half-past three when Malet, Rateau, and Bouteux started. Cajamaño accompanied them to the street door; he saw the three men disappear in the darkness and rain; they turned to the left, into the Rue Neuve Saint-Gilles. Cajamaño mounted again to the third floor, and his conversation with the Abbé Lafon, when the two were sitting alone at the supper table, must have rivalled in dramatic intensity the preceding scene. The two priests, left to their own reflections, though dead tired, did not dare to go to bed. They listened to every noise in the street, and guessed how much time would be needed for Malet to carry out his absurd plan. They expected to see the three conspirators appear, flying from their pursuers; then, as the hours passed, they became more confident, believed the plot had succeeded, and indulged in all manner of wild guesses as to the scenes that must have been enacted in this dismal comedy. Their illusion was complete when, about dawn, the two Abbés heard the tramp of men marching far off in the Rue des Minimes. Had the General met with no obstacle in his first attempt? And, in fact, at that very hour, he was advancing at the head of a thousand men (who had been placed at his disposal, without any difficulty, by the colonel of the Tenth Cohort) towards the prison of La Force, whither he was going to liberate his two old comrades, Guidal and Lahorie.

Cajamaño and Lafon neither saw nor heard any other sign. Little by little the quarter awoke; all seemed to be calm; nobody appeared to be concerned about the great events which had taken place. About half-past nine they heard the sound of a carriage rolling over the pavement of the Rue Neuve Saint-Gilles. It turned into the Rue Saint-Pierre, and stopped at the entrance to the alley. Rateau jumped out, with only a shirt on—he was in as great a hurry to get rid of his staff-officer's uniform as he had been to put it on the previous evening; and in the hurry of undressing he had even broken one of the cab windows.

Cajamaño saw him haggling with the cabman about the price of the pane. Rateau carried his uniform tied up in a handkerchief—that was a bad sign. He climbed the stairs,

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

and told them everything in a few words—how their attempt had succeeded at the barracks, with the police, and at the Hôtel de Ville, but had failed at the military headquarters. In double quick time he had donned his uniform of corporal of the guards, and without stopping to make lengthy explanations or farewells, ran off to get back to barracks, whilst Cajamaño lighted a big fire and destroyed the uniform the corporal had left. The shako and sabre he threw into the well.

As to Lafon, at Rateau's first words he had slipped out of the room, and noiselessly descended the stairs. He was never heard of again during the Empire, and did not reappear until the Bourbons had returned.

All was quiet in the city, and few Parisians had even heard of the affair. Cajamaño had some difficulty in finding out that Malet, Guidal, Lahorie, Boutreux, Rateau, and twenty others had been arrested. He felt no anxiety on his own account. But in the afternoon, a cabman "related a droll story" at a shabby restaurant in the Rue de la Corderie, kept by Tachera, a blind man, who had lost his sight four years ago. On the previous evening, the cabman said, he had taken up a fare who had entered his cab dressed as a corporal of the guard, and got out, stark naked, at a house in the alley of Saint-Pierre.¹ As soon as the cabman finished his anecdote, amidst the laughter of his hearers, a man touched him on the shoulder, led him on one side, whispered a few words in his ear, and took him to the Prefecture of Police, where his story was heard with much more interest than it had evoked at Tachera's bar. Thus it came to pass that at dawn, on the 25th, the Alley Saint-Pierre was invaded by a crowd of gendarmes, policemen, State Councillors and other officials, in full uniform, all

¹ Tachera (Nicolas), inn-keeper, stated that on October 23rd, Georges, cab-driver, entered his house to take his food, and declared in a loud voice that on the previous evening he had driven to the Alley Saint-Pierre a spurious aide-de-camp, who, during the journey, had taken off all his clothes, which he carried tied up in a handkerchief, so that he might leave the cab without being recognised, and that as soon as the cab stopped he hurriedly entered a door which was quickly opened for him."—*Archives of the Prefecture of Police.*

THE ABBÉ DE CAJAMAÑO

displaying extraordinary zeal. At the bottom of the alley two inspectors carefully guarded Cajamaño whilst the house was searched and the well emptied. There the shako and sabre left by Rateau were found. Cajamaño seemed stupefied. He was confronted with Georges, the cabman, and only murmured a few words of Spanish. When brought face to face with Rateau, who confessed everything, the Abbé looked stupid, and did not reply. He was sent to the Abbaye Prison, where Malet and his twenty accomplices—seventeen of whom were his dupes—were already confined. But Lafon was particularly “wanted,” and it was hoped he would be found through the means of Cajamaño—and this saved the Spaniard’s life. He did not appear before the court-martial¹ which condemned the ex-General and eleven of the unfortunate wretches who had by chance played a part in this remarkable conspiracy. From his cell at the Abbaye, Cajamaño saw the others led out to execution. He was purposely forgotten, for it was advisable to be silent about a plot which cast discredit on the Imperial Constitution. From the Abbaye the Spanish monk returned to La Force, and was afterwards locked up at Sainte-Pélagie and in the donjon of Vincennes. He did not come out of prison till the Bourbons had returned.

Quietly and uncomplainingly, he then resumed the place amongst the minor clergy of Saint-Gervais which the Abbé Sombardier had previously procured him. He still occupied it in 1832. He was a sad, sickly-looking priest, of no particular age, who never spoke. He is reproached with being “rather distrustful”—which was excusable enough in this

¹ There is, however, a report amongst the papers which leads us to believe that Cajamaño did appear before a military commission. “Reports to H.M. the Emperor and King. Fernandez de Cajamaño has been acquitted by the military tribunal . . . but the grave charges against him, and the suspicions raised by his previous conduct, render it desirable that he should not be set at liberty. His Majesty is desired to give his orders concerning this prisoner. It was at Cajamaño’s lodgings that Malet and Rateau dated their documents and put on their uniforms.” At the foot of the paper is written, in another hand, “detain him, and guard him closely, Paris, February 9th, 1813”; followed by Napoleon’s bold dashing signature.—*National Archives*. Papers relating to the Malet Conspiracy.

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

poor wretch, who never seems to have understood the strange succession of misfortunes which had assailed him ever since he came to France.

As for the inn-keeper, Tachera, he declared everywhere that he had saved the Empire. He solicited, and obtained, as a reward, his admission to the Asylum for the Blind, at *Quinze Vingts*.

THE PROTOTYPE OF CÉSAR BIROTTEAU

THE Revolution made a blunder in rendering the perfumers discontented. A crisis in cosmetics, let me explain, coincided with the abolition of titles; and the fashionable world, when it emigrated, struck a deadly blow at the trade in amber and marjoram, which had flourished so greatly during the Regency. The nobles who remained renounced the luxuries of former days; powders *à la reine* or *à la maréchale* were suspected of being "uncivic"; fashionable ladies were disgusted with red, and put no rouge on their cheeks, and, in 1793, it was not prudent to use perfumery.

No doubt it was for these reasons—for no others can be found—that Marie Antoine Caron, perfumer, established since 1778 in the Rue du Four Saint-Germain, at the corner of the Rue des Canettes, hated from the bottom of his heart the Revolution "which had put down powder, and made everybody dress their hair *à la Titus*."

The discoveries of M. G. Hanotaux, relating to several obscure points in the private life of Balzac, have shown how the novelist was initiated into the royalist intrigues of the time of the Consulate, and have made his works a picture-gallery of portraits so life-like that they can be recognised without difficulty in spite of pseudonyms. The heroes are real to such a degree that in turning over the police records of the time it is possible to identify many of them. Such an one is "Marche-à-Terre"; that other is State-Councillor Malin; another is the police-spy, Corentin; and here are the heroic Michu, the noble Demoiselle d'Esgrignon, and the De Simeuse brothers. Ah, how well he knew them, and has depicted them! What history can rival his novels? If

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

the lady who introduced him to them had not known the Princes themselves, who had prudently taken refuge in England, she was acquainted with all the minor actors, and had herself lived that terrible life of disguises, concealments, and pursuits—the life of “Cligne-Musette and Muche-pot”—which was the lot of “the opposition” in the days of the Consulate. All knew the shop of perfumer Caron, from having been hidden there over and over again, and his name must have cropped up many times in the recitals of the royalist-lady friend of Balzac. He remembered it later, and Caron served as a model for two characters in “*Scènes de la Vie politique*”—the perfumer, Ragon, and his illustrious successor, César Birotteau.

Caron was named *Antoine*. Balzac baptised his copy, *César*; and to anyone who knows the semi-superstitious importance he attached to the names of his characters it would seem that he has intentionally left a landmark for searchers trying to ferret out the original of the shop-keeper of the *Reine des Fleurs*. The rest of the portrait is marvelously alike, and on re-reading the first fifty pages of “*César Birotteau*,” you may believe you are turning over the police notes preserved in Caron’s *dossier*, and which, it is very certain, were unknown to Balzac.

Caron-Birotteau, when he arrived in Paris from his native village, possessed nothing but a pair of hob-nailed boots, a pair of breeches and blue stockings, a flowered waistcoat, three shirts made of good linen, and a stout walking-stick. Having very quickly found out that “the application of ‘everyone for himself’ is the gospel of all big cities,” he managed so well that from a workman he became a clerk, and from a clerk a master—master of the *Reine des Fleurs*, the most frequented shop for perfumes and essences in all the Abbaye quarter. Then came the Revolution, the decay of trade and dearth of customers, and at once followed regret for the “fallen tyrants,” conversations in the evening when the shop was closed, the street quiet, and the cash told: the narration of the misfortunes of Louis XVI., and the virtuous actions of the Queen, who brought powder into fashion. Commercial interests made the perfumer “a fanatic for

THE PROTOTYPE OF CÉSAR BIROTTEAU

royalty"; for some of the customers of the *Reine des Fleurs* were the most active and most devoted emissaries of the Bourbons. They made his shop a meeting-place to talk over events; they exchanged letters they feared to confide to the post, and very soon the shop became the centre of correspondence between the Chouans of the West and the agents of the Princes in Paris. Thither dropped in unexpectedly waggoners and drovers who had come long distances, and starved and dead-tired men with such names as "Grand Jacques," or "Jambe d'Argent," but who, when they met in the kitchen, called each other "my dear Count" or "Monsieur le Marquis." Thus the perfumer of the Rue du Four became, almost against his will, a daring conspirator.

He was the most honest man in the world—"good faith come down upon earth," the neighbours said—and too straightforward "to suspect the rascalities of others." Moreover, he was very religious, and went secretly to Mass at eight o'clock every morning. But though simple, good-natured, obliging, and artless, "he could never be wholly a fool or an idiot, for honesty and kindness rendered every act of his life worthy of respect."

Such was the history of César Birotteau, and such is also that of Antoine Caron; and though the latter must ever remain eclipsed by the glory of his illustrious counterpart, his personal adventures, nevertheless, deserve to be recounted. Caron was fifty-five years old at the time of "the 18th of Brumaire."¹ He had been a widower since 1787, and lived with his daughter, a very pious and charitable person, who before long "consecrated herself to the cloister." After his wife's death he had taken as housekeeper a relative, Françoise Souder, who domineered over everybody, and governed the house, the clerks, the quarter, and Caron himself. She was believed to be his mistress, and had brought with her an orphan girl, Victoire Cuvilliers, whom she said was her niece, and who in 1800 was nearly twelve years old. It should be added that the shopman was named Valentin, and that the house—the sign of which was a large picture of flowers

¹ *National Archives*, F⁷, 6396.

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

placed between the two first-floor windows and inclined towards the street—included besides the shop a back-parlour, which opened on a rather narrow alley which had two entrances, one in the Rue du Four, the other in the Rue des Canettes. Caron, Françoise, and Victoire lodged on the first floor; Valentin slept on the second floor, where there was also a small, unoccupied room.

As anyone who sheltered proscribed royalists risked losing his head, and generally lost it, it may well be imagined that Caron did not care to play at the game, and did not begin to do so until after the 13th of Vendémiaire, when the guillotine seemed to be thoroughly glutted. The famous “day of sections” saw the small *rentiers* and shopkeepers descend into the street for the first time. Hitherto all the rioting had been done by the lower orders, but this was an insurrection of peaceable citizens—who, by the way, dived into their burrows at the first sound of the cannon. But as no severe measures were taken against them these worthy people grew bolder, and though they dared not venture out again they grumbled in their back-shops, spoke against the Government to their neighbours, and, finding it was not dangerous, persevered in the practice—whence the unpopularity of the Directory. In the early days of the Consulate, however, there were rumours of wholesale transportations and people being shot secretly, so citizens took fright and soon ceased to be discontented. When the governmental weapon is sharp-edged, a man must be either an adventurer or a hero if he does not prefer the hilt to the blade.

So, after Vendémiaire, Caron, believing the Revolution was at an end, indulged in the luxury of a political opinion, and embraced the cause of royalty. The assistance he rendered consisted in receiving into his house the Princes' agents, who were being tracked by the police of the Directory. The first who lodged there was Pastoret; afterwards there came Margadel, Cormatin, and, perhaps, Frotté himself. The refugee was given the upper chamber, which was reached by a trap-door; the friends who came to see him asked for a perfume in some previously-arranged phrase, and whilst Caron pretended carefully to weigh out benzoin pastilles or oil of

THE PROTOTYPE OF CÉSAR BIROTTEAU

pearls, Valentin watched the street, and the visitor ran upstairs to the second floor. The best society met at the perfumer's house; they all dined together, and at night when the shop was shut they talked freely. Little Victoire stood at the street door as sentinel, and tapped the shutters if any suspicious-looking person passed along, those within dropping their voices until he was out of hearing. It seemed impossible to conspire more pleasantly.¹

Caron's most frequent guest was Hyde de Neuville, on whose head a price was set and who, under the name of Paul Berry, came and went between London and Paris and Paris and Normandy as calmly as though he had been a Government agent. On two different occasions he stayed eight months with Caron. When a visit from the police was anticipated, he slipped behind the sideboard and pulled over him the shutter of one of the two neighbouring windows. The police surrounded the house, searched it from cellar to roof—but found nothing. The alarm being over and forgotten, the refugee returned to his room and passed his time in making verses, which he sent to the *Journal des Dames et des Modes*. A song, entitled *Le Vrai Paradis*, which all Paris sung at that time, was by Hyde de Neuville.

Whilst he was living with Caron, the perfumer was asked to give refuge to another *émigré* who was wanted by the police—a very good fellow, but a bit of a boaster and a great talker, so it was deemed prudent not to reveal to him the real name of Hyde, whose rooms he shared, and who was introduced to him as a refractory priest. The newcomer took a respectful liking to “Monsieur l'Abbé,” to whom he told long stories of his adventures and his high connections. One day at lunch the voice of a crier was heard in the street, and conversation was suspended to listen to the news. With some anxious curiosity they heard these words: “Arrest and condemnation of the conspirator, Hyde de Neuville, judged by a court-martial and shot within twenty-four hours.” Though the news seemed improbable, Caron's guests looked at each other rather amazed, when suddenly the *émigré* threw himself into Hyde's arms, uttering inarticulate lamentations: “Oh,

¹ *National Archives*, F⁷, 6396, and the *Memoirs* of Hyde de Neuville.

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

it is terrible—terrible!” he cried, at length. “What a terrible event, Monsieur l’Abbé! The barbarians! The poor man! He was my friend, my most intimate friend!” Little Victoire had to leave the table, bursting with ill-suppressed laughter, and Hyde had some difficulty in preserving a serious face whilst he consoled his companion on the loss he felt so keenly.

Some time after that, the worthy man fell ill, and thinking himself in danger of dying, begged “Monsieur l’Abbé” to hear his confession. Hyde excused himself as long as he could, but the other, alleging the inconvenience there would be in bringing a priest to their retreat, implored absolution. Luckily he got better, which put an end to the comedy, and the *émigré*, moreover, soon left the house, where Hyde remained alone. He became the friend of all the Caron family, and even the scolding Françoise ceased from her habitual grumbling in his presence. Every Sunday Caron set out in his trap for Ozouër-la-Ferrière, where he possessed a small country-house. He never failed to take the refugee to stretch his legs, and get a little fresh air. At the city gate, on the return journey in the evening, there was a little excitement. Hyde concealed himself at the driver’s feet hidden by the big carriage apron, and passed under the very noses of the *douaniers*. Every week he risked his life for a day in the country. Hyde was, however, used to tricks of that sort. With five dare-devils of his own kind, with long ladders, he, on the night of January 21st, 1800, hung black drapery from top to bottom of the door of the Madeleine Church; and in the Place de la Concorde, pasted a manifesto of the Comte d’Artois on the four sides of the pedestal of the statue of Liberty, which was guarded by a sentinel. As it was cold weather the sentinel marched round the monument, and Hyde regulating his pace to that of the soldier, succeeded in sticking up his bills and getting away without being noticed.¹

These quasi-heroic acts of bravado look very charming as seen from a distance in old stories. The gentlemen who did them were endowed with a careless impertinence that made danger attractive, and their invincible good humour found

¹ *Memoirs* of Hyde de Neuville.

THE PROTOTYPE OF CÉSAR BIROTTEAU

delight in the most unpleasant situations. "Perils confronted, hazardous enterprises!" wrote Hyde, when he had become old. "You appear to me now rather to be regretted than cursed;—enviable misfortunes of youth over which honour and devotion shed their glory." But with Caron it was not the same; the good man was a hero most reluctantly, and when he found out that Bonaparte was not a man to be trifled with, and that he risked his head when he sheltered the Consul's enemies, he would have preferred to refuse hospitality to the Chouans. Unfortunately, they were then being hunted down more than ever, and as they had informed each other that the *Reine des Fleurs* was a safe refuge, almost every night the perfumer received some fresh guest—greatly against his will, and with much heart-quaking. In March 1804, however, when there was a duel to the death between the Consul and the undiscoverable Georges Cadoudal, then hidden in Paris, Caron determined to close his door. Patrols of policemen and gendarmes guarded the principal streets; placards on white paper announced that "the receivers of the brigands would be treated like the brigands themselves," and that it was death to give shelter to one of these refugees, even for an hour, without denouncing him to the police. Some days before, Pichegru had been betrayed by his host, and was said to have sometimes paid as much as 20,000 francs for one night's lodging. A description of Georges and his officers was posted on all the walls, and it was known that they could not fail to be captured or given up very soon—unless they first killed the Consul. In short, Caron began to consider the matter seriously.¹

Georges and two of his men—Burban and Joyaut—had then occupied, since February 17th, a garret in a fruit-seller's house in the Rue de la Montagne-Sainte-Genève. Mme. Lemoiné, their landlady, did not know who her lodgers were, and as she was a great chatterer, their position was highly dangerous. A safer refuge must be found at all hazards. Some one proposed the upper room at Caron's house, and Georges accepted the offer. On March 1st, Burban came to

¹ *National Archives*. Conspiracy of Georges and his accomplices, F7, 6392 to 6405. *Archives of the Prefecture of Police*.

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

the *Reine des Fleurs*, and whilst buying a pot of rouge, took the perfumer on one side, and asked him if he would consent "to lodge three good fellows." Caron refused. Burban came back four days later; he was greatly agitated, "wept much, and offered 8000 francs." Caron appeared affected; seeing which, the devoted Françoise interfered, grumbling that they would all end on the guillotine, and that "this was not a time to receive anybody." Burban went away, after intimating that he would come back on the evening of the 7th for a definite reply. The perfumer was troubled in his mind all that day; at supper he was silent, and he had been in bed nearly three hours when Françoise entered his room, leading little Victoire; they both knelt by the side of the bed and begged him "not to make any promise." The woman wept, the girl cried also, and Caron joined his tears to theirs. He protested that if he did not give shelter to these poor people "he should be sending them to their death," and that he would be "more guilty than he who betrayed Pichegru.¹" He finished by saying that "he would leave himself in the hands of Providence, and would have a Mass said. The following morning little Victoire was sent to "order" one at the Carmelite Church; she spoke to an old priest, the Abbé Enard, saying that Caron "wished a Mass said to the Holy Ghost to know the will of God as to an important decision he had to take." The Mass was celebrated at eleven o'clock; Françoise and Victoire were present, and Caron assisted. On returning, he declared that "his conscience was at ease, and he would lodge these gentlemen."²

In the afternoon, he received a visit from a vicar of St. Sulpice, the Abbé de Kéravenan, then celebrated for the pious zeal he had displayed during the Terror. It was he who, in 1793, had performed the marriage service at the wedding of Danton and Louise Gély, and who, by the desire of Mme. Gély, the mother of Louise, had accompanied the illustrious member of the Convention to the scaffold. M. de Kéravenan often came to see Caron, where his advice

¹ *National Archives*, F⁷, 6396.

² Examination of Victoire Cuvillier, 2nd of Germinal, Year XII. — *National Archives*, F⁷, 6396.

THE PROTOTYPE OF CÉSAR BIROTTEAU

was listened to as though it had been the gospel. In *César Birotteau* there is also a holy priest, also vicar of Saint-Sulpice, the Abbé Loraux, who no doubt had M. de Kéravenan for a prototype. The case was submitted to the Abbé; he appeared to be fully informed about it, and declared "that he could receive this gentleman who was a good man."¹ This opinion settled everything. It was arranged with Burban that, on the following Friday, which was March 9th, Georges should come to Caron's about eight o'clock in the evening, by the Rue des Canettes, in a cabriolet which would be driven by Leridan, one of his men. Burban and Joyaut would come on foot, and join him an hour later.

On the 9th, Caron was very restless; and at seven in the evening he left the house. Françoise had not been in a good temper all day. At eight o'clock, finding the perfumer did not return, she took it upon herself to send little Victoire "to meet the gentlemen, and tell them not to come." The girl went along the Rue des Canettes; and on coming to the Place Saint-Sulpice at the end of the street saw "a cabriolet standing there, and a crowd round it." The cabriolet had only one lantern lighted, and the horse was blown, as though it had been running away. There was no one in the carriage, and Victoire learned that Georges, finding himself pursued by the police, had jumped out of the cabriolet whilst descending the Rue des Fossés-Monsieur-le-Prince, in the hope of escaping down some alley. But the crowd had immediately seized upon him. As for the driver, Leridan, he had kept on at full gallop through the Rue du Petit Bourbon, and the Rue des Aveugles; but his foundered nag had fallen in turning into the Rue des Canettes, and Leridan, quickly arrested, was already on his way to the Prefecture of Police.

Victoire returned to the perfumer's in tears. Whilst she was relating the event to her terrified aunt, in the kitchen, Joyaut, who was accompanied by Burban, suddenly appeared at the door in the alley in a state of great excitement. Françoise, who had never seen him, guessed that he was "one

¹ M. de Kéravenan was related to Barco, one of the conspirators.—*National Archives*, AF^{IV}, 1490.

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

of the men." She was afraid, and could only stammer, "Where is the other gentleman?"

"He escaped by another road. Hide me," was the reply, and Françoise, trembling all over, led them upstairs to the room with the trap-door.

The news of Georges' dramatic arrest had spread through all the quarter, and—seeing that Bonaparte had won the game—those who had been irresolute hesitated no longer, and cried in the streets: "Long live the First Consul, and death to the Chouans!"

Caron returned home very late, in a state of consternation; he went to his room without saying a word; and no one at the *Reine des Fleurs* slept much that night.¹

The next day was passed in anguish. Every instant they expected to see the commissary arrive, for Burban and Joyaut had left the Rue de la Montagne-Sainte-Geneviève the previous evening, at the same time as Georges, and had walked with him as far as the Place Saint-Etienne-du-Mont, where the cab awaited him. They were present at the beginning of the pursuit, and came at once to the conclusion that their leader was lost. It was wonderful that they had managed to reach the Rue des Canettes without being noticed.

On the third day, however, as no policeman had appeared, confidence returned. Joyaut sent Victoire to buy some apples at the fruit-shop in the Rue Montagne-Sainte-Geneviève, and learn, at the same time, what had occurred. The girl found the shop closed, and brought back no information. The two refugees were obliged to live a whole week without knowing the fate of their friends, and not daring to show themselves. At last, they persuaded Caron, who was in a hurry to get rid of them, to go to the "Hôtel garni des Ministres," in the Rue de l'Université, and question a Mme. Gasté, who served as a go-between for the conspirators. Caron left his house about five o'clock in the evening of March 21st.²

At nine o'clock he had not returned. Burban and Joyaut, who were very anxious, guessed that their host was arrested,

¹ Examination of Victoire Cuvillier, 2nd of Germinal, Year XII. —*National Archives*, F⁷, 6396.

² Examination of Marie Antoine Caron, 30th of Ventôse, Year XII. —*National Archives*, F⁷, 6396.

THE PROTOTYPE OF CÉSAR BIROTTEAU

and left the house that night. It was quite time they did: Caron had, in fact, been arrested at the Hôtel des Ministres, where "a mouse-trap" had been arranged, and taken at once to the Abbaye Prison. A commissary and three policemen came, at one in the morning, to make a search at the *Reine des Fleurs*, and, finding nobody, installed themselves in the back shop.

Burban and Joyaut passed the night in the fields behind the old Enclos des Chartreux; but in the morning they re-appeared in the Rue du Four. Whilst Joyaut remained on the watch, Burban entered the alley. Little Victoire chancing to be there, said to him in a low voice, "Fly!" But, with one bound, the three policemen were upon him. He stabbed one with a poignard, but the other two got him down, and in a moment the house was filled with police and gendarmes, who had run up from the police station at the Abbaye. Burban and Joyaut were taken to the Temple, Françoise and Victoire to the Madelonnettes; the *Reine des Fleurs* was closed, and seals placed on the shutters.

When interrogated by Réal, Caron played the part of the simpleton very cleverly—"I don't know; I don't remember," a system which cannot be too highly recommended, and which always succeeds. He protested that he did not know the names of his lodgers. If Bonaparte, however, did not mind it being said that a few besotted Chouans still hesitated to accept the new Government, he would not, for any consideration, let it be noised abroad that the citizens of Paris regretted their former masters. Burban and Joyaut were therefore executed along with Georges, but Victoire and Françoise were released. The latter, as soon as she returned to the Rue du Four, commenced a campaign in Caron's favour; a petition was covered with the signatures of all the inhabitants of the quarter, and the perfumer, who was clever enough to pass himself off as an idiot who had been made a tool of by the royalists, was restored to liberty after ten months' imprisonment.

Proud of his importance, and "the varnish of persecution which rendered him interesting," he posed as a victim, spoke aloud of his captivity, and related to all his customers how,

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

loaded with chains, he had defied the tyrant's power. He was much pitied;—indeed, he was too much pitied. One fine day he received an order to leave Paris and go to Bourges, and live there under the surveillance of the special police. He was bound to obey, but before leaving, he wished to arrange his private affairs. He married Françoise, and entrusted the *Reine des Fleurs* to her. She proved as good a woman of business as she was a devoted wife, and until the fall of the Empire did not cease to pester the Minister with doleful supplications. She demanded her husband, swearing that he would be prudent in future, and declaring that the Emperor had no more passionate or more faithful admirer. These petitions went into the *dossier*;—along with the police notes declaring that Caron was an incorrigible royalist, and that he circulated “incendiary pamphlets” throughout the country.¹ That made his fortune; at the return of the Bourbons the incendiary pamphlets of former times became edifying tracts, and Caron was on the pinnacle of success. The King received him at the Tuileries—with a batch of others—and gave him a medal as a reward for his good and loyal services. The Duchess of Angoulême procured for him the place of “State Messenger,” and the name of the ex-perfumer appeared in the Royal Almanac, after the names of the Deputies, and amongst the State dignitaries. He lived in the Palais Bourbon, and his duties were to escort the President of the Assembly from the door of “the house” to the Presidential chair, and, once a year—clad in a velvet frock coat, with a white silk scarf round his stomach, a sword with a mother-of-pearl hilt by his side, and a cocked hat with feathers under his arm—to go and announce to the Chamber of Peers that the Chamber of Deputies had assembled.²

Caron performed these duties—which were not very

¹ “The Sieur Caron, who figured in the affair of Georges & Co., and whom the Comte de Lille has received, and presented with a medal “for his good and loyal services,” inhabits at intervals Auzouër-la-Ferrière, where he has kept a room in a house he has hired, to serve as a *depôt* for incendiary pamphlets and placards of all kinds which he carries about the neighbouring villages. He was seen lately at the market at Tournan. He is specially prone to make the most insulting remarks concerning the Duc d’Otrante.”—*National Archives*, F7, 6396.

² Musnier-Descloseaux's *Indiscrétions*.

THE PROTOTYPE OF CÉSAR BIROTTEAU

arduous, it is true—until his eighty-seventh year. He died at the close of 1831.¹ His widow survived him but six months—she also had received a pension from Government. As the favours with which both had been loaded seemed out of proportion with what was known of their history, royalists who had not been well rewarded—and there were plenty of them—imagined that, in the days of the Terror, Caron and Françoise must have rendered some signal service to some very important personage, and had the good sense never to boast about it.

¹ *Archives of the Chamber of Deputies.*

COLONEL VIRIOT

ON September 23rd, 1800, a singular adventure disturbed the peaceful existence of Senator Clément de Ris, who was passing the autumn at his Château de Beauvois, near Azay-sur-Cher.

On that day, towards five o'clock in the afternoon, he was sitting with Mme. Clément de Ris, who was ill, when two men rushed into the room, pistols in hand, seized the astonished proprietor of the house by the collar, and dragged or pushed him to his study, where they compelled him to open all the drawers. They collected all they found there, as well as all the silver plate in the house—two dozen spoons and forks, two coffee pots, and nine dishes—and packed the whole in the Senator's carriage, which four of their companions, who had remained outside, had already harnessed. Clément de Ris was pushed into the carriage; then all six mounted their horses, and went off with their victim, taking the road which led to the forest of Loches.¹

French people, in those days, were not easily astonished—which explains the unconcerned manner in which the servants at the *château* and the farm labourers witnessed the abduction of their master without saying a word. The captors also displayed astonishing coolness. They rode off at a jog-trot, with their faces unmasked, and seemed to wish to give the awe-struck servants time to notice their costumes; leather Vendean caps, *tranche-pique* hats, yellow boots, and hussar jackets, such as were then worn by many old Chouan officers. One of the brigands—this detail was noted—had only one eye. Such was the indifference of the spectators that

¹ *National Archives*, F⁷, 6256.

COLONEL VIRIOT

not one of them thought of following the carriage, which was dragged across fields and up steep banks at the slow rate of some three miles an hour.

Scarcely any more emotion was shown, when the Senator, who was believed to be dead, returned three weeks later sound and well, and stated that those gentlemen "had taken him a good way from the *château*"—though he could not indicate the spot precisely—and there they had imprisoned him in a kind of cave, where he remained seventeen days, copiously fed and well cared for. He was taken out of the cave one night, mounted behind a horseman, led into the forest, and left in a clearing, from whence he quietly returned home, fully determined to consider his adventure as a commonplace incident, about which he did not care to be questioned.

In Paris, however, people were less patient. The First Consul was not the sort of man to be attacked, even in the person of his Senators. He had but eighty of them, who had all formerly been hot Jacobins, and on whom he showered titles and dignities to reward them for their good example. He therefore took the matter seriously, and Fouché received an order to set all his police to work, which he at once did.

The incidents are now known, and though some of the details can only be guessed, it appears to be proved that Fouché had arranged all the affair himself, in order to recover possession of some very compromising papers formerly confided to Clément de Ris. As he would not give them up of his own accord, Fouché had ordered six of his chosen agents to play the brigand, and they, either by excess of zeal, or because they wanted to make a little extra profit out of the business, kept the poor man in durance, and did not release him till they received express orders to do so from the Minister. The names of these are even known. Their leader was Charles Gondé, *alias* "la Chapelle" *alias* "Mr. Charles" or "handsome Charley"—an old Chouan noted for his dexterity in robbing *diligences*. When the undertaking had been carried out, he and his companions each received a sum of money and a passport for England,

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

from whence they did not return until the affair was forgotten.

The rest of the business followed naturally. All that had to be done to assuage the irritation of the First Consul was to find some "guilty parties," and Fouché picked out two gentlemen of the district, M. de Mauduisson, and M. de Canchy, his brother-in-law. Both of them had been officers in the royal army, and had been amnestied after the pacification; the one was twenty-eight years old, the other only twenty. But it was necessary also to find a one-eyed man, and he was rather difficult to procure, though he was sought for a hundred miles round. Whenever Fouché heard of the arrest of any robber, he wrote, "Has he one eye? If so, send him to me." And thus it happened that there was sent from Caen to join Canchy and Mauduisson, a former chevalier of Saint Louis, named Etienne Gaudin, who had not quitted Lower Normandy for the last two years, but who had lost an eye by a stray shot—which was his ruin. These three men were tried by a special court at Angers, and condemned to death, in spite of incontestable *alibis*. Twenty witnesses swore to having seen them far away from Beauvois on the day of the crime, and they themselves begged to be confronted with Clément de Ris, but he had made a profitable reconciliation with Fouché, and deemed it beneath his dignity to appear as a witness at the trial. The verdict was given on November 2nd, 1801—All Souls' Day—"the day of the dead"—and the execution took place on the 3rd. With the exception of Mme. de Canchy, who it was thought would die of the shock and grief, and who would have stabbed herself with a knife, if it had not been taken away from her, no one in the district dared show any indignation, though everyone was fully persuaded of the innocence of the condemned persons. But Fouché frightened them, and they were silent.

One man alone—he whose history we are about to relate—had the courage to protest. This was a brave soldier of Lorraine, named Pierre François Viriot.¹ He enlisted at seventeen years of age, in 1791, in Chamboran's hussars, and

¹ Many of the details which follow have been taken from Viriot's *dossier* in the Archives of the Ministry of War.

COLONEL VIRIOT

was promoted some months later. He fought obstinately against the Chouans in the west, and helped to organise the flying columns of Mayenne. In 1800 he was a captain, counting as many campaigns as he had seen years of service, and bearing the scars of fourteen honourable wounds—five sabre cuts, and nine bullets. As he could in no way be suspected of tenderness or indulgence towards the royalists, and was unacquainted with the accused, he was appointed one of the judges of the special court, which consisted of two magistrates and three officers, to try the abductors of Clément de Ris. After the first sitting there could be no doubt as to an acquittal, and Viriot hastened to reassure Mme. de Canchy. The evidence which followed was almost wholly in favour of the accused, and the trial was almost at an end, when the old member of the Convention, Delaunay, who was president of the court, invited all the other judges to dinner. At this dinner the case was talked over, and Delaunay, though he owned that “a condemnation was impossible,” insinuated that it would perhaps be dangerous to displease the Government by letting free “men who were its professed enemies.” Whilst they were taking their coffee, with their elbows on the table, it was agreed that, “if Canchy, Mauduisson, and Gaudin were not actually guilty, they had, nevertheless, as old Chouans, deserved death a hundred times in other circumstances,” and it was decided they should be condemned. Viriot indignantly tried to plead the cause of the poor wretches, but finding that his protestations were of no avail against their fixed resolution not to displease the terrible Minister of Police, he fell into a rage, “struck the table, rolled about on his chair, and addressed the most insulting remarks to his colleagues.” He fell on his knees before them, and implored them at least to spare the lives of the accused; finally, he dashed out of the room swearing that he would not dishonour himself by signing such a verdict, and went to Mme. de Canchy, whom he informed of the plot. The poor woman, who could not believe such a misfortune was possible, conceived the hopeless project of saving her husband from the headsman. She knocked at the doors of all the bankers in the town, borrowed money, signed bills, and

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

collected all her resources—some few louis—with the idea of stirring up the quarry-men and slate-workers of the suburb of Bressigny to make a riot, and cause the postponement of the execution. Viriot mounted his horse, and rode without once stopping to the posting-house at La Croix Verte, where he took a post-chaise, which on the following night landed him in Paris, at the very hour that the scaffold was being erected on the Champ de Mars, at Angers.

When, after twenty vain attempts and useless interviews with Mme. Bonaparte, one of the Ministers—Abrial—and Generals Mortier and Junot, who all received him with the cold caution of people anxious not to compromise themselves, Viriot at last understood that his cries for justice would not be listened to, he started to go back to Angers. When he returned the three condemned men were dead. Some days later he received notice that, by order of the Consuls, his name had been struck off the Army List. It is asserted that he obtained an audience with Bonaparte, who put this astounding question to him: "Why did you not agree with the verdict of your colleagues?"

Viriot declared his firm conviction that the accused persons were innocent.

"That may be," said the Consul, "but the law compelled you to sign the verdict." "It did not oblige me to dishonour myself," replied the officer sharply. He begged for a trial, but it may well be imagined they knew better than to bring him before a court-martial. Fouché preferred silence—there were spectres he did not wish to see evoked.¹

From that day, Viriot was "in Coventry," and saw himself deserted little by little. Like the lepers of former days, he was avoided by all as though they had fear of a mysterious contagion, and the life of the man who had dared to brave Fouché became one long torture. Unto his life's end he was

¹ This is a short summary of the case as it is given by Créteineau-Joly (*Vendée militaire*), the *Bulletin Historique de l'Anjou* (report of the Angers trial), and *La Vérité sur l'enlèvement du Sénateur Clément de Ris*, by Carré de Busserolle; but, as many points have never been cleared up, we prefer to let the reader exercise his own judgment, and therefore give further on, in spite of its length, the report issued to the Consuls by the Minister of War, and which contains the accusations which led to Viriot being disgraced and cashiered.

COLONEL VIRIOT

to be crushed by the weight of his "crime," like Sisyphus was through having incurred the wrath of Pluto.

It would seem that, at first, Viriot did not realise the gravity of his offence. After grumbling for six months, he petitioned to be re-instated in the army, but his request remained unanswered. A year later he again sent in a petition, which led to an interchange of correspondence between the various branches of the Ministry of War, where his *dossier* is still preserved. But in this *dossier* were certain documents, on reading which General Girardon declared that "upon his honour and conscience Viriot is unworthy of belonging to the French Army,"—and the petition was "shelved." And so, this officer, who was only thirty-one years of age, was obliged to sit idly by, with rage in his heart, during the splendid days of the beginning of the Empire. He saw his brothers-in-arms receiving promotion, titles, and decorations, and starting joyously on that wild dash across Europe which had its apotheosis at Austerlitz. He remained alone and useless, amongst the old and impotent, at Metz, where he had taken refuge and had married. At last, unable to bear it any longer, and to delude himself into the belief that he was taking his share in that glorious era, he crossed the Rhine into Germany, settled at Cassel, and managed to get engaged as military instructor by Prince Maurice of Issemburg, who was raising a regiment to present to Napoleon, and who, in return for the 3,200 German peasants offered to the ogre as a holocaust, received the ribbon of the Legion of Honour. Viriot returned to France fully convinced that he had shaken off his bad luck. The Prince of Issemburg had conferred on him the honourable title of Lieutenant-Colonel, and the simple-minded soldier imagined that all he had to do was to get this title confirmed by the Minister of War. But he needed protectors, and all turned away from this plague-stricken wretch on whom there was a heavy curse.¹

¹ "M. Pierre François Viriot has not been confirmed in his appointment as captain, which he held temporarily in the Issemburg regiment.

"This officer was tried by a special tribunal of the Department of Maine-et-Loire in the Year X. He was cashiered in the course of the same year, being charged with having sold his verdict in the case of Senator Clément de Ris."—*Archives of the Ministry of War.*

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

After that, he was sometimes seen in Paris, still nursing some illusion as to his fate—sometimes at Metz, where he reflected upon his disappointments, wandering round the barracks, following the troops, and unwilling to admit that he was cut off for ever from the army in which he had lived almost since his infancy. He wrote continually, begging to be restored to his rank, offering to give up all his fortune, and “equip ten men, and provide two horses for the artillery-train.”

Years passed, each marked by some fresh vexation. The Emperor was at last vanquished, and France on the point of being invaded, when there appeared the decree of January 4th, 1814, authorising the threatened Departments to raise corps of guerilla sharpshooters to oppose the enemy's march. This seemed a real godsend to Viriot. He donned his uniform, started for Verdun, calling out the peasants on his road, and enlisting volunteers, and managed to get together, from various villages, three hundred infantry. He obtained, from the commandant of the town, six guns, to which he harnessed plough-horses, and, as General of this little army, he scoured the country, harassed the enemy's convoys, lived constantly in ambuscades, and compensated himself by restless activity for his fourteen years of enforced idleness.

“Fifteen hundred mountaineers,” he writes in his enthusiasm, “will rise at my call. My war-cries are ‘country’ and ‘Napoleon’—both dear to my heart!”

On March 27th he met, at Bazoches, near Saint Mihiel, a whole Russian army corps. Anxious to show his mettle, he harangued his little troop, gave battle, routed the enemy, and took 1,800 prisoners, 80 waggons, 500 horses, and 8 guns, and, the same evening, forwarded to the Minister of War a triumphant account of the exploit. This report—unfortunately—arrived in Paris the very day the Russians made their entry into the city, and the irony of fate also decreed that the only time Viriot had fought, he had cut in pieces the corps of Prince Biren of Courland, one of the dearest friends of Louis XVIII. So he had no share in the favours of the Restoration; and the guerilla corps he commanded was disbanded at Metz on July 1st. The

COLONEL VIRIOT

Government demanded of Viriot 3,400 francs for "damages committed by his troops," and, when he had paid, sent him home, and troubled no further about him. He then lived, with his wife, at Montigny-les-Metz, and thither he retired, resignedly, understanding nothing of what had happened in the past, and hoping nothing from the future.

The thunder-bolt of the Emperor's return, in March, 1815, roused Viriot from his apathy. He was one of the first, on hearing the great news, to present himself to Napoleon "to bring the good wishes of the population in the east of France," of whom he made himself—perhaps rather gratuitously—the spokesman. It was a good opportunity to present himself at the Tuileries. The Emperor accepted all kinds of services. He authorised Viriot to raise in Meurthe, Meuse, and Moselle a guerilla force of 4,000 infantry and 1,200 cavalry, appointed him commander, and handed him the Legion of Honour. Viriot at last had his revenge; a startling revenge—but very short-lived. Fouché had come back with Napoleon, and was all-powerful. He had forgotten none of his old hatreds, and foreseeing,—and even preparing for,—the speedy return of the Bourbons, whilst still serving the Emperor, he meant to take advantage of the interregnum to get rid of every one who was likely to be an obstacle to the surprising conversion he meditated.

Viriot, full of ardour, scoured the Moselle country, organising his little army;—without suspecting that his very earliest recruit was a police agent—named Niclot—whom, naïvely, he attached to his own person, and in whom he had every confidence. The campaign was short, and the guerilla corps was not called upon to take a part. After Waterloo, Viriot was encamped at the gates of Metz, with his troops, awaiting orders, when one evening his camp was invaded by policemen, who bound his hands, and dragged him away to prison, where he was kept in solitary confinement. When—three weeks later—he could communicate with his wife and his old octogenarian mother, he learned "that he was charged with eight offences, the penalty for each of which was capital punishment."

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

The mere enumeration of the catastrophes, which fell on him like hail, would be a tediously long litany. After twenty-three months' solitary confinement, the Court of Assizes of the Moselle condemned him, on the evidence of Niclot, to banishment, as "author, leader, and accomplice of a plot to unite armed bands to fall openly on the rear-guard of the enemy's troops, when evacuating French territory, and pillage their baggage and treasure." The verdict was quashed by the Supreme Court, and the poor wretch was dragged, between four gendarmes, from the gaol of Metz to that of Nancy. There he made a fresh appearance before the Assize Court, which reduced his sentence to six months' imprisonment, and ten years' supervision by the political police. He was so palpably the victim of an implacable fatality that his fate inspired pity even in the gendarmes charged with the surveillance and the gaolers who had to take care of him—who often let him out, on parole, for several days at a time.¹

At last he was set free, and his first care was to write to the Minister of War to relate his grievances, and claim his rank. A long series of his lamentations is to be found in his *dossier*. He speaks of his past services, of his honour kept intact, and of his three sons killed in face of the enemy. On each of these fervent appeals can be seen, written in the margin, the invariable remark, "Nothing to be done—Shelved." His supplications were not replied to; and he could not even obtain the ratification of his right to wear

¹

"Nancy, January 27th, 1817.

The Captain commanding the gendarmerie of La Meurthe gives an account of the arrest of Viriot, taken when he had just escaped from the prison at Nancy. "The private life and political morals of Sieur Viriot ought to be known to you, and render him most dangerous, as he belongs to a numerous family living in the city of Nancy, whose principles are absolutely contrary to the views of the Government.

"I questioned him about his escape. He declared that he had permission from M. le P. G— to dine with his sister, the post-mistress at Velaine, three leagues from Nancy.

"I sent back Viriot to the prison with an order to have him locked up, but the gaoler at the civil prison refused to execute the order. I have the honour to remark to Your Excellency that this prison is in the forest of Hayes, which is immense, and that consequently it is to be feared that in granting Sieur Viriot permission to leave (supposing he has the right to do so) it would not be possible to lay hands on him again, on account of the influence he has obtained over all the bad characters in the district, who are under his orders."

COLONEL VIRIOT

the Cross which the Emperor's hand had placed on his breast. The police, to whom, for the last ten years, he had been known as "most dangerous;—an enemy to every kind of Government,"—persecuted him, pursued him, vexed him in a thousand ways. At Brussels, where he took refuge in 1820, with his wife's family, he was imprisoned at the request of the French Ambassador, as being implicated in a plot against the State, banded about from judges to commissaries, and harassed with diabolical persistence.

Fouché had disappeared long ago, but the effects of his resentment had survived his power, and this is the proper place to relate the means his watchful hate had devised to gag Viriot's mouth for ever. At the beginning of this *dossier*, in which were gathered all the petitions of the unfortunate officer, was placed a *copy*—not the original—of a report dated 1802 and addressed to the Consuls. In this document—the summary of a long inquiry the materials for which are said to be in the hands of the Minister of Justice—the conduct of Viriot during the trial at Angers is presented in the most odious light.¹ This "intriguer" managed to get himself

¹ Report made to the Consuls by the Ministry of War, the 17th of Pluviôse, Year X, now in the Archives of the Ministry of War.

"The Consuls, in a report of the Minister of Justice stating that the public opinion and private opinion of the special Court of Maine and Loire accuse Citizen Viriot, supernumerary captain in the 22nd Military Division, and judged by that tribunal of prevarication in the case relating to the assault committed on the person of Senator Clément de Ris, have charged the Minister of War to obtain the opinion of General Girardon concerning Citizen Viriot.

"This General confirms in his reply the charges brought against that officer, and declares upon his honour and conscience that Viriot is unworthy to belong to the French Army.

"It is proposed to cashier this officer, and return the documents to the Minister of Justice to be examined with a view that he should be prosecuted and punished as a prevaricator."

"CITIZEN CONSULS,

The Minister of Justice has presented to you a report concerning Citizen Viriot, supernumerary captain of the 22nd Military Division, tried before the Special Tribunal of Maine-et-Loire. I have, according to your orders, asked General Girardon for information regarding that officer, and he replied in the following terms:—

"To sum up my opinion of Citizen Viriot, I regard him as an intriguer, who has long been away from the army, and who has been clever enough to pass off the shooting accident which deprived him of his right eye as a wound received in war; one of those people who hang on to all parties and use all events for their own advantage, as he did when in Nivôse,

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

named a member of the Special Court in order that he might shamelessly sell himself to commit injustice. His interviews

Year IX. Being in Paris without employment, he posed as a victim of the explosion of the infernal machine, and managed to make himself sufficiently interesting to be employed in this division. I declare on my honour and my conscience that, according to information I have received and the impressions he gave me, which I cannot describe, I look upon Citizen Viriot as being unworthy to form part of the army of the Republic."

I ought here, Citizen Consuls, to give you a summary of the facts, upon which agree—except in some few details—Generals Liebert and Girardon, the President, and the Government Commissary of the Special Court of Maine-et-Loire, Captain Curette, Judge of that Court, and the Councillor of the Prefecture of that Department, who replied to me in the absence of the Prefect.

The partisans of the accused wanted to save them by creating a rising amongst the workmen of the Angers quarries, but their plan was thwarted. They then had recourse to means of corruption. They believed they could seduce the judges with money. They addressed themselves to Dufray, forage inspector of the 22nd Division, and he went to Viriot, whose reputation in the Department made him seem very suitable for the purpose in view.

Some time before the verdict Viriot came, without permission, to Paris. Dufray, who was charged with the making of the proposals, accompanied him. They took the Mans road, and visited Mmes. Canchy and Mauduisson.

On their return, Viriot used every means to win over the suffrages of the judges in favour of the accused. He interviewed each one in private, told them he had hunted with Generals Mortier and Junot, who assured him that it was the intention of the First Consul to pardon them, but that he had been prevented by the outeries made by the Senate and law officers, but, at any rate, it was certain that if the accused were acquitted all the judges would be rewarded; that Delaunay, the President, would be named Prefect, Boullai and Bellangé would be appointed judges of the Court of Cassation, &c. He even dared to pretend that General Girardon had received secret orders from the First Consul to assure them they would be rewarded, and to interest the public he set abroad the rumour that Mme. Bonaparte was related to the accused.

Viriot counted particularly on General Carrette, who is not a very well-educated man but very honest. His good nature was taken for an assent to the solicitations, and to win him over to their side they offered him 2,000 francs and a tortoiseshell box lined with gold.

This present was left with Reymond, the keeper of the forage stores.

The trial began on the 1st of Brumaire, and already efforts had been made to gain over public opinion in the cafés. Viriot invited to dinner Captain Belleville and the substitutes Gardais and Gastineau, who remarked that in crossing the Place de la Commune, where Mmes. Canchy and Mauduisson were, Viriot walked arm-in-arm with them to give those ladies an idea of his ascendancy over his colleagues. Citizens Belleville and Gastineau left soon after the dinner, although Viriot pressed them to stop; Gardais alone remained. Dufray arrived, and said, "Have they brought the sacks?" "They are there," replied Viriot. In the course of the evening Dufray said to Viriot, "We have thought of stirring up Bressigny" (the suburb where the quarrymen live).

The same day, 1st of Brumaire, two bills to order, of 3,000 francs each, were signed by Mme. Mauduisson, payable to Viriot, endorsed by Dufray

COLONEL VIRIOT

with Mme. de Canchy, the money she borrowed from the bankers of the town, Viriot's journey to Paris, his reproaches

and his wife; the one payable the 11th, and the other the 21st of Brumaire. They were not paid on account of the condemnation, and are in the possession of Mme. de Chassily at Mans.

After the trial, when the judges were giving their votes, Viriot alone put in a white ball on every question, even on the fact of the abduction of which he denied the existence. His colleagues decided the contrary way, whereupon he behaved with the greatest indecency, striking the table, rolling about on the seats, and showering the most insulting remarks on his colleagues. His fury moderated, however, when one of the judges raised a doubt as to whether the law of Floréal, Year V., or the Penal Code—the punishment by which is imprisonment in irons—ought to be applied. Viriot almost went on his knees to the judges to ask them to save the lives of the accused persons.

Viriot, who had taken the dissimulation of some of the judges (who perceived his object) for agreement with his opinion, had so persuaded the families of the accused and their defenders that they would be acquitted, that they were celebrating it with a dinner when they heard the news of their condemnation. It was this belief which saved the town from the riots planned by Duf-ray.

As soon as the sentence was given the condemned men, Canchy, Mauduisson, and Gaudin, whilst still in Court, asked to see Viriot, and he was searched for all the evening. The following morning they sent the executioner to him but he refused to see them, and said to the headsman, "Tell them I am ill." The Government Commissary remarked to him that it was improper to charge the executioner with a message, and sent an usher to inform the condemned men of Viriot's refusal to see them.

The friends of Mmes. Mauduisson and Canchy had made them leave before the execution, but they had said enough to cause suspicion to rest on Citizen Viriot, who, on his side, had been indiscreet enough to publish abroad that he was the only judge who gave a verdict in favour of the prisoners.

These rumours spread about determined the President to convoke the Court towards the end of Brumaire, and Viriot underwent an examination by the President and was cross-examined by each of the judges. He replied in the swaggering manner which is usual with him, and not in a satisfactory manner. So far from trying to justify himself, he talked about his sword, &c., to the Government Commissary.

Since then Mme. de Mauduisson has written to Citizen Foucaud Cebren, merchant, at Angers, to instruct him to demand repayment of 8,000 francs disbursed; that is to say, 6,000 francs paid at Paris at the time of his journey, and 2,000 francs left by Duf-ray with the storekeeper Reymond. This letter has been seen and read and extracts taken from it, but Citizen Foucaud Cebren would not place it in the hands of the Government Commissary. She uses these words in speaking of Viriot, "Does the scoundrel—who is more the executioner of my children than the poor wretch who was obliged to obey the orders of the law—want to play the part of robber as well, or will he restore the 8,000 francs?"

Viriot asked leave of absence of the Court. The President asked him if his intended journey was within or outside the Department, as in the latter case he ought to apply to the Minister of Justice. Viriot did not reply, and went to Saumur without the permission of either the Court or his superior officer, and made Duf-ray sign a declaration before a notary that he had never given any money to corrupt the judges.

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

to his colleagues, his despair on learning of the death of the accused persons—the recital of all these proceedings, grouped together with astounding perfidy, led up to the conclusion—to be henceforth evident—that Viriot had extorted a considerable sum from Mme. de Canchy, by deluding her as to his influence, and having pocketed the money had fled from Angers, without waiting for the execution of the condemned prisoners, who, when their last hour had come, commissioned the executioner to fetch him to them. A letter is even quoted—preserved, like all the other documents, at the office of the Minister of Justice—in which Mme. de Mauduisson, speaking of Viriot, whose treachery she has unmasked, says, “Does this scoundrel—who is more the executioner of my children than the poor wretch who was obliged to obey the orders of the law—want to play the part of robber as well, or will he restore the 8,000 francs?”

Each time that some new petition drew attention to Viriot, each time that his *dossier* was consulted, it was on this infamous document that the eye first fell. It must have ruined for ever in the minds of successive Ministers all chance of his rehabilitation. Once—in 1818—an over-careful or over-curious clerk, anxious to trace documents to their fountain-head, asked the Minister of Justice for Viriot’s *dossier*. The reply was that, “in spite of the most searching investigations it was impossible to find it.” He then sought

Before this case, suspicion rested on Viriot in another affair. Houel, charged with embezzlement of Government money at Bougé, was acquitted, but said it had cost him 50 louis. He did not name anyone, but the day after the verdict Viriot paid a tolerably large sum he owed a goldsmith.

Other facts which are foreign to the case concerned, but relate to Viriot personally, have been forwarded to me by General Girardon, and add to our unfavourable opinion of the Captain. He seems, ever since he wore epaulettes, to have been devoid of good-feeling and to have committed embezzlements and exactions, information about which can be procured from the persons mentioned by the General.

Viriot calls on the Prefect of Maine-et-Loire to give testimony in his behalf, and attribute the charges brought against him to the President and the Government Commissary who, he says, have not pardoned him for differing in opinion from them in this case.

I propose to the Consuls to deprive Captain Viriot of his command, and to return all the documents in his *dossier* to the Minister of Justice, to be examined to see if they afford sufficient ground to prosecute and punish him as a prevaricating judge.

Signed, ALEXANDRE BERTHIER.”

COLONEL VIRIOT

for it amongst the archives of "military justice," and was informed there that "the documents had been lost or taken away twelve years ago, and could not be found, although strict search had been made." And still this apocryphal report continued to be believed in, despite its evident falsity; for if Viriot had been guilty of perverting justice, why was he not brought to trial? Why—if there was any doubt—have cashiered him, contrary to the military regulations, without any inquiry or court-martial? And, above all, why not have informed him of the odious suspicion which lay upon him?

For he never knew of what he was accused. Many years later, in October 1830—after each revolution he artlessly protested his devotion to the new *régime*, declaring himself, beforehand, a fanatical supporter of any Government, whatever it might be, which would restore him his epaulettes and his sword—in October 1830 it would seem that a light broke in on his mind. By dint of thinking over his misfortunes, he saw and understood at last the plot of which he had been the victim. The gigantic spectre of his rival—dead ten years before—appeared to him for the first time, and so great is his retrospective fear that he dared not pronounce the terrifying name. In addressing to the King "a summary of his misfortunes," he speaks of a powerful "hand," of a high "personage," of the "man in office" who had reduced him to despair, but not once does he have the audacity to name Fouché.¹

1

"October 18th, 1830.

"To the King of the French,
. . . Senator Clément de Ris was carried off in broad daylight from the door of his Château de Beauvois, near Tours. Proceedings taken in the ordinary Courts were unavailing, and the guilty persons, protected by a *powerful hand*, escaped justice.

"The Senate demanded reparation for the offence committed on one of its members, and Napoleon, then First-Consul, who wished to be on good terms with the first body of the State, created a Special Court to deal with the crime.

"The Senator, however, had been carried off by mistake; the agents of the man in power who had woven the plot should have seized *another person* and carried off his papers, but when their plot failed they fled abroad. He had either to acknowledge his error and incur the displeasure of his master, or sacrifice some innocent persons who could be charged with the abduction. *The man in power did not hesitate.* Some unfortunate Vendéans, who had retired to their homes and lived quietly ever since the pacification of their country, were destined to be offered as a holocaust

ROMANCES OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

This touching and impressive story was lodged, with his preceding letters, in that fatal *dossier*, the first document in which placed him beyond the ban of pity. The poor man never could guess why everyone in power regarded him as undeserving. In 1831, still full of energy and illusions, he proposed to organise a guerilla corps, at the head of which "he longed to fly to the help of our Belgian brothers." In 1848, "come to the decline of life, and in his quality of republican of 1790," he begged to be put on half pay, for, since he had been deprived of his rank, he had never received pay, nor pension, nor indemnity, nor relief of any sort. He then resided at Nanterre, where he lived in a peasant's cottage, where he meditated on the insolvable enigma of his destiny, like those old soldiers whom Charlet drew, seated in their arm-chair, a woollen nightcap on their head, and clad in an old cloak instead of a dressing-gown, motionless, dreaming of bygone days, their fists clenched, and looking fixedly from under their bushy eyebrows.

In 1851, when he was almost eighty, he welcomed with juvenile enthusiasm the return of the Eagle. He forwarded a fresh petition to Napoleon III., to which, like the others, no reply was ever made.¹ That was the last. After having

to the reputation of this high personage, and he strove to find executioners for them under the name of judges.

"No doubt he believed that I, a devoted patriot who had fought with some success against the Vendéans, should not hesitate to condemn them on the most trifling evidence, and I was appointed one of the judges of the Special Court. But he was deceived.

"The evidence proved no charge against the accused, and, nevertheless, they were sentenced to death. I will not say what methods of seduction were employed against my colleagues; what offers and what threats were made to me. I should tell nothing new, for examples of corruption are unfortunately too frequent. Strong in my own convictions I refused to sign the iniquitous sentence; I proclaimed aloud the innocence of the accused, which was clearly shown by the evidence. I made known who were the real culprits and exposed all the plot, but my voice was stifled, and the unfortunate men paid with their lives for a mistake made by the agents of a man in power.

"I have kept copies of all the documents relating to this iniquitous affair . . . Some time after that I was struck off the Army List. Three times has justice been on the point of triumphing, and I succeeded in getting my command restored; and three times the author of the plot procured my dismissal. . . ." &c.—*Archives of the Ministry of War*.

¹ *To the Emperor*. Signed, Colonel Viriot. Livry, Seine-et-Oise. A copy of this pamphlet is in the Bibliothèque Nationale.

COLONEL VIRIOT

implored the Consuls, the Emperor, the Bourbons of 1814, the open-handed Napoleon of the Hundred Days, Louis XVIII. after his return from Ghent, Charles X., the Provisional Government, Louis-Philippe, the Second Republic, and the Second Empire, Viriot realised that no human power had ever cared to break the tombstone under which he had been interred alive for sixty years. Time alone could procure him his revenge, and he sadly gave up the useless struggle. He retired to Livry, and lived in a cottage in the woods, with his wife, who bore the well-merited name of Constance. She had never left him during the sixty-seven years of their married life. And sometimes, when at evening, sitting before his door, his face buried in his hands, he meditated upon his ruined life till his old shoulders shook with stifled sobs, she would come and sit by his side, and gently console him whilst she knitted. There are still some persons at Livry who remember having seen these two old people, of whose history they were ignorant. They called Viriot "Colonel," though they were surprised that there was no red ribbon in his button-hole. He passed his time in gardening, or in arranging his papers, which he never tired of re-perusing. Créteineau-Joly, the historian of La Vendée, came to see him once, and looked through these valuable bundles of papers. They were "authentic copies of all the documents relating to the iniquitous trial at Angers." Créteineau-Joly spent several days there; and came away absolutely certain of the innocence of the men guillotined in 1801, and informed the descendants of M. de Canchy of his discovery. Viriot, he said, "is the most honest and upright of men."

This obscure martyr died at Livry, June 10th, 1860.¹

¹ *Mairie of Livry. Register of Deaths, No. 73.*
June 10th, 1860, Sunday.

Death of Pierre François Viriot, retired colonel, born at Nancy, September 20th, 1773. Son of Pierre Viriot and Jeanne Françoise Lemaure, deceased, and husband of Marie Françoise Constance Calonne.

RICHARD CLAY AND SONS, LIMITED,
BREAD STREET HILL, E.C., AND
BUNGAY, SUFFOLK.



477016

DC 145 .67
v.1 SMC
Lenotre, G., 1855-1935

Romances of the French
revolution,
AJX-8704



