we knew that it was too late to do anything but to flock to the church and pray for the safety of our good lady."

"Thank you, my friend. Leigh and I are going to Nantes to see if anything can be done to get her out of prison. Leigh's band are coming also. Of course they will travel singly. If of no other use, they will be better able to ask questions than we. I am going over now to Rehan's farm to see my boy and to thank Marthe for saving him."

"It was well managed indeed," the priest said. "I went over yesterday to see the child, and the nurse told me how its escape had been contrived. It was a happy thought on the part of its mother, and the woman carried it out well. But before you go you must take a meal, I am sure that you must want it."

"I will not say no to that," Jean replied, "for we have not broken our fast this morning."

In half an hour the curé's table was most abundantly furnished, for as soon as the news spread through the village that the seigneur had arrived, and was at the house of the priest, the women brought in little presents—a dozen eggs, a fowl, or some trout that had been caught by the boys in the stream that morning. One or two of the women volunteered to assist the curé's servant. Three fowls were hastily plucked, cut asunder, and grilled over the fire. As soon as they were nearly ready they were placed in front of the fire to be finished, while the trout took their place. The repast began with these, the fowls followed, and it was concluded with an omelette.

"I have not eaten such a meal, father," Martin said, "since I rode away. I think after this I shall be able to take a more hopeful view of matters. In that respect the meal will be thrown away upon Leigh, for he always takes the brightest view of everything, and has never ceased to

assure me that we are sure to manage to get my wife out of the hands of these villains somehow, and as he has so far always succeeded in what he has attempted, I feel a good deal of faith in him. I should be as hopeful as he if I knew that the *Henriette* was in the river at Nantes, and that I had to my hand a dozen stout fellows I could thoroughly rely on."

After paying a visit to the farm, praising Marthe, and arranging that she should continue to live there, they returned to the village.

"We will go over to the château, Leigh, before we do anything else. I want to see how hot the ruins are."

"I should think that they must be pretty cool by this time, Jean; you see it is nearly four days since it was burnt."

"I have no doubt that the walls will be cool enough; but there was a lot of woodwork about it. When the roof fell in it would smother the fire for a time, but it might go on smouldering even now."

"But what does it matter, Jean?"

"It matters a good deal. I have with me only a hundred francs in paper, which is not worth above a third of its face value; I have here four thousand in gold, which I brought with me from Nantes as soon as the troubles began. I buried it one day under the hearth-stone of the kitchen, thinking it possible that the Blues might come here. The money is of the utmost importance now, for we may want it to bribe some of the jailers, and therefore I must get it, even if it delays us for a day."

They found indeed that, as they had feared, there was still fire among the mass of débris.

"We must quench it before we can do anything, Jean. I have no doubt that the women will help."

François was at once sent round, and in a short time all the women in the place were assembled with pails. Martin and François worked the windlass of the well, the women carried pails of water, and Leigh threw the contents on to the smouldering mass above where he knew the kitchen fireplace must have stood. Clouds of steam rose, and from time to time some of the women with rakes pulled off the upper layer of ashes. They worked till nightfall, by which time steam had ceased to rise.

"That will do for to-night," Jean said; "we will finish the job to-morrow morning. Your band will be here by that time, and will help us to get some of these heavy beams and timbers out of the way. We can then rake the smaller stuff out and get at the fireplace."

At eight o'clock the band arrived. Leigh went down and spoke to them, and thanked them for the two long marches they had made. He had during the afternoon obtained a supply of bread and wine, and after they fell out a meal was eaten before they started for their homes, promising to be back at six in the morning to aid in the work of clearing away the débris. Jean and Leigh spent a couple of hours in talk with the curé, and related to him the events that had passed since they had left. Then, thoroughly tired out, they retired to the room that had been prepared for them. The work that afternoon had been heavy; they had had a long ride previously, and neither had slept much the night before. The next morning the work was recommenced. During the night the fire had crept in again from the surrounding mass; but there were plenty of hands now, and in an hour it was again extinguished. The hearth-stone was soon cleared and raised, and Martin brought out a crock in which he had placed the gold.

"Now, Leigh," he said, "you had better have a talk

with your boys and arrange where they are to meet you. I should not press any of them who are unwilling to go. This is a private business, and I do not think that it would be right to urge them."

"Certainly not," Leigh agreed. "I am quite sure that all our boys will go with us, both for Patsey's sake and because they are furious at the château being burnt down; as to the others, I shall put it to them that they are perfectly free to do as they wish. They can go with us, or they can rejoin the army, just as they like. If they go, I think that it would be as well that they did not enter the town, but should take up their quarters in a copse or in a deserted house, a mile or two away, so that we could call them in if we wanted them. Even in a town like Nantes, forty strange boys wandering about might be noticed."

Martin, after seeing that the workers all had refreshment, went to the curé's, as he never interfered in any way with the boys, thinking that it might lessen Leigh's authority were he to do so.

"Now, I want to talk to you all," Leigh said, after they had drunk their wine and eaten their bread. "In the first place, do I understand that all who were first with me are ready to run a considerable risk, to attempt with us to carry off Madame Martin from the hands of the Blues, and to save her from the fate that falls upon every one that they once lay a hand upon?"

"They are all willing, captain," André said. "We spoke to them again just before we came in last night, and they all said that they were willing and anxious."

"Good! Remember, lads, that it is not too late to draw back now."

"We should not dare show our face in the village again,"

Pierre said, "if we were to hang back when there was a chance of our being of service to so good a lady."

"I thank you with all my heart," Leigh said. "I tell you fairly that I expected such an answer. Those who have shown such courage as you have done, and have been so loyal to the promises made me when I first enrolled you, would, I felt certain, not hang back now. Now, do you draw aside for a minute or two while I speak to the others."

There was a movement, and the two groups stood apart.

"Your case is different from that of the others," he said. "In the first place you have not been with me so long, and secondly—and this is more important—that Madame Martin is not the wife of your seigneur, and that you owe no duty to her. The enterprise on which we are going to start does not concern the cause for which we are fighting; it is a private business, and there is no occasion whatever for you to take part in it. You are free either to choose an officer among yourselves, or to rejoin the army, find Monsieur de la Rochejaquelein, and tell him that I sent you to him in order that he might find a suitable leader for you among the gentlemen with him. I would rather that you talked the matter over among yourselves, and came and gave me an answer in half an hour."

"Will you tell us what we shall have to do, captain?" one of them said.

"That I can hardly do, for I do not know myself. However, I think it probable that the greater portion of the band would remain outside the town. There are copses down by the river-side where you could wait in safety until you were wanted. Possibly you might not be wanted at all, possibly you might be summoned to take part in so desperate an enterprise as storming one of the prisons.

Of course it would be done at night, when we should have the advantage of a surprise. I can tell you no more than that. Now, my last word is, I shall not think any the worse of you if you decide not to go with me."

It wanted five minutes of the time, when two of the boys returned to where he was talking with Pierre and André.

"We have decided, captain. You told us when you marched away from Saumur that M. de la Rochejaquelein had approved of your taking us, and therefore we shall feel that we are still doing our duty to the cause. You have been kind, good, and thoughtful while we have been with you. All those of our own age in the army envied us who were of Cathelineau's scouts, and regarded our position as a great honour. Even if we were willing to go back, we could not do so and tell the others that we had left you and our comrades when you were about to undertake some perilous service. But we do not wish it. We all desire to remain with you and to follow wherever you may lead us, and to die in your service if need be."

Leigh shook them warmly by the hand.

"Bravely said, and I thank you heartily. I am proud of my scouts, and am glad to see that my confidence in you is well founded. Call the others up."

After thanking these also, Leigh addressed the whole of them.

"Now, I will give you your orders. You must make your way by different routes to Nantes. There are many villages on the bank where you can find a boat that will take you across. Never travel more than two together. You must all take the green ribbons off your hats, leave your belts behind, and hide your pistols. If questions are asked you, reply that you are going to get work at Nantes, where you have friends, and that you are afraid to stay in your

own villages. I will give each of you assignats for five francs. It would not do to give you silver. With this you can pay for your ferry across the water and buy food on the way. It were best that both on this side of the river and the other you travel either by by-lanes or through the fields.

"When you get near Nantes, keep close to the river, and enter the last large copse before you get there. André or Pierre are likely to be there first, and will be on the look-out for you. They will join me in the town and bring you orders when necessary, and will send two or three of you in daily to buy food for the rest. I can give you no orders beyond that. Now, I hope I shall meet you all in three days' time at your rendezvous. Pierre and André, you will, on the evening after you arrive, enter Nantes, following the river bank. You will go along to a spot where a church faces the river. Sit down on its steps and wait for us until the clock strikes ten. If we are not there, return and come back the next evening. If we are still not there, you will know that some bad luck has befallen us, and the band will then disperse, and you will all find your way up home. I should advise you all to travel by night when you have once crossed the Loire. In that way you will avoid any risk of being questioned."

The boys then dispersed, and Leigh returned to the priest's. He and Martin had already talked over their disguises, and had agreed that those of fishermen would be the most appropriate; but until they could obtain the necessary clothes, they would go in the attire of fairly well-to-do people in a country town.

"We should only have to put on a tricolour scarf, Jean, and should look like municipal authorities."

"It would go against the grain to put that rag on,"

Martin said; "but your idea is a good one, and I would dress up as a general of the Blues, or as Robespierre himself, on such an errand as we are bound on. We cannot do better than go to Clisson. The place is in the hands of our people, and the village authorities will not dare to ask us any questions."

After dining with the curé, they mounted and rode to Clisson, arriving there at five o'clock in the afternoon. They went to the leader of the force there, as he was a friend of Jean's.

"I will send and get you the things," he said, when they told him the object of their visit. "It is just as well, if any of the people here are acting as spies for the Blues—which is likely enough—that they should not be able to give any description of you. We are all three about the same size, therefore I will go out and buy two suits. As to the scarves, I am more doubtful. I doubt if any shopkeeper here would admit that he had even a bit of tricolour ribbon in his possession."

"It will not matter about that," Martin said; "and, at any rate, when we get beyond the ground held by us, we shall find no difficulty whatever in getting a couple of cockades of those colours.

"Thank you very much indeed," he went on. "Here are five louis; I have no doubt that you will be able to lay them out well for us. But remember, please, that although we are all three the same height, I am some four or five inches bigger round the shoulders than Leigh, and want more room for my arms also."

"I will remember," the other laughed. "Just let me pass this string round you, and then round Monsieur Stansfield, and tie two knots in it; and I will also measure you round the waist and leg."

In an hour he returned with one of his men carrying two parcels.

"I had no difficulty in getting the clothes for your brother-in-law," he said, "but I had to go to two or three shops before I could get coat and breeches wide enough for you. What do you intend to do with your horses?"

"We shall ride into Nantes as we are after nightfall, and shall put them up at a small inn. I know of one near the water; it is kept by a man who was at one time in my lugger, but he had his leg crushed in a storm, and had to have it taken off. He was a good sailor, so I set him up, and can rely upon him. He will get fishermen's clothes for us, and, should we have to stay there any time, buy a boat and nets. We may want such a thing badly."

The clothes were tried on and found to fit fairly well. In our days the short-waisted coats with their long tails, and the waistcoats extending below the waist, would be deemed laughable, but as it was then the fashion among the middle classes, and especially the Republicans, Jean saw nothing ridiculous in it, while Leigh smiled at the figures they cut. Both had bright-yellow breeches and stockings, and low shoes. They waited till midnight at Clisson and then mounted again, and by morning they were within a mile or two of a ferry a short distance above Nantes. They stopped at a small village and there purchased two tricolour cockades from the one shop it boasted, these forming conspicuous objects in the window, as a proof of the warm adherence of its owner to the Convention.

At the little cabaret they took breakfast and saw that the horses were fed, then they rode on to the ferry. The boat was on the opposite side, and in half an hour it crossed. Then they took their places and were ferried over. A party of soldiers were posted at the landing-place.

"You are going to Nantes, I suppose, citizens?" the officer in command asked.

"We are. We come from Vallet, and are going to consult the commissary of the republic concerning some taxes that, as we consider, it is impossible for the town to pay, which the commissary there has imposed upon us."

"I should imagine that your errand is scarcely likely to meet with success," the officer said with a light smile. "I hear the same complaints at Nantes, but have not heard that any remission has been made. Well, citizens, at any rate I can wish you luck on your errand."

It was still very early when they rode into Nantes, and but few people were about the streets. Trade was almost at a stand-still. The town, which had been strongly Republican, was at once deeply discontented with the crushing taxation imposed upon it, and horrified at the constant executions that took place. Almost every house had soldiers billeted on it, as it was considered necessary to keep a large force there in order to overawe the south of Brittany, and, if necessary, to send supports to the generals operating in the west of La Vendée. There was scarcely any shipping in the river, and even the fishermen had almost given up plying their business; their best customers had fallen under the guillotine, and there was no demand for fish on fast days—for to practise any of the observances of religion was considered to be in itself a proof of hostility to the Convention. Therefore Jean and Leigh rode into the court-yard of the little inn without having attracted any attention whatever.

CHAPTER X.

PREPARATIONS FOR A RESCUE.

"I HAVE no accommodation for you here, citizens," a voice said, as Jean Martin and Leigh rode into the little court-yard, and a man with a wooden leg came out from the side door of the inn.

"I think you might be able to manage for us, Brenon," Jean said.

"Mon Dieu! it is—"

Jean held up his hand snarply.

"Yes, it is I, Citizen Gallon from Vallet. It is not often that I stir so far from home, but I had business here."

"Well, well, I will see what I can do for you, comrade; but, as you know, I don't profess to take in horses. My clients come from the water-side, and generally my stable is full of their baskets and ropes. However, I will see what I can do. I will tie them up in that shed for the present, and then clear out a stall for them afterwards."

The horses were led to a shed encumbered with fishing gear of all sorts.

"What madness has seized you, mon capitaine, to put your head into this lion's den?"

"I will tell you presently, Brenon, when we get inside. I am glad that you are able to take the horses in. We don't want to be stared at, or talked about; we have come along the river bank, and, so far, we have been quite unnoticed."

"All the better, all the better; to be noticed here means to have one's head cut off. Now, I will take you to a little room upstairs where there is no chance of anyone seeing you."

"Get us up, if you can, without our being noticed by your servants, Brenon; we shall be differently dressed when we come down again."

The man nodded.

"The boy is in the front room," he said. "There are three or four fishermen there having their morning glass. I have no other servants. My wife does what is needful, for I was obliged to discharge the girl we had, everything has been so slack of late."

He led them up to a chamber looking on to the quay. Jean was puzzled at the man's manner, for he spoke in a confused and hesitating way. When he closed the door behind him, he stood rubbing his hands together nervously.

"Have you heard lately from Nantes, Monsieur Jean?"

"No, it is five weeks since I had any news, except, of course, what was known about the troops that were here. What is it, old friend? Is there bad news?"

"There is terrible news," Brenon said, "so bad that I don't know how to tell you."

"Speak out, old friend; I have had one blow so heavy that I can scarcely be hurt more than I am."

"Well, then, monsieur your father has been arrested and is in the prison, and you know what that means!"

"Father arrested!" Jean exclaimed; "on what grounds? He never expressed an opinion as to public affairs. That at heart he hated what has being going on, I know; but he never spoke strongly even to me, and when I have heard his opinion asked, he has always replied that he was a trader, and that a man could not give his attention to business if he worried himself over politics. He attended to his trade, and left it to those who liked, to manage the government of the country. What of my mother and sister?"

"They are safe, monsieur. He sent them off a fortnight

before in disguise to La Rochelle; at least, so I have heard from the fishermen. And as the *Henriette* was lying there at the time, and sailed two days after, there is not much doubt but that they sailed in her for England. Your father was denounced before the committee of public safety as one who was hostile to the Convention. He was accused of having sent large sums of money to England, and was believed to have sent his wife and daughter there also, with the intention, of course, of following them; and the fact that you were known to be fighting in the ranks of the brigands, as they call the Vendéans, was also mentioned as an additional crime on his part."

"Then we have a double task to carry out, Leigh," Jean said grimly. "Now I will tell you what we came here for, Brenon. Six days ago a small party of the Blue cavalry came at night to my château. I was away, but they carried off my wife as a prisoner, and burnt the house to the ground. So we have come here to see if we cannot get her out of prison."

"You have thought of such a thing as that?" the man exclaimed in surprise. "Ah, monsieur! it is well-nigh an impossibility that you have undertaken. The villains know that there are hundreds of men, friends of the prisoners with whom they have crowded the jails, who would tear them down stone by stone if they had the power; but in addition to the prison warders—not the men that used to be there, but men taken from the lowest class in the town—the prisons are watched by what they call the volunteers, fifteen hundred men belonging to the scum of the city, the men from the slaughter-houses, the skinners', and the tan-yards. Some of these are ever on guard round the prisons night and day. There have been great changes here.

"A year ago almost everyone thought that the Assembly was going to do wonderful things, no one knew exactly what. According to what they said, everyone was to be able to eat meat seven days a week, to wear good clothes, and to do just as much work as pleased him and no more. Even the fishermen and sailors were fools enough to believe it. But there is a great change now. At first they approved of cutting off the heads of those who, they were told, were the cause of all misery and poverty; but when every day fresh prisoners were brought in, and it was not the nobles only but quiet citizens—tradesmen, manufacturers, doctors, and advocates — and every morning a score were carried out to be guillotined, men began to change their opinion, especially when they found that the more heads were cut off the less work there was and the poorer they became. They began to talk among themselves, and when it came to executing women and children as well as men they turned round altogether.

"More than once the fishermen and sailors have tried to rescue prisoners on their way to execution. The commissioners of the republic have been hooted in the streets, and if they had had arms in their hands our men would have turned the tables; but the town is full of troops now, and, worse than all, they have enrolled this corps of volunteers, who are the terror of the place. They have spies everywhere, and no one dares whisper a word against the commissioners or the executions, for, if but two or three men are standing by, the chances are that one of them is a spy."

"But surely my brother might have prevented my father's arrest, Brenon? He was one of the leading men at that Jacobin Club."

"He is still one of the leading men of the party," Brenon

said gloomily. "He is established in your father's house now, and is on the most intimate terms with the commissaries of the Convention."

"Is Monsieur Desailles still here? He was a young advocate, and a member of the Jacobin Club."

"Yes, he is a member still; but he is not in good odour with the extreme party. He is at the head of what they call the moderates. They say that sometimes these try to defend accused persons, and that is considered a terrible offence by the others. I should never be surprised to hear that he himself and those with him have been denounced as enemies of the state. This is an awful time, monsieur, and Heaven only knows what we shall come to. Now, is there anything that I can do for you, captain? You know well that you have but to say the word, and that, whatever it is, I would do it even if I were cut to pieces the minute afterwards."

"Thank you, old friend; it was because I knew that you were trusty and true that I came here. Now, the first thing that we want is fishermen's clothes. We only disguised ourselves in those things in order to pass safely through the Blues and be able to cross the ferry. For the present they have done their work, and now we want a disguise that we can go about in unnoticed. Of course we don't want new things."

"I can get them easily enough, monsieur; my customers are all hard up. I know pretty well which are true men and which are not."

"In the next place, I should like to buy or hire a boat to be at my disposal as long as I stay here."

"There are boats and to spare, captain. Fishing goes on because men must live, though it can hardly be called living, for the prices of everything are fixed by law now, and are

fixed so low that the men can scarce earn enough to buy bread for themselves and their families. Still, there are boats in plenty. Men have come down from towns and villages higher up, for they say that the troops are under no control, and when the boats come in after a night's fishing they come down and help themselves, and if a man ventures to grumble he gets a musket-ball to pay him for his fish. The men here at first were against their fishing between this place and the sea, but the authorities stepped in, and said that the more food the better for the people; and as the price was fixed the men here saw that it made no difference to them. Still, like our own men, they are doing badly enough, and one could buy a boat for a mere song."

"It would be better to buy one from those men, Brenon, because the fact of our being strangers would not then be noticed. I want one rowing boat, as fast a craft as you can pick out. I also want to hire a boat with a cabin that will hold us both. Of course it will be a sailing boat, say of three or four tons burden. I intend that we shall live on board. It might be noticed if two strange sailors were often coming in and out of your place, whereas if we were in a boat moored against the bank no one would notice us. If you can get hold of such a boat, with a couple of men who seem to you to be honest fellows, strangers to the place, it will be a great thing, and we could occasionally go down the river and do a little fishing."

"All that can be managed easily enough, captain. I know of one boat just such a size owned by two men, Rouget and Medart, who sailed in the *Henriette* for years, and only left her when you did, as they had wives and families here and knew that she would not put in again for a long time. You could trust them as you do me."

"That would be the very thing. Make arrangements

with them on any terms they like. I will take her by the week. She carries a boat, I suppose?"

"Of course, monsieur, they could not do without one."

"If she is fast, well and good; if not, tell them to buy the fastest they can find. They can sell their own boat in part payment, or they can get her up on the quay and let her lie there until we have gone, when they can either sell her or the new one. However, the clothes are the first thing; we cannot venture out in these, in the first place, because we might be questioned, and secondly, because we might be recognized; whereas in a fisherman's dress, with a wide oil-skin hat and our faces dirtied somewhat, I don't think that anyone could know us."

They remained quiet until evening, and then sallied out in the disguises Brenon had obtained for them. Their first visit was to the house of Jean's friend, Desailles. It was arranged that Leigh should not go in, as Desailles would probably speak more freely to Jean if alone. Jean had written his name on a piece of paper, folded it up, and carefully sealed it, and when he reached the house he handed this to the woman who opened the door.

"This is for Citizen Desailles," he said. "I will wait; he may want to see me."

In a minute the servant returned and requested him to come in. He was shown into a room where Desailles was sitting with some papers before him. He did not speak until the servant closed the door, then he leapt up and held out both hands to his visitor.

"My dear Jean," he said, "what imprudence, what madness for you to venture here!"

"I don't think there is any fear of my being discovered. Even you yourself would scarcely know me."

"I know you now you have taken that hat off, but I own

that I did not recognize you before, and thought for the moment that you were but a messenger. Please do not talk loud. For aught I know, my servant has been bribed to act as a spy upon me, and may have her ear at the keyhole. To tell you the truth, Jean, things are coming to a crisis at the club. The violent party get more violent every day, and I am heartily sick of this butchers' work. I feel that at any moment I may be denounced."

"Then why on earth do you stay here, Jules? Why don't you come and throw in your lot with us?"

"I should have laughed at the idea a year ago," he said, "for at that time, although I objected strongly to the doings in Paris, I yet believed that much good would come of the changes. Now I know that nothing has come of them but murder and misery, and the madness increases rather than diminishes. Hopeless as I own your struggle seems to me, I would at least rather be killed in battle than executed here; but I would rather still get to England if I could. As you know, I can play the violin well, and might be able to support myself by its aid if nothing else turned up."

"If you are thinking of going, Desailles, I will give you a letter to my father-in-law at Poole. I hear that my mother and sister have escaped, and they have doubtless gone there; so you will not find yourself friendless. And now for the purpose that has brought me here. I had no idea until I arrived that these wretches had imprisoned my father, who is the last man to interfere in politics, and has, I am sure, never uttered a word of enmity against the Convention. I came to endeavour to rescue my wife, who, as no doubt you have heard, has been seized and carried off in my absence, and my house laid in ashes. I suppose she has been brought here."

"Yes, I am aware of it," Jules said. "The party of horse

who did it were specially sent from here. Of course you were the principal object of the expedition, but the officer was ordered to bring her too—in the first place as your wife, in the second as an Englishwoman, and therefore, of course, an enemy of France. You were denounced to the club; and as you were known to be one of the gentlemen who had joined the insurrection and were fighting with Cathelineau and others, I knew that it would be useless to raise a voice on your behalf, having the satisfaction of feeling sure that you would be away from home when they got there, and hoping that your wife would receive notice of their coming before they entered the house."

"Has she been brought here yet?"

"Yes, she arrived three days ago. She is in the old city prison, where your father is also confined."

"So far that is fortunate," Jean said. "Now, how about my father? I should have thought that Jacques' influence would have been sufficient to protect him."

The young advocate smiled bitterly. "Monsieur Jacques Martin poses as a Brutus, Jean. When your father was denounced in the club he rose and said that he should take no part in the deliberations, that he was before all other things a patriot, and that he would not permit private affection to interfere with his duty as a citizen. In fact, my dear Jean, painful as it must be for you to hear, my opinion is, that your brother has all along been playing a deep game, and that his object has been to grasp the whole of your father's business and property. It was a friend of his who denounced you at the club when I before gave you warning; it was members of his clique who stirred the authorities up to send a small body of cavalry to capture you, and it was they also who denounced your father. Your brother is by far the most powerful of the committee of safety, as well as

in the club. He assumes an air of perfect disinterestedness and of a passionate love for the republic. His vote is always given for death. I think he takes St. Just as his model, and repeats his assertion, that it is only by the destruction of the enemies of France that France can be freed.

"There is a cold-bloodedness about him that sets my nerves tingling. I believe myself that the discovery that your father had largely reduced his stocks and had sent the proceeds to England, decided him in either agreeing to, or bringing about, this denunciation, and that he deferred it only until he found that your mother and sister had escaped; that freed his hands to some extent. Had they remained here he would have been in a difficult position. Even in these days, when we are sated with horrors, he could hardly have permitted his mother and sister to be executed, when, as everyone knew, he had power to save them. On the other hand, if they had remained they would have been obstacles to the success of his plan. As it is now, your father's house and all property belonging to him were declared confiscated; but the committee of safety passed a vote that, seeing the inestimable service rendered to the state by his eldest son, they would be bestowed upon him as a token of gratitude for his well-doing."

"You scarcely surprise me," Jean said gloomily. "I never liked my brother—we had not a feeling in common, and for years he has never seemed to belong to the family; and certainly since the troubles began he has not set foot in my father's house. Still, I hardly believed that he would be such a scoundrel. I abhorred his opinions, but believed that he was at least sincere. I did not see what he could gain by a revolution. Now I understand his character better, and can see how cleverly he has played his cards. I cannot reckon myself with the scoundrel, deeply as he has wronged

me and my father, but I should welcome the news that retribution had fallen upon him by some other hand. And now, Jules, can you give me any advice whatever as to how to set about my scheme of getting them both out of prison?"

Jules shook his head. "I fear, my poor friend, that that is impossible. The prison is, as you know, strong; there are, I should say, some forty warders, all ruffians and scoundrels. Any attempt to bribe even one of them would almost to a certainty be denounced, and it would probably be necessary to have at least half a dozen in the plot. As to force, it is out of the question. The building is very strong, there are always some twenty or thirty of the volunteers on guard outside, and an alarm would bring up five hundred in a quarter of an hour, to say nothing of the troops. What force could you bring that could have even a remote chance of success?"

"I have Leigh with me; you know him well, Jules. I rely much more upon him than I do on myself. He is full of plans and contrivances, and has rendered extraordinary services during the war. He has with him, or rather will have in the course of a day or so, a band of forty lads, of whom he is the captain, who have acted as scouts to Cathelineau. They will be in hiding a mile or two out of the town."

Jules lifted his eyebrows. "I am afraid that such a force as that would be of very little use to you, Jean—in fact, of no use whatever. If you had five hundred men, and could gather them for a sudden attack on the jail, and had a couple of cannon to blow in the gate, I should say it might be possible, and even then the chance of its being all done and the fugitives got safely away before the arrival of some three thousand troops would be very doubtful."

At this moment the servant brought in a note.

"Who brought this?" Monsieur Desailles asked.

"It was a woman, monsieur; she did not wait for an answer."

The advocate opened it. It was written in pencil.

Dear Jules, Martin is on his feet denouncing you. Hostile vote certain. Escape at once.

After reading it he handed it to Jean.

"That settles it," he said. "I am with you. Where are you staying?"

Martin told him, and said, "It will never do for you to stay there. But I have arranged for a boat with a cabin. We shall go on board at once, you can come with us. I had better go out first."

"It is better that we should not go together, for if the woman reports that I went off with a fisherman, a search might be made in all the boats. I will join you on the quay opposite the inn you speak of. I shall need a quarter of an hour to burn some papers. I have already a valise packed, with a couple of thousand francs, which is all the money I could obtain without creating suspicion. I have seen this coming for some time, and had no intention of making a martyr of myself when my doing so would be of no advantage."

"Don't delay too long, Jules. I shall be in a fever until you join me."

"I know their way, Jean. There will be half a dozen speeches, each vieing with the other in abusing me. My friends will see the uselessness of trying to defend me when the terrorists are three to one against them. If my friend slipped out, as is probable, directly your brother rose, I can calculate on a good hour. Actually the club

have no power whatever to order arrests, but they are so closely allied now with the committee of safety that they do not stand upon legalities, except in cases likely to attract a great deal of public attention."

Jules went to the door and let his visitor out. Jean joined Leigh.

"Desailles is going to join us. He has just been denounced, and will be with us in a quarter of an hour on the wharf. It is very lucky that Brenon completed the arrangements to-day for the boat, and that Rouget and Medart will be expecting us this evening. I told them that I might not come until to-morrow morning, but this settles it. There will be a sharp search for Desailles as soon as it is found that he has gone, and it is just as well that we should be off too. I am very glad that I had the boat taken from her usual berth to a spot half a mile higher up, because there are sure to be inquiries whether any fishing-boats put out during the night."

They walked fast back to the inn. Brenon, on being told what had happened, agreed that it would certainly be safest for them to go on board. "I have two friends living here," he said, "both of whom are carriers, and keep eight or ten horses. To-morrow morning early I will take one of your horses to one and the second to the other. No one will notice them there, whereas if a search is made—and I have no doubt a search will be made of the houses near the river—they will light upon them in my shed, and they would not believe my story that I had two citizens from Vallet living here—in the first place because it is an unlikely place to put them up, and in the second because no such citizens would be forthcoming. It is lucky that you told the men to get a cask of wine and a store of provisions on board before starting. Well, you know, captain, that

whenever you choose to land again, my house is at your disposal, and I will carry out what we arranged, that I should get together a score of men I can trust, and to each of whom I can promise a hundred francs for a night's work in a good cause."

They packed up their former disguises, which might come in useful again, their pistols they had already about them. They then went out on to the wharf again, and a few minutes later were joined by Jules Desailles.

"I have been nervous ever since I left you," Jean Martin said, as his friend shook hands with Leigh. "I was afraid that a quarter of an hour's delay might be fatal."

"I lost no time. But I feel sure that it will be an hour before anyone is down after me; they are all too fond of listening to their own voices to close any discussion in less than an hour after the proposer has sat down. I hope the boat is not far off, for this portmanteau of mine is heavy, I can assure you."

Martin took it up and swung it on to his shoulder.

"No, my dear Jean, I won't have it."

"Nonsense, Jules! the weight is nothing to me, though no doubt to a man who never takes any exercise it would feel heavy."

"To say the truth, it is heavier than I expected. I went on packing up everything that I did not like to leave behind, until the thing was crammed full, and after I had locked it and went to lift it I was thunderstruck with the weight."

"Did your servant see you go out?"

"No; I rang for her, and told her that I was going out, and did not suppose that I should be back till late, and that she could go to bed when she liked—which I knew would be a few minutes after she got permission. She is a sort of human dormouse, and nineteen times out of twenty I

have had to wait for my breakfast. I was in a fright as I walked down here, lest someone who knew me might run against me, but happily I saw no one."

"They would not recognize you if they had seen you," Jean laughed. "The idea of Monsieur Desailles, advocate, a gentleman somewhat particular as to his attire, dragging a portmanteau weighing a hundred pounds through the streets, would seem an impossibility."

"I have left that phase of my existence behind me," Jules laughed; "henceforth I am a man of war, a rebel, a brigand, as they call you, prepared for any desperate adventure, ready to rush up to a cannon's mouth."

"That is right, Desailles, I am glad to see that you take things so cheerfully."

"My dear Jean, I feel as if I walk on air since you have taken my portmanteau. I have been living in a state of suspense for months, hating these wretches and their ways, and knowing that I was gradually falling into bad odour with them, and that the blow would certainly fall ere long. Over and over again I have thought of making my escape from it all; but, you see, I am not a man of action as you are. I did not see how the matter was to be effected—where to go or what to do. I was like a boy shivering at the edge of the bank and afraid to plunge in; then another comes behind him and pushes him into the water, and he strikes out, and finds that it is not as cold as he expected, and forthwith enjoys it. I have cut loose from the past. I have become a rover and a waif, and I feel as light-hearted as a boy. Now, let me get hold of one end of that trunk again."

"I have got it all right, and, as you see, I have not yet changed shoulders. And if I want help, it is to Leigh I should turn and not to you. After three months' campaigning it may be that you will be able to hold up an end

as well as he can, but you certainly cannot do so now. In another hundred yards we shall be at the boat, and they must be on the look-out for us."

In a short time they saw a fishing craft with a boat astern of her. A man was standing on the deck.

"It is a dark night, my friends," he said.

"It will be lighter in the morning," Jean replied.

The man leapt ashore.

"Ah, captain, I am glad indeed to see you! Brenon did not tell us until after he had made a bargain with us who wanted our boat, or we should not have talked about payment. Not likely, after having sailed with you since you were a boy of fourteen."

"No, indeed," said another man, who had just raised his head out of the cabin hatch; "and we are not going to take it either."

"We will talk about that afterwards," Jean said as he stepped on board.

"I doubted whether it was you, captain, for Brenon had only spoken to us of two, and when I saw three of you I thought that you must belong to one of the boats higher up. There are two or three of them a bit farther on."

"I did not know myself until half an hour ago. This is my friend Monsieur Desailles, who is in the same danger from these butchers of the Convention as I am. First pass this box down, and then we will follow it." They gathered in the little cabin. It was but some seven feet long.

"It will be close work, captain," Rouget said.

"It will do very well," Jean said cheerfully. "There is room for two of us to sleep on the lockers, and one on the floor. You have got the small boat behind you, I see."

"She is there," the man said, "and a good boat she is. We bought her from two fishermen who had come down

from St. Florent. She is very well for up there, but she is scarce fit for fishing far below Nantes."

"I am glad that she did not belong to this place," Martin said. "The fishermen might have been surprised to see two strange men in a boat they knew; but so many have come down here from the towns above that we shall excite no attention. Now, the first thing to do is to get up sail and drop down two miles past the town, then you can go about your fishing as usual. Only one of us will show upon deck at a time. Now as to the matter on which we are here. Brenon told you that it was a dangerous business for which you would be required?"

"He told us that it was to hide two gentlemen whom the committee of public safety would be glad to get hold of, and I knew of course that to do such a thing was dangerous; but we did not like it any the worse for that. All honest men are horrified at the way these commissioners from Paris are carrying things on, and would be glad enough to aid in getting anyone out of their hands."

"But the danger is greater in our case than ordinary," Jean went on. "You heard that my father had been imprisoned?"

"We heard it, captain, and savage it made us, as you may guess. Everyone spoke well of him; and being your father, of course we felt it all the more."

"But that is not all, lads. A party of their cavalry went to my château in my absence, burnt it down, and brought my wife here a prisoner. Now, it is absolutely certain that they will both of them be condemned, for they have a personal enemy on the committee of public safety, and they will be murdered unless we can get them out; and I and my brother Leigh, whom you all know, have come for that purpose."

"Well, captain, you can count upon both of us, heart and soul. But I don't see how it is going to be done. The prison is a strong place, and well guarded. I have no doubt that we could count on getting twenty stout men along the wharf, but that would not be much use. They have more than that on guard, and before we could get into the prison they would come swarming down, any number of them."

"We have forty young fellows from my neighbourhood, who will by to-morrow be hidden away in the wood a mile and a half higher up the river."

"That will be a help, sir; but even with two hundred we should not be able to do much."

"We shall have plenty of time to talk it over afterwards. Get the sail up and drop down the river. Keep close to the opposite bank. It is important that we should not be noticed as we pass the town."

"Well, sir, there is hardly air enough to fill the sails. I should say that we had best tow her across to the other side in the small boat, and then drift till we are fairly beyond the town. We are safe not to be seen then."

"Perhaps that will be the best plan, Rouget."

The men went out, and in two or three minutes the sound of the oars could be heard.

"I can't say that the look-out is very hopeful, Leigh."

"I did not think that anyone would think it so, Jean; but it seems to me that it is just because everyone seems so confident that the prison is safe from attack, that we shall have a chance. The thing that is troubling me most is where we can get a barrel of gunpowder. We must have powder to blow open the gate. I expect that any of the doors we may find locked inside will give way if a pistol is fired through the keyhole, but to blow in the main

gate of the prison we must get powder, and a good deal of it. That, however, is a matter in which we shall find that money will be of use. There are too many officials in the prison for us to hope to get anyone out without eight or ten being in the plot, and as these, we hear, are all fellows who are heart and soul with the Convention, it is not possible to attempt it in that way. But when, as you know, the Blues succeeded in bribing a Vendéan to tamper with our guns, it ought not to be such a difficult thing to bribe one of these fellows who is in charge of ammunition to let us have a barrel or two of powder."

"That certainly seems to hold out a prospect of success so far, Leigh. I have never been able to understand your confidence in success, but certainly the first indication of your plan seems to promise well. Now let us hear some more of it."

"Well, this is my idea, Jean. I will choose a windy night, and send André and Pierre with twenty of the boys into the worst part of the town. Each shall carry a ball of yarn dipped in turpentine, mixed with sulphur and other inflammable things. They shall also carry another ball, having but a thin coating of the yarn, and powder inside so as to explode. When the clock strikes two, we will say, each of them will smash the window of some store, light both balls, and put them in. I want the explosion of one ball to scare anyone who may be sleeping there half out of their senses and make them rush out of the house, which will leave plenty of time for the other ball to set on fire anything that it may light upon. Twenty fires starting at once at different spots will create a fearful scare. Many of the guards outside the prison—all of whom are drawn from the slums—will have come from that quarter, and as they have no idea of discipline, will, when they see the flames mount-

ing up, leave their posts and rush off to see to the safety of their homes.

"Choosing a windy night, you may be sure that the fires would burn fast, and that the rest of the volunteers and the National Guard would soon be so busy that they would not trouble themselves about the prison one way or the other. Thus I calculate that of the fifty men on guard round the prison, there would not be twenty left at the outside, and they would be so busy staring at and talking of the fire, that with a sudden surprise they could all be disposed of without difficulty. Then the gates of the prison would be blown in, and we should rush in, shoot down all the warders we meet, keeping one only as a guide, make straight for the rooms where your father and Patsey are confined, release them and as many others as the time will allow, telling them to rush down to the wharf and seize boats, or to escape in whichever way they like; while you, with your father and Patsey, would make straight down to our boat, while I with the boys would follow you and cover your retreat if any of the Blues came up to pursue you."

"Leigh, you are a genius!" Martin exclaimed, bringing his hand down on the lad's shoulder with a force that almost knocked him from his seat.

"What do you think of that, Desailles, for a plan? I told you that I relied upon Leigh's head more than my own, and you see I had good reason for doing so. I doubt whether it could be done with his forty boys, but if we can get the powder, it seems to me that, with half as many sailors to help us, there is no reason why it should not succeed."

"But you might burn half the town down!" Desailles said gravely.

"If I was sure that it would burn the whole of it down

I should not mind," Leigh exclaimed. "But there is not much fear of that. If it cleared out the whole of the slums where the supporters of the gang of murderers they call the committee of public safety live, I should rejoice most heartily. As there are several wide streets between them and the business quarters, and as they will have all the soldiers of the town to assist in fighting the flames, I do not think that there will be any fear of the fire spreading very far."

"Well, at any rate, Leigh, you have hit on a plan that offers a good chance of success. We shall find out in a day or two how many of the boatmen we can get to aid us, and how far they will be disposed to go. We must learn in some way how long it is likely to be before it is absolutely necessary to act. If we find that there is time, we can send some of the boys off to the army to bring their fathers and brothers back with them. The sixty might not be enough, but with a hundred of our men I think we should be pretty sure of success.

CHAPTER XI.

THE ATTACK ON NANTES.

WHEN three or four miles down the river the boat was anchored, and the two men were called into the cabin and Leigh's scheme explained to them.

"It is a big affair, sir," Medart said thoughtfully when Jean had concluded. "Now, there is no love lost between us and the ruffians who carry out the committee's orders. They call us river rats, we call them sewer rats, and there have been many fights between the fishermen and these fellows as far back as I can remember, and lately these have

been much more frequent. If the plan was only to burn down their quarters there are a good many who would lend a hand, because it could be done quietly, and they would have no particular reason for suspecting that it was the work of the fishermen. But as for going into the jail, that would be different. We should not have time, by what you say, to hunt up and kill all the warders, and it would therefore be known at once that we were concerned. Five or six of our fellows have already had their heads chopped off on suspicion of having aided Royalists to escape. They don't mind whom they lay hands on, and they don't trouble themselves to search, but just seize the first they come to who, perhaps in a cabaret, has said a word against their doings.

"As to the trials, they are no trials at all. One of their fellows comes in and says, 'I heard this man abusing the authorities, and I accuse him also of being concerned in the escape of so and so.' It is no odds what the prisoner says. The fellow who acts as judge looks at the jury, who are all their creatures; they say 'Guilty!' and he says 'Death!' and the accused are marched off again to the prison to wait until their turn comes for the guillotine. Well, you see, if this prison was broken into as you propose, and it was known that the sailors had a hand in it, the chances are that they would march a couple of hundred of us into the great square, which would be choke-full of the National Guard and volunteers, and just shoot us down."

Jean was silent. The probability that things would go as the man said was so evident that he had no answer.

"I think the way to get over that difficulty," Leigh said, when he saw that Jean was puzzled, "would be for you all quietly to buy other clothes, or better still, for them to be bought for you by your wives. They should be such clothes as the peasants buy when they come into the town.

It would then be supposed that the attack was made by a party of Breton peasantry. As a good many other prisoners would escape, in addition to Monsieur Martin and your captain's wife, there would be no reason to suppose that the plot was specially arranged to aid their escape, or that any of the people of this town were concerned in the matter."

"That is so, Master Leigh," Rouget said. "It might be managed in that way. But I think that most of our chaps had better be told off for firing the town. I think that a good many might be willing to undertake that job, for I have heard it said many and many a time that they would like to burn the sewer rats out. There are other men who would, I am sure, rather join in the attack on the jail, if they could do so without putting the lives of all of us in danger. As to getting hold of an artilleryman, I don't know that that would be difficult. The men employed on that sort of work are all old soldiers, and many of these, though they dare not say so, hate what is going on just as much as we do. I have met one of them with Emile Moufflet, who served with you, captain, for two or three years. When we have been chatting together he has said things about the committee that would have cost him his head if he had been overheard.

"I know that his chum is in charge of some stores, but whether they are powder or not I cannot say. But at any rate, Emile will be able to find out for me the names of several of them who have charge of powder, and he would be likely to know which of them had sentiments like his own, and how far they could be trusted. That would not take long, but to get hold of forty hands for the other work would take some time. One dare go only to men one is very intimate with, and get them to approach men whom they know well; for

even among us there are fellows who take the committee's money to spy over the others, and to find out whether any trouble is likely to come or Royalists to be shipped off. One generally knows who they are, because they overdo their parts, and rail at the Convention more roundly and openly than an honest man would dare to do. Some of them one finds out that way; others, again, one spots by their always having money to spend. If they are too shrewd to betray themselves in that way, our wives find them out for us by telling us that their women and children have new clothes, and we know well enough that there is no buying new clothes out of fish at their present price; besides, most of these fellows give up fishing altogether, and lounge about the wharves talking and smoking, and one knows that a man and his family cannot live on air. Still, there may be others who are too sly to let out their secret in either way, and therefore one must be very careful whom one speaks to. One would not think of telling anyone about what is intended until, just as it comes off, one could simply say that one has heard that there is something in the air, and that report says that every man who will lend a hand will earn—how much, captain?"

"Two hundred francs."

"When one sees how a man takes that, one can go a step or two further. Well, I should not think of letting out to a soul what the nature of the work would be, simply saying that every precaution will be taken to prevent its being known that any fishermen are engaged in it. All that will take time. I should say that it might be nigh a couple of weeks before one could get the whole thing arranged."

"What do you think, Desailles?" Jean said. "Shall we have a fortnight?"

Desailles shook his head.

"I could not say; you might have more than that, if the prisoners were taken in the regular order in which they were condemned. The jails are crowded, and as fresh captures are effected room must be made for them. Of course the committee have a list, and they make a mark against the names of those who are to be executed each day. It might be three weeks before your friends' turn comes, it might be only a few days."

"I tell you what, Rouget; you and your comrade had better land to-morrow morning and set to work. You might say that three fishermen from St. Florent, finding their boat too small, hired yours for a week to try their luck. If they succeed they will give you a fair price for her, if not they will simply pay the hire. You can say that the price is not much, but as it is as much as you can make at fishing, you thought that you might as well have an idle week on shore. Leigh and I can work her. As soon as day breaks you shall shoot your nets, so that we can see exactly how you work, and be able to catch an average amount of fish each day. I am sure that no one will know us in these disguises, and at any rate we sha'n't be clumsy either with the sails or oars. You can say that, as we are strangers, you have agreed to sell our fish for us, which will be an excuse for your coming down to us with the news of how you are getting on each time that we come in."

"That will do very well, captain; but in that case, as a good deal of the fishing must be done at night, we had better get out the nets at once and show you how they are managed."

For the next three days the work was carried on. Desailles had undertaken to obtain from a friend of his on

the committee of public safety news of what was going on, and an early copy of the names of the prisoners told off for execution on the following day. On the third day after their arrival Martin and Leigh rowed up to the wood where they had directed the band to assemble, and found that, with two or three exceptions, all had arrived. Four or five of them were at once told to return to the estate and to the army with a message from Jean, begging all his tenants to leave and join the party in hiding. Many of them would no doubt have returned to their homes within a day or two of the capture of Saumur. Letters had already been written to Bonchamp and la Rochejaquelein to say that they were intending to attack the jail, and deliver a number of captives besides Jean's father and wife, and to beg that they would pick out some fifty or a hundred determined men and send them on. On the morning of the sixth day, when the two sailors joined them they were in a state of high excitement.

"There is great news, captain," Rouget said; "the whole city is in a state of tumult. It is reported that Cathelineau with his army is marching upon Nantes, and it is also reported—but this is not so certain—that Charette is marching to join them with all his force."

"That is grand news if true!" Jean exclaimed; "that would indeed favour our scheme! I doubt whether they will capture Nantes, for there is a big force here, and enough of them are seasoned troops to encourage the volunteers and National Guard to make a good fight of it. However, we can at any rate take advantage of the attack to carry out our own plans. When the fighting is at the hottest you may be sure that every armed man will be wanted at the work, and that there will not be many guards left behind at the prison. Our band here can dis-

pose of them, and half a dozen men each with fire-balls can add to the confusion by setting fire to warehouses and factories. The great thing now will be the powder."

"That we have managed already, captain," Medart replied. "As I told you, I spoke to Emile Moufflet the first morning I went ashore, and he said that it was at the magazines that his chum was employed. Yesterday evening he came to us and said that if I gave him the two thousand francs that you had given me for the purpose, he would hand us over two barrels of powder at eleven o'clock last night. We got them, and carried them, as you told us, to Brenon's, and helped him to bury them in his shed. We also got, as you ordered, a couple of yards of fuse."

"Bravo, Medart! everything seems going well for us."

The news of Cathelineau's advance was confirmed on the following day by the return of the lads who had been sent to fetch assistance. They brought with them eight or ten men from the estate, and reported that la Rochejaquelein had remained at Saumur with a portion of his army to defend that town against a large force that Biron was assembling at Tours, while Cathelineau, having with him Bonchamp and Stofflet, was marching with the main force along the north bank of the river. They said, however, that his force was greatly diminished, for that large numbers of his men, objecting to fight outside their own country, had scattered to their villages. They, however, confirmed the news that Charette was reported to be marching north to join Cathelineau.

"That is the worst part of the whole business," Jean said bitterly. "Our generals have no control over their men; they will fight when they want to fight, and return home when they choose. If Cathelineau had come along

with a big force he would have been joined by numbers of Bretons on the way, and, if he had captured Nantes, by the greater part of Southern Brittany. Now that so many of his men have left him, it is quite possible that his attack may fail, and in that case the result will be disastrous. His army would disperse, the Blues would turn their whole force against la Rochejaquelein, and the cause that a fortnight since seemed half won would be lost. It shows, at any rate, that the idea of marching on Paris could not be carried out, for if men refuse to march, when they would be separated from their own country only by the river, to take Nantes, by which La Vendée is constantly threatened, certainly a greater portion still would have gone off to their homes rather than join in what would seem to them so terrible an affair as a march on Paris. The peasants are good enough at fighting, but though they may win a victory by their bravery, they are certain to lose a campaign by their independent habits."

Feeling convinced that the approach of the Vendéan army would enable their enterprise to be carried out by a much smaller body than had at first appeared necessary, Jean Martin told the two sailors that they had better abstain from broaching the matter to any more of their acquaintances. They had already obtained the adhesion of those of whose fidelity they felt absolutely assured, and should one of the others whom they intended to approach turn traitor, it would overthrow all chances of success, and might cause such alarm to the authorities that the executions would go on more rapidly than before, and the fate of their friends be precipitated. Day by day the excitement in the city increased. Generals Beysser and Canclaux had under their command some ten thousand men. There was no chance of further reinforcements

reaching them, but they felt confident that they could successfully defend the town with this force.

Had Charette marched to Ponts-de-Cé, and, crossing there, joined Cathelineau, the danger would have been much more formidable, but instead of so doing he was advancing directly towards Nantes, on the south side of the river, the few places remaining in the hands of the Republicans being hastily evacuated on his approach. Here, however, he could give but slight aid to Cathelineau, for the bridge crossing the Loire could be defended by a comparatively small force provided with cannon to sweep the approaches. In order to reassure the townspeople and encourage the troops the French generals, as the enemy approached, moved out with a large proportion of their force and threw up some intrenchments a mile and a half outside the town, feeling confident that they could withstand any attack in the open country.

As many of the peasants fled into Nantes, especially those who in the villages had rendered themselves obnoxious by their persecutions of those suspected of Royalist leanings, or who were personally obnoxious to them, Leigh was able to gather the whole of his party in the town.

They were, like other peasants, to sleep in the open squares or down near the walls. They were always to go about in pairs, and to meet Pierre or André at places and hours arranged by them. They were supplied with money sufficient to buy bread, and were warned on no account to make themselves conspicuous in any way. With them were the men from Martin's estates who had answered to his summons. Clothes had been bought for the twelve sailors engaged by Medart and Rouget. The fire-balls had been prepared in the cabin of the fishing-boat. Each of the fourteen fishermen was to carry two of these. Their

leaders had carefully gone round the quarter, and had picked out the stores or warehouses into which the fire-balls were to be flung. Among these were several wood-yards. No private houses were to be fired. That the flames would spread to these was likely enough, but at least there would be time for the women and children to escape.

Having decided upon the places to be fired, the sailors were one by one taken round, and the two buildings assigned to each pointed out, so that there would be no confusion or loss of time when the signal was given. Only two stores near the water had been marked down for destruction, namely, those belonging to the Martins. This was Leigh's work. As a firm the business was extinct. It was now the sole property of Jacques Martin, and there was no probability that Martin senior or Jean would ever recover a share in it. As in each of the stores a considerable quantity of spirits in addition to the wine was housed, not only would the loss be very heavy, but the interest excited in the vicinity would increase the confusion and alarm that would prevail. Desailles was in daily communication with his friend. He learned that the list of prisoners was being taken now more in the order in which they stood. The farce of a trial had been gone through in the case of Jean's wife, and she had of course been condemned. She stood a good deal lower on the list than his father. There was not much chance of the day of her execution being settled before the arrival of the Vendéan forces.

The number of names, however, above that of M. Martin was rapidly decreasing, and there was imminent danger that he might be included in the fatal list before their arrival. On the twenty-sixth of June the Vendéans arrived within a few miles of the town, and a formal summons was sent in to the generals. It was briefly refused.

General Canclaux believed that he had so strengthened his advanced position, which was occupied by his best troops, that he would be able to repulse Cathelineau's force there. The Vendéans, however, being informed by the peasantry of the formidable nature of the intrenchments, decided that it would be dangerous to attack them, and consequently moved round so as to threaten the town from the north. Charette on his side moved his force up within cannon-shot of the bridge. At eight o'clock on the evening of the twenty-seventh the sound of heavy firing was heard in Nantes. A column of the Vendéans had attacked Nort, a place lying to the north of the town. It was defended by six hundred troops of the line and a body of the National Guard. They maintained themselves there during the night, but at daybreak fell back upon the town, leaving their cannon behind them. A considerable body of troops moved out to cover their retreat.

Confident that the attack would begin that evening, every preparation for action was made by Jean and Leigh. The powder barrels were dug up, and holes bored for the fuses. The boys were all informed that the hour for action was at hand, and were ordered to lie down at nightfall in the open space facing the front of the prison, scattering themselves among others who would be sleeping there, or, in expectation of the attack on the town beginning, would be standing in groups listening for it. Leigh would be among them. As the hour neared twelve they were to gather in a body. The sailors were not to begin their work until the attack on the town commenced in earnest. Jean, with his twelve tenants, was to come up at twelve. The exact moment for the attack was to be decided upon by the progress made by the fires. When these had had their effect, Leigh was to fall upon the

guard round the prison, and Jean with his band to run forward to the gate, plant the powder barrels against it, light the fuse, and run back.

As soon as they had killed or driven away the guard, Leigh's party were to return to the front. There André, with half the band, were to station themselves and to hold the gate against any armed body that might arrive, while Leigh, with the others, entered the prison and aided, if necessary, to overpower the warders and blow open the doors of the cells. The prisoners were all to be told that Charette's army was on the other side of the Loire, and that their best plan was to make their way down to the river, seize boats, and get across.

At five o'clock in the afternoon Charette's guns opened against the barricades that had been thrown up at the bridge. Canclaux, seeing that the attack upon the north had rendered it useless for him to retain the advanced post, ordered the troops there to fall back into the town at ten o'clock in the evening; and at eleven the whole garrison were concentrated in Nantes.

Finding that, with the exception of the cannonade on both sides across the river, all remained quiet, Leigh passed the word round among his followers to remain as they were until further orders. Jean and his men came up by twos and threes before twelve, and these, too, lay down as if to sleep, or seated themselves on the steps of the houses. Few of the inhabitants had retired to rest. They knew that at any moment the storm might break, and some awaited the attack with hope that the time of their release from the tyranny under which they had for months groaned had come; while others trembled at the thought of the vengeance that, if the town were taken, would fall upon those who had been concerned in what had passed. Martin and

Desailles presently joined Leigh. As the time went on they began to fear that for some reason or other the Vendéans had determined to delay their attack until the next day. At half-past two Charette's cannonade redoubled in vigour, and the rattle of musketry showed that his troops were advancing. The batteries of the defenders opened with equal violence, and their musketry answered that of the assailants on the opposite bank.

"I think that that must be the signal for Cathelineau to begin," Martin said. And ten minutes later the attack commenced with fury upon the gates of Vannes, Rennes, and that by the river.

Every window was opened, and anxious faces looked out. The night was dark, and the few oil lamps alone threw a feeble light on the square. Suddenly a broad glare rose to the west, and the murmur, "There is a house on fire!" passed from mouth to mouth. In another few minutes flames were seen rising at a dozen points, and a cry of consternation arose.

"The brigands have entered the town! They are going to burn it to the ground."

Man after man of the little group of National Guards who had been gathered talking in front of the door of the prison was seen to detach himself from it and to move quietly away. Then those at the windows noticed four or five parties of men move forward from among those who were standing talking; when within a short distance of the guard there was a sharp command, and these groups all rushed towards the gates together. There were shouts and cries, and then there was silence. Taken wholly by surprise, the guard had fallen under the knives of the Vendéans without having had time to fire a shot. Then the majority of their assailants ran off, half one way, half the other, follow-

M 572

"JEAN SEIZED ONE OF THEM BY THE THROAT."

ing the wall of the prison. Two pistol-shots were fired a moment later. The men who had remained at the gate drew back for some distance. There was a short pause, and then a tremendous explosion. All the people gathered in the place, save those who had carried out the affair, fled with cries of terror. Then Jean and his party dashed forward towards the shattered gates and entered the prison, and shot or cut down the frightened warders as these came running out dazed and bewildered at the sound of the explosion. Jean seized one of them by the throat.

"Where are the keys kept? Answer, or I will blow out your brains!"

The frightened ruffian at once led the way to the chief warder's room. He had already fallen, being one of the first to run down. There were two bunches of keys.

"These are of the doors of the corridors," the man said, taking down one bunch. "The others are of the cells."

"Now, go before us and open them all—every one, mind."

They were soon joined by Leigh with his party, who had made short work of the few guards who remained at their post outside the prison.

"Set your men to blow in the doors," Jean said; "it would take half an hour to unlock them all at this rate."

Pistols were at once applied to the key-holes, and the locks destroyed. There were a few separate cells, but the prisoners were for the most part crowded, twenty or thirty together, in the larger rooms. As he entered each room Leigh shouted the directions agreed on to the prisoners. In a short time he came upon Jean, who, as had been arranged, had gone first to the rooms where his father and Patsey were confined. Jean started with the seat once, with six of his men, leaving Leigh and Desailles to see to the release of the rest of the prisoners. As soon as all rooms had

been burst open or unlocked, he and his party, with that at the gate, hurried away. The streets were light, as a sheet of flame rose from the stores of Jacques Martin. The musketry fire on the wharves showed that there were troops stationed there. As they hurried along, the shouts of alarm which rose in the town showed that the news of the attack upon the prison had spread rapidly. As soon as the released prisoners knew that they were well above the bridge, and the silence on the wharves showed that none of the troops were stationed there, shouts of delight arose. There were a good many boats moored to the bank, and the fugitives threw themselves into these.

"Get out your oars and row straight across," Leigh shouted. "If you drift down the stream you will come under the fire of the troops there."

Then, having done their work, he and his band went up a hundred yards farther, where they knew that three large boats were lying. In these they took their places and started to row across the river, and in five minutes reached the opposite bank. They sprang out with a shout of joy at finding themselves again in their own country. Most of the fugitives also gained the opposite bank, but some boats, in which there were but few capable of handling the oars, drifted down the river, and lost most of their number from the fire of the troops on the bank, before they could land among the men of Charette's army. Leigh with his boys soon joined the other party, who had landed a hundred yards higher up. It was a joyful meeting indeed between him and Patsey.

"Jean tells me it is all your doing that we have been got out," she said. "I felt sure you would manage it somehow."

They had already arranged their plans. Jean, with his wife and father and his twelve men, was to start at once

for Parthenay, where Lescure was in command. Leigh had determined to join Cathelineau with as many of his band as chose to accompany him. Desailles would go with Jean. The boys, on the choice being given them, almost all decided to accompany Leigh. They were excited at the success that had attended them, and the tremendous roll of fire round the town showed how fiercely their countrymen were fighting, and they longed to join in the conflict. Saying goodbye to those who were going, Leigh and his party towed one of the boats a mile up the river, and then crossing, soon joined the party engaged. The Vendéans had already advanced some distance, but every house and garden were fiercely contested. Hour after hour passed, and the troops were beginning to be discouraged. It was broad daylight now, and the Vendéans pressed forward at all points more hotly than ever.

The troops were falling into disorder, and would soon have become a disorganized mass, when a musket-ball, fired from a window, struck Cathelineau in the breast, as, with his officers, who had been considerably increased in number owing to the many gentlemen who had joined him at Saumur, he was leading on his troops. A cry of dismay rose from those who saw him fall, and the news spread like wildfire among the peasants, who regarded him with an almost superstitious reverence, and had a firm belief that he was protected by Heaven from the balls of his enemies. His loss seemed to them an irretrievable misfortune. The fierceness of their attack diminished. Their ardour was gone, and the Blues, gaining courage as their assailants ceased to press them, took the offensive. They met with but little opposition. The Vendéan army, lately on the point of being victorious, was already breaking up, and ere long was scattered over the country, its retreat being undisturbed by the

enemy, who could scarcely believe their own good fortune at having succeeded when all had seemed lost.

Cathelineau was carried off, but died a fortnight later from the effects of the wound. His death was a terrible blow to the cause. The failure to take Nantes had in itself been a great misfortune, but the Vendéans had suffered no more heavily than the enemy; and had Cathelineau been but spared, matters might still have gone well with them. The effect of his death, however, was for the time to dishearten the peasantry utterly; and had at this time terms of peace, which would have permitted them to enjoy the exercise of their religion and to be free from conscription, been offered to them, they would gladly have been accepted.

Charette, after he saw that the attack upon Nantes from the north side of the river had failed, fell back with his force, as before, into Lower Poitou. The Vendéans, now under Bonchamp, who had also been wounded, retired along the north bank of the Loire, crossing the river at various points as they could find boats. Before joining in the fight, Leigh had told his band that, in the event of failure, he should recross the river in the boat that had brought them over. They had all kept near him during the struggle. Eight of them had fallen, several others were wounded, and he himself had received a musket-ball in the shoulder. As soon as he saw that the battle was lost, he withdrew from it, and made his way with the boys to the river bank, recrossed the stream, and struck across the country. After proceeding some six miles they entered a wood and lay down and slept for some hours, and then marched to Parthenay.

Here the band broke up and proceeded to their homes, while Leigh made his way to Lescure's head-quarters, learned where his friends were lodged, and joined them.

Patsey gave a cry of alarm as he entered. Fugitives had arrived before him, and it was already known that the attack on Nantes had failed, and that Cathelineau was mortally wounded.

"What is it, Leigh?"

"I am wounded in the shoulder. It is nothing very serious, I think, though I suppose I sha'n't be able to hold a sword for some time."

A surgeon was soon fetched, the ball extracted, and the wound bandaged, and they then sat down to talk over the events that had occurred. Since they had been separated Monsieur Martin had become a broken man. The fact that his son, who assuredly had it in his power to protect him, had given him over to the terrible tribunal, had been a harder blow to him than the prospect of death, and even the devotion that had been shown by Jean scarcely sufficed to comfort him. Patsey was pale and thin; her imprisonment had told upon her, and, still more, the thought of what Jean must be suffering on her account, and her uncertainty as to the fate of her child. But even the twenty-four hours that had elapsed since she had left her prison had done much for her. The news that the child was safe and well had taken a load off her mind, and she felt proud indeed that her release, and that of so many other of her fellow-prisoners, had been brought about by the devotion of her husband and her brother. Before the day was out, she was laughing and chatting as if nothing had happened.

On the following morning they started early, and reached home in the afternoon. They were received with delight by their people, although many of these had lost relations in the recent battles. A house in the village was placed at their disposal, Patsey riding straight on to see her child, with which, and its faithful nurse, she soon returned.

"And now, Jean," Patsey said, when, with the curé and Jules Desailles they sat down for a quiet talk that evening, "what is to be the next thing?"

"You should ask the Blues that," he replied. "So far as I can see it will be a repetition of what has taken place. They will invade us again, and probably we shall beat them back. Each time they will come with larger forces, and at last I suppose we shall have to endeavour to make our way to England. I am afraid there can be no question that that will be the end of it. Fight as we may, we cannot withstand the whole strength of France."

"Why can we not fly at once?" Monsieur Martin asked.

"The difficulty in reaching the coast, and of getting a passage, would be immense. Besides, so long as La Vendée resists, so long is it my duty to fight, and I am sure that Patsey would not wish me to do otherwise. I have been in it from the first, and must stay until the end, if I am not killed before that comes. If it were possible to send you and Patsey and Leigh away to England, I would gladly do so; but I am sure that she would not go, and I think I may say the same for Leigh."

"Certainly, Jean; as long as you stay I stay. My life is far less important than yours, for I have no one dependent upon me. I quite agree with you that the war can end in only one way, but till that comes, all those who have been the leaders of these poor peasants ought to hold by them."

"I agree entirely with you both," Patsey added; and there was no more to be said.

CHAPTER XII.

A SERIES OF VICTORIES.

MORE formidable foes than the peasants had yet met were approaching La Vendée. Mayence had surrendered to the allies, and the garrison there, which was a large one, composed of veteran troops, was allowed to march away on each man taking an oath that he would not again serve on the frontier. Outside France there was no idea of the desperate struggle that was going on in La Vendée. Had it been known in England that it needed but little aid for Brittany and La Vendée to successfully oppose the efforts of the Republic, men, money, arms, and ammunition would no doubt have been sent; but unfortunately the leaders of the insurrection, occupied as they were with the efforts they were making, had taken no steps to send a statement of the real facts of the case to the English government.

The ports were all in the hands of the Republicans, and although in Paris public attention was concentrated on the struggle, the British government was very badly informed as to what was passing there. Had the allies been aware of it, the terms granted to the garrison at Mayence would have been very different, and they would either have been held as prisoners or been compelled to take the oath that they would in future not serve the Republic in any way in arms. As it was, they were free to act in France, and were already on the march towards La Vendée. As before, arrangements were made for the district to be attacked simultaneously on all sides. La Rochejaquelein was so much weakened by the return of the peasants to

their homes that he was obliged to evacuate Saumur, and this town was taken possession of by the division from Tours, consisting of twelve thousand five hundred infantry, sixteen hundred cavalry, and four hundred artillerymen, under General Menou.

The division of Niort comprised fifteen thousand six hundred infantry, and thirteen hundred and eighty cavalry. It was commanded by Chalbos, having Westermann with him. At Sables were four thousand three hundred infantry, two hundred and fifty cavalry, and three hundred artillery. They were commanded by General Boulard.

There was but small breathing time for the Vendéans. Westermann had moved towards Parthenay with a strong force, and but a few hours after the Martins had left it Lescure was forced to fall back from the town. This was occupied by the Blues. They pillaged and burned a village near, although no opposition had been offered, and then sent off a force which burned Lescure's château at Clisson. The Martins were engaged in conversation when a messenger ran in.

"I have an order from Monsieur Lescure," he said. "The church bells are to be rung throughout the district."

All started to their feet. "Already?" Jean exclaimed. "Why, what has happened?"

"We have fallen back from Parthenay. The Blues, under Westermann, eight thousand strong, have already occupied the town. The general's orders are that all are to join him at Moulin in two days' time. Messengers have been despatched all over the country, and Monsieur de la Rochejaquelein has been sent for to join General Lescure at Moulin."

"That gives us twenty-four hours, then," Jean said with a sigh of content. "I will see that your message is carried

on to all the villages near, there are plenty of boys of twelve or fourteen about the place."

But the bells rang that night to deaf ears. Many of the peasants were still absent, others had returned but a few hours before, worn out and dispirited. But when on the following day the news came that Westermann's troops were burning villages, and slaying all who fell into their hands, and that Monsieur de Lescure's château had been burnt, fury and indignation again fired them, and that night the greater part of them set out for Moulin.

"I wonder what has become of our horses!" Jean said, as he prepared to start. "We shall never hear any more of those we left at Nantes. We must go on foot this time, and trust to getting hold of a couple of horses the first time we defeat the Blues."

He had that day been over with Patsey, her child, his father, the nurse, and François to the peasant's house, deep in the forest, to which he had before arranged that she should go in case of need. All the party were dressed as peasants. The man and woman from whom the house was hired removed to another hut a quarter of a mile away. François was to go down every day in the cart to the village to get news and letters and buy provisions. The curé had arranged to send off one of the village boys the moment that he heard that any party of the Blues were approaching, when the whole of the occupants of the village and the farms around it would be obliged to take to the woods, for it was evident that neither age nor sex was respected by Westermann's troops.

It was morning when Jean, Leigh, and Desailles arrived at Moulin. They were warmly received by Rochejaquelein and Bonchamp, to whom Jean introduced Desailles as a new comrade.

"I know nothing of fighting," the latter said, "but, gentlemen, I shall do my best."

"That is all that anyone can do," Rochejaquelein said heartily. "We may say that none of us, with the exception of Monsieur Bonchamp and a few others, had any experience in fighting when we began, but we have done pretty well on the whole."

"Do you think that we have much chance of holding this place?" Jean asked. "They told us as we came in that at present there are not much more than eight thousand men here, and Westermann, they say, has about as many."

"That is so," Bonchamp said, "and I do not expect that we shall beat them; but we must fight, or they will march through the country, wasting and destroying as they go. It is only by showing them that we are still formidable, and that they must keep together and be prudent and cautious, that we can maintain ourselves; a succession of blows, even of light ones, will break a rock."

At two o'clock the enemy's forces approached, and the engagement soon became hot. Every hedge was lined by the peasants, every position strongly defended, and only evacuated when the horns gave the signal. At the end of two hours Westermann, after losing a considerable number of men, approached ground where his cavalry could come into play, and the leaders of all the bands had been warned that when they fell back to this point the horn was to be sounded three times, and that resistance was to cease at once and the bands disperse, to meet at a given point two hours later. Seven of the ten cannon they had with them were safely carried off; and although compelled to retire from their position, the peasants were well satisfied with having withstood so long the attack of an equal number of

troops, supported by an artillery much superior to their own.

Leigh had taken no part in the actual fighting. His right arm was tightly strapped, and bandaged across his chest, and he therefore acted only as the general's aide-de-camp.

"I'll tell you what it is, Jules," Jean said to Desailles as they retired from the field. "If you are going to expose yourself in the way you have done to-day your fighting will be over before long. When it comes to leading the peasants to an attack, one must necessarily set the men an example; but when on the defence, you see the peasants all lie down behind the hedges and bushes and show themselves as little as possible. And there were you walking about as if you were in the principal street in Nantes! I do not say that we must not expose ourselves a good deal more than the peasants in order to encourage them; but there is a limit to all things, and one must remember that we are very short of officers, and that the peasants, brave as they are, would be useless without someone to direct them."

"I have no doubt but you are right, Jean," Desailles said with a laugh; "but in fact, I don't remember giving a thought to the matter. I was almost bewildered by the roar of the battle and the whistling of the bullets. I felt like a man who had taken too much wine, which in my student days happened to me more than once. My blood seemed to rush through my veins, and I would have given anything for the order to come for us to throw ourselves upon the enemy."

"You will get over that," Jean laughed, "but the same feeling is strong among the men. One can see how eager they are for the order to charge. They use their muskets, but it is to use their bayonets that they are panting. They

would make grand soldiers if they were but well drilled and disciplined. Unless I am mistaken, you will see them at their favourite work before many days are over. Westermann will get to Chatillon to-night. When he gets there he will find no provisions for his troops, and will begin to wonder whether he is wise in thus penetrating so far into a nest of hornets. Bonchamp will give him two or three days to forget the mauling that we have given him. By that time our force will have increased, and it will be well for Westermann if he manages to carry half his force back with him."

The news of the burning of la Rochejaquelein's château on the following day excited the liveliest indignation. The young count himself received the news with greater indifference than did those around him.

"When a man carries his life in his hand every day," he said, "he does not fret over the loss of a house. I do not suppose that I should ever have sat down quietly in possession of it, and the cousin who is my heir may have to wait a number of years before, if ever, he comes to take possession of the estate. Had circumstances been different, the loss of the old château where my family have lived for so many years would have been very grievous to me, but at present it affects me comparatively little. It is lucky that I sent off four men directly the fight was over, with a letter to my steward charging him to hand over to them the four horses that still remained in my stables. They arrived here an hour ago. I guessed that the Blues would be paying a visit there in my absence. One of them is for you, Monsieur Martin, and one for Leigh; the others I shall keep as spare chargers. I have had two shot under me already, and am likely to have more. In the meantime, if your friend Monsieur Desailles likes to ride one it is at his service."

"I thank you very much, marquis," Jules said, "but I would prefer trusting to my own legs. My profession has been a peaceful one, and I have never yet mounted a horse, and certainly should feel utterly out of my element in the saddle with an animal under me excited almost to madness by the sounds of battle. Of the two, I think that I should prefer being on a ship during a storm."

Rochejaquelein laughed. "It is all a matter of training," he said. "As for me, I feel twice the man on horseback that I do on foot. I have never tried fighting on foot yet, and I should certainly feel altogether out of my element the first time that I attempted it. However, I will not press the animal on you. I shall send it and the other to some cottage in the heart of the woods, whence I can have them fetched when needed."

"I am sure that we are greatly obliged to you," Jean said. "As I told you, when relating our adventure in Nantes, we had to leave our horses behind us there, though had we captured the town we should have recovered them. As it is, the Blues carried off the two I had left behind at the château, and I could only buy one other as we came through. That I detailed for the use of my wife. I certainly had not expected to obtain another until we captured some from the enemy. We are heartily obliged to you, not only for your generous gift, but for your thoughtful kindness in sending for them for us."

"Say not another word," Rochejaquelein said. "You are a sailor and I am a soldier, and between us there is no occasion for thanks or compliments. You would have done the same for me, and I am glad to be able to set you both on horseback again. And indeed, I am not sure that I was not a little selfish in the matter, for yesterday I missed the company of your brother-in-law greatly, and felt that

I would give a good deal to hear his cheery laugh and confident tone."

As usual, the army dispersed after its victory; but there were but a few days' quiet, for on the fourteenth it gathered to oppose the advance of a strong French column from Brissac, and on the morning of the fifteenth, early, just as the troops were getting into movement, the Vendéans burst down upon them. Their numbers were not large, for the notice had been short, and only the peasants of the surrounding district had had time to gather. Nevertheless they attacked with such energy, led by Rochejaquelein and d'Elbée, that they fought their way into the middle of the camp, captured the head-quarters with its correspondence and treasury, and scattered several battalions in utter confusion. On the return of the advanced guard under Santerre the situation changed; the fugitives were rallied, and after long and fierce fighting the Vendéans drew off.

"We must admit another failure," said Rochejaquelein, who had with his little troop of mounted men been in the thick of the fight, charging again and again into the midst of the enemy, and covering the retreat when it began by opposing a determined front to the enemy's cavalry—"a failure, but a glorious one. They were superior to us in numbers, and yet, if it hadn't been that their advanced guard returned while our men were scattered, intent upon the plunder of their head-quarters, we should have won the day. However, we shall have reinforcements up in a couple of days."

On the seventeenth, the French column resumed its march. Santerre's command led the way to Vihiers, which they reached without opposition; the rest of the division arrived in the afternoon. They had left at their previous halting-place the heavy baggage, with a portion of their artil-

lery ammunition. Scarcely had they arrived at Vihiers when a tremendous explosion told them that the guard left behind had been overpowered and their store of ammunition destroyed. A feeling of uneasiness and alarm spread through the army. Santerre's battalion were at once attacked by Rochejaquelein, who had but a small body of men with him, but who thought to take advantage of the alarm which the explosion would naturally cause among the enemy. Santerre's battalion, however, stood firm, and the Vendéans were drawn off. In the night, however, the main body of the peasants arrived, and at one o'clock next day made their attack. Menou himself, with the rest of his command, had now come up. Some of the battalions, as before, stood steadily; but the rest of the army, dispirited by the perseverance with which the Vendéans, in spite of failure and losses, were ever ready to renew their attack, speedily lost heart.

In two hours the right fell back in disorder, the panic spread, and in a short time the rout became general. In vain the officers endeavoured to check the fugitives; so great was their terror, that in three hours the panic-stricken mob traversed the distance between Vihiers and Saumur. Thus the second great invasion of La Vendée had met with no greater success than the first, the two strong columns that had advanced in full confidence of success had returned utterly discomfited. Westermann's division had been all but annihilated, the army from Saumur had lost great numbers of men, and had for the time ceased to be a military body. The Bocage, with its sombre woods, its thick hedges, and its brave population, seemed destined to become the grave of the Republican army, and the order to advance into it was in itself sufficient to shake the courage of those who boasted so loudly when at a distance. It was the grave,

too, of the reputation of the French generals. One after another they had tried, failed, and been disgraced.

The first general, Marce, was superseded by Berruyer, Berruyer by Biron, who was recalled and guillotined. Westermann was also tried, but, having powerful friends, was acquitted. Generals of divisions had come and gone in numbers. Some had been dismissed, some, at their own urgent request, allowed to return to the districts they commanded before the outbreak of the insurrection; but one and all had failed; one and all, too, had never ceased from the time they joined the army of invasion to send report after report to the Convention complaining of the untrustworthiness of the troops, the bad conduct and uselessness of the officers, and the want of a sufficient staff to maintain discipline and restore order. Indeed, the bulk of the revolutionary troops possessed little more discipline than the Vendéans themselves, and being uninspired, as were the latter, by a feeling either of religion or of patriotic enthusiasm, they were no match for men who were willing to give their lives for the cause.

The Vendéans were far better armed than when they commenced the struggle. Then the proportion of men who were possessed of muskets or firearms of any kind was extremely small; but now, thanks to the immense quantity which had been captured in the hands of prisoners, thrown away by fugitives, or found in the storehouses of the towns, there were sufficient to supply almost every man of the population with firearms, and in addition, they possessed a good many pieces of artillery. Unfortunately they had learned little during the four months' fighting. Their methods were unchanged; love of home overpowered all other considerations; and after a victory, as after a defeat, they hurried away, leaving with their generals only the

officers and a small body of men, who were either emigrés who had returned from England to take part in the struggle, or Royalists who had made their way from distant parts of France for the same purpose.

After the capture of Saumur, too, a good many Swiss and Germans belonging to a cavalry regiment formed of foreigners, had deserted and joined the Vendéans. Thus a small nucleus of an army held together, swelling only when the church bells summoned the peasants to take up arms for a few days. But while the Royalists of La Vendée remained quiescent after they had expelled the invaders, the Republicans, more alarmed than ever, were making the most tremendous efforts to stamp out the insurrection.

Beysser, who had commanded at Nantes, was appointed to succeed Menou. Orders were given that the forests and hedges of La Vendée were all to be levelled, the crops destroyed, the cattle seized, and the goods of the insurgents confiscated. An enormous number of carts were collected to carry faggots, tar, and other combustibles into La Vendée for setting fire to the woods. It was actually proposed to destroy the whole male population, to deport the women and children, and to repeople La Vendée from other parts of France, from which immigrants would be attracted by offers of free land and houses. Santerre suggested that poisonous gases should be inclosed in suitable vessels and fired into the district to poison the atmosphere. Carrier, the infamous scoundrel who had been appointed commissioner at Nantes, proposed an equally villainous scheme, namely, that great quantities of bread, mixed with arsenic, should be baked and scattered broadcast, so that the starving people might eat it and be destroyed wholesale. This would have been carried out had it not been vigorously

opposed by General Kleber, who had now taken the command of one of the armies of the invasion.

The rest of July and the first half of August passed comparatively quietly. General Toncq advanced with a column into La Vendée and fought two or three battles, in which he generally gained successes over the peasants; but with this exception, no forward movement was made, and the majority of the peasants remained undisturbed in their homes. Soon, however, from all sides the flood of invaders poured in.

No fewer than two hundred thousand men were now under the orders of the French generals, and advanced from different directions, in all cases carrying out the orders of the Convention, to devastate the country, burn down the woods, destroy the crops, and slay the inhabitants. Five armies moved forward simultaneously, that commanded by Kleber consisting of the veteran battalions of Mayence. But everywhere they were met. Charette had marched to the aid of the Vendéans of the north, and the country was divided into four districts commanded by Charette, Bonchamp, Lescure, and la Rochejaquelein. Each of these strove to defend his own district.

The war now assumed a terrible aspect. Maddened by the atrocities perpetrated upon them, the peasants no longer gave quarter to those who fell into their hands, and in their despair performed prodigies of valour.

They had not now, as at the commencement of the war, the superiority in numbers. Instead of fighting generally four to one against the Blues, the latter now exceeded them in the same proportion. But the peasants had changed their tactics. Instead of rushing impetuously upon the enemy's lines, and hurling themselves upon his artillery, they utilized the natural features of their country.

As the Republican columns marched along, believing that there was no enemy near, they would hear the sound of a horn, and from behind every hedge, every thicket, every tree, a stream of musketry would break out. Very soon the column would fall into confusion, the lanes would be blocked with dead horses and immovable waggons. In vain would the soldiers try to force their way through the hedges and to return the fire of their invisible foes. Then, as suddenly as the attack commenced the peasants would leap from their shelter, and with knife and bayonet carry havoc among their enemies.

These tactics prevailed over numbers, even when, as in the case of Kleber's division, the numbers possessed military discipline, training, and high reputation. For a month fighting was almost continuous, and at the end of that time, to the stupefaction of the Convention, their two hundred thousand troops were driven out of La Vendée at every point by a fourth of that number of undisciplined peasants. Never, perhaps, in the history of military warfare did enthusiasm and valour accomplish such a marvel.

The second half of September was spent by the peasants at their homes rejoicing and returning thanks for their success; but already a heavy blow was being struck at their cause. Charette, hot-headed, impetuous, and self-confident, had always preferred carrying out his own plans, without regard to those of the leaders in Upper Vendée, and he now quarrelled with them as to the course that had best be pursued, and left with the forces that he had brought with him, to renew the war in the south.

But although the peasants rejoiced, their leaders knew that the struggle could not long continue. The number of fighting men—that is to say, of the whole male population of La Vendée capable of bearing arms—had diminished terribly;

indeed, the number that originally responded to the summons of the church bells was decreased by fully a half. Food was scarce; owing to the continued absence of the peasants the harvest had in many places not been garnered, and wherever the Republican troops had passed, the destruction had been complete. A large portion of the population were homeless. The very movements of the Vendéans were hampered by the crowds of women and children who, with the few belongings that they had saved packed in their little carts, wandered almost aimlessly through the country. Many of the towns were in ruins, and deserted; in all, save a few secluded spots as yet unvisited by the Republicans, want and misery were universal.

There was no thought of surrender, but among chiefs and peasants alike the idea that as a last resource it would be necessary to abandon La Vendée altogether, and to take refuge in Brittany, where the vast majority of the population were favourable to them, gradually gained ground.

Generals Beysser, Canclaux, and Dubayet were recalled by the Convention for their failure to obtain success, and l'Echelle was appointed to the command, having Kleber and Westermann as leaders of his principal divisions. Jean Martin and Leigh had joined their friends in their retreat in the forest after the repulse of all the Republican columns. They had heard, while engaged in the thick of the fighting, of the death of Monsieur Martin. He had never recovered from the effects of his imprisonment at Nantes, and instead of gaining strength he had become weaker and weaker. The terrible uncertainty of the position, the news that constantly arrived of desperate battles, and the conviction that in the end the Vendéans would be crushed, told heavily upon him. He took to his bed and sank gradually.

"I am not sorry, my child," he said to Patsey the day before he died, "that I am going to leave you. I was wrong in not taking Jean's advice and sailing for England with my wife and daughter. However, it is useless to think of that now. I can see terrible times in store for all here. It is evident that no mercy is to be shown to the Vendéans. It has been decreed by the Convention that they are to be hunted down like wild beasts. Had I lived, I should have been a terrible burden to you; I should have hampered your movements, and destroyed any chance whatever that you might have of escaping from these fiends. It would have been impossible for me to have supported the fatigues and hardships of a flight, and I should have been the means of bringing destruction on you all; it is therefore better in every respect that I should go. I pray that Heaven will protect you and Jean and your brave brother, and enable you to reach England in safety. You will bear my last message to my wife and Louise. You will tell them that my last thought was of them, my last feeling one of gratitude to God that they are in safety, and that I have been permitted to die in peace and quiet."

"It is a sad home-coming this time, Jean," Patsey said, as her husband and Leigh rode up to the door.

"It is indeed, Patsey; and yet, even when the news came to me I could scarcely grieve that it was so. I had seen how he was fading when I went away, and was not surprised when I heard that he had gone. For me it is one care, one anxiety, the less in future. Patsey, we will be together; I cannot leave you here when Leigh and I are away. The child shall go with us, and when all is lost, we will escape or die together."

"I am glad to hear you say so, Jean. It has been terrible waiting here and knowing that you were in the

midst of dangers, and that even while I thought of you you might be lying dead. I shall be glad indeed to share your fate, whatever it is."

For three weeks the little party lived quietly in the cottage. There were many discussions as to the future. It was agreed that, in case of a final reverse, it would be better that they should travel alone.

"The more of us there are the more certain to attract observation," Jean said. "We must go without François and Marthe; their chance of safety will be greater if they either return to their villages or take up their abode with the family of some woodman—or rather, Marthe's safety would be greater. As to François, he has long been eager to join in the fighting, and it is only his fidelity that has constrained him to remain in what he considers is a disgraceful position, when every other man who can bear arms is fighting. We will therefore take him with us, and when the day of battle comes he will join the fighting men, and, if we are defeated, must care for his own safety. When we fight, I shall always leave you at a village a mile or two away. You will have the horse ready to mount, and we shall join you at once if we are defeated."

"We ought to be disguised, Jean," Leigh said.

"It would be well," Jean said, "but I hardly see what disguise would be of use to us; certainly not that of peasants, for in that dress we should be shot down without question by the first party of Blues we came across. Even if we succeed in reaching the river and crossing it, we may be sure that the authorities will be everywhere on the look-out for fugitive peasants. It would be better to be shot at once than to await in prison death by the guillotine."

"I should say that it does not matter a bit how we are

dressed till we reach the river. We know now pretty nearly every lane in the country," Leigh said, "and I should think that we ought to be able to reach the Loire."

"That is where the difficulty will begin. In the first place there will be the trouble of crossing, and then that of making our way through the country. Certainly we could not do so as Vendéan peasants."

"I should say, Jean, that the best disguises would be those of fairly well-to-do town's-people, something like those we wore into Nantes, but rather less formal—the sort of thing that ordinary tradesmen without any strong political feeling either way would wear. I don't say that we shall not be suspected however we are dressed, because no one in his senses would be travelling about just at present; but when once we get beyond Tours, if we go that way, we might pass without much notice."

"Which way do you think that we ought to go, Jean?"

Jean shrugged his shoulders. "I don't see that there is any choice. There would be very little chance of escaping from any of the ports of Brittany, and La Rochelle would be still more hopeless. As far south as Bordeaux we should be in a comparatively peaceful country, and I should hope to find friends there. The eastern frontier is of course the safest to cross, but the distance is very great, and in the towns near the border a very sharp look-out is kept to prevent emigrés escaping. There is a rumour that Lyons has declared against the Convention, but if we got there it is certain that it would be but La Vendée over again. Lyons cannot resist all France, and as soon as they have done with us here they will be able to send any number of troops to stamp out these risings. Undoubtedly, if we could get there, Toulon would be the best place. I have heard for certain that they have driven out the extreme party,

and have admitted the English fleet. Once there, we should be able to take berths in a ship bound somewhere abroad, it matters little where, and thence get a passage to England. Most probably we should be able to arrange to go direct from Toulon, for there are sure to be vessels coming and going with stores for the British fleet."

"But that would be a terrible journey, Jean," his wife said.

"Yes, I think that would be quite out of the question. It seems to me that our best chance would be either to cross the Loire and then make for Le Mans, and so up through Alençon to Honfleur—that way we should be east of the disturbed district; or, if we found that a vast number of fugitives had made their way into Brittany, as is almost certain to be the case, we might bear more to the east, and go up through Vendôme and Chartres and Evreux, and then branch off and strike the Seine near Honfleur. In that case we should be outside the district where they would be searching for fugitives from here. Once on the sea-shore, or on the Seine, it would be hard if we could not steal a fishing-boat and cross the Channel. However, one must of course be guided by circumstances. Still, I do think that it would be as well to buy the disguises Leigh suggests without loss of time. I will ride over to Chatillon to-morrow and get them."

CHAPTER XIII.

ACROSS THE LOIRE.

MARTHE was filled with grief when she heard that it had been decided that it was better that she should return to her native village, but her mistress pointed out to

her that if all went well she could rejoin them. If things went badly, and they escaped, they would send for her wherever they might be; but, in case disaster compelled them to fly, three persons were as many as could hope to travel together without exciting suspicion. The nurse, however, begged that at any rate she might go with them to the head-quarters of the army.

"Everyone is going," she said; "and they say that if we are beaten in the next battle they will cross the Loire and take refuge in Brittany, for the Blues will not leave a soul alive in La Vendée. I should have nowhere to go to here, and will keep with the others whatever happens. If you are with them, madame, I can rejoin you; if not, I hope to be with you afterwards."

It was indeed an exodus rather than the gathering of an army that was taking place. The atrocities committed by the invaders, the destruction of every village, the clouds of smoke which ascended from the burning woods, created so terrible a scare among the peasants that the greater portion of the villages and farms were entirely deserted, and every road leading to Chollet, which was the rendezvous where the fighting men were ordered to gather, was crowded with fugitives. François walked by the horse's head. Patsey, the nurse, and the child, with a trunk containing articles of absolute necessity, occupied the cart. Jean and Leigh rode ahead. The company of Cathelineau's scouts no longer existed, more than half of them had fallen in the late battles, their services were no longer required as scouts, and the survivors had joined their fathers and brothers and formed part of the command of Bonchamp.

On the fourteenth of October the enemy's columns were closing in upon Chollet. Those round Mortagne were marching forward, when the advanced guard under General

Beaupuy were suddenly attacked by the Vendéans while entangled in the lanes. The head of the column fought well, but those in the rear, finding themselves also attacked, and fearing that the retreat would be cut off, retired hastily to Mortagne. The column would have been destroyed had not Beaupuy promptly sent up large reinforcements. After a long and obstinate fight the Vendéans were driven from the woods, and, the Republican artillery opening upon them, they were compelled to retire to Chollet. Here no halt was made. Kleber had also been fiercely attacked, but had also, though with much difficulty, repulsed his assailants. The next morning the Republicans entered Chollet, which they found deserted by the enemy. On the seventeenth, their whole force being now concentrated there, they were about to move forward towards Beaupréau when the advanced guard was hotly attacked, and in a short time the combat became general.

For a time the Vendéans bore down all opposition, but as the whole of the Republican force came into action their advance was arrested. The battle began soon after one o'clock, it raged without intermission till nightfall. No decisive advantage had been gained on either side, and the result was still doubtful when a panic took place among the multitude of non-combatants in the rear of the Vendéans. The cry was raised, "To the Loire!" The panic spread. In vain the leaders and their officers galloped backwards and forwards endeavouring to restore confidence, and shouted to the men that victory was still in their grasp. In the darkness and din they could only be heard by those immediately round them, and even these they failed to reanimate, and the men who had for seven hours fought, as Kleber himself reported, like tigers, lost heart.

Lescure had fallen in the fighting on the fourteenth,

Bonchamp and d'Elbée were both desperately wounded at the battle at Chollet, and were carried off by their men. La Rochejaquelein, with whom Jean Martin and Leigh were riding, had made almost superhuman efforts to check the panic, and they fell back almost broken-hearted with a band of peasants, who held together to the last. On the previous day Leigh had escorted Patsey to Beaupréau, and it was to this town that the fugitives made their way, arriving there at midnight.

"Thank God that you are both alive!" Patsey said, bursting into tears as her husband entered the room in which she was established.

"We can hardly believe it ourselves," Jean said. "It has been a terrible day indeed. Our men fought nobly, and I firmly believe that we should have won the day had not an unaccountable panic set in. What caused it I know not. We were doing well everywhere, and had begun to drive them back, and could we have fought on for another half-hour it was likely that, as usual, a panic would have seized them. However, Patsey, they would have gathered again stronger than ever, and it must have come to the same thing in the long run. Now put on your disguise at once. We will lie down for two hours, and see you off before daybreak. I do not know whether la Rochejaquelein, who must now be considered in command since d'Elbée and Bonchamp are both desperately wounded, will gather a force to act as a rear-guard. If so, we must stay with him, but I do not think that even his influence would suffice to hold any considerable body of peasants together. All have convinced themselves that there is safety in Brittany. At any rate, the enemy will need a day's rest before they pursue. They must have suffered quite as heavily as we have."

The night, however, was not to pass quietly. At two

o'clock two officers who had remained as piquets rode into the town with news that Westermann's division, which had marched through Moulet and had taken no part in the action, was approaching. The horn sounded the alarm, and the fugitives started up and renewed their flight. Marthe could not be left behind now, nor did the others desire it, and until they had crossed the Loire there could be no separation, for the whole country would swarm in forty-eight hours with parties of the enemy hunting down and slaying those who had taken refuge in the woods. Jean and Leigh had lain down in the cart to prevent any of the fugitives seizing it. The two women and the child were hurried down, and took their places in it. François, who had escaped, had fortunately found them, and took the reins, and the journey was continued. There was no pursuit; it was only a portion of Westermann's force that had arrived, and these were so exhausted and worn out by the length of their march and by the fact that they had been unable to obtain food by the way, that they threw themselves down when they reached the town, incapable of marching a mile farther. At Beaupréau there had been no fewer than five thousand Republican prisoners kept under guard. On the arrival of the routed Vendéans, the peasants, as a last act of retaliation, would have slain them, but Bonchamp, who was at the point of death, ordered them to be set free.

"It is the last order that I shall ever give," he said to the peasants assembled round his litter. "Surely you will not disobey me, my children."

The order was obeyed, and the prisoners were at once sent off; and as the Republican column marched out from Chollet the next day they encountered on the road their liberated comrades. The sentiments with which the commissioners

of the Convention were animated is evidenced by the fact that one of them declared in a letter to the commander-in-chief of the army that the release of these prisoners by the Vendéans was a regrettable affair, and recommended that no mention whatever should be made of it in the despatches to Paris, lest this act of mercy by the insurgents should arouse public opinion to insist upon a cessation of the measures that had been taken for the annihilation of the Vendéans.

The fugitives, a vast crowd of over one hundred thousand men, women, and children, reached St. Florent without coming in contact with the enemy.

The Republican generals, indeed, had no idea that the peasants had any intention of quitting their beloved country, and imagined that they would disperse to their homes again, and that there remained only the task of hunting them down. A company had been left on a hill which commanded St. Florent, but they had no idea of being attacked, and had not even taken the precaution of removing the boats across the river. As soon as they arrived, the Vendéans attacked the post with fury and captured it. Twenty boats were found, and the crossing was effected with no little difficulty. There were still two or three thousand, principally women and children, to be taken over when a party of Republican dragoons arrived. Numbers of the women and children were massacred, but the great bulk, flying precipitately, regained the country beyond the heights of St. Florent, and took refuge in the woods.

The multitude were for the present safe. There was no strong force of the enemy between Nantes and Saumur, and they halted for the night, dispirited, worn out, and filled with grief. They had left their homes and all they cared for behind. They were in a strange country without aim or purpose, their only hope being that the Bretons would

rise and join them—a poor hope, since the terrible vengeance that had been taken on La Vendée could not but strike terror throughout Brittany also.

Jean Martin and Leigh had seen Patsey and the nurse placed in one of the first boats that crossed.

"Do not go far from the spot where you land," they said. "We shall stay here until all is over. If the Blues come up before all have crossed, we shall swim across with our horses; be under no uneasiness about us."

Taking the horse out of the shafts of the cart and putting a saddle that they had brought with them on its back, they left the three animals in charge of François, and then aided other officers to keep order among the crowd, and to prevent them from pressing into the boats, as they returned from the other bank, in such numbers as to sink them. All day the work went on quietly and regularly, until so comparatively few remained that hope became strong that all would cross before any of the enemy arrived. That hope was destroyed when suddenly the enemy's cavalry appeared at the edge of the slope and came galloping down. The officers in vain tried to get the few men that remained to make a stand. They were too dispirited to attempt to do so, and the little throng broke up and fled, some one way, some another.

Fortunately an empty boat had just returned, and into this the other officers leapt, while Jean, with his two companions, led the horses into the water. They had already linked the reins. François was unable to swim, but at Jean's order he took hold of the tail of the horse in the middle, while Jean and Leigh swam by the heads of the two outside horses, and without difficulty the other side was gained. Patsey, who had had her eye fixed upon them all day, was standing at the spot where they landed. They

were near the town of Ancenis, and a portion of the Vendéans entered the place, which was wholly undefended. The inhabitants were in abject terror, thinking that the town would be sacked, and were surprised to find that the peasants did no one any harm, and were ready to pay for anything that they required. So long, indeed, as any money whatever remained the Vendéans paid scrupulously. When it was all expended the chiefs did the only thing in their power, issuing notes promising to pay; and although these had no value save in the good faith of the Vendéans, they were received by the Bretons as readily as the assignats of the Republic, which, indeed, like the notes of the Vendéans, were never destined to be paid.

Had the army plunged into Brittany after the capture of Saumur there can be no doubt that the peasantry would everywhere have risen; but, coming as fugitives and exiles, they were a warning rather than a source of enthusiasm, and although small numbers of peasants joined them, the accession of force was very trifling. Jean Martin, his wife, and Leigh held an anxious consultation that evening. They had found a poor lodging, after attending a meeting of the leaders, at which la Rochejaquelein had been unanimously elected commander-in-chief, Bonchamp having died, while d'Elbée, wounded to death, had been left at the cottage of a Breton peasant, who promised to conceal him.

The young soldier had accepted the fearful responsibility with the greatest reluctance. He and those around him saw plainly enough that the only hope of escape from annihilation was the landing of a British force to their assistance. Unhappily, however, England had not as yet awoke to the tremendous nature of the struggle that was going on. Her army was a small one, and her fleet, as yet, had not attained the dimensions that were before many years

to render her the unquestioned mistress of the seas. The feeling that the Revolution was the fruit of centuries of oppression, and that, terrible as were the excesses committed in the name of liberty, the cause of the Revolution was still the cause of the peoples of Europe, had created a party sufficiently powerful to hamper the ministry. Moreover, the government was badly informed in every respect by its agents in France, and had no idea of the extent of the rising in La Vendée, or how nobly the people there had been defending themselves against the whole force of France.

It is not too much to say that had England, at this time, landed twenty thousand troops in Brittany, or La Vendée, the whole course of events in Europe would have been changed, the French Revolution would have been crushed before it became formidable to Europe, and countless millions of money and millions of lives would have been saved. Throughout France there was a considerable portion of the population who would have rejoiced in the overthrow of the Republic, for even in the large towns its crimes had provoked reaction. Toulon had opened its gates to the English. Lyons was in arms against the Republic. Normandy's discontent was general, and its peasantry would have joined those of Brittany and La Vendée had there been but a fair prospect of success. England, however, did nothing, but stood passive until the peasantry of La Vendée were all but exterminated; and, indeed, added to their misfortunes by promising aid that never was sent, and thus encouraging them to maintain a resistance that added to the exasperation of their enemies, and to their own misfortunes and sufferings.

"What are we going to do?" Patsey asked, as her husband and Leigh returned from the meeting.

"That is more than anyone can say," Jean replied. "We

shall for the present move north; we are like a flight of locusts, we must move since we must eat, and no district could furnish subsistence for eighty thousand people for more than a day or two. There can be no doubt that the impulse to cross the Loire was a mad one. On the other side we at least knew the country, and it would have been far better to have died fighting there than to throw ourselves across the river. It was well-nigh a miracle that we got across, and it will need nothing short of a miracle to get us back again. Of one thing we may be sure, the whole host of our enemies will by this time be in movement. We should never have got across had they dreamed that such was our intention. Now that we have done it, you may be sure that they will strain every effort to prevent us from returning. Probably by this time half their forces are marching to cross at Nantes, the other half are pressing on to Saumur. In three or four days they will be united again, and will be between us and the river. Were we a smaller body, were we only men, I should say that we ought to march another twenty miles north, then sweep round either east or west, and while the enemy followed the north bank of the river to effect a junction, we should march all night without a halt, pass them, and hurl ourselves either upon Saumur or Nantes, and so return to La Vendée. But with such a host as this there would be little hope of success. I fancy that we shall march to Laval, and there halt for a day or two. By that time the whole force of the enemy will have come up, and there will be another battle."

"And we, Jean?"

"I see nothing but for us to march with them. We know nothing of the movements of the enemy, and were we to try to make our way across the country we might

run into their arms. Besides, Leigh and I have both agreed that, at present at least, we cannot leave Rochejaquelein."

"We could not indeed, Patsey," Leigh broke in. "If you had seen him this evening when, with tears in his eyes, he accepted our choice, you would feel as we do. It was all very well for us before to talk of making off, but now that the worst has happened, if it were only for his sake I should stay by him, though I think that Jean, with the responsibility of you and your child, would be justified in going."

"No," Patsey said firmly, "whatever comes we will stay together. As Jean said, you cannot desert the cause now. As long as there are battles to fight we must stay with them, and it is not until further fighting has become impossible that we, like others, must endeavour to shift for ourselves."

"Well spoken, Patsey!" her husband said. "That must be our course. So long as the Vendéans hang together, with Rochejaquelein at their head, we must remain true to the cause that we have taken up. When once again the army becomes a mass of fugitives we can, without loss of honour, and a clear consciousness that we have done our duty to the end, think of our safety. I grant that if one could find a safe asylum for you and our Louis in the cottage of some Breton peasant—"

"No, no!" she interrupted, "that I would never consent to. We will remain together, Jean, come what may. If all is lost I will ask you to put a pistol to my head. I would a thousand times rather die so than fall into the hands of the Blues, and either be slaughtered mercilessly or thrown into one of their prisons to linger until the guillotine released me."

"I agree with you in that, Patsey. Well, we will regard

the matter as settled. As long as the army hangs together, so long will we remain with it; after that we will carry out the plans we talked over, and make for the coast by the way which seems most open to us."

The next day was spent by Rochejaquelein and his officers in going about among the peasants. They did not disguise from these the extreme peril of the position, but they pointed out that it was only by holding together, and by defeating the Blues whenever they attacked them, that they could hope for safety.

"It was difficult to cross the Loire before," they said; "it will be tenfold more difficult now. Every boat will have been taken over to the other side, and you may be sure that strong bodies of the enemy will have been posted all along the banks to prevent our returning. You have fought well before, you must fight even better in future, for there is no retreat, no home to retire to. Your lives, and those of the women and children with you, depend upon your being victorious. You have beaten the Blues almost every time that you have met them; you would have beaten them last time had not a sort of madness seized you. It was not we who led you across the Loire; you have chosen to come, and we have followed you. At any rate, it is better to die fighting for God and country than to be slaughtered unresistingly by these murderers.

"You saw how they fell upon the helpless ones who were unable to cross with us, how they murdered women and children, although there was no resistance, nothing to excite their anger. If you die, you die as martyrs to your faith and loyalty, and no man could wish for a better death. All is not lost yet. Defeat the Blues, and Brittany may yet rise; besides, we are promised aid from England. At any rate, La Vendée has been true to herself through over six months

of terrible struggle. La Vendée may perish. Let the world see that she has been true to herself to the end."

The fugitive priests with the army seconded the efforts of the officers, and by nightfall a feeling of resolution and hope succeeded the depression caused by the terrible events of the preceding thirty-six hours; and it was with an air of calmness and courage that the march was recommenced on the following morning.

The instant that it became known that the Vendéans had crossed the Loire, a panic seized the Republicans at Nantes, and messengers were sent to implore the commander-in-chief to march with all haste to aid them should, as they believed, the Vendéans be marching to assail the town. Kleber with his division started at once, followed more slowly by the main body of the army.

Another column advanced to St. Florent, and, obtaining boats, crossed the river and entered Angers, to the immense relief of the Republicans there, who had been in a state of abject terror at the presence, so near them, of the Vendéans. Kleber marched with great rapidity, passed through Nantes without stopping, and established himself at the camp of St. Georges. The news of what was termed the glorious victory at Chollet, although in point of fact the Republicans fell back after the battle to that town, caused the greatest enthusiasm in Paris, and the Convention and the Republican authorities issued proclamations, which were unanimous in exhorting the army to pursue and exterminate the Vendéans. By the twenty-third, the whole of the French army was in readiness to march in pursuit. Kleber was still in the camp of St. Georges, Chalbos was at Nantes with a corps d'armée, Beaupuy was at Angers.

The Vendéans had marched through Cande and Chateau-

Gontier, and had without difficulty driven out the Republican force stationed at Laval. L'Echelle, the commander-in-chief, was profoundly ignorant, supine, and cowardly, and owed his position solely to the fact that he belonged to the lower class, and was not, like Biron and the other commanders-in-chief, of good family. Remaining always at a distance from the scene of operations, he confused the generals of divisions by contradictory orders, which vied with each other in their folly. On the twenty-fourth, Kleber marched to Ancenis, and on the following day he, Beaupuy, and Westermann arrived at Chateau-Gontier. Canuel's division from St. Florent had not yet come up. The troops were already tired, but Westermann, who, as Kleber in his report said, was always anxious to gain glory and bring himself into prominence, insisted on pushing forward at once, and prevailed over the more prudent counsel of the others, as he was the senior officer.

When they approached Laval, Westermann sent a troop of cavalry forward to reconnoitre. He was not long before he came upon some Vendéan outposts. These he charged and drove in towards the town. No sooner did they arrive there than the bells of the churches pealed out. It was now midnight, but before the army could form into order the Vendéans poured out upon them, guided by the shouts of the Republican officers, who were endeavouring to get their troops into order. The combat was desperate and sanguinary; the peasants, fighting with the fury of despair, threw themselves recklessly upon the Republican troops, whose cannon were not yet in a position to come into action, and whose infantry, in the darkness, fired at random. Fighting in the dark, discipline availed but little. Kleber's veterans, however, preserved their coolness, and for a time the issue was doubtful.

Had Westermann's cavalry done their duty victory might still have inclined towards them, but instead of charging when ordered, they turned tail, and, riding through a portion of their infantry, spread disorder among them. Westermann, seeing that it was hopeless to endeavour to retrieve the confusion, ordered a retreat, and the army fell back to Chateau-Gontier, where they arrived in the course of the day. Here they found the commander-in-chief, who, disregarding the exhausting march the troops had already accomplished, and their loss of spirit after their defeat, ordered them to return to Villiers, half-way to Laval. It was nightfall when they reached this place, but Westermann pushed the advanced guard some two leagues farther. Kleber, seeing the extreme danger of the position, refused to advance beyond Villiers, and sent orders to Danican, who commanded the advanced guard, to fall back to a strong position in advance of Villiers.

Danican had taken command only on the previous day, and the soldiers, believing that this order was but an act of arbitrary authority on his part, refused to move, and the bridge over the river Ouette, in front of Villiers, remained unguarded save by a squadron of cavalry. Kleber had just returned from visiting the post, when he received a despatch from l'Echelle, bidding him give the order they had decided upon between them to the other two divisions. As no such arrangement had been made, Kleber was in ignorance of what was meant, but he sent a messenger to Beaupuy, who was at Chateau-Gontier, and to Bloss, who commanded a column of grenadiers, to join him as soon as possible. Bloss arrived early the next morning at the camp. Beaupuy moved forward, but as his whole force had not yet come up, he did not arrive at the camp at the same time.

At eleven that night l'Echelle and the four generals now

in the camp held a council. Westermann was extremely discontented at finding that the heights were not occupied; but, as Kleber remarked, the troops were utterly dissatisfied at the way in which they had been handled, and at the unnecessary and enormous fatigues that had been imposed upon them, and it was impossible to demand further exertions. Savary, one of the generals at the council, was well acquainted with Laval, and gave the advice that a portion of the army should follow the river for some distance, and then take possession of the hills commanding the town. When Beaupuy arrived, his division moved forward at once as an advanced guard, but as the army was moving, a messenger arrived from l'Echelle, issuing orders in absolute contradiction of the plan that he had agreed to when the council of war broke up.

The orders were obeyed, but the generals again met, and sent off a messenger to l'Echelle to remonstrate against the attack in one mass and a march by a single road, on a position that could be attacked by several routes, and to recommend that at least a diversion should be made by a false attack. Westermann himself carried this remonstrance, but the commander-in-chief paid no attention to him. Advancing, it was found that the Vendéans had taken up a position on the neglected heights. The cannon opened on both sides, and Beaupuy was soon hotly engaged. Kleber advanced his division to sustain him. L'Echelle coming up arrested the further advance of the division of Chalbos. Savary rode back in haste to implore l'Echelle to order Chalbos to move to the right and attack the left flank of the enemy; but by this time the unfortunate wretch had completely lost his head, and instead of giving Chalbos orders to advance, ordered him to retreat, and himself fled in all haste.

Two columns that were posted a few miles in the rear received no orders whatever, and remained all day waiting for them. Kleber, seeing the division of Chalbos retiring in great disorder, felt that success was now impossible, and placed two battalions not yet engaged at the bridge to cover the retreat. But the panic was spreading, his orders were disobeyed, and the veterans of Mayence, as well as the division of Beaupuy, broke their ranks and fled.

In vain the officers endeavoured to stay the flight, the panic was complete. Their guns were left behind, and the Vendéans, pressing hotly on their rear, overtook and killed great numbers. Bloss, with his grenadiers, advancing from Chateau-Gontier, tried in vain to arrest the flight of the fugitives, and he himself and his command were swept away by the mob and carried beyond the town. A few hundreds of the soldiers alone were rallied, and prepared to defend the bridge of Chateau-Gontier; but la Rochejaquelein had sent a portion of his force to make a circuit and seize the town, so that the defenders of the bridge were exposed to a heavy fire from houses in their rear.

Kleber, with a handful of men, held the bridge, and was joined by Bloss, who had been already wounded while passing through the town. He advanced to cross; Kleber and Savary in vain tried to stop him. "No," he said, "I will not survive the shame of such a day," and rushing forward with a small party fell under the fire of the advancing Vendéans. The pursuit was hotly maintained. Keeping on heights which commanded the road, the Vendéans maintained an incessant fire of cannon and musketry. It was already night, and this alone saved the Republican army from total destruction. Beaupuy received a terrible wound in the battle, and a great number of officers were killed in endeavouring to stop the panic. At last the

pursuit ceased, and for a few hours the weary fugitives slept. Then they continued their retreat, and took up a strong position near the town of Angers, which was crowded with fugitives.

L'Echelle came out to review the troops, who by the orders of their generals had already formed in order of battle, but was received with such yells of hatred and contempt that he was forced to retire. The representatives of the Convention offered Kleber the command of the army, but he refused, saying that Chalbos was of superior rank, and that it was he who should take the command. They agreed to this, and sent to l'Echelle, telling him to demand leave of absence on account of his health. A council of war was then held. The representatives of the Convention were favourable to a fresh advance of the army, but Kleber protested that at present there was no army. He said that the soldiers were utterly discouraged, that some battalions had but twenty or thirty men with the colours, that all were wet to the skin, utterly exhausted, many without shoes, and all dispirited. Therefore he insisted that it was absolutely necessary that the army should be completely reorganized before undertaking a fresh forward movement.

Their loss had indeed been extremely heavy, Kleber's division alone having lost over a thousand men. Beaupuy had suffered even more heavily, while the divisions of Chalbos and the grenadiers of Bloss had also lost large numbers. The total loss, including deserters, amounted to over four thousand. The whole of the cannon of the two first divisions had fallen into the hands of the enemy, the artillerymen having cut the traces. A large number of ammunition waggons and a quantity of carts laden with provisions had also been captured.

CHAPTER XIV.

LE MANS.

THE victory won by the Vendéans was one of the most important of the war. Never had they fought with greater bravery, never did they carry out more accurately and promptly the orders of their generals. Napoleon afterwards pronounced that the tactics pursued by la Rochejaquelein showed that he possessed the highest military genius. It was night alone that saved the routed army of the Republic from absolute destruction. It is probable that at the time the Vendéan general had no idea of the completeness of the victory that he had won, or of the disorganization of the enemy. Had he known it, he would doubtless have attacked them again on the following day, when he would have experienced no resistance, could have captured Angers without firing a shot, and could, had he chosen, have recrossed the Loire. The Vendéans, however, well content with their success, returned to Laval, and there enjoyed a week's quiet and repose.

The crushing defeat that the Republicans had experienced caused an immense sensation at Paris, and in the towns through which the Vendéans would pass on their way to the capital, which was at the time actually open to them. Patsey was delighted when Jean and Leigh returned unwounded.

"You both seem to bear a charmed life," she said. "Leigh has indeed once been hit, but it was not serious; you have escaped altogether. What is going to be done next?"

"We are going to rest here for ten days or so. There is plenty of food to be had, and the rest will do wonders

for the men. Of course we rode back with la Rochejaquelein. His opinion was, as it always has been, that a march on Paris will alone bring this terrible business to a close, but he knows that even his authority will not suffice to carry out such a plan. As long as they are in Brittany they are among friends and are still near their homes, but to turn their backs on these and march on Paris would appear so terrible an undertaking that, reckless as they are of their lives in battle, nothing would induce them to attempt it."

After ten days' delay the Vendéans commenced their march towards the coast. The battle at Villiers was fought on the twenty-seventh. By the sixth of November they had captured the towns of Ernée and de Fougères, defeating at the latter place three battalions. Dol was next captured, Mayenne opened its gates without resistance. The greatest efforts were made by the Republicans to place the seaports in a state of defence. Cherbourg would have been the best point for the fugitives to attack, as here they would have found an abundance of powder, of which they were in great need, and cannon, and here they might have defended themselves until the promised help arrived from England. Granville, however, had been fixed upon by the British government; and the march thither was shorter, therefore it was against Granville that the attack was directed. A considerable portion of the force with the artillery were left at Avranches. Although assured that the march to the sea was made in order to obtain succour there from England, there was much fear among the peasants that the intention of the chiefs was to embark, and to leave the army to its fate. Consequently they advanced against Granville with less energy and enthusiasm than usual.

However, half a league out of the town they came upon a portion of the garrison, and repulsed them so successfully that they entered one of the suburbs with them. The garrison had for the most part shut themselves up in a fort which commanded the town, having erected a strong palisade across the streets leading to it. Four hundred men occupied this post. The Vendéans had no axes to cut down the palisades nor powder to blow them in. They were, therefore, obliged to content themselves with a musketry fire against it. As the garrison were well supplied with ammunition, and kept up a constant fire, they suffered heavily. When night came, the Vendéans scattered among the houses to find food, fire, and shelter, and all night the batteries on the heights played upon them. In the morning the Republicans redoubled their fire. It became evident that the town itself could not be taken, and the mass of the Vendéans, without orders from their chiefs, began to retire, and in a short time the whole were in rapid retreat to Avranches.

There the cry was raised, "Back to La Vendée!" La Rochejaquelein, after halting his force on the main road a few hours, called upon the men to follow him to Caen, but only one thousand did so; on arriving at a village he learned that the bulk of the army, instead of being behind him, had marched towards Pontorson. He was therefore forced to retrace his steps and to follow them, and on overtaking them, found that they had already carried the bridge, driven away the enemy, and occupied the town. The enemy were closing round them, but the capture of Pontorson deranged the plans of the Republicans. The place had been held by four thousand men and ten pieces of cannon, and as it could be approached only by a narrow defile, it was believed that it would be impossible for the Vendéans to force their way into it.

However, after three hours' fighting their desperate valour won the day, and the Republicans were routed with the loss of most of their cannon.

The affair, indeed, appeared to the peasants to be a miracle granted in their favour, and with renewed heart they marched the next night to Dol. Kleber was with a large force in this neighbourhood, but the impetuosity of Westermann again upset his plans. As soon as the latter heard that Pontorson had been carried by the Vendéans, and that they had marched to Dol, he pursued them with three thousand infantry, two hundred cavalry, and four cannon. He arrived within a short distance of Dol at six in the evening, and, without waiting for the infantry to come up, charged into the town, and for a moment spread confusion among the Vendéans. They, however, soon recovered from their surprise and drove the enemy out with loss. Westerman's infantry took no part in the action. Kleber was occupied in closing every route by which the Vendéans could leave Dol, but Westermann, who had held no communication with him, and knew nothing of his plans, marched with Marigny's division, with six thousand men, to attack the town.

This he did at two o'clock in the morning. The Vendéans at once rushed to meet them, and first tried to turn the right, but they failed here, and also in an attack on the left; they fought, however, so fiercely that Westermann withdrew his troops to the position that they had occupied before attacking. The Vendéans, however, gave them no time to form in order of battle, but, heralding their charge with a heavy musketry fire, rushed down upon them. The enemy at once broke, and leaving their cannon behind them, continued their flight till they reached Pontorson. In the meantime Marceau was advancing with his division by another road, and the Vendéans, hearing this, ceased their pursuit of

Westermann's routed division and moved against him, and at four o'clock in the morning attacked him when within a league of Dol. A combat ensued that lasted for three hours. The Vendéans then drew off on learning that the division of Muller was on the point of joining that of Marceau. Together these divisions could have forced their way into Dol, but Muller was hopelessly drunk, and, being the senior officer, the greatest confusion arose, and had the Vendéans known what was taking place they could have gained a decisive victory.

Marceau, seeing that he could do nothing to restore order, rode at full speed to Kleber's head-quarters, and at day-break the two generals arrived at the spot and found the two divisions mingled in supreme disorder, the brigades and battalions being mixed up together. Finding that nothing could be done with them there, Kleber drew them off, their confusion being almost converted into a rout by the fire of about a hundred Vendéans. A council of war was held, and eighteen hundred men, with two guns, were sent to Pontorson to join Westermann's defeated division. That general was ordered to advance again at once upon Dol. Kleber opposed this, and the rest of the council coming at last to his opinion, orders were sent to Westermann to remain on the defensive and await fresh orders. Westermann, however, as usual, disregarded these, and, marching through the night, approached the town and arrived early in the morning at a village close to it.

The sounding of the church bells told that the Vendéans had discovered the enemy, and in a few minutes these were seen rushing as usual to the attack. In spite of the reinforcements that had reached them, Westermann's troops fought worse than they had done two nights before. The reinforcements were the first to give way. The advanced guard speedily turned and fled. Westermann and Marigny,

with a small party of cavalry, fought desperately to cover the retreat. Marigny, however, fell, and the whole force became a mass of fugitives. Kleber on his way the next day to reconnoitre the town met the Vendéans advancing. Scattering rapidly, these occupied the ridges and attacked the brigade that formed his advanced guard so fiercely that it broke and fled. Kleber sent to fetch some battalions of the troops of Mayence, and, as soon as they arrived with some battalions of grenadiers, formed them in order of battle. Other troops came up, and they prepared for a serious engagement.

At this moment the Vendéan column that had defeated Westermann showed itself on the right flank of the Republicans, and threatened their rear. Kleber ordered some of the battalions to take post farther back to cover the line of retreat. Other battalions, seeing the movement, and believing this to be a signal for retreat, followed. The grenadiers alone stood firm and defended themselves for three hours. In the meantime the greater portion of the Republican army was already in full flight, and a retreat was ordered. The troops remaining on the field retired at first in good order, but as the victorious Vendéans pressed on, this speedily became a rout. Marceau, gathering together such soldiers as still retained their presence of mind, endeavoured to defend the bridge of Antrain, but the Vendéans, pressing forward, swept them away, and the fugitives fled in a confused mob as far as Rennes.

The Vendéans, on entering Antrain, at once scattered in search of food, disregarding the orders and entreaties of la Rochejaquelein and Stofflet, who urged them to press hotly upon the routed enemy, and so to complete the victory they had won. At Antrain they learned that the wounded, who had been left in hospital at Fougères, had been murdered in their beds by the Blues, and they accordingly shot all the

prisoners they had taken in the battle. The victory seemed to open the way to the Loire, and the Vendéans steadily marched south through Mayenne and Laval and arrived in front of Angers. But the city was no longer in the defenceless state in which it was when they first crossed the Loire. As soon as it was perceived to be the point for which the Vendéans were marching, four thousand troops were thrown into it and all preparations made for a stout defence.

"If they defend themselves as they ought to do," la Rochejaquelein said to two or three of his officers, among whom was Jean Martin, "there is no hope of taking the town. We have neither cannon to blow down the walls nor means of scaling them. Thirty-six hours is the utmost we can hope for our operations, Kleber and the rest of them will be up by that time. However—it is our sole hope—possibly a panic may seize them when we attack; but even cowards will fight behind walls, and after our failure at Granville, I have little hope of our taking Angers, especially as they must know how soon their army will be up."

The affair was a repetition of that at Granville. The Vendéans at once obtained possession of one of the suburbs. Twenty pieces of cannon opened fire upon it from the walls, while from the houses the Vendéans replied with a musketry fire. During the night a number of men laboured to undermine the wall by one of the gates, and partially succeeded. But day broke before the work was completed, and the defenders planted several cannon to bear upon them. The Vendéans were too much discouraged to make any further effort, and when, a few hours later, news came that the Republican army was fast approaching, and would reach the ground in an hour's time, they again got into motion and pursued their hopeless journey in search of some point where they could cross the river, if only to

die in their beloved land. On the following day Kleber was reinforced by a column eight thousand strong from Cherbourg, and a reconnaissance was made along the road by which the Vendéans had retreated. They found everywhere the bodies of men, women, and children who had succumbed to cold, fatigue, and misery. Westermann's cavalry set out in pursuit, Muller following with his division to support him.

Marceau was now appointed commander-in-chief, pending the arrival of Turreau and Rossignol. The latter had, almost from the commencement of the war, intrigued against every general concerned in the operations, especially against Kleber. He was himself utterly without military talent, and owed his position simply to his devotion to the Convention and his readiness to denounce the men who failed to satisfy its anticipations of an easy victory, or who showed the slightest repugnance to execute its barbarous decrees.

With the exception of some three thousand men who marched at the head of the Vendéan column, the fugitives were now utterly disheartened. Many hid their muskets, and, cutting sticks, thought that, being no longer armed, they would not be molested by the enemy. Each night numbers stole away in groups of twos and threes in the hope of finding a boat on the bank of the river. Others scattered among the villages, their appearance exciting compassion; but fear of the troops was more powerful, and the men for the most part were seized and held prisoners. Of the hundred thousand men, women, and children who had crossed the Loire more than half were dead. Of those who remained, fully fifteen thousand were women and children.

On the march Leigh always rode by the side of his sister, generally carrying the child before him. Jean, as one of

the leading officers, now rode with Rochejaquelein at the head of the column. Patsey suffered less on her own account than on that of the poor people who had to journey on foot. The cold was intense, and except when they entered a town it was impossible to obtain provisions. The horses were worn out and half-famished, a great proportion of the fugitives were without shoes, and the clothing of all was in rags. In order to spare her the sight of the misery prevailing among those who marched in the rear of the column, Leigh always rode with his sister in the rear of the leading division. He himself, for the most part, walked on foot, lending his horse to some wounded man or exhausted woman.

When the column left Angers it had been intended to march to Saumur and cross there, but the news arrived that a strong Republican force had gathered there, and it was determined to change the course and to march through La Flêche to Le Mans. By this sudden and unexpected movement Rochejaquelein hoped to gain time to give his followers two days' rest. The immediate result, however, was to excite a feeling of despair among a great portion of them. Their backs were now turned to La Vendée, and it seemed to them that their last hope of reaching their homes had vanished. Rochejaquelein's idea, however, was that in their present state of exhaustion it was impossible to hope to cross the Loire, guarded as it was at every point, and with over one hundred thousand men between him and La Vendée; and he intended, after giving them the much-needed rest, to march round through Chateaudun, to come down on the Loire above Orleans, and so to make his way back into Poitou.

Had he had with him only men, the project, difficult as it seemed, might possibly have been accomplished. Unembarrassed by baggage-trains or cannon, the peasants could have outmarched their pursuers; but, hampered by

the crowd of wounded, sick, women, and children, the movement must be regarded as the inspiration of despair. Indeed, even the fighting men were no longer in a state to bear the fatigue. Bad and insufficient food had played havoc with them. Dysentery was raging in their ranks, and many could scarce drag themselves along.

"We cannot conceal from ourselves that it is nearly over," Jean said, when he told his wife and Leigh that the route was changed. "We shall get to Le Mans, but the Republicans will be on our heels, and one cannot doubt what the issue will be. Doubtless a small body will hang together, and still try to regain La Vendée; but we shall have done our duty. After our next defeat I will leave the army. I shall not go without telling la Rochejaquelein of my intentions. He has more than once spoken to me of you both, and it was but two days ago that he said to me: 'Martin, you are not like the rest of us; you have an English wife, and your brave young brother-in-law is English also. You have to think of them as well as of La Vendée. You can make your home in England, and live there until better times come.

"'It is no longer a question of defending our country, it is lost. Charette is there now, and still fighting; but as soon as we are disposed of, all these troops that have been hunting us down will be free to act against him, and he too must be crushed. The peasants have nowhere else to go, and it is not with a desire to defend their homes, which no longer exist, but to die in their native land, that they seek to return. You have from the first done your utmost for La Vendée, but there can be no occasion that you should throw away your life, and those of your wife and brother, now that the cause is utterly lost and all hope is at an end. Think this over. I do not say that it is possible for you to escape, but the longer you stay with us the more difficult will it become.'

"So, you see, I am sure that when I tell him that, feeling that we can no longer be of use, I am determined to make at least an endeavour to reach England with you, he will approve."

"I think he is right, Jean. No one can say that you have not done your duty to your country to the utmost, or can blame you for now doing what you can for your family."

Just as they neared La Flêche a squadron of the enemy's cavalry fell upon the rear of the column. They killed many of the fugitives, but were too small in number to threaten the safety of the column, which kept on until it reached the bridge across the Loir. This had been broken down, but fire was opened against the cannon planted on the other side, the gun-boats that were guarding the river were driven away, and a party moving up the bank found two little boats and began to cross. A detachment of Republicans hurried to attack them, but the Loir, an affluent of the Loire, was narrow, and the musketry fire of the main body drove them away until two or three hundred men had crossed. La Rochejaquelein went over and took the command, and on their advance the Republicans took to their heels. Rochejaquelein then recrossed and drove off the cavalry that were harassing the rear. Working desperately, a strong party threw beams across the broken bridge, and the Vendéans occupied the town at daybreak. The weary fugitives slept till mid-day, when the enemy's cavalry reappeared, but Rochejaquelein with some mounted gentlemen attacked and defeated them and pursued them for some distance.

In the evening a force under Chalbos approached the town, but the Vendéans sallied out and speedily scattered them. They then broke down the bridge that they had repaired, and started for Le Mans, which they captured after three-quarters of an hour's fighting. Two days later

Kleber was in front of the town. Westermann and Muller's divisions first approached. The two days' rest had reanimated the Vendéans, and Muller's infantry were driven back three miles; but large reinforcements came up, and the peasants were forced to fall back again. Then Westermann's cavalry charged into the town, carrying dismay among its defenders; but la Rochejaquelein and his officers soon reanimated them, and the cavalry were driven out of the town itself. They and the infantry that had come up were able, however, to maintain themselves in the suburbs.

By this time la Rochejaquelein was aware that the armies of Brest, Cherbourg, and the west were all upon him. All through the night the battle went on without interruption. The Republican columns could gain no ground, and were frequently obliged to give way, but behind the Vendéan line of defence panic was gaining ground among the fugitives. Three or four thousand escaped by the road to Laval, but the retreat of the rest was cut off by the cavalry. In the morning Kleber's division came up. They at once relieved Marceau's division, which had been fighting all night, and renewed the attack. The resistance was feeble. A few hundred men disputed every foot of the way, and died with a consciousness that they had at least covered the retreat of the rest. A hot pursuit was at once organized, and while all taken in the town were massacred at once, Westermann's cavalry pursued the fugitives in all directions, covering the plain with corpses, and pressing hard on the rear of the force that still held together.

Jean Martin had, the day before the Republican attack, gone with Leigh to la Rochejaquelein's quarters, and told him that he intended, if the town was captured by the enemy, to endeavour to save the life of his wife by flight.

"You are quite right," Rochejaquelein said warmly. "I

entirely approve of your determination. As long as ten of my men hold together it is my duty to remain with them; for I have accepted the position of their commander, and I must share their fate to the end. But it is different with you. As the cause of La Vendée, for which you have fought, is lost, your first duty now is to your wife. I trust that you will all three succeed in making your way to England, and enjoy there the peace and rest that none can have in unhappy France. I thank you for your gallant services. And I thank you in the name of La Vendée, Leigh, for the manner in which you have fought for her, and also for the companionship that has so often cheered me during our last days. As for myself, I have no wish to live. I should feel dishonoured were the army I led to be exterminated, and I, who accepted the responsibility of leading it, to survive. We have the consolation at least that never in history has a people fought more bravely against overpowering odds than La Vendée has done; and though at present we are called brigands, I am sure that the world will acknowledge that we have fought like heroes for our country and our faith. Unfortunate as we may be, I am proud to be one of those who have led them so often to victory. When will you go, my friend?"

"I intend to be with you to the last," Jean said. "When the fight begins, Leigh and my wife will be ready at a point agreed on in the rear of the town. When all is lost I shall join them there. We shall ride until beyond pursuit, and then put on our disguises."

"Then I will not say good-bye to you now," Rochejaquelein said. "Good-bye, Leigh! May Heaven keep you, and take you safely home again!"

Leigh was too much affected to speak, and after a silent grasp of the hand of the gallant young soldier, he returned with Jean to the quarters they occupied.

"Now for our plans," Jean said. "They are as vague as ever, but we must settle now. It is quite evident that the alarm is so widely spread here in the west that it will be well-nigh impossible to pass through even a village without being questioned. Alençon on the north has a strong garrison, at Mayenne on the west is a division, and the whole country beyond will be alive with troops on the search for fugitives. It is only to the east that the road is open to us. I should say that the safest way will be to travel so as to cross the Loir between Chateaudun and Nogent, and then come down on the road running south from Fontainebleau through Montargis. Travelling south through Nevers we should excite no suspicion. If questioned, we can say that we are going to visit some friends at Macon. The unfortunate thing is that we have no papers, and I think that our story had best be that we belong to Le Mans, and fled in such haste when the town was captured by the Vendéans that we escaped just as we stood, and omitted to bring our papers with us.

"Fortunately we all speak French without accent, and there is nothing about us to give rise to suspicion that we belong to La Vendée. If we can think of a more likely story as we go along, all the better. When we get as far as Macon, if we ever get there, we can decide whether to endeavour to cross the frontier into Switzerland or to go down to Toulon. Now remember, Patsey, my last injunctions are that when you perceive, from the rush of fugitives, that all is over, and that any firing that may still be going on is but an attempt to cover the retreat, you must not wait for me, but as soon as the sound of combat approaches you will ride off with Leigh. You need not suppose, because I do not join you, that I am killed. The enemy may have pushed so far through the town that I may find it impossible to join you. But from whatever

cause I tarry, you are not to wait for me. If I am shot, it will be a consolation to me to know that you will be away under your brother's protection. If I escape, I shall, if I make my way to England, have the hope of meeting you there, and shall not be haunted with the fear that you have delayed too long and have sacrificed your lives uselessly. I want you and him to give me your solemn promise that you will act thus, and will, as soon as he considers that further delay will be dangerous, ride off. Remember that this is my last wish, this is my last order."

"I will do as you wish, Jean," his wife said firmly. "God has preserved us three thus far, and I trust that He will continue to do so. I shall have the less hesitation, because I think that alone you will have perhaps a better chance of escaping than with us. At any rate, we will carry out your instructions. But should we miss each other, is there no place where we can arrange to meet?"

"I do not see that it is possible to make any arrangements, Patsey. You may be turned out of your course by circumstances which it is impossible to foresee, and the same may be the case with myself. Suppose we named a seaport, there would in the first place be difficulty in finding each other. You might see some opportunity of getting across the water, and if you lost that, the chance might not occur again, and the delay might cost you your lives. I trust that we shall not be separated, dear; but I see clearly that if such a misfortune should happen, it were best that we should each make our own way, in the hope of meeting at Poole. You may be sure that I shall join you if possible, for I see that if separated your difficulties will be far greater than mine. You, too, would have the burden of the child. But let us suppose that I was wounded, but got away and managed to obtain shelter in some Breton cottage; you might be waiting for me for weeks at an agreed point.

Now, while travelling, you might escape many questions, but were you to stop even for a few days at any town or village, you may be sure that you would be questioned so closely by the authorities that there would be little chance of your getting on. I should know that, and should be fretting my heart out."

"Yes, I see 'tis best that we should do as you say, Jean. God forbid that we should be separated; but if you do not come to the rendezvous, I promise you that we will, as you wish, go on by ourselves."

"And now, dear, we will divide our money. We have still three hundred louis left. I will take one hundred, and you shall take the rest. You are much more likely to want money, if we are separated, than I. You had best sew the greater part up in your saddle, Leigh."

"I think we had better divide it as much as possible, Jean. We can put seventy-five louis in each of our saddles, and the weight would not be so great that anyone who happens to handle one of them would notice it. I can put another five-and-forty in the belt round my waist, and keep the odd five in my pocket for expenses. Of course, if we decide to abandon our horses I will make some other arrangement."

"The best plan, Leigh, will be for us to change the louis for assignats at the first opportunity. Gold is so scarce that each time you offered to pay with it, it would excite suspicion. I have no doubt that I can buy assignats here. We have taken a quantity from the enemy, and la Roche-jaquelein will, I am sure, be glad to obtain some gold for them. It will be a double advantage, we shall have less weight to carry, and shall be able to pay our way without the gold exciting suspicion. The assignats now are only a quarter of their face value, so that for two hundred louis I should get eight hundred louis in assignats, of which

I would take two hundred, and you could take the rest."

"That would certainly be an excellent plan, Jean, for two hundred louis in gold would be a serious weight to carry, and if found on us, would in itself be sufficient to condemn us as intending emigrés."

Jean at once took two hundred louis, which had hitherto been carried in their wallets, and went out. He returned in an hour.

"That is satisfactorily settled," he said. "Blacquard, who is in charge of the treasury, was delighted to obtain some gold, and has given us five times the amount in assignats. Of this I will take two hundred and fifty louis' worth. You will have seven hundred and fifty louis in assignats, and we will divide the hundred louis in gold. Of the latter you had best sew up twenty in each of your saddles, and you can carry ten about you. People are so anxious for gold that, in case of need, you can get services rendered for it that you would fail to obtain for any amount of paper."

The greater portion of the assignats and the gold, as agreed, was sewn up in the saddles, some provisions packed in the valises, and Jean and Leigh went out together and fixed upon a spot where they were to wait. The preparations were all finished when firing broke out. Jean kissed his wife.

"May God's blessing keep you!" he said. "I trust that we shall meet again when the fighting is over."

Then he kissed his child, wrung Leigh by the hand, and rode off to join the general. The women, children, and the men who had thrown away their arms, the sick and wounded, were already leaving the town.

"Marthe, you must go now," Patsey said to the faithful nurse. They had bought a horse for her from a peasant

who had captured it, a riderless animal that belonged to one of Westermann's troopers. "Here are fifty louis in assignats. I wish that you could have gone with us, but that is not possible. François is waiting outside and will take care of you, as we have agreed. The best possible plan will be to separate yourselves from the others as soon as possible. The Blues are sure to be keeping close to them. Ride straight for the river by by-lanes, and if you cannot obtain a boat, swim your horse across, and then make for home. If we get safely to England, we will write to you as soon as these troubles are over, and you can join us there."

"God bless you, madame! It breaks my heart to part with you and the child, but I see that it is for the best."

Leigh fetched the horse round and assisted her to mount behind François. The two women, both weeping, were still exchanging adieus when Leigh said to François:

"Ride on; the sooner this is over the better for both."

The man nodded.

"God bless you, young master! I will look after Marthe. As soon as we get away from the rest, I shall get off and run by her side; the horse would never carry two of us far."

So saying, he touched the horse with his heel, and they rode off.

CHAPTER XV.

IN DISGUISE.

LEIGH returned into the house with his sister.

"Cheer up, Patsey," he said; "it is very hard parting, but I have every hope that they will succeed in getting safely home. François is a sharp fellow, they have a

good stock of food, and they won't have to go into any village; and being only two, they will have a far better chance of crossing the river than if they kept with the others."

"How they are fighting!" Patsey said a few minutes later.

Indeed the roar of musketry was unceasing, and was mingled with the louder cracks of the field-guns.

"Our men are holding their own," Leigh replied; "the firing is no nearer than it was half an hour ago. Now, you had better lie down, Patsey. I will keep a sharp look-out, and the moment I see any signs of our men retiring, we will mount. I know there is no chance of your sleeping, but it will rest you to lie down, and we shall have a long ride before us to-morrow."

Patsey nodded, but after he had gone out she did not lie down, but threw herself on her knees by the couch, and prayed for the safety of her husband. Hour after hour passed. From time to time Leigh returned, and towards morning told Patsey that it was time that they should mount.

"Our men have not begun to give way yet," he said, "but they say that Kleber's division has just arrived. There is a lull in the fighting at present, but no doubt they will relieve the division that has been fighting all night, and our men cannot hope to hold out for long. I have just brought the horses round to the door. Now, I will strap the valises on while you wrap Louis up warmly."

In five minutes they started for the point agreed on. Before they reached it, the firing broke out again with increased violence. In an hour numbers of men began to make their way past them. One of them halted, he was one of Jean's tenants.

"Ah, madame," he said, as he recognized her—for it was

now broad daylight—"I fear that all is lost! You had best ride at once; the Blues will not come just yet, for la Roche-jaquelein, with four or five hundred of his best followers, will hold the place till the last, so as to give us time to get away."

"Did you see my husband, Leroux?"

"He was with the general, madame. They and the horsemen charged again and again whenever the Blues pushed forward."

"Thank God he is safe so far!" Patsey said. "Good-bye, Leroux; we may not meet again!"

"We shall meet in heaven, madame," the man said reverently. "They may take away our country, they may kill our curés, they may destroy our churches, but they cannot take away our God. May He protect you, madame!" and, pressing the hand she held out to him, he hurried on.

Faster and faster the fugitives passed them, but for an hour the combat continued unabated; then the exulting shouts of the Blues showed that they were making way. The gallant band of Vendéans were not, indeed, retiring, but they were being annihilated. Patsey had said but little during the anxious time of waiting. From time to time she murmured, "Will he never come? Oh, God, send him to us!"

Presently a mounted officer rode past.

"Ride on! ride on!" he shouted. "The Blues will be here in a minute!"

"We must go, Patsey," Leigh said, as, without drawing rein, the officer rode on.

"No, no; wait a few minutes, Leigh. He will surely come soon."

Presently, however, a number of peasants, their faces blackened with powder, ran past. "The Blues are on our

heels!" they shouted. "They will be here in a minute; they are but a hundred yards away."

"Come, Patsey," Leigh said. "Remember your promise. We must go; it is madness waiting any longer." And as he spoke one of the peasants, running past, fell dead, shot by a musket-ball from the rear. Leigh seized Patsey's bridle, and, setting his own horse in motion, they rode on. They were but just in time, for before they had ridden two hundred yards Leigh, looking round, saw the Republicans issuing from the town.

"Pull yourself together, Patsey," Leigh exclaimed. "We may have their cavalry after us in a minute or two. Remember, Jean trusts you to carry out his instructions."

Patsey drew herself up, struck the horse with her whip, and galloped on at full speed. They soon left the road followed by the rest of the fugitives, and turned down one leading east. The din of battle had ceased now, but a scattered fire of musketry showed that the enemy were engaged in their usual work of shooting all who fell into their hands. After riding for an hour at full speed they drew rein at a wood, and, entering it, dismounted and put on their disguises. They had no fear now of pursuit. The enemy's cavalry must have made a very long march to reach the town, and their horses must be worn out by their previous exertions, while their own had had forty-eight hours' rest, during which time they had been well fed and cared for. Moreover, any pursuit that was made would be in the direction taken by the bulk of the fugitives. Mounting again, they rode on. It was but a narrow country road that they were traversing, and during the day they only passed through two or three small hamlets.

"Are the brigands coming this way?" they were asked.

"No," Leigh replied. "They are fighting at Le Mans. If they are beaten they won't come this way, but will make

south. We thought it best to leave the town. When fighting is going on in the streets it is time for quiet people to be off."

They rode forty miles before night and then entered a wood, having agreed that, until they got farther away from the scene of action, and struck the road running south, it would be better not to enter any place where they would be questioned. Choosing an open space among the trees, Leigh took off the bridles to let the horses pluck what grass they could, after giving to each a hunch of bread from their store. Then he returned with the blankets that had been rolled up and fastened behind the saddles.

"Now, Patsey, you must eat something and drink some wine. You must keep up your strength for the sake of Louis and Jean."

Patsey had spoken very few words during the day. She shook her head. "I will try for Louis' sake," she said; "as to Jean—" and she stopped.

"As to Jean," he said, "we have every reason to hope for the best. Many things may have happened to prevent his joining us. The Blues may have pushed in between his party and us, and he may have found that he could not rejoin us. His horse may have been shot and he obliged to fly on foot. He has gone through all these battles from the first, and has never been wounded. Why should we suppose that he has not done the same now? I feel sure that if he had lost his horse he would not have tried to join us, for he would have thought that he would have hampered our escape. Jean is full of resources, and has everything in his favour. He is not like the others, who have but one aim, to get back to La Vendée and die there, and whose way is barred by the Loire. He has all France open to him, and if he gains a port has but to get some sailor clothes to pass unnoticed. He is well provided with money, and has everything in his

favour. When he once gets away from Le Mans, the road would be open, for we may be sure that the enemy will all gather in the rear of the remains of our army."

"I see all that," Patsey said; "and if I were but sure that he got safely away I should feel comparatively easy. However, Leigh, I will try and look at the best side of things. If Jean is killed he has died gloriously, doing his duty till the last. If he is not, he will some day be restored to me."

"That is right, dear," he said. "You have always been so hopeful and cheery through all this business that I am sure you will keep up your courage now. We have every reason to hope, and for my part I confidently expect to see Jean safe and sound when we arrive home. Now let us set to, we both want something badly."

Patsey did her best, and being indeed faint from hunger, having eaten nothing since the evening before, she felt all the better and stronger when she had finished her meal, and was able to chatter cheerfully to little Louis, who had ridden before Leigh all day, and who was now just beginning to talk. Then they spread a blanket on the ground, and, lying down together for warmth, covered themselves with the rest of their wraps; and Leigh was glad to find by her steady breathing that the fatigue of the last twenty-four hours had sufficed to send his sister to sleep in spite of her grief at her separation from her husband. The next day they crossed the road leading to Tours, between Chateaudun and Chartres. Once over this there was no longer any occasion for haste. There was no fear of their connection with the struggle in the west being suspected, and they had now only to face the troubles consequent on travelling unprovided with proper papers.

Late that evening they entered the town of Artenay, on the main road from Paris to Orleans, coming down upon it from the north side. Here they entered a quiet inn.

The landlord was a jovial, pleasant-faced man of some sixty years of age, and his wife a kind motherly-looking woman. As usual, the travellers signed the names they had agreed upon in the book kept for the purpose, Patsey retaining her own name, and he signing as Lucien Porson.

The landlady, seeing that Patsey was completely worn out, at once took her off to her room.

"Ah! I thought that monsieur was too young to be madame's husband," the landlord said.

Leigh laughed. "I am her brother," he said. "Her husband is a sailor, and she is to join him at Toulon."

"I see the resemblance," the landlord said. "It is a long journey indeed for her, and with a child under two years old, and in such weather.

"But you forget that such a place as Toulon no longer exists. It has been decreed that the town that received the English and resisted the Republic is to be altogether destroyed, except of course the arsenal, and is henceforth to be known as 'the town without a name'."

The tone, rather than the words, convinced Leigh that his host was not an admirer of the present state of things. Leigh shrugged his shoulders slightly, and said, with a smile, "Perhaps France will change her own name. Surely a Republic cannot put up with the name that has been associated for centuries with kings."

The landlord brought his hand down with a heavy smack on Leigh's shoulder. "Ah," he said, "I see that you are too young, as I am too old, to care for the present changes! With anyone in the town I should not venture to say anything, but I am sure by your face that you can be trusted."

"And I can say the same to you, landlord."

"Are your papers, by the by, in good order?"

"Frankly, we have no papers."

The landlord gave a low whistle expressive of surprise

and consternation. "And how do you expect to travel, monsieur? How you have got so far as this I cannot make out, for at any tavern where you put up you might of course have been asked for them."

"We have not put up at any towns as yet, but have slept at little places where no questions were asked."

"But you can't get on like that, monsieur. Even in the small villages they are on the watch for suspected persons. You must have papers of some sort."

"That is all very well," Leigh said; "the question is, where to get them."

"What story do you mean to tell?"

"If we had been stopped anywhere on our way here we should have said that we belonged to Le Mans, that, like most of the other inhabitants, we fled before the Vendéans entered, and in such haste that I forgot all about papers, and indeed could not have got them had I thought of it, as all the authorities had fled before we did."

"That story, added to your appearance and that of madame as respectable citizens, might succeed sometimes with those who are not anxious to show their zeal; but as most of these functionaries are so, you would probably, if it was a village, be sent on under a guard to the next town, and if it were a town would be thrown into prison. And you know, to get in a prison in our days is—"

"Equivalent to a sentence of death," Leigh put in as he hesitated.

"You must get papers somehow—something that would pass at any rate in the villages, where as often as not there is not a man who can read. I will see what I can do; a cousin of mine is clerk to the mayor. He is a good fellow, though he has to pretend to be a violent supporter of the Convention. I don't know how you are situated, monsieur, but times are hard, and all salaries terribly in arrears; and

when they are paid it is in assignats, and I need hardly say that when you pay in assignats you don't buy cheap."

"We have money," Leigh said, "and I would pay any reasonable sum in gold for proper papers."

"Sapristi! you might almost tempt the maire himself by offering him gold. Only he would suspect that you must have more hidden away, and that by arresting you he could make himself master of the whole instead of only a part; but since you offer gold I have no doubt that my cousin would not mind running some little risk. How much shall I say, monsieur?"

"I would, if necessary, give forty louis."

"That is more than his yearly salary," the innkeeper said; "half of that would be ample. I will go to him at once. It is important that you should get papers of some kind, for at any moment anyone might come in and demand to see them."

"Here are ten louis. I have more sewn up in my saddle, and can give him the other ten later on when I get an opportunity to go to the stable unnoticed."

"That will do very well, monsieur. I will be off at once."

It was an hour before he returned, and Leigh and Patsey had just finished supper. As there were two or three other persons in the room he said nothing, but signified by a little nod that he had succeeded. A quarter of an hour later, the other customers, having finished their meal, went out.

"Here are your papers," he said as he handed a document to Leigh. It was a printed form, blanks being left for the names, description, and the object of journey.

Arthenay Mairie,—To all concerned, it is hereby testified that citizen Lucien Porson and his sister citoyenne Martin, both of good repute and well disposed to the Republic, natives of this

town of Arthenay, are travelling, accompanied by a child of the latter, to Marseilles, whither they go on family affairs, and to join citoyenne Martin's husband, a master mariner of that town.

The destination had been altered when they heard of the state of things at Toulon. The document was purposed to be signed by the maire under his official seal.

"There is only one difficulty," the landlord said as Leigh and Patsey warmly thanked him, "and that is, that although it will pass you when you have once left this town it would be dangerous to use it here, and you may at any moment be asked for it. But my cousin, who is a charming fellow, pointed out the difficulty to me, and said, 'The best thing will be for me to take a couple of men, and pay the official visit to him myself.' I expect that he will be here in a few minutes."

"Then, as the stableman has gone out at last—at least I see no lights there—I will go and get the rest of the money."

"Yes, I met him a hundred yards off on my way back. There is no one about. I will take a lantern and go out with you."

In ten minutes they returned, Leigh having the ten louis required in his pocket. A quarter of an hour later the door opened, and a man wearing the scarf which showed him to be an officer of the municipality, entered, followed by two men with the cockade of the Republic in their hats.

"This is citizen Porson and citoyenne Martin, his sister," the landlord, who accompanied the party, said.

The functionary walked up to the table and said gruffly, "Your papers, citizen." Leigh handed him the document. He glanced through it.

"That is right," he said. "Citizen Porson and citoyenne

Martin, of the arrondissement of Paris, travelling to Marseilles, duly signed by the maire of the arrondissement and duly sealed. That is all in order. We are obliged to be particular, citizen; there are many ill-disposed to the Republic travelling through the country."

"Will you sit down, citizen, and take a glass of wine with me? Landlord, draw two stoups of wine for these two good citizens."

The two men followed the landlord out to the public room.

"I should think, Jeannette," Leigh said to his sister, "you had better retire to bed. You have had a long day's ride, and must, I am sure, be tired out."

As soon as she had left the room Leigh dropped the ten louis into the adjoint's hand.

"I thank you with all my heart," he said. "You have done a good action, and I can assure you that it can do no harm to the Republic, against whom I have no intention of conspiring. There is no fear, I suppose, that the maire's signature may be questioned?"

"There is no fear whatever of that, because the signature is precisely similar to that which occurs on all official documents. The maire is without doubt an excellent Republican and a devoted servant of the Convention, but he is altogether ignorant of letters, and the consequence is that I sign all official documents for him. So you see there was no trouble whatever in filling in, signing, and sealing this letter. The only matter that concerned me was that if by any chance you should be arrested as a suspect, possibly a demand might be made as to how you obtained this pass. However, even that did not trouble me greatly, for as I myself open and read the maire's letters, I should have no difficulty in keeping him altogether in the dark as to the purport of any letter that might come, and should myself

pen an answer with explanations which would no doubt be found satisfactory."

"And now can you tell me, sir, which in your opinion would be the best port for me to make to, to leave the country? It matters little whether we go by land or sea."

"It would be more easy for you to make your way to a port than across the frontier," the adjoint said, "but when you reach a port your difficulties would but begin. In the first place, our trade with foreign countries is almost at a stand-still, and every vessel that goes out is rigidly searched for concealed emigrés. On the other hand, once across the frontier your troubles would be at an end; but every road is closely watched, every village is on the look-out, for the orders are precise that all persons leaving France shall be arrested and detained until in a position to prove their identity, and to place the truth of the reason given for journeying beyond all doubt. I do not say that it might not be possible to bribe peasants to take you by unfrequented paths over the Jura; but the journey would be arduous in the extreme, and probably impossible to be performed on horseback. But, for my part, if I were in your position and desired to leave the country, I should go north instead of south. I should go in the first place to Paris, stay there in quiet lodgings for a little time until you became known, and you might then get your papers viséed to enable you to continue your journey to Calais or Dunkirk. Money will go just as far among the incorruptibles of Paris as it will here. You might obtain a passage down the Seine to Rouen or Havre."

"That would certainly suit us best. I regret now that I had the paper made out for Marseilles."

"That can easily be remedied, monsieur. If you will walk back with me to the mairie, I will write a fresh paper out and destroy the one I have given you. But what shall I

say is your object in journeying to Paris? You are too young to be going to purchase goods, and, indeed, would hardly be taking a woman and child with you for such a purpose. Now, monsieur, frankly tell me who you are. I have some relations in Paris, quiet bourgeois, who keep a small shop near the markets. If I were to give you a letter to them, saying that you have business in Paris, and have asked me to recommend someone who would provide you with quiet lodgings, no doubt they would willingly take you in. But I would not involve them in danger. You might be recognized as being members of some family who are proscribed, and in that case not only would my friends get into trouble, but as they would, of course, say that you were recommended to them by me, I might find myself in a very unpleasant position."

"There is no fear of anything of that sort. I and my sister are both English. She married the son of a merchant at Nantes, and I came over with her to learn the business. There have, as you know, been troubles in that part of France. We endeavoured to escape, but she was separated from her husband, who has, I greatly fear, been killed, and we, of course, are both anxious to rejoin our family in England."

"How long have you been in France, monsieur? You speak the language well."

"We have been over here nearly three years."

"Well, I do not think that there is any risk, unless, of course, you are caught in the act of trying to make your escape. But I think that it would be as well that my friends should be prepared for your coming. I know a man who is leaving for Paris to-morrow. I will give him my letter, and ask him to deliver it personally as soon as he gets there; then you can follow twenty-four hours later. Now that it is known that I have examined your papers

and found them correct, there will be no further inquiry about you, and, at any rate, you could stay here for a day or two without any questions being asked."

"That would be an admirable plan, monsieur, and I cannot tell you how much I am obliged to you."

"Say no more about that, monsieur, you have paid me well for it; and moreover, I am not a bad fellow, though at present I am obliged to appear to be a strong supporter of the people in Paris. Now, if you will put on your hat and come along with me, I will leave you a short distance from the hotel de ville, to which I have access at all hours. I shall, of course, simply put in the passport, that you are travelling to Paris on private matters, and that you will stay with your friend, citizen Tourrier, in the rue des Halles."

A quarter of an hour later Leigh returned to the auberge furnished with the required paper. The adjoint had said, on handing it to him, "I shall not come round to-morrow. We met as strangers yesterday, and it is as well I should not appear to be intimate with you. But should you find yourself in any difficulty, send for me at once, and I will soon set matters right."

"Is it all satisfactorily arranged, monsieur?" the hotel-keeper asked when Leigh returned.

"Perfectly. Your friend has done even more than he promised." And he told him of the change that had been made in the plans.

"That is certainly better. I have been wondering myself how you would ever be able to get away from Marseilles. Now it seems comparatively easy. I have no doubt that my cousin's friends in Paris will be able to get you another pass, or to put you in the way of travelling to one of the ports, though no doubt it will be almost as difficult to get away from there as from Marseilles."

"I think that could be managed, landlord. I am a pretty good sailor, and there ought to be no great difficulty in getting hold of a boat and making out to sea, and when once away, I could steer for England, or get on board some vessel bound there."

He tapped at his sister's door. She was still up.

"You are very late, Leigh."

"Yes, but you will be able to sleep as long as you like to-morrow, as we are not going to start till next day, and are then going north instead of south. Our paper has been changed for Paris instead of Marseilles, and we are going to the house of a cousin of the man who gave me the pass, so we shall be safe so far, and ought to have no difficulty whatever in journeying from there either to Havre or one of the northern ports. I will tell you all about it to-morrow."

They passed the next day quietly, and both felt better for the short rest. In addition to the pass, the adjoint had given Leigh a note to his cousin. It was unsealed, and read:

My dear Cousin,

The bearer of this is Monsieur Porson, and his sister, Madame Martin, of whom I wrote to you. You will find them amiable people, who will give you but little trouble. I have assured them that they will find themselves very comfortable with you, and that you will do all in your power for them, for the sake of your affectionate cousin,

SIMON VALLES,
adjoint to the maire of Arthenay.

They journeyed by easy stages, stopping at Etampes, Arpajon, and Longjumeau, and rode on the fourth day into Paris. They had no difficulty in finding the shop of Monsieur Tourrier. It was a grocer's, and as soon as they

alighted from their horses its owner came out and greeted them heartily.

"Madame and monsieur are both most welcome," he said. "I have received a letter from my cousin Simon. I am glad indeed to receive his friends. Fortunately our rooms upstairs are unlet. Strangers are rare in Paris at present."

He called a boy from the shop and told him to show Leigh the way to some stables near.

He then entered the house, accompanied by Patsey with her child. Here she was received by Madame Tourrier, a plump-faced business-like woman, and was not long in finding out that she was the real head of the establishment.

"I have got the rooms ready for you," she said. "We were surprised, indeed, to get a letter from Simon Valles, for he is a poor correspondent, though he generally comes to stay with us for three days once a year. He is a good fellow, but it is a pity that he did not go into trade. He would have done better for himself than by becoming adjoint to the maire of Arthenay. It has a high sound, but in these days, when men are paid their salaries in assignats, it is but a poor living. However, I suppose that it is an easy life, for I don't think hard work would suit Simon. The last time he was up we tried to persuade him that he would do better; here but he laughed, and said that people's heads were safer in Arthenay than they were in Paris. But that is folly, the Convention does not trouble itself with small shopkeepers. It knows well enough that we have work enough to do to earn our living without troubling ourselves about politics; yet, if the truth were known, a good many of us are better to do than some of those they call aristocrats. This is a busy quarter, you see, and we are close to the markets, and the country people who come in know that we sell good groceries, and on

cheaper terms than they can get them in their villages. We should do better still if my husband would but bestir himself; but men are poor creatures, and I don't know what would become of them if they had not us women to look after their affairs."

They now reached the rooms, which were small but comfortable, and the price which Madame Tourrier named seemed to Patsey to be very moderate.

"You see, your room is furnished as a sitting-room also, madame, and you and your brother can talk over your affairs here. As to your meals, I could provide your café au lait in the morning, but I can't undertake to cook for you. But there are many good places where you can obtain your meals at a cheap rate in the neighbourhood. How long do you expect to remain in Paris?"

"That I cannot say at present. My husband is a sailor, but I have not heard from him for a long time. At Arthenay there is but small opportunity of learning what happens outside, and it may be that I shall have to travel to Havre to obtain news of him, although I am troubled greatly by the fear that his ship has been lost, or captured by the English. We have never been in Paris before, and my brother naturally wishes to stay a short time to see the sights."

Madame Tourrier shook her head. "There are but few sights to see," she said; "the churches are all closed, or at least are turned into meeting-places and clubs. It is not as it was before the troubles began; there are few amusements, and no reviews or pageants. I do not say that it is not better so; I have no opinion on such subjects. I have never once been to the hall of representatives, I have no time for such follies, and, except on Sunday afternoons, I never stir out of doors. Still, no doubt, it will all be new to him, and as you have horses you can ride over to Ver-

sailles and other places round. There is not much of that now; people think of nothing but the Convention, talk of nothing but of the speeches there, and of Robespierre and St. Just and Danton. It seems to me that they are always quarrelling, and that nothing much comes of it. Now, if you will excuse me, madame, I will go down to the shop again. My husband cannot be trusted there a minute, and if my back is turned he will be selling the best sugar for the price of the worst, then we shall lose money; or the worst sugar for the price of the best, and then we shall lose customers."

So saying she hurried away. In a few minutes Leigh came up. "I was told where to find you," he said. "Madame is in the thick of business, and there were half a dozen customers waiting to be served. Monsieur was standing a few yards away from the front of the shop. It was he who gave me instructions for finding your room.

"'It is best,' he said, 'that madame should be asked no questions while she is busy. I always go out myself when customers come in. She is one of the best of wives, and manages affairs excellently, but her temper is short. She likes to do things her own way, and as it pleases her I never interfere with her.'"

"I think he is wise not to do so," Patsey laughed, I can see already that she is mistress of the establishment. But from what I have seen at Nantes I think that it is generally the women who look after the shops and mind the businesses. However, though she speaks sharply I should say that she is a kind-hearted woman. However, we may be very thankful that we have obtained a shelter where we can live safely and quietly until we have fixed on our plans for the future."

But although Monsieur Tourrier was, in all matters connected with the business, but as a child in the hands of his wife, he was far better acquainted with what was passing

around them, and when Leigh mentioned to him that he intended to ride out to Versailles, he at once warned him against doing so.

"My dear monsieur," he said, "I know nothing of the state of things at Arthenay, and for aught I know people may go out riding for pleasure there, but it would be little short of madness to attempt such a thing here. At present things have got to such a state, that for any man to seem richer than another is in itself a crime. Here all must be on an equality. Were you to ride out, every man you pass would look askance at you. At the first village through which you rode you would be arrested, and to be arrested at present is to be condemned. There are no questions asked, the prisoners are brought in in bunches, and are condemned wholesale. I say nothing against the condemnation of the aristocrats, but when perhaps two or three aristocrats are brought up with half a dozen journalists, and a dozen others who may have been arrested merely out of spite, and all are condemned in five minutes, it is clear that the only way to live is to avoid being arrested, and the only way to avoid being arrested is to avoid attracting attention.

"If you were really going on a matter of business it would be different, but to ride to Versailles merely to see the place would be regarded as ample proof that you were an aristocrat; and no one would regard your papers as anything but a proof that these had been obtained by fraud, and that you were either an aristocrat, or a spy of Pitt's, or a Girondist, and certainly an enemy of the Convention. Therefore, monsieur, if you wish to go anywhere, walk, or go out in a market cart, for to ride might be fatal."

"I will take your advice," Leigh said. "I did not think that things were so bad as that."

"They could not be worse, monsieur, it would be impos-

sible. But we who are quiet men think that it cannot go on much longer; even the sans-culottes are getting tired of bloodshed, there is no longer a great crowd to see the executions, and the tumbrils pass along without insults and imprecations being hurled against the prisoners.

"The men of the Convention, having killed all the Girondists, are now quarrelling among themselves. Robespierre is still all-powerful, but the party opposed to him are gaining in strength, and there is a feeling that ere long there will be a terrible struggle between them, and if Robespierre is beaten, there are many of us who think that the reign of terror will come to an end. We who are too insignificant to be watched, talk these things over together when we gather at our café, and there is no one but ourselves present, and even then we talk only in whispers; but we all live in hopes of a change, and any change must surely be for the better."

CHAPTER XVI.

A FRIEND AT LAST.

DAY after day Leigh went out into the town. More than once he saw the fatal tumbrils going along in the distance, but he always turned and walked in the opposite direction. Once or twice, having changed his clothes for those of a workman, he fought his way into the public galleries of the Convention and listened to the speeches, in which it seemed to him that the principal object of each speaker was to exceed those who had gone before him in violence, and that the most violent was the most loudly applauded, both by the galleries and the Assembly. Patsey was most anxious to be off, but he urged that it would not

do to show haste. She did not leave the house at all, while he was out almost all day. At the end of the fortnight he told Monsieur Tourrier that he had now finished his business, and asked him if he could obtain from the maire of the arrondissement a pass down to Havre.

"It is a pity that you did not get your pass direct from Arthenay," he said. "You say that your sister wants to make inquiries about a husband there, and that you are taking her down, and you also say that you are a sailor."

"Yes."

"Then, I should think that the best thing for you would be to dress yourself as a sailor again; it will seem more natural than for you to be in that civilian dress. I can go with you and say that you were strongly recommended to me by the maire's adjoint at Arthenay, and that your papers are all en règle. If he asks why you did not have your papers made out in the first place to Havre, say that you had hoped to have been joined by your brother-in-law here, but as he has not arrived, your sister is anxious about him, and wishes therefore to go on to Havre, which indeed he has requested her to do, as it was uncertain whether he would be able to leave his ship. I know, of course, that it is all right, or my cousin would not have recommended you so strongly to me, but in these days everyone is suspicious, and one cannot be too cautious. I will get one of the market authorities to go up with me; I am well known to them all, and 'tis likely that none of the people at the mairie will know me, seeing that I am a quiet man and keep myself to myself."

Leigh had no trouble in buying a sailor's dress at a shop down by the wharves, and having put this on went up with Monsieur Tourrier and one of the market officers to the mairie. As the former had anticipated, there was no difficulty. Leigh's pass was examined. The market official

testified to the grocer as being a well-known citizen, doing business with the market people, and taking no part in public affairs, while Monsieur Tourrier showed the letter that he had received from his cousin the adjoint at Artenay.

"What is the name of the ship which your sister's husband commands?" the maire asked.

"The *Henriette*, a lugger. Formerly she traded with England, but since the war broke out she trades between the ports on our western coast."

"And you have been a sailor on board her?"

"Yes, citizen."

The maire nodded, and made out the pass for Jeannette Martin, travelling to join her husband, the captain of the lugger *Henriette*; for her brother, Lucien Porson; and for Louis Martin, aged two years, son of the above-named citoyenne Martin.

As they agreed that it would now be best to travel by water, Leigh next went to the stables, and as the horses were both good ones, obtained a fair price for them. The next morning they went on board a sailing craft going down the river, and after a cordial adieu from their host and hostess, and a promise to take up their abode there on their return through Paris, they went on board. Leigh had sold the saddles with the horses, having on the journey to Paris removed the bundles of assignats concealed in them.

The accommodation on board was very fair. Patsey occupied a roomy cabin aft, the rest slept in a large cabin forward; for before the troubles began the majority of people travelling from Paris down to Rouen or Havre went by water, and although the boats were mainly constructed for the carriage of merchandise, the conveyance of passengers formed an important part of the profits. At present, however, there was but little travelling, and Patsey had the women's cabin to herself; while one

other male passenger, with the master and two hands, had the forward compartments to themselves. The master explained that at ordinary times his two men occupied a tiny place boarded off from the hold, or in summer slept on deck; but that, as there were so few passengers, they lived with the rest "for", as he growled under his breath—"the present".

The voyage was slow but not unpleasant. There was scarce wind enough to fill the two sails carried by the boat, but the captain and his two hands frequently got out sweeps to keep the boat in the middle of the current. They stopped for a day at Rouen, while the cargo destined for that town was landed. Patsey and Leigh were glad to spend the day in the town visiting the cathedral, taking their meals at a restaurant, for the cuisine on board the boat was not of the highest character.

"We used to keep a regular cook," the captain lamented. "In those days we often carried several passengers, but at present, when we seldom have more than one or two, we cannot afford it. The Revolution is no doubt a grand thing, and has greatly benefited the nation, but it has weighed hardly on us. There are but half the boats on the river there used to be, and they are hardly paying expenses now that no one travels. Those that go to sea are worse off still, for what with the falling off in trade, and with the English cruisers all along the coast, there is little employment for seamen save in the privateers. However, they don't starve, for the greater portion of the men on the coast have to go in the ships of the Republic."

On the sixth day after leaving Paris they arrived at Havre. Here they had no difficulty in obtaining lodgings in a small auberge near the port. Their pass was, on their arrival, sent to the authorities of the town and duly stamped. Leigh's first inquiries were for the *Henriette.*

He found that she was well known in the port, and had sailed for La Rochelle six weeks before.

"She does not very often come up here," one of the sailors said. "Sometimes she is months between her visits. As likely as not she may have been captured on her way down. Her port is Bordeaux, and if you wanted to find her you had much better have gone straight there than come to this place."

"I do want to find her," Leigh said. "Is there any chance of finding a ship going down south?"

"Well, you might find one," the man said; "but you would have to take your chance of getting there. Many of the ships are laid up, for the risk of capture is great. It is small craft that for the most part make the venture. They creep along inshore, and either run into a port or anchor under the guns of a battery, if they see a British cruiser outside. Drawing so little water, they can keep in nearer than a cruiser would dare to; and as they all can take the mud, they do not mind if they stick on the sands for a tide."

Leigh returned with the news to his sister.

"What do you think, Patsey?" he said. "I do not say that we cannot cross from here in a boat, though I have learned that the entrance to the Channel is guarded by gun-boats. If we passed safely through these we should have serious risk and many hardships to undergo. I hear that there are numerous French privateers, and we might be picked up by one of them instead of by an English cruiser. I am afraid that our passes, in that case, would not avail us in the slightest. Now, if we go down to Bordeaux we have only to wait till the *Henriette* comes in, possibly she may be there when we arrive. In that case I am sure that Lefaux will be willing to take us out, and either put us on board a British cruiser or land us in England."

"Certainly we will go to Bordeaux," Patsey said; "we may find Jean there. If he escaped that night he would make for the Loire, and as he is a good swimmer he would get over without difficulty, and he would then try to make his way towards Bordeaux."

"That may be so, Patsey; but I would not be too sanguine about our finding him there. It was so much nearer for him to have made for one of the northern ports that he might very well have done so, and as soon he managed to obtain a sea outfit he would no longer be suspected of having anything to do with the Vendéans."

They had learnt before this that after the fight at Le Mans the Vendéans had made for the river, had desperately fought their way through the forces that barred their march, had come down on the banks, but had failed to find any means to cross it. Then they had turned into Brittany again for a short distance, had fought two or three more desperate battles, and had again reached the Loire. There was but one leaky boat to be found. In this la Rochejaquelein, with a few of his officers, had crossed the river to bring back some boats that were moored on the opposite bank. Directly they got across they were attacked, but la Rochejaquelein, with two or three others, effected their escape. After this the Vendéans no longer kept together. The women and children, wounded and invalids, hid themselves in the woods, where they were hunted down like wild beasts, and either slaughtered at once or sent to Nancy, where thousands were either executed or drowned by the infamous Carrier, one of the most sanguinary villains produced by the Revolution. Many of the men managed to cross the river either by swimming on rough rafts or in boats. In La Vendeé the war was still going on, for Charette had marched up again from Lower Poitou, and was keeping a large force of the Republican troops engaged.

"I will try not to hope too much," Patsey said. "But at any rate I am for going down to Bordeaux; for, apart from the chance of finding Jean there, it seems much safer than putting out to sea in a little boat."

"I certainly think so," Leigh replied. "Now I will go out and make inquiries as to what craft there may be bound south."

He returned in a couple of hours.

"I have arranged for our passage, Patsey. She is a fast-looking little craft, with very decent accommodation. She is in the wine trade, and brought a cargo safely up last week, and will start again the day after to-morrow. She carries a crew of eight hands; and I have made inquiries about the captain, and hear a very good report of him, and he seemed to me a first-rate fellow. When I mentioned the name of the *Henriette* he said that he knew her well, and was acquainted both with the present captain and with your Jean. He had heard from Lefaux that her former owner had been denounced, and had been obliged to fly from Nantes to a chateâu that he had in La Vendée. The *Henriette* has never been into Nantes since, but went down to Bordeaux, and was there registered in another owner's name and Lefaux had worked for him ever since.

"'I fancy,' he said, 'she sometimes makes a run with brandy to England. She was in that business before, and had, Lefaux said, been chased many a time by English cutters, but had always managed to give them the slip.' I was half inclined to tell him that I was Jean's brother-in-law, but I thought it better not to until we had been to sea for a day or two and had learned a little more about him."

The next day Leigh went to the mairie, and explained that, not having found the ship commanded by citoyenne Martin's husband, and thinking it likely that they would hear of him at Bordeaux, they had taken passage by the

Trois Frères, which sailed the next day. The addition was made to his papers without a question, and the next morning they went on board. They were heartily received by the captain.

"You ought to bring us luck, madame," he said—"I mean citoyenne, but the old word slips out of one's mouth sometimes. It is not often that I have a lady passenger. There are few who travel now, and before the war broke out people preferred taking passage in larger ships than mine. Still, I will do my best to make you comfortable, and I can assure you that Léon, my cook, is by no means a bad hand at turning out dainty dishes. He was cook in an hotel at one time, but he let his tongue wag too freely, and having to leave suddenly, was glad enough to ship with me. Fortunately he likes the life, and I do not think anything would tempt him to go back to an hotel kitchen again."

"I am not particular, I can assure you," Patsey said. "In these times we all have to rough it. Still, I own that I like a good dinner better than a bad one."

"We shall put in to a good many little ports," the skipper said. "Sailing as close as we do inshore, I always make a port if I can as evening comes on, and we are therefore never without fresh meat, fish, and vegetables."

"How long shall we be going down?"

"That I cannot tell you. It all depends upon the wind. We may, too, be kept in port for two or three days if there is an enemy's cruiser anywhere about. We may get there in ten days, we may take three weeks."

Before the boat set sail, a commissary with two men came on board and examined the passes of the passengers, and searched below the hatches to make sure that no one was hidden there. As soon as they had completed their inspection the sails were hoisted, and the *Trois Frères*

started on her way down the Channel. The wind was light and blowing from the south-west, and they were just able to lay their course, and anchored for the night off the mouth of the Vire river.

"I suppose to-morrow you will get round the Cape de la Hague, captain?" Leigh said.

"No, we shall not attempt that. The coast is a very difficult one, with furious currents. We shall bring up off Cherbourg and start at daylight, and shall, I hope, be well down towards the bay of Avranches by nightfall. There is no fear of a British cruiser till we get out towards Ushant. They do not care about coming inside the islands; what with the fogs, the rocks, and the currents, it is safer outside than in. Besides, there is little to be picked up except coasters like ourselves and fishing-boats. There is hardly any foreign trade between Havre and Brest; it is from there down to the mouth of the Gironde that their cruisers are so thick. From Ushant to Boulogne there are plenty of them, but these are chiefly occupied in guarding their ships going up and down the Channel from our privateers, which run out from every port, Dieppe and Havre, Granville, Avranches, and St. Malo."

The skipper had by no means overpraised his cook, who turned them out a better dinner than any that they had eaten since the troubles began, with the exception only of those they had had at Arthenay.

"He takes a pride in it," the captain said, "and you will never get good work done in any line unless by a man who does so. A sailor who is careless about the appearance of his ship is sure to be careless about the keeping of the watch, and is not to be trusted in matters of navigation. When you see a craft with every rope in its place, everything spotlessly clean, the brass-work polished up, and the paint carefully attended to, you may be sure that the

skipper is as particular in more important matters. It is just so with our man. It is a little bit of a galley, but his sauce-pans shine like gold, everything is clean and in its place. He grumbles if we run short of anything, and is a good deal more particular about my dinner being just what it should be than I am myself.

"Sometimes when we have rough weather I say to him, 'Make me a soup to-day, Léon, I shall be well content with that, and it is not weather for turning out a regular dinner.' He always replies gravely, 'Monsieur, anyone can cook when the sea is calm; it is on an occasion like this that one who knows his business is required. Monsieur will dine as usual.' And up comes dinner, with three or four courses, cooked to perfection. For myself, I would rather snatch a few mouthfuls and go up on deck again; but this would hurt Léon's feelings if he saw it, and he might even consider that he must seek another employer, for that his talents were wasted upon me, so I go through it all with exemplary patience. I would not lose him for anything, not only because I own I like good food, but the *Trois Frères* has such a reputation for good living, that if I am in port passengers will wait for days to sail with me, instead of going by other craft.

"And then, too, I have no trouble with my crew, and it is rarely indeed that I change one of my hands; for although their meals are of course much simpler than mine, they are all perfect in their way. It takes a great deal of trouble off my hands, too. Instead of my having a dozen little accounts to go into at every port we enter, I allow him a certain sum and he manages on that—so much a day for my own table, so much for each passenger, and so much for the crew. How he does it I don't know. I find that it is cheaper than it used to be before his time, and yet I have all sorts of dainties I never dreamt of then. I

say to him sometimes, 'Léon, you must be ruining yourself;' but he smiles and says, 'I am well content, captain; if you are satisfied, I am so.'

"He buys the fish off the boats as they come in, and I can understand that he gets them far more cheaply than if he waited till they were hawked in the streets. He is great at omelets, and when he has a chance he is ashore before the countrywomen come into the market, and will buy the whole stock of eggs, a pound or two of butter, and three or four couples of fowls from one woman, who is glad to sell cheaply and so be free to return home at once. At Bordeaux he lays in a stock of snipe and other birds from the sand-hills and marshes, oysters, and other such matters. He is a great favourite with the crew, and in cold weather or stormy nights there is always hot soup ready for them. He has only one fault. As a rule the cooks are expected to help get up the anchor and sails, but he will not put a hand to sailors' work. He says that a cook must not have a rough hand, but that it should be as soft as a woman's. Personally, I believe that is all nonsense. However, as we have a fairly strong crew I do not press him on the subject; though sometimes, when I tail on to a rope myself and see him leaning quietly against his galley smoking his pipe, I am inclined to use strong language."

"I don't think that is much to put up with, captain," Patsey said with a smile, "if he always cooks for you such breakfasts and dinners as we have had to-day; and I do think that there is perhaps something in what he says about rough hands."

"Well, I feel that myself," he said. "Still, it is a little aggravating, when everyone else is working hard, to see a man calmly smoking and never raising a finger to help."

The next day they kept very close inshore. More than once a white sail was seen in the distance, which the

captain pronounced from its cut to belong to a British cruiser.

"The weather is fine, you see, and the wind is steady, so they are coming rather farther into the bay than usual. We shall see more of them as soon as we are round that cape ahead, for they keep a very sharp look-out off Cherbourg."

It was not, however, until they had rounded Ushant that any British vessel came near enough to cause them uneasiness. There were two large frigates cruising backwards and forwards off Brest, and a brig-of-war came within shot as they were doubling Penmarch Point.

"There is plenty of water for her here," the skipper said. "However, she will hardly catch us before we are under shelter of the batteries of Quimper."

"I should have thought that she would hardly think you worth the trouble of chasing."

"It may be that they think we are carrying fresh meat from St. Malo to Nantes. There is a good deal of trade that way this time of year, when meat will keep good for a week. Or it may be that they want to get news of what ships there are in Brest. However, it is certain that he is in earnest, he is politely requesting us to lower our sails."

He laughed as a puff of white smoke broke out from the brig, and a second or two later a ball dashed up the water fifty yards ahead of them. The emotions with which Patsey and Leigh watched the brig differed much from those of the captain. They would gladly have seen the lugger overhauled and captured, but they soon saw that there was little chance of this. The lugger was a fast boat, the wind just suited her, and the brig fell farther and farther astern, until, as the former entered the bay of Quimper and laid her course north, the brig hauled her wind and turned to rejoin the vessels off Brest. Keeping close to the land, they passed L'Orient and Quiberon and

Vannes without stopping, and did not drop anchor again until they entered the bay on the eastern side of the island of Noirmoutier. The next day they passed out through the narrow channel of Froment, and had gone between the island and the mainland for a distance of two miles, when they saw a large brig making in towards the shore.

"Another of those cruisers," the captain exclaimed. "This is more serious, for there is no bay we can run into, and the fellow is bringing the wind down with him. Our only chance is to anchor under the guns of St. Jean des Montes; we shall be lucky if we get there in time."

The brig came up fast, and was within a mile when the lugger caught the wind; then running along rapidly she held her own until off St. Jean, when she ran in as close as her draught would permit, and anchored. Two French privateers were already lying in there, one having dropped anchor only a few minutes before the *Trois Frères* arrived.

"I expect it was that fellow that the brig was in chase of, and I am not by any means sure that we have done with her yet. They are as likely as not to try to cut out one, if not both, of these privateers. Of course it would look like madness, with the guns of that battery on the height protecting them, but they have done such things so often, that one can never say that one is altogether safe from them."

The brig stood in until two or three guns in the battery opened fire, when she turned and made out to sea again.

"That means nothing," the captain said. "Of course she would not attack in daylight. I dare say she will sail pretty nearly out of sight, so as to make the privateers believe that she had no intention of meddling with them. If I was sure that was her game, I would get up sail again as soon as it is dark, and make for Oleron; but it is

likely enough that she may think that that is just what the privateers will do, and will sail in that direction herself, so as to cut them off before they get there, and force them to fight without the protection of a shore battery. There is the bell for breakfast! Léon would not be two minutes late if there was an action going on close to us."

Half an hour later they went on deck again.

"At any rate, the sea has saved us the trouble of discussing the matter," the captain said; "we are aground. The tide turned just before we got here. It is now half-past twelve, and we shall not be afloat again for nearly twelve hours. Well, there is one thing, if they are thinking of trying to cut out the privateers they are not likely to do it before two or three o'clock in the morning. As soon as we float I shall haul out a cable's length or two, so as to ensure our being able to get off, and if they do attack, I shall get up my sails at once and run south; they will be too much occupied to give us a thought. Whereas, if I stay here, and they capture the privateers, they might take it into their heads to come on board and set fire to the lugger, which, as I am part owner, would be a very serious matter to me."

It was apparent that the privateers had no thought of the brig returning, at any rate at present, as boats went backwards and forwards between them and the shore.

"What do you think, Leigh?" his sister asked quietly as they were sitting alone together.

"I do not know in the least," he said. "Our best chance is that the two Frenchmen seem to be so confident that they are safe under the guns of the fort, that they will take no very great precautions. One of them mounts eight guns, the other ten, and they ought to be a match for the brig, even without the forts, for we could see by her ports that she only carries sixteen guns. However, I think myself

that she will very likely have a try at them. It will be a very dark night, for the sky is overcast and there is no moon."

It was between ten and eleven when, just as they were about to turn in, the captain ran in.

"Quick, madame, you must hurry on your clothes! I heard a sound just now that could only be made by a boat. As we are still aground, I shall bring a boat alongside and land. There is nothing like being on the safe side!"

The two privateers were lying a quarter of a mile farther out, and there were still lights burning on board them.

"The fools!" the captain growled as Leigh and his sister came on deck, Leigh carrying little Louis, who had been put to bed fully dressed. Indeed, no time had been lost, for his mother and Leigh had agreed that it would be better to lie down in their clothes in case of an alarm being given. "The fools!" the captain repeated. "If they had extinguished every light, as they ought to have done, the boats would have had difficulty in finding them; now, they could not miss them if they tried. Now, madame, will you please take your place in the boat with me? I am sure that there are boats coming along. Of course the oars are muffled, and there is enough sea on to prevent us hearing the splash. I think the noise I heard was caused by one of the stretchers giving way."

Reluctantly Patsey and Leigh took their places in the boat. Just as they reached the shore a shout was heard on board one of the privateers, and a moment later came the sound of a British cheer. It was followed by a hubbub of shouts, then muskets flashed out from the decks, and almost immediately came the sounds of conflict. A blue light was struck on the deck of one of the privateers, and by its light those on shore could obtain a view of the conflict. The boats had boarded from the shore side; two of them lay alongside

each of the privateers, and the crews could be seen climbing up by the chains and leaping down upon the decks.

"They deserve to be taken," the captain said; "they have not even triced up their boarding-nets."

A confused medley of sounds came to the shore; with the shouts of the French sailors were mingled the clash of cutlasses and the crack of pistols. The British sailors fought for the most part silently. On the heights above, blue lights were burning in the battery, and men could be seen standing on its crest watching the combat below, but powerless to assist their friends. It was but five minutes after the outbreak of the combat when a loud British cheer, followed by a dead silence, showed that one, at least, of the privateers had been captured. The fighting still continued on the deck of the other craft, but from the vessel that had been captured a number of sailors leapt down into one of their boats, and rowed to the assistance of their comrades. The reinforcements apparently decided the issue of the fight, for in a couple of minutes the British cheer was again heard, and the blue light was promptly extinguished, as were all the other lights on both vessels. Scarcely was this done when the guns from the battery boomed out.

"It is of no use their firing," the captain said; "I don't think they can depress the guns enough to bear upon them. There, they are making sail!" he went on as the creaking of blocks was heard. "Of course they have cut the cables; they would not waste time in getting up anchors with the forts playing upon them. However, it is mere waste of powder and shot on such a night as this. I don't suppose the gunners can make them out now; for a certainty they won't be able to do so as soon as they have moved off another quarter of a mile. Of course a stray shot may hit them, but practically it is all over. I think that we can go on board again. I did not think of it before, but they

would hardly set fire to us, for the light would enable the gunners to see them till they were a long way out. There is no doubt those Englishmen can fight. Our men are all right when they are under sail and it is a question of exchanging broadsides, but the success of so many of their cutting-out expeditions shows that, somehow or other, we lose heart when we are boarded. We must have had nearly twice as many men as there were in those four boats, and yet it seemed to be a certainty as soon as the English got among them. Our craft had much better have sailed out together when the brig came in this morning, and fought her fairly. They ought to have been more than a match for her.

"No doubt they would have done so if they had thought that they would be attacked to-night; but they relied upon the battery, and allowed themselves to be taken completely by surprise. I could see, even from this distance, that most of them were fighting in their shirts, and I expect that they were sound asleep when the attack began; and men roused in that sudden way can never be relied upon to do their duty as they would do if prepared to meet it."

The party were soon on board the lugger again. Just as daylight was breaking there was a trampling of feet on the deck, and Leigh, going up, found that sail was being hoisted. Keeping close to the shore, they ran down, without putting in anywhere, to La Rochelle. Here they waited for a day, and then, keeping inside the Isle of Oleron, entered the Gironde, and the next day anchored in the Garonne, off the quays of Bordeaux. After thanking the captain very heartily for his kindness during the passage, they landed, showed their papers to an official on the quay, and then, being unhampered by luggage, walked quietly away. As there was nothing particularly noticeable in their appearance they attracted no attention whatever. It was

five o'clock when they landed, and already becoming dusk. They waited until it was quite dark, and then, having inquired for the house of Monsieur Flambard, the merchant to whom Jean had assigned the *Henriette*, they knocked at his door. It was a handsome house not far from the quays. The lower portion was evidently occupied by the offices. As a servant opened the door, Leigh, seeing that his sister hesitated to speak, inquired if Monsieur Flambard was at home.

"He is," the man said shortly; "but he does not see people on business after the office is closed." Leigh saw that his dress as a sailor did not impress the man.

"I think he will see us," he said, "if you take the name up to him. Will you tell him that Citoyenne Martin wishes to speak to him."

A minute later the merchant himself, a handsome man of about the same age as Jean Martin, came down. "Ah, madame, I am glad indeed to see you!" he said; for he had more than once been up to Nantes during the time she was living there, and had been frequently at the house. "I have been in great anxiety about you."

"Has Jean been here?" she asked in a tone of intense anxiety.

"No, madame, I have heard nothing of him for many months; not, indeed, since his lugger first came down here with his letter and the deed of her sale to myself. Did you expect to find him here?"

"I hoped so, although there was no arrangement between us to meet here. Still, I thought that he would have made his way down here, if possible, as he would then be able to escape in the lugger."

"He may have found it more difficult than he thought," Monsieur Flambard said soothingly. "But do not let us be standing here. Pray, come up. My wife will be glad to

welcome you, for she has often heard me speak of Martin's English wife."

Leigh had been standing behind Patsey while they spoke, but as the merchant closed the door his eye fell upon him.

"Ah, monsieur, now I recognize you. You are Monsieur Leigh Stansfield, the brother of madame. I welcome you also cordially." So saying he led the way upstairs.

CHAPTER XVII.

A GRAVE RISK.

NOTHING could be kinder than the reception of the fugitives by Madame Flambard. She had heard so much of Patsey, she said, from her husband, to whom she had been married six months before, that she had quite shared his anxiety about the fate of Jean Martin, who had more than once been mentioned as being one of the leaders of the Vendéans. She soon went off with Patsey to put the child to bed, and while they were away Monsieur Flambard took Leigh into his smoking-room.

"Before," he said, "I ask you anything about your adventures, I must explain to you the state of things here. Until November last Bordeaux, and indeed the whole of the Gironde, was moderate. All our deputies—who have now, as perhaps you know, either fallen on the scaffold or been hunted down like wild beasts—belonged to that party. They were earnest reformers, and were prominent among the leaders of the Revolution. They went with the stream up to a certain point. They voted for most of the sanguinary decrees, although in time they strove to mitigate the horrors inflicted by the extreme party, but after a long conflict the

latter, supported by the mob of Paris, obtained the ascendency, and the Girondists underwent the same fate that had befallen so many others. For myself I cannot pity them. They were all men of standing and of intelligence, but, without perceiving the terrible results that must follow, they unchained the mob and became its victims.

"Up to that time there had been but few executions here, and the power remained in the hands of the moderate party. Two months since, however, there was a local insurrection. The party of the terror suddenly rose, seized the members of the council, and threw them into prison. Other prominent citizens were seized, and the guillotine began its bloody work in earnest. Since that time every citizen of position or standing lives in momentary danger of arrest. Not a day passes but a dozen or so are seized and dragged off. I grant that at present there is nothing like the wholesale butchery that goes on at Nantes under that fiend Carrier, it is only those who have wealth and property that are seized. Not only in this town, but in the whole department, the agents of those who assumed power are busy. It is the Gironde, and therefore hateful to the party of Robespierre; and the proprietors of the land, who have hitherto been left unmolested, are being brought in daily.

"The trial is of course a mere farce, the prisoners are murdered, not because they are moderates, but because they are rich, and their wealth is divided among the members of the council and the mob who support them. So far I have been unmolested. I have never taken any part in politics, business being sufficient to occupy all my time. Another thing is, that I employ a considerable number of men, in addition to the crews of some ten vessels which belong to me. I believe that I am popular generally on the wharves, and it is the knowledge that my arrest might promote a tumult and might reverse

the present order of things that has led to my being left alone so far. Fortunately my servant, who let you in, has been in the family for the past five-and-thirty years, and is devoted to me. Had it been otherwise the position would have been a dangerous one. A report to the council that a young man in the attire of a sailor, accompanied by a lady and child, had arrived, and been at once received, would suffice to set them in motion. I should be accused of having a suspect, probably one of the emigrés, hidden here, and it would be difficult for me to explain your reception. You must, in the first place, attire yourself in clothes such as are worn by the mate of a privateer. I suppose you have papers, or you would not have been permitted to land."

Leigh took out the passes and handed them to him. M. Flambard glanced through them. "You must have managed well to have got hold of these passes, and they certainly put the matter on safer ground. However, I should find some difficulty in explaining how I came to show hospitality to two persons who, by a strangely roundabout course, had made their way from Arthenay. It is a little unfortunate that your sister kept her own name. Had it been otherwise, I might have said that her husband was captain of one of my ships. But he is unfortunately not unknown here. After Martin's flight from Nantes a claim was made by the committee of public safety at Nantes for the *Henriette*. Fortunately your brother-in-law had dated his bill of sale to me a fortnight before he left. The trial took place here, and as in those days law and justice still prevailed in the civic courts, the decision was given in my favour.

"It was urged on the other side that the transaction was invalid, as Martin must have parted with his vessel knowing well that he was a traitor to the Republic, and that his property would be confiscated. However, we got the best of them. There was no proof whatever that Martin was

conscious that he was suspected of being disaffected, and we claimed that he had only sold it as, having married, he had decided to give up the sea and to settle upon his estates in La Vendée. Of course at that time La Vendée had not risen, and it was not a crime worthy of death to own an estate there. Still, the case attracted attention, and the fact that my guest was a Madame Martin might recall the circumstances and at once awake a suspicion that she was the wife of one of those who had led the insurgents of La Vendée, in which case her life and yours would be certainly forfeited, and my receiving you would be regarded as amply sufficient evidence of my connection with the insurgents.

"Now, for our sakes, as well as yours, I think that it would be strongly advisable that you should take up your abode elsewhere. Believe me that it is no want of hospitality, but a measure of precaution, both for your sake and ours. To-morrow morning I should have to send in a statement that two guests have arrived here, and it is therefore most desirable that you should move without delay. Fortunately the wives of two or three of my captains live here; one of these especially, an excellent woman, has a house much larger than she needs, and takes in lodgers, generally captains whose families do not reside here, when their ships are in port. Therefore the fact that a sailor with a sister and her child have taken rooms there will excite no suspicion whatever. She will as a matter of course send in your name to the police of the town, together with your passes. They will be marked and returned without, probably, being glanced at."

"I think that that will be an excellent arrangement, sir," Leigh said, "and I quite see that our stay here might be awkward for you as well as us."

"I will at once go with you, that is as soon as you have told your sister the reason why it will be better for you to

establish yourselves elsewhere than here. I may tell you that I myself have been quietly making preparations for flight, but it is not all my captains whom I can trust. The *Henriette*, which I expect here shortly, has been delayed, but on her arrival I propose that we shall all cross the Channel together. I hear the ladies' voices in the next room. It were best that we got this painful business over at once."

Madame Flambard was greatly distressed when Leigh gave his sister an account of the conversation they had had, and the resolution at which they had arrived; but Patsey at once saw that it was most desirable that the change should be made, and assured her hostess that she fully recognized that their safety would be imperilled by staying at their house.

"It would be a cruel kindness on your part to insist upon our stopping here, Madame Flambard. We know that it is from no lack of hospitality that we are leaving, but that you are making a real sacrifice in order to procure our safety.

"Shall I put on my things at once, monsieur?"

"By no means. I will go with your brother first to see if Madame Chopin has other lodgers; if so, I will go to the wife of one of my clerks, who also lets a portion of a house; or, if you would not mind poor accommodation, to another of the captain's wives, as in your brother's character of a sailor it would be more natural for you to go to such a lodging, which may very well have been recommended to you by the skipper of the lugger in which you came here. When we have arranged things we will return. It is but a quarter of an hour's walk, for the house stands near the river above the bridge."

He at once set out with Leigh. On arriving at the house they found that there were at present no lodgers there.

"This young sailor has brought a letter of recommenda-

tion to me, Madame Chopin. He has a married sister and her child with him, and I am sure that you will make them very comfortable, and can supply them with what they may require. They have just arrived by sea from Havre; the length of their stay is uncertain. This young man is looking for a berth as mate, and shall have the first vacancy on one of my vessels. His sister may stop with you for some time, as she is hoping that her husband will return here, though he is so long overdue that I fear his ship has been either lost or captured by the English."

"I will do my best to make them both comfortable, Monsieur Flambard, and thank you for recommending them to me."

Leigh saw the rooms, which consisted of two bedrooms, and a third room which was similarly furnished; but Madame Chopin said that she would take down the bed and put some other furniture into it, so that they could use it as a sitting-room.

"We should prefer that, madame, for my sister at times is greatly depressed, and we should prefer being alone."

"I can quite understand that," the woman said. "Well, you will not be troubled with society here, as I have only these three rooms to let, so that unless my husband comes home before you go, we shall be quite alone."

"I shall return with my sister in an hour's time," Leigh said; "that will not be too late for you?"

"No, monsieur, it is little past eight o'clock yet, and it will take me fully two hours to get everything straight and tidy."

"Very well, then, we will say ten o'clock," Monsieur Flambard said. "I will keep Monsieur Porson, as he has news to give me concerning the friend who recommended him to me."

On their return to the merchant's, they sat chatting for

an hour over the adventures through which Leigh and his sister had passed, and the manner in which they were separated from Jean Martin.

"I think you have every reason to hope, madame," Monsieur Flambard said cheerfully. "Jean is not the sort of fellow to let himself be caught in a hole; and I expect that when he found that he could not rejoin you, he at once struck north, either for Dunkirk or Calais, and has probably managed to be taken over in a fishing-boat or a smuggler, and if he failed in doing so he would probably make off in a boat single-handed. I think that you have every reason to hope that you will find him at Poole when you arrive there; but even should he not be there, there will be no reason for despair. He may have had difficulty in getting away, he may have been impressed for the naval service. At any rate, I have great faith that he will turn up sooner or later. Certainly when he has once managed to get a seafaring outfit he will be safe from any fear of detection as one of the terrible Vendéan insurgents."

At a quarter to ten little Louis was taken out of bed, wrapped up in a cloak, and carried by Leigh. Monsieur Flambard insisted on again accompanying them. The streets were now almost deserted, and they soon arrived at Madame Chopin's.

"I quite forgot to ask if you would want anything before going to bed, but I can make you a cup of good coffee if you would like it."

"Thank you, but we have eaten but an hour ago."

Saying good-night to M. Flambard, they went up to their rooms, their hostess leading with a candle. She had made the most of her time since Leigh left the house. White curtains had been put up at the windows, and everything looked beautifully clean, and Patsey uttered an exclamation of pleasure when she entered the room.

"This does indeed look fresh and home-like," she said. "Thank you for taking so much trouble, madame."

The next morning Leigh procured a jacket and waistcoat with brass buttons, and a cap with a gold band. He then sauntered along the wharves and went aboard the *Trois Frères*, and told the skipper that no news had been received of his sister's husband. It had been agreed that it was best that they should not go to Monsieur Flambard's house, but that the merchant should call at the lodging after dark. When Leigh returned to the mid-day meal, he found that the papers had come back from the mairie, duly stamped and countersigned, and that as no one had been to the house to make inquiries, it was evident that no suspicion had been excited.

During the next four or five days Leigh went but little into the town, contenting himself with keeping near the wharves, watching the vessels loading or discharging cargo, and spending much of his time on board the *Trois Frères*. On the afternoon of the fifth day he saw a lugger approaching, and as it came near he made out, to his great delight, that it was the *Henriette*. As soon as she dropped anchor in the stream, her boat rowed to the wharves. Lefaux was sitting in the stern, and as soon as he landed, went off in the direction of Monsieur Flambard's office. Leigh did not go near him. He thought that it would be better that the honest sailor should learn that he and his sister were there from the merchant before he spoke to him, as any imprudent remark on the sailor's part might be caught up by one of the spies of the committee and lead to trouble. As he expected, Monsieur Flambard came round with Lefaux that evening.

"I am heartily glad to see you again, madame," he said as Patsey shook him by the hand; "and you too, Monsieur Stansfield. I began to think that I never should do so,

and I only wish that Monsieur Jean was here too. Still, I feel confident that he has got safely away; trust a sailor for getting out of a scrape. You must have gone through a lot, madame, but you don't look any the worse for it."

"Except anxiety for my husband, I have gone through nothing to speak of. I had a horse to ride, and generally a shelter to sleep under, and for myself I had little to complain of; but it was terrible to see the sufferings of the peasant women and children, and of the many men broken down by sickness. And there was, too, the anxiety as to the safety of my husband and brother in each battle that took place. But of hardship to myself there was very little."

"Well, madame, I hope that I shall soon have the pleasure of sailing into Poole again with you and Monsieur Leigh on board, and also with my good master, Monsieur Flambard, and his wife."

"When will you be off again?" Patsey asked eagerly.

"That is what I have come to talk with you about, Madame Martin," Monsieur Flambard said. "I have pretty good information as to what passes at the meetings of the wretches who call themselves the committee of public safety, and I hear that there will very shortly be a seizure of a number of prominent citizens, and my name has been mentioned. They are only hanging back until they can decide upon what shall be the pretext, since none of those named have taken any part in politics here. All those who have done so have been already seized. However, the blow may come at any moment. The *Henriette* has already begun to discharge her cargo, fortunately there is not much of it. The moment that she has finished she will drop down below the rest of the shipping, and be ready to start at any moment. If we find that the matter is not absolutely

pressing, we will go quietly on board as soon as she is ready and sail at once, as there will then be no fear of her being stopped.

"If, however, I find that the order for our arrest is on the point of being issued, I will send her down and let her lie beyond Fort Medoc and Blaye. If it were discovered that I was missing a few hours after she had started, it would be suspected at once that I had gone in the *Henriette*, mounted messengers would carry the news down to both forts, and the boat would be forced to heave to as she passed between them. Therefore I shall have a light carriage with two fast horses kept in readiness a quarter of a mile outside the town, and a relay of horses fifteen miles on, which is about half-way, and join the ship below the forts. If, as may possibly happen, I am suddenly arrested in the streets, I shall have my servant near me. He will have his orders, which will be to hurry back home to tell his mistress to put on the disguise of a peasant woman that has already been prepared for her, and to go with her at once to the carriage; and another man whom I can also thoroughly trust is to come here and say to you, 'It is a bad day.' Then you, and your sister, and the child, will at once start to join my wife. She has most reluctantly consented to carry out this plan, for, as I tell her, it will add to my sufferings a hundred-fold were she also to be arrested."

By dint of great exertions the *Henriette* was unloaded by the following evening, and half an hour after her last bale was ashore she dropped down the river with the tide. She was to anchor off a small village two miles beyond Fort Medoc, and if inquiry was made as to why she stopped there, Lefaux was to say that he was to take in some wine that Monsieur Flambard had bought from a large grower in that district, and that the lugger was then

going to Charente to fill up with brandy for Havre. Leigh had the day before gone with the merchant into the extensive cellars which adjoined the house.

"There is not a man here," Monsieur Flambard said, "who would not do all in his power for me. Some of them have been with the firm nearly all their lives. I treat them well, and I am happy to say that not one of them has taken any part in our last troubles. Indeed, I am told that is one of the matters that, if I am arrested, will be brought against me. It will be said that it was a proof of my enmity to the Convention, that none of my people took the side of the patriots. However, it tells both ways. I have over forty men here. They have, of course, friends among the porters and others working on the wharves, and a disturbance might take place were I arrested. However, the scoundrels have now got such absolute power, that no doubt they feel that they could disregard any local rising, and, indeed, with the plunder of my store before them, they could reckon on the devotion of the greater part of the mob of the town."

On the morning after the *Henriette* had sailed, the merchant took Leigh down to a little wayside inn half a mile below the town, where he had placed his carriage and horses, and gave instructions to his coachman that he was to place himself under Leigh's orders.

"At whatever hour of the day or night he comes, you will start at once with him, and the lady and child who accompany him. You will know in that case that I am not coming, but have been arrested."

"But, master—"

"It must be as I say, Pierre. Once I am arrested—and it is almost certain my wife would be arrested with me—nothing can be done to help, and it would be a great satisfaction to me to know that my friends have escaped.

There will be in that case no need of extreme haste, for no one knows that they are in anyway connected with me, and there will be no inquiries for them."

Leigh told Patsey that afternoon that, in the event of the Flambards being arrested, he might possibly, instead of coming himself, send a messenger to her, and that she must then start at once, and await his coming in front of the church, at the end of the street in which the merchant's house stood.

"You had better have a letter written to our landlady, inclosing the sum due to her and a week's rent in advance, and say that we are hastily called away to Blaye, but may return in a few days, and begging her to keep the rooms vacant for a week, for which you leave the money. You had better write the letter at once, so that if you get my message you can leave instantly. There is nothing like being prepared for everything. Of course the arrest of the Flambards would not really affect us in any way, or add to our danger, but if the coachman were to hear of it before we got there, he might disregard his master's orders and return at once with the carriage."

Leigh had in his mind the very short notice that Desailles had had of his danger, and how narrowly he escaped being arrested, although he had a friend who kept him acquainted with what was going on. He thought that it was still more likely that the arrest of the Flambards would take place suddenly. It would probably be decided upon by two or three of the men who were the leaders of the party of terror, and no word would get about as to their intentions until the arrest had been absolutely made, in which case the captives would be lodged in prison before the matter would be known, and all fear of an *émeute* be thereby prevented. He had therefore decided upon what was the best course to pursue, and posted himself in

the street, where he could observe anyone who entered or left Flambard's house.

It was already getting dusk when he saw two commissaries of the committee, with six armed men, stop before the door and knock. It was opened; two of the men remained outside, and the rest entered. He ran to the stores. The head cellarman had gone round the place with him and his master, and Leigh at once went to him.

"Lefranc," he said, "your master and mistress have just been arrested. Two commissaries and six armed men have gone into the house. There is time to save them yet. They have a carriage in waiting a short distance away, and if we can overpower these men and tie them up, so that they cannot give the alarm until morning, Monsieur Flambard and his wife will get safely away. They have a vessel waiting for them in readiness down the river."

"I am your man, sir, and everyone here."

"Half a dozen will be enough. Pick out that number of strong fellows whom you can rely upon. Let them all take off their aprons, and tear up this black silk handkerchief, and as we leave the cellar let each man put a piece over his face to act as a mask. There is a private door leading to the house, is there not?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"Well, draw the men off quietly, so that the others shall not notice them, and tell them to go to that door and to put on their masks there. Let each man take some weapon, but not a mallet or anything used in the trade. Let them bring some stout rope with them."

The man nodded and hurried away, and Leigh went to the end of the stores abutting on the house and stopped at the door he found there. In a minute the men began to arrive. They had, as he directed, thrown aside their leather aprons and put on blouses, so that

they differed in no way in appearance from ordinary working-men. One or two were armed with hammers, others with long knives. Each carried a piece of black handkerchief in his hand long enough to go from the forehead down to the mouth. Leigh tied these on with strings, cutting holes with his knife through which they could see. When the six men and the foreman had assembled they entered the house. The old servant was standing in the hall wringing his hands in distress.

"Where are they?" Leigh asked.

"In the master's study, sir. They are searching the drawers."

"Come on quietly," Leigh said to the men. "We must take them by surprise."

The door of the study was standing open, and lights burned within. Leigh had already instructed his followers to go at once for the armed men, and to knock them down before they had time to use their muskets. Going noiselessly up, they entered the door with a sudden rush. The two commissaries were engaged in emptying the contents of the table drawers into a basket. The armed ruffians had leant their muskets against the wall, and had seated themselves in comfortable chairs. Flambard stood with his arm round his wife, looking disdainfully at the proceedings of the commissaries.

In a moment the scene changed. Before the men could even rise from their seats they were knocked down, bits of sacking thrust into their mouths, and their arms tied. Leigh had levelled one of the commissaries by a blow in the face, and the foreman had struck down the other with a hammer. These were also securely tied. The Flambards stood a picture of astonishment. The whole thing had passed so instantaneously that they could scarcely realize what had happened. When they did so, Madame Flambard,

who had hitherto preserved her calmness, burst into tears, while her husband embraced Leigh with passionate gratitude.

"Now, monsieur," the latter said, "you had better collect at once any money and jewels you wish to take with you, while we are making sure of these ruffians. Now, my men," he went on, "take these fellows into different rooms; but first let me see that the ropes are securely tied, although, as sailors, you are not likely to make any mistake that way. Still, it is as well to be on the safe side."

He himself then examined the fastenings, and added a few more cords.

"Now, when you have got them into separate rooms, tie their feet to a heavy piece of furniture; make a slip-knot at the end of another rope, put the noose round the neck, and fasten the other end to another piece of furniture, that there may be no chance of their getting loose till their friends come to their assistance."

He saw all this securely done. Then he said:

"There is one more thing to see to. In time those fellows at the door will be getting impatient, and will begin to suspect that all is not right. We must get them inside, and then tie them up with the others. Stand back behind the door as they enter, and as I close it, throw yourselves upon them. One of you grip each of them by the throat, and another seize his musket and wrench it from him; the rest will be easy."

The men placed themselves as directed, and Leigh then opened the door and said, "You are to come in. They will take some little time over the papers, and there is plenty of good wine for you to amuse yourselves with."

With an exclamation of satisfaction the two men entered.

"It is very dark in here," one said, as Leigh closed the door. "Why didn't you get a light?"

The words were scarcely spoken when there was a rush,

a sudden exclamation, the sound of a short struggle, and then silence.

"Keep hold of them tightly while I fetch a candle," Leigh said, and, running upstairs, soon came down with the light. The two guards were standing helpless in the hands of their captors, and gripped so tightly that they were unable to utter the least sound.

"Now, put the gags into their mouths and truss them up as you did the others."

Leaving the men to carry out his orders he ran upstairs again.

"Everything is arranged now," he said. "The whole of the fellows are bound, and the road is free for you. I should go out by the back way, for there is sure to be a little crowd in front of the house attracted by the sight of the guard standing outside. I do not think that there is any extraordinary hurry, but in an hour or so, if either of the men who have ordered your arrest is waiting at the prison, he may get impatient, and send down to see what detains the party here. I am going, in the first place, to have the servants bound, so that they may not be suspected of having aided in this business. As soon as that is done I shall hasten to my lodging and bring my sister and the child to the inn where you have your carriage. Of course you will have the horses put in as soon as you get there. I shall not be very long behind you, as I shall take the first fiacre and drive down to that end of the town, and then discharge him. As I am not in any way associated with you, even if inquiries are made our movements will throw no light upon yours."

The conversation took place in the bedroom where Madame Flambard was, with her husband, packing up a few necessaries.

"As we go downstairs," he went on, "I shall make some

remark about our going straight on board. That will put them on the wrong scent, and they will waste a lot of time searching all the craft in the river. I do it principally because I want them to believe that you have been rescued by a party of sailors. You heard me say that as sailors they would be accustomed to tie the knots tightly, and of course my uniform will help to lead them astray. The men with me were really some of your cellarmen under Lefranc."

"We shall be ready in three minutes. Fortunately we have not much beyond my wife's jewels that we want to save. Like your wife's brother, I have already made provision in England for this."

"I will be off as soon as I see the servants tied up."

He ran downstairs again. The two men and the maids willingly suffered themselves to be tied up when Leigh explained to them the reasons for which it was done.

"Mind," he said, "if questioned, you say you believe that the men who rushed in and fastened you up were sailors."

Before the work was done Monsieur Flambard came down, and, standing at the door which communicated with the cellars, shook hands with his rescuers as they went out, and thanked them most heartily in the name of himself as well as his wife for the service that they had rendered. The men, before they passed through the door, took off their masks. It had already been arranged that they should at once scatter and return quietly to the places where they had been at work, and in so large a place it was not likely that their absence had been noticed, as it would be supposed that they had gone to another part of the cellar, and it was not above twenty minutes since they had left it. As soon as they had gone out, the door was locked on the inside. Leigh and the Flambards went out at the back

entrance into another street and there separated, Leigh hurrying back to his lodgings. Madame Chopin opened the door.

"Madame," he said, "I have good news for my sister. I hope that we shall be able to obtain news of her husband at Blaye, for he may, if my information is correct, have sailed up the Dordogne, and we may catch him as he comes down again. If my information is not correct, we shall return here. I will therefore, if you will allow me, pay you our reckoning at once, and also the rent of the rooms for another week, so that if we return we may find them unoccupied."

"But you are not going to start this evening surely, monsieur?"

"Yes; I have arranged for a passage on a boat that is on the point of starting, and have not a moment to lose."

He ran upstairs to Patsey.

"They have gone on to the carriage," he said. "Put on Louis's things and your own; I will tell you all about it as we go."

He then went down again and settled up with his landlady, who was profuse in her exclamations of regret at their departure. In a couple of minutes Patsey came down. She had the letter that she had written in her hand. Leigh took it from her.

"I have already settled up with our kind hostess," he said. "Say good-bye, dear, at once, or the boat may be starting without us."

A minute later they were out of the house. Leigh carried Louis, and led the way to a spot near, where two or three fiacres were always standing. He took the first, and told the driver to put them down in a street at the lower end of the town, the name of which he had noticed when he went with Monsieur Flambard to the inn where the carriage was

standing. When he got to the end of the street he told the driver to stop, saying that he was not sure of the number. Paying the man his fare, they walked slowly down the street until the fiacre had driven off, and then returning, took the road leading into the country. Ten minutes' walking brought them close to the little inn. They met the carriage coming along slowly three hundred yards before they arrived there. It stopped at once.

"You are here sooner than I expected, madame," Monsieur Flambard said, as he alighted and helped Patsey in.

As she took her place by the side of Madame Flambard the latter threw her arms round her neck.

"Thank God this awful time is over!" she said. "It is to your brother we owe it that we are not both now in that terrible prison."

"Leigh is good at breaking prison," Patsey said. "He rescued me from the gaol at Nantes."

By this time her husband and Leigh had taken their places, Louis, still soundly asleep, was transferred to his mother's lap, and the carriage, turning, went back at the full speed of the horses.

CHAPTER XVIII.

HOME.

"WHY did you come down the road?" Leigh asked Monsieur Flambard as the carriage flew past the little inn. "We had not arranged for that, and in the dark we might have passed it without knowing that it was yours."

"We were on the look-out for you, and had no fear of missing you. I decided to drive back to the town as we went out. I believe the innkeeper to be an honest fellow, and he has been one of our customers for a number of years, but I thought it just as well to throw dust in his eyes. Therefore, as I got into the carriage I said in his hearing, 'Don't go through the main streets of the town, but drive round and strike the road beyond it. Keep on to Langon; we shall stop there to-night.' We drove off fast, and only broke into a walk just before you met us. The innkeeper would have gone into the house again before we met, and as I noticed that the shutters were up, he certainly would not have supposed that the vehicle which passed was our carriage coming back again. Well, thank God we are all safe and together! In three hours we shall be at the village. Lefaux was to keep a boat ashore, and to be himself at the inn. There is only one in the village."

The road was a good one, and the horses fast, and in less than an hour and a half they reached the spot where the relay of horses had been stationed. Five minutes sufficed to make the change, and in a little under three hours after starting they arrived at the village two miles below Fort Medoc. They stopped at the first house.

"Now, Gregoire," Monsieur Flambard said as they alighted, "here are five louis for yourself. You had better drive back to the place where we changed horses and put up there for the night, to-morrow you can go quietly back to Bordeaux. Don't get there until late in the afternoon. Return the carriage and the other two horses to the stables where you hired them, and take my two horses back to our stables. You are sure to be questioned, and can tell them the truth. Say that you acted by my orders, and had no idea of the reason for which I had hired the

carriage and the extra horses; that you knew that I often made flying visits to the vineyards, and you thought I wanted to see some proprietor of Medoc on business and to return as quickly as possible, and were much surprised when you saw that madame went with me. Do not say anything about our picking up my friends on the road."

"I understand, monsieur, and I will stick to that story. God bless you, sir, and you, madame, and I trust that before long you will be back again with us!"

"I hope so, Gregoire, but I fear it will not be for some time to come."

They now walked forward, Leigh hurrying on in front until he came to the little village inn. It was already closed, but on his knocking violently at the door, a window above was opened.

"What are you making such a noise for at this time of night?"

"I have come to call Captain Lefaux," he said. "A messenger has just brought an order from Bordeaux that he is to get up anchor at daylight."

"I will call him," the landlord said; and in three minutes Lefaux came out.

"We are all here, Lefaux," Leigh said, "and we want to go on board and get up anchor at once, and to be as far down the river as we can before daylight."

"The saints be praised that you have all escaped, Monsieur Stansfield! We will lose no time. I have two men sleeping in a cottage close to where the boat is made fast. They sleep on the ground-floor, and I can tap at the window and get them out. I told them to turn in as they stood, as they might be wanted at any moment."

The others had now come up, and together they went down to the boat. The tide had turned about an hour before, and the boat was afloat.

"Now, I will fetch the men out," the skipper said; and in five minutes he came down with them.

They untied the head-rope of the boat from the stump to which it was fastened and hauled it in.

"That is the lugger, I suppose?" Leigh said, pointing to a dark object a hundred yards from the shore.

"That is her, sir, and it won't take us long to get under weigh. Everything is ready for hoisting sail."

They rowed off to the *Henriette*, and Leigh could hardly restrain a shout of joy at finding himself once again on board her. The crew had been unchanged since they left Nantes, and, tumbling up on deck as they heard the boat coming off, greeted Leigh most heartily, and respectfully saluted Patsey and their owner. They would have broken into cheers had not their skipper sharply silenced them.

"It will be time enough to cheer when we reach the open sea, lads," he said, "and we will do so more heartily still when we land Madame Martin, Monsieur Leigh, and the owner and his wife either on English ground or the deck of an English ship."

"You mistake, captain," Monsieur Flambard said. "As you know, the lugger was only passed over to me by Monsieur Martin to escape confiscation. There is no longer any need that I should appear as owner, and in fact Madame Martin, as representative of her husband, is the owner of the *Henriette*, and I and my wife are passengers on board her."

"I hope that you will find it all right below, madame," Captain Lefaux said. "Captain Martin's cabin—we have always called it so—is ready for you and Madame Flambard, monsieur will take the spare cabin, and Monsieur Leigh mine."

"I will sleep on one of the sofas in the saloon, captain. I should not feel comfortable if I turned you out; and

besides, I like being able to pop quietly on deck whenever I feel inclined: so that is settled."

"Now we will have a tumbler of hot brandy and water," the captain said; "you have had a cold drive. What will you take, ladies?"

Both declared that they wanted nothing but to get to bed, and they at once retired to the after-cabin, with little Louis, who had slept without waking ever since he had been lifted from his bed at Bordeaux. The captain had given orders as soon as he came on board to have the sails hoisted, and as Monsieur Flambard and Leigh sipped their grog they had the satisfaction of hearing the water rippling past, and of feeling by the heel of the boat that there was sufficient wind to send them along at a good rate.

"What is she making, captain?" Leigh asked as he went up to take a last look round.

"About five knots, but the wind is getting up. There was scarcely a breath when I turned in at ten o'clock."

"How far do you call it to the mouth of the river?"

"It is about forty miles to the tower of Cordouan. Once past that we reckon we are at sea."

"Eight hours going at five knots. It is nearly twelve now; it will be daylight when we get there."

"I hope that we shall be there before that, sir. You have not allowed for the tide nor for the wind increasing. I reckon we shall be there by six, and day does not begin to break till an hour later. I want to get past without being seen. There are always a couple of gun-boats lying there. I fancy that they know us pretty well by this time, but sometimes as we go out they make us lie to and come on board, to see that we are not taking off suspected persons, and that any passengers we have tally with those on the manifest. If they should take it into their heads to do that in the morning it would be awkward, and I am

anxious to get past without being seen. Once out of gun-shot I do not mind. I fancy that we can show our heels to either of the gun-boats."

Leigh and Monsieur Flambard turned in. The latter slept soundly, but Leigh went frequently on deck.

"She is doing well," the captain said gleefully, "she is going fully seven knots an hour. You see, Master Leigh, I still keep to Captain Martin's terms and count by knots instead of by leagues. The tide is giving us another two knots. I reckon that at the rate we are going we shall keep it pretty nearly down to the mouth of the river; seven and two are nine, and as I have just been looking up the chart, and as I find that it is but thirty-seven from the village where we started, we shall do it in five hours at the outside. The river is wide at the mouth, and by heading south directly we get there, and running so for a couple of miles before we put straight out to sea, there will be no chance whatever of our being seen. Once away we shall of course lay a course inside the islands till we are off Finisterre, then we can either strike out into the Channel or coast along as far as Cape la Hague, and thence sail straight for Poole. But there is no occasion to discuss that at present."

Satisfied with the assurance of the captain, Leigh turned in again at two o'clock, and this time slept soundly. When he awoke the motion of the vessel told him that he was at sea, and he saw that it was broad daylight. Leaping off the sofa, he saw by his watch that it was eight o'clock, and he was speedily on deck. The mate was in charge.

"The captain turned in half an hour ago, sir. Do you wish him to be called?"

"Certainly not. Where are we now?"

"We are just passing between the island of Oleron and the mainland."

"Oh, yes, I see! When I came down, of course we saw

it from the other way, and I did not recognize it at first. So we managed to get past Cordouan without being seen?"

"Yes, we rounded the south point of the river before six o'clock, laid her head south-west for an hour, and just as it became light changed our course north and passed three miles to seaward of the tower. They doubtless supposed that we were coming up from Bayonne. At any rate, they paid no attention to us."

"The wind is blowing pretty strongly."

"Yes, sir, we should have had a rough tumble of sea if it had been from the west, and should have had to lie up under shelter of the island; but as it is blowing right off shore it is just about the right strength for us, and we shall make a quick run of it if it holds. I hear there is no news of Captain Martin, monsieur?"

"No, I am sorry to say there is not; but I have every hope that we shall find he has got to Poole before us."

"We are all hoping that nothing has happened to him. Of course we heard that he was fighting in La Vendée, and as every one of us comes from one port or another there we only wished that we had been with him."

"You were well out of it, Edouard; it was a terrible business. No one could have fought better than your people did, but they had all France against them; and few indeed of those who were engaged from the first can ever have returned to their homes. And even when they get there there can be no safety for them, for Carrier and his commissioners seem to be determined to annihilate the Vendéans altogether."

The mate indulged in many strong expressions as to the future fate of Carrier and his underlings.

"We heard of that attack on the jail, Master Leigh. I guessed that you were in that, for among the prisoners who

were delivered the names of Monsieur Martin and Madame Jean Martin were mentioned."

"Yes, Captain Martin and I were in the thick of it. There was very little fighting to do, for we chose a time when the troops were all busy with Cathelineau's and Stofflet's attack, and we had really only to open the door of the prison to get them out."

"The captain has been telling us that Monsieur Flambard was also in danger of arrest. It is atrocious. Everyone knows that he is a good master, and I never heard a word said against him."

"That has very little to do with it," Leigh said. "His crime was that he was rich, and the scoundrels wanted his money. They did arrest him, but he was rescued before they got him out of his house, and fortunately everything had been prepared for his flight. At the present moment they are searching high and low for him, and I expect that no craft there will be permitted to leave till she has been thoroughly ransacked, to make sure that he and madame are not hiding there."

"Ah, they are bad times, monsieur! It may be that things were not quite as they might have been, though for my part I never saw anything to grumble at, nor did any other Vendéan as far as I ever heard; but if things had been ten times as bad as they were, they would have been better than what is going on now. Why, monsieur, all Europe must think that we Frenchmen are devils. They say that more than a hundred thousand people have been put to death, not counting the loss in La Vendée."

"Which must be quite as much more, Edouard; and it is no consolation to know that the loss of the Blues must have been fully equal to ours."

"How is it to end, monsieur?"

"I think that the first part will end soon. As far as I

could find out as we travelled through the country, and in Paris, even the mob are getting sick of this terrible bloodshed. That feeling will get stronger, until finally I believe that Robespierre and his gang will be overturned. What will come after that I don't know. One may hope that some strong man will rise, drive out the Convention, and establish a fixed government. After that, I should say that no one can guess what will follow."

"There is one consolation, monsieur, no change can be for the worse."

"That is absolutely certain." He went to the galley. "Well, cook, when are you going to let us have some breakfast? I am famishing, for I have eaten nothing since twelve o'clock yesterday."

"It will be ready in twenty minutes, monsieur. I was just going to ask you if you would call the ladies, or whether you will take the café au lait and eggs to their door."

"I will go and ask them."

He went and knocked at the cabin door. "Patsey, café au lait will be ready in twenty minutes. Will you and Madame Flambard take it in your cabin or come into the saloon?"

"I am just dressed, and shall be up on deck with Louis in two or three minutes. Madame Flambard will not get up. It is her first voyage, and she will not take anything to eat."

He was just going to knock at the merchant's door when there was a shout from within, "I have heard what you are saying, and shall be dressed in ten minutes."

Patsey was soon on deck.

"This is splendid, Leigh! and now that we have got away so wonderfully I feel more hopeful than I have done before that Jean also will have made his escape. Well, Louis, what do you think of this? You had better keep hold of your

uncle's hand as well as mine, or you may get a nasty tumble."

"Nasty, bad ship, mama?"

"It is because the wind is blowing hard and the sea is rough. We had smooth water on our last voyage, you know."

"Louis not like him," he said positively; "very bad ship."

"You will be all right if you keep hold of your uncle's hand. He will walk up and down with you."

"This is good indeed," Monsieur Flambard said. "If we go on as well as we have begun we shall have nothing to grumble at."

The voyage to Ushant was accomplished without any adventure. The lugger was so evidently French that two or three privateers who passed close by paid no attention to them; and although they saw the sails of more than one British cruiser, they either escaped observation or were considered too insignificant to be chased. On the voyage they had agreed that when they came to Ushant they would be guided by the wind. If it continued to blow as it had done from the east, it would be a great loss of time to beat in to St. Malo, and they would be within sight of England long before they could make in there. As the wind was unchanged they therefore laid their course from Ushant for the Isle of Wight. Before they had been many hours out they saw an English brig of war making towards them. They did not attempt to escape, but slightly changed their course so as to head for her. As the brig approached they lowered their mainsail. The brig was thrown up into the wind a couple of lengths away.

"Send your boat on board!" the captain of the brig shouted. They had indeed already got the boat over the side.

"You may as well come with me," Leigh said as he

stepped into her. "Monsieur Flambard will take care of Louis while you are away." Seeing that there was a woman in the boat the brig lowered its accommodation ladder, and the captain was standing at the gangway.

"We are English, sir," Leigh said. "The lugger is owned by my sister's husband if he is alive. If not, I suppose it belongs to her. We are escaping from France with two French friends. My brother-in-law was a Vendéan, and has fought through the war. We were with him until at the attack on Le Mans we were separated. We hope to meet him at Poole. The vessel traded between that port and Nantes until the war broke out. Some members of the family are already established there, and our father is a magistrate, living within a couple of miles of the town."

"I am sorry, madam, that I cannot offer you a passage, but I must not leave my cruising ground."

"Thank you, sir; we are doing very well in the lugger. We intend to register her as a British vessel, and the crew, who are all Vendéans, will probably remain in our service until things settle down in France."

"And were you through the war too, madam?" the captain asked Patsey.

"Not through the whole of it," she replied. "Our château was burned down by the Republicans, and I was carried to the prison at Nantes, and should have been guillotined had not my husband and brother rescued me when the Vendéans were attacking the town. I remained at the farmhouse until the Vendéans could no longer maintain themselves in La Vendée and crossed the Loire, then I accompanied my husband."

"Well, madame, I congratulate you heartily on your escape. We heard terrible tales in England of what is going on in France."

"However terrible they are they can hardly give you an

idea of the truth. At Nantes, for instance, the guillotine is too slow, and hundreds of men, women, and children are put into boats, which are sunk in the middle of the river. It is too horrible to think of."

"Is there anything that I can do for you, madam? Anything in the way of provisions with which we can supply you?"

"No, thank you, we have everything that we can want."

"Then I will detain you no further," he said, "and can only wish you a pleasant voyage. I see by the course you are steering that you are making for the Isle of Wight. You ought to be there to-morrow afternoon."

The boat returned to the lugger, the sails were filled again, and at four next afternoon the *Henrietta* passed Handfast Point and headed for the entrance to Poole harbour. As the distance from home lessened, Patsey's excitement increased hourly. She could not sit down for a minute quietly, but walked restlessly up and down the deck. She had scarcely spoken when Leigh said, after a long look through the telescope:

"I can make out the house on the hill quite plainly, Patsey."

At any other time Patsey, who dearly loved their old home, would have shown the liveliest interest; but just then her thoughts were all of Jean, and she could spare none for anything else.

"They must have made us out by this time," she said, as they passed Durleston.

"I should think so, but I don't suppose they watch as we used to do in the old days. The revenue men up there"—and he nodded up the cliff—"must of course see that we are French, and if there are any of them who were here three or four years ago, no doubt they know us again, and must be wondering what brings us here."

They had scarcely passed Durleston when Patsey sprang

on to the rail, holding fast by the shrouds, and gazed intently at the narrow entrance of the channel between the island and the mainland.

"There is a boat coming out," she exclaimed.

"The coast-guard are sure to have launched their boat as soon as they made us out. They would naturally come out to inquire what a French lugger is doing here."

He went forward with his telescope and took a long look at the boat. "Yes, it is the coast-guard rowing six oars."

In a minute or two he went back to his sister.

"Do get down, Patsey," he urged. "Of course they may have news of Jean, but you must not be disappointed too much if they have not. You know that we have agreed all along that very likely we shall be the first back, and no news cannot be considered as bad news. It will only mean that we must wait."

She shook her head, but did not reply.

"There are three men in the stern," she said at last.

Leigh sprang up on to the rail behind her.

"Yes, there are three sitters."

Suddenly one of the men stood up. The boat was still too far away for the figure to be distinguished. Leigh would have called to the captain to use his glass, but he feared to hold out even a hope to Patsey that Jean might be in the boat. A minute later the standing figure began to wave his arms wildly.

"It is Jean, it is Jean!" Patsey cried, "he has made me out."

It was well that Leigh had taken his place beside her, for suddenly her figure swayed; his arm closed round her, and, calling to the captain to help him, he lowered her and laid her on the deck.

"My sister has fainted, bring a bucket of water." Madame Flambard took Patsey from him. "She thinks she sees her

husband in that boat," Leigh said. "Pray try and get her round before it comes up. I think it must be he, but if it should not be we will take her below directly we are sure. It will be a terrible blow to her to be disappointed now; but possibly they may have news of him, and that would be almost as good as his being here."

"She could not have recognized him at this distance," Monsieur Flambard said.

"No, she did not; but he would have recognized her. At least he must have seen that there was a woman standing upon the rail watching them, and it was hardly likely that, coming in his own boat, it should be anyone but her. I don't see why anyone else should have waved his arms suddenly in the way that he did."

He took the bucket of water from Lefaux's hands.

"We think it is Captain Martin," he said. "Run up the shrouds and take a look through the glass." Then, taking a double handful of water, he dashed it into his sister's face.

"But, monsieur—" Madame Flambard began to remonstrate.

"Oh, it does not matter about her being wet a bit," Leigh said, "the great thing is to bring her round. There, she is opening her eyes. I never saw her faint before; she is not that sort."

At this moment there was a joyous shout from the skipper, "It is Captain Martin himself; hurrah, boys! it is the captain."

The crew broke into joyous shouts.

"It is Jean, Patsey!" Leigh said sharply. "Thank God it is he! Steady, steady!" he added, as his sister suddenly sat up and held out her arms to be lifted to her feet. "Are you all right, dear? He will not be alongside for some little time. Don't try to get up for a minute or two."

As Madame Flambard supported her he ran down into the cabin, poured out a little brandy and water, and ran upstairs again with the glass. "There, dear, drink this, you must be strong enough to greet him as he comes alongside."

She drank it up, and then he helped her to her feet. She stood leaning on the rail, but unable to see the boat through her tears. Leigh ran up a few of the ratlines and waved his cap, and two or three minutes later the whole crew, clustered along the side, raised a loud cheer as the boat came near. Patsey held out her arms to Jean, who had, after his first eager signal, dropped back into his seat, and sat there with his face covered in his hands until within two or three hundred yards of the lugger, then he had stood up again. He waved his cap in reply to the cheers of the crew, but his eyes were fixed upon Patsey. As the boat came alongside, he sprang on to the channel, swung himself over the rail, Patsey falling into his arms as his feet touched the deck. The others all drew back, and for two or three minutes husband and wife stood together; then Jean, placing Patsey in a chair, turned and embraced Leigh warmly.

"I felt sure that you would bring her back safely," he said, "I never allowed myself to doubt it for a minute; and as soon as I made the lugger out from the height there, I was sure that she was on board, and ran down to the coast-guard station, and Captain Whiffler and the crew were in her in a couple of minutes. Where is Louis?"

"Here he is!" Monsieur Flambard said, coming forward with the child in his arms.

Louis knew his father at once, and greeted him with a little shout of pleasure.

"And you too, Flambard?" Jean said, after he had kissed and embraced his boy. "I am glad indeed that you too have escaped from that inferno they call France."

M 572

"FOR TWO OR THREE MINUTES HUSBAND AND WIFE STOOD TOGETHER."

"Yes, and my wife too, Martin; and, like your wife, we owe our safety to Leigh."

Although they had not met before, Jean and Madame Flambard shook hands as warmly as if they had been old friends, filled as they were by a common happiness. Captain Whiffler now came on board. He had hitherto remained in the boat in order that the family meetings should be got over before he showed himself.

"I am glad to see you, Master Leigh," he said, shaking hands as he spoke, "though I certainly should not have known you again. You ought no longer to be called Master Leigh, for you are a grown man. We have talked of you often and often, and it was not until Captain Martin arrived, a week ago, that we had any idea of what had become of you. Everyone will be glad to know that you are safely back; and you too, Mrs. Martin. Everyone has missed Miss Patsey, as they still call you when they speak of you."

Jean had been shaking hands with Lefaux and the crew, and now returned. "I don't know how we stand with this craft, captain. She has come into port of her own free-will and not as a prize. I claim that she is the property of a French Royalist, now an emigré; and as England, so far from being at war with French Royalists, is their ally, I intend to transfer her to my wife, and to have her registered as an English ship."

"Well, I suppose that you will have to settle that with the authorities, Captain Martin; but I should think that you are right, for other French craft have come across with emigrés, and have always been allowed to return. Is there any cargo on board?"

"None," Leigh said. "She left Bordeaux the moment she discharged the cargo she brought there."

As they dropped anchor off the island another boat came alongside, with Mr. Stansfield and his two sons, and there

was again a scene of tender greeting between them, her, and Leigh.

"Where is Polly?" Patsey asked.

"She was married two years ago," her father said, "to Harry King, the son of the banker, you know. Of course she lives in Poole now. And so this is your little boy?"

"Yes, but he cannot understand you at present. We have always talked French with him since the troubles began, as, had he spoken a word or two of English, it might have been fatal to him and to us; but he will soon pick it up now he is among you all."

It was a happy party indeed that evening at Netherstock, where Mr. Stansfield had insisted that Monsieur and Madame Flambard should stay till they could find a lodging to suit them in Poole. Madame Martin and her daughter Louise arrived a few minutes after the others had reached the house, as Jean had sent off a boy to tell them as soon as he made out the lugger, and a little later Patsey's sister Polly came over from Poole.

At first innumerable questions were asked on each side, and then Leigh related all that had happened since they left Le Mans. Monsieur Flambard interrupted when it came to the point where Leigh had rescued him and his wife, and gave full particulars of it to Jean, who translated it to the others. Then it came to Jean's turn.

"I was with Rochejaquelein," he said. "We had made our last charge down on the head of the enemy's column. It was hot work. Desailles was shot through the head close by my side, and as we rode off I felt my horse stumble, and knew that it was hit. Almost at the same moment my sword fell from my hand, my right arm being broken by a musket ball. La Rochejaquelein had given orders that this charge was to be the last. He knew that by this time the main part of the army would have left the

town. My horse lagged behind the others, and I was just turning it to ride to our meeting-place when it fell under me. I decided at once not to attempt to come to the rendezvous. In the first place, I felt sure that you had already followed out my instructions; and in the next place, had I joined you I should have ruined your chance of escape. Being dismounted, I should have hampered your flight, and even had we escaped pursuit, your having a man with a broken arm with you would everywhere have roused suspicion. I therefore determined to go as far as I could, and then hide in a wood and shift for myself.

"I got a peasant who was running past me to stop for a moment and bind my arm tightly with my sash. It was broken high up. I walked for two or three hours in the direction opposite to that in which the army had retreated. The peasant who had bound my arm up accompanied me. I found that he came from a farm near us; he had recognized me at once, but I had not noticed who it was. I told him to try and save himself, but he would not hear of it. 'Monsieur will require my aid,' he said, 'and it is my duty to render it. Besides, I am as likely to escape one way as the other. Monsieur knows more about the roads than I do, and will be able to direct me.' Of course, I assented, for I was glad indeed to have him with me. As soon as we hid up in a wood he cut two strips of bark off the trunk of a young tree, cut off the sleeve of my coat and shirt, put the arm straight, and with a strip torn off my sash first bandaged it, and then applied the two pieces of bark as splints, and finally bound another bandage round them.

"He had carried with him the blanket and valises he had taken off the saddle. The latter contained a bottle of wine and some food, and on this we lived for three days; then I determined upon starting. He went out in

the evening and managed to buy at a cottage two loaves of bread and a couple of bottles of wine. We divided these. Then I put on my disguise, and we started in different directions, he making south for the river, which I trust the good fellow managed to reach and cross safely, while I struck north. My wine and bread lasted me for four days, by which time I had arrived at Louviers on the Seine. I was now a hundred miles from Le Mans, and altogether beyond the line of action. I felt comparatively safe. My arm was so painful, however, that I felt that at whatever risk I must see a surgeon. I went first to an inn, where my appearance as a stranger and without means of conveyance excited the surprise of the landlord.

"'You are hurt, monsieur,' he said.

"'Yes; my horse fell under me and threw me heavily, and broke my arm. Before I could recover myself it had run away. Fortunately a peasant who was going by bandaged my arm up, and I was able to walk on here. Who is the best surgeon in the place?'

"He mentioned the name of the doctor, and said that he had the reputation of being very skilful and kind. He offered to send for him, but, being close by, I said that I would rather go to him. The man's face gave me confidence as soon as I entered. I knew that it would be of no use to tell him the story of a fall, and I said at once, 'Monsieur, I believe doctors are like confessors, and that they keep the secrets of their patients.'

"He smiled. 'Monsieur has a secret, then?'

"'I have,' I said. 'I have had my arm broken by a musket-ball—it does not matter how or when, does it?'

"'In no way,' he said; 'my business is simply to do what I can for you.'

"'It is seven days old,' I said, 'and is horribly painful and inflamed.'

"He examined the wound. 'The bone is badly broken,' he said. 'It is well for you that it has been bound up with some skill, and that these rough splints have kept it in its place. Of course, what you require is rest and quiet. Without cutting down to the bone I cannot tell how badly it is splintered, and in the state of inflammation that it is now in I could not venture upon that. I can only re-bandage it again, and give you a lotion to pour over it from time to time. Tell me frankly what you are; you can trust me.'

"'I am a sailor,' I said, 'captain of my own craft. I am also a Vendéan, and as the cause is now lost, I am making my way down to the sea. I hope in some way or other to make my escape to England, where I have friends, my wife being an Englishwoman. What I require more than anything is a suit of sailor's clothes.'

"'I will do what I can to help you, my friend. I am not one of those who think that France can be regenerated by the slaughter of the whole of the best of her people, and by all power being given to the worst. Let me see; I cannot go and buy sailor's clothes myself, but my old servant can be trusted absolutely. There is a shop down by the river where such things are sold. I will get her to go down there and say that she has a nephew just arrived from sea, and that she wants to give him a new rig-out, but as he has hurt himself, and cannot come, she must choose it. What is your height?'

"'About five foot ten,' Martin said.

"'And how broad round the shoulders?'

"'Forty-three inches. I have plenty of money to pay for all that is necessary, and more;' and I took out my roll of assignats.

"'Since you are well provided,' he said, 'I will take some. The people are very poor, and we all suffer to-

gether. They pay me when they can, and so that I can make ends meet I am well content.'

"In an hour the woman returned with a suit of rough sailor's clothes, and you may imagine how glad I was to put them on, the doctor helping me on with the jacket.

"'Now,' he said when I had dressed and eaten some food the old servant had set before me, 'it happens that at daybreak to-morrow one of my patients, the master of a river boat, is starting on the turn of tide for Honfleur. I will first go round to the auberge and tell the landlord that your arm is badly broken, and that I shall keep you here for the night, as you will require attention; then I will go to the captain and arrange for your passage. When I tell him that you are a patient of mine, and that I should be obliged if he would find you some quiet lodging at Honfleur, where you can remain till your arm is better and you are fit to be about again, I have no doubt he will manage it. He is a good fellow, and I shall let him understand that you don't want inquiries made about you. Now, you had better lie down on a bed upstairs and try to sleep. I will call you in time to go down to the boat.'

"'There is no fear of my getting you into trouble?' I asked. 'I would rather go on to Honfleur by road at once, than do so.'

"'There is no fear of that; the maire is a friend and patient of mine. And if, as may be the case, the landlord mentions the arrival of a stranger, and his coming to me, I shall simply tell the maire that your arm being badly broken, I kept you for the night, and then sent you on by boat; and that as for papers, not being a gendarme, I never thought of asking you for them.'

"The next morning he dressed my arm again, and then himself took me down to the boat and handed me over to its skipper. He absolutely refused any payment for his