

A Legacy of Peril

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by William Murray Graydon

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A Legacy of Peril.

CHAPTER I

Digby Tryon, shipping merchant, of New York, had departed this life suddenly. So the newspapers, with eloquent expressions of regret for the city's loss, had informed the public on the morning previous to that which witnesses the commencement of this narrative. For the benefit of such as did not read the news, a streamer of crape fluttered from the business office down on Whitehall Slip—an office that still displayed on its front the weather-beaten sign-board of “Tryon & Tryon,” a relic of the days when father and son were active partners in the firm.

There was crape also on the door of the merchant's residence in Pearl Street. A stately old house it was, long standing, and with tales to tell of hospitality shown alike to British officers and American patriots, had its thick walls been able to speak. It was built of yellow Holland brick, with five windows in front, and a double pitched roof covered with tiles. In the rear was a garden, full of trees and shrubbery, that had once extended clear down to the river. But stop!—the reader must bear in mind that I am writing of the year 1793, more than a century ago. At that time New York was a very tiny and quiet city as compared with its present grandeur, and then Pearl Street stood for pretty much what Fifth Avenue is to-day—the home of the town's leading citizens.

And now to proceed. It is the morning of the third of March, 1793, and the scene is the house of Digby Tryon. The dead merchant lies in solitary state in an upper chamber, and almost as silent and grave-faced as he are the two individuals sitting in the cheerful breakfast-room down-stairs. From the table between them the servants have removed the remnants of the tea and toast, but it still bears a snowy cloth and a quantity of shining silver.

Leslie Tryon, seemingly attired in black broadcloth, black silk stockings, and spotless linen, is gazing vacantly and with knitted brow at some sheets of paper, covered with close writing, that he holds in his hand. He is a well-built young man of eighteen, with brown hair, brown eyes, and an honest, good-looking face that marks a cool and resolute character. All the advantages of the period have been his. He has traveled extensively by land and water through the States, has more than once proved his courage in times of danger, and to his education and social polish he adds a knowledge of the French tongue. He is equipped, as was intended, to carry on the shipping business of Tryon & Tryon.

The lad's companion is an elderly man of sixty, dressed in rusty black, ruffled linen, silver-buckled shoes, and wearing a flaxen wig that has not a single hair awry. He is bent and spare, but with a tinge of ruddy color that speaks well for his lease on life in the future. His wrinkled, smooth-shaven face indicates tact and a depth of legal learning, and inspires ready trust. And this is as it should be, for Mordecai Janeway is the family lawyer—the confidant and adviser for many years of Digby Tryon and of his father before him. One lean hand supports his chin, and the other toys with the seals that dangle from his waistcoat. He is looking gravely and expectantly at the lad.

“Will you read this over again, sir, if you please?” said Leslie, breaking the long spell of silence, and handing the sheets of paper to the lawyer. “I want to get a better understanding of it—to grasp all these amazing facts. And you are so familiar with my uncle's writing.”

Mordecai Janeway nodded. He adjusted a pair of glasses to his eyes, turned the document where it would catch the light from the garden window, and proceeded as follows in his dry, precise voice:

“March the first, 1793.

“MY DEAR LESLIE: When you have read this letter I hope you will fully understand the spirit in which I am sitting down to write it, and will pardon what may at first seem to you to have been harsh and cruel on my part. It is remorse that drives my quill now—remorse for a hard heart and for long silence. I am urged on by a desire to atone for what wrong I may have done you, while yet there is time. And that time is short. To be brief, the hand of the Destroyer is upon me. For months a subtle disease, showing no traces to the eye, has been creeping steadily toward my heart. Two days ago my physicians bade me prepare for death, telling me that the end would come speedily and suddenly. I shall be ready for it when I have finished this letter, and explained the strange legacy I am leaving you to carry out. You were brought up as my own son, Leslie, and when in early years you were wont to ask about your father I evaded your questions, but gave you to understand that a shadow of disgrace rested on his name. That was false, so far as I know. Mine was the tainted name, and now you shall have my penitent story.

“I am feeling ill, and must write more briefly than I would wish. To begin, twenty-two years ago, my sister Elizabeth and I were living together in this

house on Pearl Street. Our parents had died not long before, and I was the surviving partner of the prosperous firm of Tryon & Tryon. In that year, 1771, there came to New York from Paris a young Frenchman by the name of Philip Courcel. Of his past I learned nothing, but he was clearly a gentleman, as his courtly manner and speech showed. Nor do I know what means he had, though I believe he was in receipt of periodical remittances from home. Certainly there was a mystery about him, and it is possible that the name he bore was assumed.

“Well, Philip Courcel made our acquaintance, and in a short time he fell in love with my sister Elizabeth, who returned his affection. On learning of this I conceived a blind and violent hatred for him. I forbade him the house, and denounced him as an unscrupulous adventurer. I had other views for my sister, and, moreover, since she was the only relative I had in the world, I was selfishly determined that she should remain at home to keep me company. I had no doubt of conquering in the end, but it proved otherwise. Elizabeth, usually like wax in my hands, now showed a will of iron. Tearfully, pleadingly, but inflexibly, she refused to give up her lover. We parted after a bitter scene in which I yielded to a burst of rage. She left the house, and before twenty-four hours had passed she was the wife of Philip Courcel.

“I was a changed man from that day. I swore never to forgive my sister, and would not permit the servants to mention her name. She, on her part, was too proud to make overtures for a reconciliation. Money rightfully hers, and which I sent her from time to time, was repeatedly returned without a word of writing. The young couple had settled in the town of Philadelphia, and were living in a very humble way. Now and then I had news of them indirectly. In the year 1773, a son, Henri, was born to them. Two years later, in 1775, came another son, whom they called Paul. You, Leslie, were that second son, Paul Courcel.

“I must hasten. When the War of the Revolution broke out, Philip Courcel joined the American army, In 1778, having then risen to the rank of lieutenant, he was mortally wounded at the battle of Monmouth. He sent word to his wife in Philadelphia, and she started to his bedside with her two sons, aged five and three.

“It was a long and rugged journey, and in some mysterious manner the eldest boy, Henri disappeared at night in a lonely part of the Jerseys. The mother, almost frantic with grief, did not dare to tarry long to look for him. She pressed on to the village of Monmouth with the remaining child, only to find that her

husband was dead and buried. The double shock threw her into a fatal illness, and when she realized her condition she sent for me.

“Filled with remorse, I traveled as fast as horses would carry me, but, when I arrived, Elizabeth was no more. She had passed away within the hour, and you, Leslie, were prattling innocently by her side.

“A pain at my heart warns me that I must make this letter as short as possible. I had forgiven my sister, but I blamed her husband for all, and hated him more bitterly than ever. For the orphan children, on the contrary, I felt both affection and sympathy, and I determined that their future should be my care. So, after the burial of your mother, I sent you on to New York. Then I spent two weeks in searching for your brother Henri, but neither at that time nor in later years did I obtain the least trace of him. I have no doubt that he wandered away at night, and was drowned in some deep hole of the Jersey swamps. A slight clue came to my knowledge two months afterward, but on investigation I was satisfied that it was false. Mordecai Janeway, if you ask him, will tell you what I refer to.

“After abandoning the quest for Henri, I traveled to Philadelphia and visited my sister’s little house. But Philip Courcel had destroyed all his papers, if he had any, and what Elizabeth may have known of her husband she had carried with her to the grave. I found nothing relating to his past save an address scrawled on a dirty bit of paper. The original I destroyed, but fortunately my memory enables me to copy it here for you exactly as it was written: ‘Andre Bellermont, care of Jacques Ferry, at the Flambeau Rouge, Quartier St. Antoine, Paris.’

“From Philadelphia I returned to New York, where my lonely home was in future to be shared by you, little Paul Courcel, to whom I gave the name of Leslie Tryon. Still hating your dead father, I brought you up in ignorance of him, giving you the best education that money could supply, and intending you to succeed to all my property and to the business of Tryon & Tryon. But the sting of conscience pricked me at times, and for that reason I insisted on your mastering the French language.

“Now, when I know that the end of my life is near, I am a prey to burning remorse. I would undo as far as possible the wrong I have done. I realize that but for my cruel conduct your parents might be living today. But it’s too late to write of these things. I will be dead when you read this letter, Leslie, and in order that I may rest more easily in my grave, I pray that you will carry out the instructions

herein contained.

“I declare it to be my solemn conviction that Philip Courcel was a man of unsullied honor. I believe also that he was a gentleman by birth and education, and that an unyielding pride, roused perhaps by some foolish family quarrel, drove him an exile to America. Had he been a mere adventurer he would have induced his wife to accept from me the money that was hers. Had he been other than a brave and true man he would not have given his life to his adopted country. He may have parents living in France, still hoping some day to hear of their lost son. He may have sisters, brothers, cousins, all mourning his unknown fate.

“You are my sole heir, Leslie, and you will have a ready command of money. You are a stout-hearted, sensible lad, equipped in needful ways for foreign travel. Go to Paris, and spare neither time nor money to find, by means of the address I have given you, the relatives of your father. Tell them that you are his son, and let them know how bravely Philip Courcel died on the field of battle. Then, when you have fulfilled the duty to the dead, and made all possible amends for my wrong-doing, return to America and carry on the honorable business which for years has been connected with the name of Tryon. The task will be a hard one, and you may not succeed. But at least do your best. Mordecai Janeway knows of my wishes in this matter, and will tell you how best to execute them. And in future years remembering how I cared for your youth, I trust that my tardy repentance may—”

“An unfinished letter,” Leslie said huskily, as the lawyer placed the sheets of paper on the table. “A sad, sad ending! As the last word was written my uncle must have died.”

“Yes, suddenly and painlessly,” assented Mordecai Janeway. “The disease must have reached his heart. So I found him, when I came by appointment night before last—the quill still clutched in his fingers, the ink scarcely dry on the paper. In Digby Tryon I have lost one who was ever more of a friend than a client.”

CHAPTER II

After an interval of meditative silence, the lawyer leaned back in his chair, removed and wiped his glasses, and looked fixedly at his companion.

“Well, my boy, what do you think of it?” he asked. “Do you understand it now?”

“Quite, Mr. Janeway,” Leslie replied. “The contents of the letter, which has been both a shock and a surprise, are perfectly clear. And I had no suspicion that any such secret shadowed my early life. I knew, of course, that my mother was my uncle’s sister, but I was always under the impression that my father was of American birth, and that he had been more or less of a worthless character. I am filled with pity for my unfortunate and misjudged parents, and for my lost brother Henri, of whose existence I was never aware. As for Uncle Digby, I pity him as well. He suffered years of remorse for the consequences of a passionate temper, and in bringing me up as his own son he more than atoned for his fault. The confession makes no difference. I love and respect him just as much, and I wish he were alive that I might tell him so.”

“Very good.” commented the lawyer. “That you should entertain such feelings is no more than right and proper. Digby Tryon was an affectionate and indulgent father to you, and I can testify that he was a man of sterling worth and character. After all these years—years that were doubtless embittered by remorse—the shortcomings of his younger days must not be reckoned against him. And what do you think of the strange legacy he has left you?”

“It is a sacred trust and charge,” declared Leslie. “I dare not neglect it, nor would I wish to do so. To carry out my uncle’s wishes will be but a slight return for the affection and care he gave me. And for my own sake I would do the same. I admit that I am anxious to learn the mystery of the past—to discover who my father was and why he came to America, to find out if any of his people are still living. Yes, I will start for Paris as soon as possible.”

“It is a bad time for our journey,” said Mordecai Janeway. “France is in the throes of a revolution that grows more powerful and bloody from day to day—”

“I have thought of that,” interrupted Leslie. “It is strange my uncle made no mention of it in his letter.”

“The fact probably did not occur to his mind,” said the lawyer, in a hurried and evasive tone. “As I was about to remark, the situation in France is exceedingly gloomy. The Revolution now in progress is the growth of years of oppression and discontent under cruel and pleasure-loving kings. It broke out with the fall of the Bastille in 1789, and merely smoldered for some months while the king made lying promises of a liberal constitution to the National Assembly. You know what happened next. With foreign enemies at her doors, and universal discord within, the ill-fated monarchy fell. The king and queen, seeking to escape, were captured and imprisoned. In Paris rival factions struggled to rule, and mobs sacked the royal palaces. More than a year ago the Republic was proclaimed, and now the outlook is darker than ever. In January Louis XVI was reported to be on trial for his life, and by this time his head has probably fallen. I fear the unfortunate queen, Marie Antoinette, will follow her husband to the guillotine. Paris is at the mercy of a savage populace, and the hated aristocrats—those possessed of fortune or good birth—are in peril of their lives. The streets will run red with blood, my boy, before the Revolution comes to its destined end.”

“That may all be, sir,” replied Leslie, “but it cannot change or delay my purpose. And you must admit that I, at least, have strong claims to safety and protection. France aided our colonies to win freedom, and the relations between the two countries are of the best. No American need fear to be molested in Paris to-day. The search for my father’s family may be difficult, even impossible, but I am confident of finding friends to aid me, and equally confident of finding protection from the perils of that turbulent city.”

“But suppose that, having traced your father’s people, you learn that they are aristocrats?” suggested Mordecai Janeway. “Suppose they are in prison, or have already perished by the guillotine? You, as one of their blood, might meet the same fate.”

“On the contrary,” replied Leslie, “what you have stated makes my journey more urgent and necessary. If my relations are in peril I may be able to save them by proving that Philip Courcel fought and died for America’s freedom. Do not try to dissuade me, sir. I must undertake this search for my father’s family, and by the aid of the address my uncle gave me I feel hopeful of success.”

“Then go, my lad,” said the lawyer, with a sudden change of manner and voice. “Go, and do your best. Forgive me for throwing these obstacles in your way. I

but wished to try your mettle and courage—to see if your heart was in the quest. The fact is that your uncle and I discussed the matter in all its bearings only three days ago. And his view was identical with yours. He knew how likely it was that Philip Courcel's relatives would prove to be of gentle birth, and he judged that you might aid them because you were an American, and because your father had fought and died for the freedom of the colonies. Such a consummation, it seemed to him, would best atone for the wrong-doing that caused him lifelong remorse."

"I think just that myself, sir," exclaimed Leslie. "You will aid me, then?"

"Yes, I pledged your uncle to do so," replied Mordecai Janeway, "though I admit that I argued against his wishes at first. But a promise is a promise, and I will assist you as far as possible in the plans he formed. If you encounter dangers abroad you must rely on your own resources for escape. In searching for your father you have only the address at this tavern in the Quartier Saint Antoine to guide you. You do not know his real name—I believe Philip Courcel was assumed—nor when or by what vessel he came to America."

"I have time, patience, and money," said Leslie. "I will succeed."

"I trust so, my boy," the lawyer answered. "So far as concerns your safety, and the enlisting of proper aid in your quest, I will see that you are well provided. You will take with you a passport signed by President Washington, and also a letter to an advocate in Paris with whom I have conducted some business correspondence, and who will probably offer you his assistance. The Marquis Lafayette might have been of some service in the matter—I once had the honor to meet him—but he was taken prisoner by the Austrians in 1792, and has since been confined in the fortress town of Wesel. As you say, you will not lack for money. By Digby Tryon's will you are his sole heir, and that means a considerable fortune. But patience and time are of more importance—"

"I think I have the former," interrupted Leslie, "and if necessary I shall remain abroad a year. I suppose I can be spared?"

"You must be spared," replied Mr. Janeway, clearing his throat to hide a smile. "You can trust me to attend to all matters connected with the settling up of the estate, and the business of Tryon & Tryon will be managed by the senior clerk, who has been in the firm's employ for nearly thirty years. You will find it in a

prosperous condition when you return.”

“I’m sure of that,” said Leslie. “Do you think I could be ready to start in three weeks’ time?”

“I think it quite likely.”

“Oh, and there is another thing I want to ask you, sir. About this clue to the disappearance of my brother Henri—what was it? I believe you know?”

“I do,” admitted the lawyer. “Several months after the loss of the child a French officer who had served in the American army, accompanied by a boy of about five years, who answered slightly to Henri’s description, sailed from New York to a French port. But I am satisfied, as was Digby Tryon, that the child was not your brother.”

“Still, it is not impossible,” said Leslie. “Was the name of the officer ascertained?”

“No.”

“Nor the vessel he sailed on?”

“I’m sorry I can’t tell you that. The matter was brought accidentally to your uncle’s notice, and he ignored it from the first.”

“Well, I suppose it was merely a coincidence,” said Leslie, “and yet I may find my brother alive and in Paris—he would be twenty years old now. Stranger things have happened.”

“Very true,” assented Mordecai Janeway, “but I would not advise you to extend your search beyond the family of Philip Courcel. And now I must leave you for a time. I will return in a few hours.”

Putting on his beaver hat and adjusting his glasses, the lawyer left the room. Leslie remained seated, and, taking up his uncle’s letter, he was soon deep in its contents.

CHAPTER III

On a certain dull and rainy afternoon in the last week of July, 1793, a covered carriage drawn by four horses was rumbling southward through France on the highroad that leads from Calais to Paris. Two postilions, cracking their braided whips, rode astride the two foremost horses. The solitary passenger inside the vehicle, wrapped in a thin traveling-rug, was no other than Leslie Tryon.

Months had passed since the death of his uncle, and it was now midsummer. Unforeseen matters connected with the settlement of Digby Tryon's estate delayed the lad's departure from New York for nearly five weeks, and the vessel on which he finally embarked for England made an unusually slow passage by reason of bad weather. He was detained in London for several weeks, while he exchanged the money and bills of exchange he had brought with him for drafts on the Paris branch of an English banking-house. Then, posting to Dover, and crossing the Channel in the Calais packet-boat, he had hoped to speedily reach his destination.

But the final part of the journey proved to be the most tedious and difficult, and it was only by an unsparing use of money that he was able to make progress at all. The carriage advanced by stages of a few miles, and a halt for the night was necessary with nearly every change of horses. The terrible shadow of the Revolution was on the land. One heard nothing but the echo of the popular watchword, "Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity." One saw only fierce faces surmounted by the red cap and the tri-colored cockade. Instead of scythes and spades, men carried pikes and muskets. At each little town and village, each wayside posting-house, the young traveler was stopped by bands of armed citizen-patriots who examined his papers, consulted greasy lists of names, and finally allowed him to depart with the greatest reluctance.

And the history of the past few months was not of a nature to encourage the lad. Frightful indeed were the times. From end to end of France the Revolution had grown from a red to a white heat, and the rest of the world looked on aghast, wondering what further horrors were in store for this most bloody and arbitrary of republics. In January the king had perished by the guillotine, and his unhappy consort, Marie Antoinette, was a foredoomed captive in a dungeon. In Paris the Reign of Terror was in full swing, and the members of the dreaded Convention held absolute and merciless sway. The guillotine was the popular idol, and

hundreds of wretched prisoners were being tried, condemned, and hurried to the ax. To be an aristocrat, to fall under suspicion of having filled a station in life higher than that of the common people, meant certain death. To address one by any other title than citizen was likely to cost a man his head. All foreigners were suspected, and it was a difficult thing for a traveler to enter or leave French soil.

On this July afternoon, as the carriage rolled southward through the mist and rain, Leslie Tryon was in brighter spirits than he had been for some days. He was nearing the end of his journey, and if all went well he would reach the barriers of Paris in a few hours' time. His luggage was limited to a small portmanteau, and buttoned in a deep inner pocket of his coat were drafts for a large amount of money, side by side with a precious document signed by President George Washington, stating that the bearer was a citizen of the United States, and that his business was of personal and harmless nature. The pocket also contained an open letter of introduction to Mordecai Janeway's friend, the advocate—Monsieur Jules Verneville, 16 Rue Loire, in the Quartier St. Germain.

The address of Andre Bellermont was stored in Leslie's mind, and he carried nothing in writing to show the actual purpose of his journey. He knew the condition of Paris, and was familiar with the recent events of the Revolution. But while he shrank from the scenes of horror and bloodshed into which he would shortly be plunged, he was as eager and determined as ever to fulfil his uncle's strange request. The mystery of Philip Courcel must be solved, and he hoped to succeed in spite of the many years that had elapsed. The increasing fury and power of the Revolution had been the strongest argument against a postponement of his journey. He knew that his father's relatives, if any existed, were likely to be in danger. Perhaps they had already perished by the guillotine, and in that event his quest would be fruitless. But if they were alive and in prison he stood some chance of saving them, so he foolishly reasoned.

Of his own safety he felt assured, believing that the fact of his American citizenship would be a passport to protection and aid. He was young, stout-hearted, and sanguine, and it was natural that both he and Mordecai Janeway should have underestimated the danger of fulfilling Digby Tryon's legacy. It was natural that they should have failed to fathom the tide of pitiless fury and bloodshed that had inundated France. But could the old lawyer have foreseen what fiery experiences the lad was destined to pass through, he would have promptly nipped the rash but well-meant scheme in the bud, and consigned the mystery of Philip Courcel's past to eternal oblivion.

On, on, to the cracking of whips and the splashing scurry of hoofs, the carriage rumbled over the sloppy road. Closer gathered the mist, and steadily fell the drizzling rain. The murky light faded from the evening sky, and here and there candles flickered dismally in cottage windows.

Leslie, having fallen into a doze from weariness of long riding, was roused suddenly by a strange noise. Collecting his thoughts, he leaned his head and shoulders out of one of the open carriage windows. Far in front, at a distance of which he could form no estimate, a mass of lights was glowing on the flat horizon. Behind him the blackness of the night lay like a shroud, and from that direction proceeded the noise he had heard. He could not be mistaken as to its nature. Another traveler, and one evidently in great haste, was approaching with a furious rattle of wheels and muffled pounding of hoofs.

“Do you hear?” the lad called out. “Some one is coming.”

“Yes, citizen,” the nearest postilion shouted back. “Some one is coming—you are right. It is a carriage and four like this, and either the horses have taken it into their heads to run away, or they are feeling the lash to a purpose.”

“Yes, they are closer already. Are those the lights of a village yonder on the horizon?”

“The town of Beauvais, citizen—but five hours from Paris.”

“Ah! Will we stop there?”

“Yes, for fresh horses.”

“Is it necessary?”

“Absolutely. These jaded animals will go no farther tonight.”

“And will we find fresh horses at Beauvais?”

“It is doubtful, citizen. Certainly there will be no more than one relay, if that.”

“Then we must be the first to reach the town posting-house,” cried Leslie.

“There has been too much delay, and I refuse to spend another night this side of Paris. If there is but one change of horses at Beauvais I intend to have them. Do

you understand? We must beat this traveler who is coming behind us. He must not overtake us.”

“But he is flying like the wind. I fear, citizen—”

“We must beat him, I tell you. Forty francs extra if we do!”

“Very good, citizen. We will do our best, rely on it. And who knows but the horses may be fit for a spurt? The distance is short, luckily.”

The two postilions cracked their whips and shouted, and as Leslie dropped back into his seat he felt the pace increase tremendously. Jolting and shaking, the vehicle plunged on, the wheels and hoofs sending the mud and water flying right and left.

But at once the carriage and four in the rear quickened their pace, as though the unknown traveler understood his rival’s game, and was determined to block it. Looking back from time to time, Leslie could see, against the curtain of the night, the blacker mass creeping slowly but surely nearer. He could hear the muffled whirr and thud ringing on the miry road above the din of his own conveyance.

Five minutes passed, while hedges and fences, farm-houses and outbuildings, skimmed by like the wind. Ten minutes! Still the mad race continued, and now the lad was rent by shifting hopes and doubts. Would he be the first to enter Beauvais, and so win the longed-for horses that would take him on to Paris? Or would this desperate traveler pass him at the last, and leave him stranded for another night? Faster the foremost vehicle tore on, and still faster came the one behind. There was no telling yet how it would end.

Suddenly the road grew more narrow and stony, with a line of trees on each side, low stone walls behind those, and here and there a lamppost flaring, or a candle gleam flashing from a cottage window. Leslie thrust out his head, and fearing to see how close his rival was he looked the other way. Beauvais was nearly reached. A short distance in front gabled houses and swinging signs were looming out of a glow of yellow light and ruddy torches. And above the din of wheels and hoofs hoarse shouting could be heard.

“Will we beat?” the lad cried excitedly.

“No—they are gaining fast, citizen,” one of the postilions yelled. “And the evil one is in this traveler’s horses. They have taken the bit, and are running away. Not a soul is astride the saddles! But we will try to be first at the edge of the town, so that we may turn off and let the mad beasts pass us. There is no room here!”

Leslie sank back on the seat with a groan of disappointment, thinking more of the probable loss of the race than of the danger suggested by the postilions’ words. And the race was surely lost to him, for at that instant, close alongside the lowered window on his left, appeared the horses of the rival traveler—four snorting, plunging, foam-flecked steeds, with no postilions seated in the loosely swinging saddles.

At furious speed they tore on, bringing the rocking and swaying vehicle opposite the other carriage. And inside of it, by the aid of a flash of light from a lamppost across the road, Leslie caught a brief and passing glimpse of a scene that brought his heart to his mouth and a husky cry to his lips—a silhouetted picture of two men struggling desperately on the seat. Above the tumult, in a shrill and vengeful tone that the lad never forgot, rang a passionate voice:

“At last! I know you, marquis—I know you and denounce you! The ax awaits your neck—”

Then, as the vehicle was dragged farther on in its mad course, there came a frightful scream and the sharp report of a pistol. This was followed immediately by a loud cry from one of Leslie’s postilions.

“*Mon Dieu*, they are closing the barrier! We shall be smashed to bits!”

CHAPTER IV

“The struggle in the strange carriage, the shrill-voiced denunciation, the flash and crack of the firearm and then the hoarse cry of fright from the postilion it was lightninglike sequence of tragic events, and the last was the one that roused Leslie, dazed and horrified as he was, to a sense of his own peril. A great clamor and din rang in his ears as he thrust his head from the window to the right, and he saw instantly what it all meant. A short distance in front, where flashing lights shone on dark forms, a wooden gate had just been swung shut across the road. And straight for this perilous barrier both teams of horses were plunging with the vehicle at their heels.

Crash! crash! There was a splitting and rending of beams, and four maddened and agonized horses were down in a heap. Another crash, and the strange carriage was overturned in the water and mire of the road; from a score of throats came excited yells.

Sick at heart, and dazed by the prospect of immediate death, Leslie reeled back from the window. He heard the postilions shouting, and knew that they must be trying to check the horses in time. Then, amid a medley of harsh noises, his carriage suddenly lurched, spun partly around on two wheels, and toppled over on its side with tremendous force.

Leslie was flung all in a heap, and sprinkled with chips of broken glass. But fortunately he sustained no worse hurt than a few bruises and scratches, and though he was a little stunned and dizzy he lost no time in wrenching open the door above his head and climbing out of his uncomfortable prison.

For a moment he stood ankle-deep in mud, gazing around him with a sense of gratitude for his escape, and of wonder and horror at what he saw. The night was noisy with shouting and running feet, lurid with the waving lights of torches and lanterns. The double accident had happened at the very commencement of the high-street of Beauvais, and amid the wreckage of the shattered gate lay the horses of the strange traveler, two motionless, and two squirming and neighing with the pain of broken limbs. The carriage was a ruin, several of its wheels being off and the top and side crushed in. The other team had fared better, the postilions having pluckily jerked their horses to one side just before the inevitable collision. The rear steeds were standing quietly, perspiring and

trembling, with the harness dangling about them. Of the foremost one lay dead, and its mate had galloped unhurt into a neighboring yard.

As yet, so brief a time had elapsed since the disaster, there was no attempt on the part of the inhabitants of Beauvais to render assistance. Beyond the wrecked gate the street was filled with people, all clamoring and shouting at once. Leslie glanced at them briefly, and then his searching eyes discovered one of the postilions lying still and bleeding in the mud, and the Other ruefully rubbing his knees by the roadside. He was about to approach the former when he heard a voice calling loudly for help behind him, and turning around he saw an arm waving from the capsized vehicle of the strange traveler.

With his eagerness whetted by the remembrance of the struggle he had lately witnessed, Leslie hurried at once to the spot, evading one of the kicking horses that lay in the way.

“One moment, monsieur!” he cried. “Have patience!”

At first the broken and misplaced door defied his efforts, but he quickly wrenched it open by main force. Immediately out of the shattered carriage there climbed with an air of unconcern a tall, strongly built man. He seemed to have escaped even a scratch or a bruise, and his clothing, though much awry, was of the finest—silk stockings, plum-colored breeches, ruffled linen, and coat and waistcoat of black broadcloth. On his bosom was a spattering of blood, but that it was not his own blood Leslie well knew.

“Monsieur, I thank you,” he said, looking hard and keenly at the lad, and then making a courtly bow. “I was on the wrong side of the door, and but for your assistance I should still be a prisoner.”

“I am glad to have been of service to you, sir,” Leslie answered in French. “I trust you are not injured?”

“Not in the least, thank you. I have been indeed fortunate. And you? I fear I am responsible for your mishap, since my runaway horses evidently started yours in their mad flight.”

“On the contrary, I am the one to blame,” said Leslie, “and I scarcely deserve to have escaped so well as yourself. I did not know that your horses were running away, and I urged my postilions to win the race to Beauvais—”

“Yes, I see,” broke in the stranger, with an ominous glitter in his eyes. “So it was a race, monsieur. Well, I do not blame you. It was the fault of the idiot who closed the barrier. We have at least afforded some amusement to the good people of the town—they seem to be gloating over our misfortunes yonder.”

With that he stepped aside and began to brush and smooth his garments, meanwhile shooting covert glances at the lad. These Leslie detected and understood, and being as yet undecided how to act he was careful to keep his face in shadow and to refrain from turning his eyes on the carriage. But he took advantage of the opportunity to get a good look at his companion, who was in range of a ray of light from a near-by lamppost.

The stranger was indeed a man of remarkable appearance, and one to be observed among a thousand. His face was smooth-shaven, and in age he might have been anywhere from sixty to seventy—possibly even older.

A man of strong character, evidently, and of good birth. The cut of his chin, the mold of his thin nostrils, the set of his fine mouth—these gave him an expression that was at once proud and aristocratic, handsome and cynical, cruel, relentless and fierce. The ruddy tint of his cheeks unmistakably meant rouge, and his bushy wig of iron-gray hair fitted as though it was glued tight on. Altogether, he was an individual to be feared and respected.

Leslie formed the above shrewd estimate of the traveler in the space of a few seconds, aided, perhaps, by the angry words he had heard from the wrecked carriage, and which invested that vehicle with such a dread interest for him. And, indeed, as the reader, must remember, but little more than a minute had passed since carriages and horses came to grief against the barrier.

Now, just when the lad was about to turn his attention to the dead or unconscious postilion lying in the mud, the assembled populace of Beauvais concluded that it was time to do something, and acted on that conclusion by swarming with much outcry and confusion over the debris of the gate. In a moment Leslie and the stranger were surrounded by a curious and ill-natured crowd of ragged peasants, petty shopkeepers, women and children, and brutal-faced citizen-patriots wearing rough red caps and armed with pikes and muskets. And it was a sign of the times that sympathy for the accident was merged in savage and ready suspicion.

“Emigrants!” howled the mob.

“They are cursed emigrants!”

“Kill them!”

“Off with their heads!”

CHAPTER VI It was an ominous moment, and the demonstration was so threatening—so unexpected in its hostility—that Leslie’s presence of mind half-deserted him, and he glanced anxiously this way and that in search of a loophole of escape. The truth is, he was unnerved by what he had recently gone through. The strange traveler, however, seemed to be in nowise discomposed or alarmed. He surveyed the crowd with a supercilious smile in which contempt was scarcely veiled, and thrust one arm at them.

“Stand back, my good people,” he drawled loudly. “Have you no respect for trusty citizens of the republic? Do we look like emigrants? And is this the sort of hospitality you are accustomed to show to strangers in misfortune? For shame!” To Leslie he added:

“Face them boldly. Don’t betray any fear.”

There was a stir in the crowd, and several voices spoke up for moderation and forbearance. But more voices growled and murmured, and the savage shouts broke out afresh. Weapons were, brandished, and a forward movement began. Then, just when the danger of bloodshed was most imminent, an unshaven, sullen-browed officer wearing the national uniform elbowed his way through the press. He was followed by two red-capped soldiers with muskets and sabers.

“Stand aside!” he cried harshly. “Make room here! I’ll have no nonsense, remember! Blockheads, is it likely these men are emigrants? Would such dare to venture on French soil in these times? And no matter what they may be, they must be judged before they, are condemned.”

The crowd reluctantly edged away and became comparatively quiet, and the officer turned to Leslie and his companion.

“Who are you?” he demanded sourly. “Your papers? And what do you mean by smashing the gate yonder?—you will have some pretty damages to pay, ‘Tis

seldom travelers are in such haste to reach Paris.”

“That may be, citizen-officer,” replied the stranger, but I, for my part, cannot arrive there too soon. And as for the broken gate, I beg to be informed why it was thrown shut in front of my runaway horses. It was a piece of cursed stupidity, and you see the result—”

“Silence, citizen!” snapped the officer. “Do you dare to question the authority of the republic? The gate was closed by my orders. Travelers must be stopped at all barriers before they can pass through. And now your papers? Quick, both of you!”

The stranger, with a protesting shrug of his shoulders by way of reply, began to leisurely search the pockets of his clothing. He was so long about it that Leslie was first to produce his credentials and hand them to the guard. The latter opened and read the documents, and his stern and suspicious expression gradually relaxed.

“Very good,” he said approvingly. “Monsieur Leslie Tryon, citizen of the United States of America, bound to Paris on business not harmful to the cause of the republic. Correct and satisfactory!”

He returned the passport and the letter addressed to the advocate Verneville, and held out his hand to the other traveler.

“Your turn, citizen,” he said sharply.

The stranger had by this time brought to light a couple of parchments, which he handed with a bow to the officer.

“My name is George Barrington,” he volunteered. “I am an Englishman, and am on my way from London to Paris on business connected with the finances of the French republic. My credentials will explain all, and you will assuredly find no cause for complaint or suspicion.”

At this there was a murmur of approval from the crowd, who were as fickle and changeable as French mobs always are, and the officer’s manner savored of respect as he opened the documents. They were covered with close writing, and he started with the evident determination of reading them through.

A hush fell, and it was a weird and impressive scene that the flickering lamps and torches shone upon the cordon of savage faces upturned to the drizzling rain, the travelers and their grim guards standing in the mud of the road, the injured horse's kicking with pain amid the ruins of the barrier, and in the background the narrow housetops of Beauvais. The dead or stunned postilion had been picked up and taken away, and his more fortunate companion, covered with bruises and mire, was standing with an interested face on the verge of the crowd.

In the meantime, while the officer proceeded slowly with his task, Leslie kept watching alternately the shattered carriage of George Barrington and the inscrutable countenance of that individual himself. And he wondered, with a puzzled and anxious mind what would be the result of the terrible discovery that must soon be made.

"It's an ugly lookout for some one," the lad reflected. "I don't believe this George Barrington is an Englishman, or that he is going to Paris on business for the French republic. His papers are likely a blind to cover his real purpose. He must be one of the hated emigrants—a marquis who has ventured back to France in disguise. Yes, I am sure of it. That awful denunciation from the carriage was a clear proof—'I know you, marquis!—I know you and denounce you! The ax awaits your neck!' I can never forget the voice and the words, the scream and the pistol-shot."

Leslie shivered, and glanced fearfully at the overturned vehicle.

"It's deep," he went on to himself, "but one thing seems clear: The man who cried out was murdered by this George Barrington. He must have been traveling with him, and accidentally recognized Barrington as the marquis. Then they fought, and the denouncer—he was a Frenchman, for he spoke in that tongue—was shot to death. Well, I can't blame Barrington, and I'm not going to make things worse for him than they will be when the body is found. If he really is a French noble, and I tell what I heard, it will end in his neck going under the guillotine. He is a cool and brave man, and if my silence will help him— Ah, but what about the postilion yonder? Could he, too, have heard the shout? No, I don't think so. He was several yards in front, and all his attention was given to checking the horses. And, besides, if he had heard he would have denounced the traveler before this. But how can the man explain the tragedy? It's amazing how calmly he bears himself—"

Just then the officer finished reading the parchments, and folding them up he gave them back to the owner.

“Quite correct,” he said. “Your credentials are beyond dispute. You may go on your way. Citizen Barrington, and may your mission prosper to the good of the republic!”

“But one moment, citizen-officer,” cried an eager voice. “I have a word to say.” There was a stir, and the bedraggled postilion limped forward from the crowd. “Search this traveler’s carriage, and you will find a dead body,” he added shrilly. “There were two men in the vehicle, and just before the crash I saw them struggling. Then I heard a scream and a pistol-shot. It may be all right, but it has a queer look. And where were the traveler’s postilions?”

A hoarse murmur came from the crowd, and the officer turned to the accused man.

“Citizen, is this true?” he demanded excitedly.

“Yes, it is true,” was the calm and smiling response. “I was attacked in my carriage by a robber, and I had to shoot him in self-defense. You will find the body yonder. I intended speaking of the matter at the proper time, but this stupid fellow,” nodding at the postilion, “has forestalled me. Since he has seen so much, perhaps he can remember hearing my shouts for aid a moment before the accident?”

“I heard nothing else,” the postilion answered sulkily; “only the yell and the report, and after that the horses of both teams struck the gate. My poor comrade, Antoine, was badly hurt, and I myself escaped by jumping. But I shall be sore for a week—”

An uproar of voices cut the postilion short. It was clear that he had not heard the denunciation shouted by the other man, and George Barrington, realizing this fact, betrayed his intense relief by a swift change of color—the first touch of emotion of any sort he had yet shown. He next looked keenly at Leslie, but the lad met the gaze with an unconcern that disarmed suspicion.

The postilion’s story had spread from mouth to mouth, and violence was now threatening again. Weapons were drawn, and the mob surged closer about the little group. A score of savage voices demanded that the carriage be searched—

clamored for vengeance on the English assassin. Some asserted that the tale of the robbery was but a lie to hide a darker crime.

Monsieur George Barrington, with his arms folded, defiantly and sneeringly confronted the officer and the people.

“I ask only for justice,” he cried, “and where but in republican France is that to be found to-day? Drag out the carrion, see for yourselves, and then I will clear myself in your eyes. But be quick, for I must be on my way to Paris.”

The boldness of this speech and the appeal to justice, the irony of which none detected, caused an instant reaction. The officer angrily drove back the swaying circle of people, and gave an order to his two soldiers. They lustily attacked the carriage, watched eagerly by all eyes, and by none more intently than those of George Barrington and Leslie.

Through the broken door they hauled first a traveling-bag and a blood-stained pistol, both of which articles the officer took possession of. Then, amid breathless silence, they dragged out the dead body of a man—short, elderly, and thick-set, well dressed, of a sinister and clean-shaven countenance, and with a bullet-wound over his heart. His teeth were clenched, and on his rigid face was a look of horror.

The officer held up a hand to silence the shouting crowd, and after a short search of the corpse he produced a folded paper. He opened and read it.

“Passport correct,” he said ominously. “Roger Clyde, Englishman, going to Paris to search for a brother. Initials R and C engraved on the stock of the pistol.”

“Exactly; it was his weapon,” coolly replied Monsieur George Barrington, “and he is plainly English. As for the man himself. I know only this of him: I met him first at Calais, and as he told me a pitiable tale of poverty I offered him a seat in my carriage. He was a poor companion, being silent and gloomy, but all went well until this morning. Then, at the posting-house, ten leagues back, I was unable to hire more than one postilion. Close to Beauvais, in the rain and darkness, my horses became scared at something by the roadside and bolted. My postilion was quickly thrown off, and an instant later this Roger Clyde thrust a pistol in my face and demanded my money. I grappled with him, and a struggle began that lasted for some minutes. Finally I secured the pistol, and, to save my life, I shot the scoundrel. That is exactly what occurred—nothing more. And I

would do the same again under similar circumstances.”

CHAPTER VI

There was a murmur of voices, mostly ominous, as the Englishman ceased speaking. Then a hushed silence fell, and all eyes looked to the officer from whom a verdict was expected. Though the story of the struggle in the carriage had made an impression, it was evident that the crowd still desired a vent for their turbulent passions. The officer toyed with the pistol in his hand, and for an instant stared at the ground in a perplexed and doubtful manner.

“Citizen Barrington, this is a hard thing for me to decide,” he began. “Your explanation seems to me to be true, and your papers show that you are entitled to respect and belief. Also this dead man, Roger Clyde, has an ill-favored look, and I would not put robbery and murder above him. But life has been taken, and my duty to the republic requires that the affair should be more closely looked into. Is it not so?”

“No doubt,” replied Monsieur Barrington, with a shrug of his shoulders. “Take what further steps you please, and you may count on my assistance and presence when needed. Only do not detain me at the present time—you understand that I must be in Paris before morning.”

“I have no wish to detain you,” the officer answered, “and you may resume your journey shortly. But I must send an escort along with you, who will report the matter to the commandant of the barrier at the same time that your papers are examined there. The proper authorities will then search for the brother of this Roger Clyde, and meanwhile the dead man shall be kept here unburied for a week. This is the least I can do under the circumstances—”

“It is quite satisfactory,” interrupted the Englishman, though his tone was by no means hearty, “and since you have reached a decision I trust you will delay me no longer than necessary. And now about a conveyance—can you find me a carriage and four?”

“Luckily, I can, citizen,” the officer replied. “It will be ready in half an hour.”

“And I also want a carriage,” broke in Leslie. “I am in haste to reach Paris.”

“Impossible, Citizen Tryon,” said the officer. “There is but one carriage, and in

the whole town there are no more than four spare horses. You must wait—”

“Not so,” exclaimed the Englishman, turning with a bow to Leslie. “I have plenty of room, monsieur, and I owe you a return for your kindness. Will you accept a seat in my conveyance?”

Leslie hesitated an instant, but the offer was so tempting that he could not bring himself to refuse it, little as he relished a tete-a-tete of some hours with this mysterious stranger.

“I thank you, monsieur,” he replied. “With pleasure I will accompany you, provided it does not put you to any inconvenience.”

“Not the slightest, I assure you,” said the Englishman. “So it is settled, then. And now let us look after our luggage.”

By this time the mob, disappointed at the outcome of the affair, had yielded to the influence of its more turbulent members. A score of voices were complaining loudly, and making ugly threats and insinuations against both travelers. But the officer and his soldiers, aided by a local official who had appeared on the scene, managed to restore a semblance of order. Meanwhile Leslie had recovered his portmanteau, and Monsieur Barrington had dragged a small bag of black leather from the depths of his ruined carriage.

Then, after giving instructions relative to the clearing away of the debris and the horses, the officer led the little party forward. The soldiers kept a passage open in the muttering crowd, and Leslie and the Englishman came safely through into the high-street, and thence to the posting-yard of an inn on the left. As a precautionary measure the gates were closed and barred and the populace were left jeering and clamoring on the outer side.

The innkeeper appeared, and after ushering the travelers into a room where a fire was burning—at which they dried their damp clothes—he spread a table with bread, meat and wine, and bade them be seated. At another table the officer busied himself with writing-materials that he had ordered, and in a corner of the room the uninjured postilion munched bread and cheese, glancing from time to time at the Englishman in a furtive and suspicious manner. The fellow’s companion had been removed to the guard-house near the gate, and the village surgeon came in presently to report that his patient had received no more serious injury than a severe shaking up. The officer had promised that Monsieur

Barrington's postilion, about whom no one showed any concern, should be searched for in the morning.

Leslie and the Englishman were hungry, and they did ample justice to the rather savory meal. While they ate they were cheered by the sight of the four horses being harnessed to a carriage in the dimly lit posting-yard, and they could hear the mutterings of the mob growing fainter and fainter out in the rainy street. The postilion fell asleep in the corner, and the officer's pen went on scratching busily over the coarse paper.

But the travelers, having finished the repast, and paid the host an unreasonable sum of money, still had an unpleasant experience before them. The officer, flourishing the lengthy document he had written, now insisted that enough money should be turned over to him to defray the expenses of the injured postilion, and to cover the loss of the horses and carriages. The request was reasonable, but the amount demanded was exorbitant. Finally, however, the sum of fourteen hundred francs was fixed on, and this Leslie and the Englishman produced between them, the former giving a draft for his share, while the latter contributed gold and notes.

"Correct!" said the officer, after counting the money. "You may depart now, citizens, and I wish you a safe and speedy journey to Paris."

He led them into the posting-yard, where all was silent. The carriage was ready, with two fresh postilions on the foremost horses, and after the travelers had taken their seats the vehicle was driven through the yard gates into the street and there halted.

Rain was falling fast, and had driven to shelter all but half a dozen of the late clamorous mob. In the mire of the road two armed soldiers with red caps, mounted on raw-boned steeds, were waiting. To one of these the officer gave the document he had prepared. Then he waved his hand, the postilions cracked their whips, and off rolled the carriage through the high-street of Beauvais, with the mounted guards riding on either side of it.

At last the strain was over, so far as getting started to Paris was concerned, but it was evident from their demeanor that both travelers still felt some fear and alarm for the future. For a long time they sat in thoughtful silence, looking out opposite windows from opposite seats, while the carriage rumbled out of and beyond the

town. Then, when they were come to the dark and lonely country, they broke the stillness with a few commonplace remarks, and in reply to a question of Leslie's his companion declared that the presence of the armed escort was a bad sign, and virtually meant arrest.

But Monsieur George Barrington was disinclined to talk at all, and presently, with a courteous excuse, he settled himself comfortably in his portion of the vehicle and fell sound asleep. This was a great relief to Leslie, who had constantly dreaded the bringing up of some unpleasant subject. He now realized that he was fatigued and drowsy himself, and though the remembrance of Roger Clyde's fate was an urgent reason to him to keep awake, he was soon slumbering as deeply as his companion.

Amid rain and mire, to the sighing of the wind, the carriage and its unconscious occupants sped on their destined and fateful way, past lonely cottages and ruined chateaus, over hill, and meadow, and brawling stream. On, on, hour after hour, league upon league, they sped, with the steady whirring of wheels and the splashing patter of hoofs. In one way the presence of those two grim guards, with drenched caps trickling red streams down their faces, was a distinct advantage. For though halts were made at roadside barriers and villages, and brief conferences were held between the mounted escort and local citizen-patriots, the travelers were not once disturbed or wakened from their dreamless slumbers.

Leslie, rousing at last with a start, beheld the murky gray light of a rainy dawn outside, and saw rows of mean cottages, avenues of dripping trees, and a few people yawning and stretching by the roadside. Barrington was also awake, and might have been so for a long time. His features wore a haggard, fierce, and worried expression that made him look a different man, and after craning his neck to catch a glimpse of the mounted soldiers he drew down the curtains of both windows.

"We are near Paris," he said curtly, "and it is just as well that we should not make ourselves conspicuous. "You are an American, I believe, Monsieur Tryon?"

"Yes; an American."

"And what, in the name of Heaven, takes you to this bloodthirsty and accursed

city—to this seething pit of lawlessness and murder?”

“It is a matter of private business, monsieur,” replied Leslie. “I am engaged in a search that I fear will be difficult and doubtful, and to which I possess but a single and slight clue. You, perhaps, are acquainted with Paris?”

“I have been there, monsieur,” with a searching glance. “Most Englishmen have in their time.”

“And did you ever chance to hear the name of Philip Courcel?”

“No, it is strange to me.”

“Or of Andre Bellermont?” Leslie continued.

A low gasp—or did the lad merely imagine it?—was the only reply. Did the Englishman really give a start and turn pale, or was it a phantasm of the dim and uncertain light?”

“What name?” he asked hoarsely.

“I said Andre Bellermont, monsieur.”

At that moment the carriage stopped. There was a rattling noise, and the din of harsh voices arose.

“Monsieur, I will speak with you again,” said Mr. George Barrington. “This is the barrier—we have reached Paris at last.”

CHAPTER VII

Paris at last!

Yes, this was Paris. The carriage had stopped, and when the lad looked from one of the windows he saw the town wall, and the barrier rising stern and forbidding. Through the bars—the gate was not yet open—a waiting mass was visible against a background of misty houses; carts of all sorts, beasts of burden, men and women wearing red caps and tri-colored cockades.

A minute passed, and when Leslie turned from the window to glance at his companion, he saw that the Englishman was looking at him with an expression closely akin to amazement and fear. But before either could speak, a loud command was followed by the creaking open of the gates and a shout from the postilions, and at once the carriage rumbled through into the town. During the brief transition a strange feeling chilled Leslie's blood. It was as though he had entered the jaws of some huge monster, which would shortly close on him and hold him fast forever.

"A bad sign," muttered George Barrington, as the vehicle stopped immediately by the inner door of the guard-house. "It is not customary to admit persons until their papers are examined."

"And that is always done outside?" asked the lad.

"Yes, I have heard so—"

"Come forth, citizens," interrupted a sharp voice. The speaker was the wolfish-faced officer, and he was holding open the door of the carriage. The travelers silently obeyed the summons, and were conducted into a dingy and smoky guard-room where the night-lamps were still burning and which contained a number of drowsy-looking patriots and soldiers. A man was standing writing at a dirty register on a desk, and he glanced keenly at Leslie and his companion as they followed their guide into an adjoining apartment.

It was a very small room, with one little window facing cityward, and its only occupant was a red-capped soldier seated on a stool, with his musket across his knees. The officer motioned the lad to a bench on the right of the soldier, and the

Englishman to another bench on the left. Then he went out, closing the door behind him.

The time dragged on monotonously. The prisoners, for such they appeared to be were denied the scant consolation of looking out of the windows, to which their backs were turned.

The soldier, sitting between the two, neither stirred from this stool nor spoke a word. Barrington, his arms folded on his chest, looked hard and steadily at the floor. Leslie, busied with his thoughts, was just as silent. Listening to the voice of Paris swelling on the rainy morning air, he remembered that he was in the city which had been his father's home, and he grew impatient to be up and about his search.

"I wonder how much longer they intend to keep us here?" he said to himself at last. "We have been prisoners for more than an hour now. Of course it is only a matter of form, and as soon as my papers are examined I will be released. But I fear my fellow traveler will not be so fortunate—he seems to have fallen under suspicion. I am sure he is a marquis in disguise. It may be all true, his meeting this Roger Clyde at Calais and offering him a seat in his carriage. I dare say the dead man was a Frenchman and a spy, and one of the two accidentally recognized the other. This led to a struggle, and the way it ended will likely cost the Englishman dear. I hope not, though, for he is a brave and cool man. And my sympathies are certainly not with the revolutionary party of France, though I am afraid I will have to pretend that such is the case. All depends on cunning, and on my being a good actor."

The lad gave a little start, suddenly remembering what had slipped his mind until now.

"There is another thing," he went on, knitting his brows in perplexity. "Was this Barrington really agitated when I asked him if he knew Andre Bellermont, or did I deceive myself? I felt sure that he gave a startled sort of a gasp, and that his face turned pale. His voice shook when he told me to repeat the name. And then how strangely he was looking at me when the carriage rolled through the gates."

A moment of reflection, and a glance at the Englishman's averted and inscrutable features, turned Leslie's convictions the other way.

"Bah, what nonsense!" he thought. "The light was dim, and I could easily have

been mistaken. And if he was agitated, it was probably because we reached the barrier just at that moment, and not on account of my questions. But Mr. George Barrington, or whoever he is, was likely acquainted with Paris twenty years ago. He may be able to help me, and I intend to keep track of him if possible.”

Having reached this conclusion, Leslie dismissed the matter from his mind and sought distraction in a scrutiny of the red-capped patriot. That individual turned suddenly around with a scowl, and just then, to the lad’s relief, the door leading to the guard-room was thrown open and the wolfish-faced officer entered. Behind him came a little, thick-set man, with a sinister, lantern-jawed face, wearing dirty linen and a long-tailed coat and with a cocked hat surmounting the mop of black hair that trailed on his neck. He closed the door and advanced furtively into the room at the heels of his companion, blinking his fiery little eyes this way and that.

“Citizens, your papers?” demanded the officer.

“Here are mine,” replied Monsieur Barrington, rising to his feet with a gesture of impatience. “They have been waiting your pleasure this long while—”

“Silence, citizen!” snapped the officer.

He took the document, ran his eye quickly over the contents, and thrust it into his breast pocket.

“Are my credentials correct?” inquired the Englishman.

“So far as I know,” was the curt response.

“And this other matter of which you have doubtless been informed—the affair of the rascal who tried to rob me near Beauvais, and whom I had to shoot in self-defense?”

“His death will be investigated in due time, citizen.”

“Thank you. I promise you all the aid in my power, since I shall be residing in Paris for some weeks. And now, I presume, I am free to go—”

“Not yet, Citizen Barrington,” quietly interrupted the little lantern-jawed man, as he stepped nearer. “On the contrary, I have here,” producing and flourishing a

slip of paper, “your commitment to the prison of La Force.”

“The prison of La Force!” cried Monsieur Barrington, turning as white as marble. “My commitment? Good heavens, how is it possible? This is an outrage—”

“Silence, citizen!” thundered the officer. “Respect the Republic, or it will be the worse for you.”

“But this is beyond all reason,” exclaimed the Englishman, mopping his brow with a trembling hand. “You have my papers. You know that I have come to Paris on government business—”

“We know nothing,” said the little man. “Your identity remains to be proved. If you are innocent the Republic will release you. If you are guilty you will suffer.”

“But guilty of what?” the other demanded fiercely. “Why am I arrested?”

“On suspicion, citizen,” was the reply.

“And who accuses me?”

“You shall know later. This much I will tell you now. The Republic was aware of your departure from London, and your arrival in Paris was expected.”

“Yes, I see,” replied the Englishman. “It is the work of some scoundrel of a spy, who has mistaken me for another.”

Folding his arms, he sat down again on his bench. With a contracted brow he stared hard at the floor.

“Poor fellow, he is lost!” Leslie said to himself. “His identity is at least suspected, and he is marked for the guillotine. What a shame! And what a fool he was to venture back to France!”

“Come citizen,” urged the officer. “They are waiting in the next room.”

George Barrington stood up, and composed his features to a stony expression.

“I submit, like a good patriot,” he said quietly. “It is all a mistake, and some one

will pay dearly for it.”

Then he followed the little man from the room, first glancing quickly at Leslie, and the door closed behind him.

CHAPTER VIII

It was well that the morning was cloudy and the room was poorly lighted, else Leslie's face must have betrayed the sympathy he felt for his traveling companion, and the horror and indignation that the arbitrary methods of the revolution had roused within him. Perhaps the former feeling was stronger, for during the brief period of their acquaintance he had taken a liking to Mr. George Barrington, mainly because of the man's cool and intrepid character.

"You wish my papers?" he asked of the officer, who was regarding him intently.

"Yes citizen," was the reply. "It is your turn."

There was an ominous ring to the words, but Leslie pretended not to detect it.

"My passport," he said, handing it over.

At that moment the lantern-jawed little man entered from the adjoining apartment. The officer, addressing him as Alphonse, called him to his side. The two, standing together, read the contents of the document; and a worse-favored pair of ruffians it would have been difficult to find in all Paris.

"You come to Paris well recommended, Citizen Tryon," said the little man. "You will find all patriots at your service."

"Protection is all I ask or desire," replied Leslie, "and the Republic shall have no cause to repent the confidence it places in me. And now, sirs, I trust you will return my passport and allow me to depart."

"Presently, citizen, presently," said the officer. "There are several little formalities yet to be attended to. In the first place, did you ever see or converse with the Englishman, Citizen Barrington, before you were thrown into contact with him at the town of Beauvais?"

"Never," declared Leslie. "I never knew of his existence until last night."

"Did you hold any conversation with him during the ride to Paris?"

"A few commonplace words passed between us—that was all. We both slept

through the entire journey, waking up when we reached the barrier.”

The officer nodded.

“Very good,” he said. “And now concerning this matter which has brought you from America to France—the passport states that it is business of a personal and harmless nature. Our instructions are strict, citizen, and we must know what that business is. It will be to your own advantage—”

“Is it absolutely necessary?” asked Leslie.

“Absolutely, citizen,” the officer answered. “These are times of danger and suspicion, and the republic is not to be blamed for taking precautions. Moreover it is my duty to aid you as far as possible, and to do so I must have your full confidence.”

“If I refuse I will probably be arrested on suspicion,” he reasoned rapidly, “and if I tell all it is ten to one that spies will follow every step of my search—this little man is certainly a spy himself. Then, if it should turn out that my father was an aristocrat, my own life may be in danger. I am afraid I have counted too much on my American citizenship.”

He glanced at the officer and his companion, and was somewhat reassured to see that they were regarding him with friendly and even benevolent expressions—so far as their brutal faces were capable of meaning that.

“I must take the chances,” the lad concluded quickly. “These men are probably not so bad as they look, and they may really be of service to me. At all events, it is better to trust them than to be thrown into prison on suspicion—”

“Citizen, have you decided?” broke in the officer in a voice meant to be pleasant.

“Yes, I am ready to explain the nature of my errand,” replied Leslie. “It is entirely personal and private, and that is why I have hesitated. But I see now, as you say, that I must be frank and open if I would gain the assistance I need. Also, it is well to avoid even the shadow of suspicion in these times.”

“Exactly!” assented the little man.

Leslie obeyed. Briefly and clearly he stated the main facts of the story with

which the reader is familiar, for obvious reasons omitting no link in the chain, save that he did not mention Andre Bellermont. Meanwhile the little man had produced a blank book and pencil and was making occasional notes. The red-capped soldier, sitting on his stool, listened with an air of attention.

“That is all,” Leslie concluded.

“It is not much,” said the little man. “Philip Courcel came from Paris to New York in the year 1771,” he read, glancing at his book. “Nothing was known of him then or afterward. He married in that year, was killed in battle in 1778, and left no evidence that would throw light on his past. His wife died, one of his two sons was lost or drowned, and you are the other son.

You were brought up by your uncle under the name of Leslie Tryon. Is this correct?”

“Yes,” replied Leslie.

“And why have you come to Paris at such a time?”

“I told you the reason,” Leslie answered. “My uncle had wronged my father years ago, and when he died lately his last request was that I should seek out my father’s relatives at once, if any were living. I held that request as sacred, and so I am here.”

“Very good,” said the little man, making a note.

“It does you credit, Citizen Tryon. And suppose you find your father’s relatives, what then?”

“I have no plans as yet,” Leslie answered. With a flash of inspiration, he added: “If I find them, and they are poor and in want, I shall relieve their needs.”

“Twenty-two years is a long time,” said the little man, with a shrug of his shoulders. “I fear you will fail, citizen. And you have so little to help you. Is there no other clue except the two facts that your father left Paris in 1771, and that he was known in New York by the name of Philip Courcel?”

“One other, but it is very slight,” Leslie answered reluctantly.

“And what is it?”

“A name that was found scrawled on a bit of paper among my father’s effects—the name of Andre Bellermont.”

“The name of Andre Bellermont,” repeated the little man, making a note in his book. “Presumably an old friend of your father’s in Paris?”

“I judge so.”

“And you have no knowledge of the past or present whereabouts of this Andre Bellermont?” asked the little man, known as Citizen Alphonse le Clerc; clearly he was forgetting to inquire if the scrap of paper contained anything more than the name.

“None whatever,” said Leslie.

The answer was strongly evasive, but he felt that he was justified in concealing the further facts, since he would thus be in possession of a working clue known only to himself.

Citizen le Clerc made another note, glanced keenly at his companion, and then said:

“Yes, it is a doubtful quest, this of yours. Twenty-two years ago! What marks may not have been obliterated since! But have courage! I am a secret agent of the Republic—”

“I knew it—he is a spy!” reflected Leslie.

“—and I will assist you to trace your father’s family,” finished the little man.

“Sir, I thank you,” said Leslie. “I have both time and money to devote to the task.”

All seemed to have gone well, and he expected his order of release at once. But it was not to be yet. The little man put away his book and pencil, and the officer took a step forward.

“Citizen Tryon, have you no other papers about you?” he demanded.

It was a fatal question, though how fatal Leslie did not know at the moment. Yet he had a subtle suspicion of danger, and he would gladly have kept back the letter to the French advocate. For a passing second he hesitated, and then, deciding that a denial would probably lead to his person being searched, he produced the paper.

“I have this,” he said. “It will explain itself, and the address is the first place to which I intend going.”

CHAPTER IX

Half a dozen seconds of deep silence. The two men put their heads together and held the letter where the murky light from the window could fall upon it: for Mordecai Janeway's writing was cramped and illegible. Then, from the lips of Citizen le Clerc, an exclamation forced by sudden surprise:

"Yes, even so," he muttered. "Monsieur Jules Verneville, Number Sixteen Rue Loire—"

"The advocate of the Quartier Saint Germain!" broke in the officer.

They whispered for a moment, meanwhile looking suspiciously at Leslie. Then they went a little nearer the window, where they managed with some difficulty to read the brief and simple contents of the letter. Citizen le Clerc took a paper from his pocket, apparently a list of names a foot long, and marking a spot with his finger he showed it to his companion. Both nodded, and the little man returned the list to his pocket.

"Who is this Mordecai Janeway, the writer of the letter?" the officer demanded sternly.

"He has been for many years the legal adviser of my uncle," Leslie answered, striving hard to keep cool. "At one time he had a business correspondence with Monsieur Jules Verneville, and when it was decided that I should come to Paris he gave me the letter of introduction to the advocate, thinking that he might be a suitable person to aid me."

"Just so," commented the little spy. "Has Mordecai Janeway ever been in France?"

"Never."

"Has he corresponded with Jules Verneville during the past four years?"

"I think not, but I can't speak positively."

The officer and the little man exchanged glances.

“This must be looked into,” said the latter. “I fear I must detain you a further time, Citizen Tryon—”

“Detain me!” cried Leslie, now satisfied that serious trouble was threatening. “Why, I have been kept here already for hours!”

“It is a better place than a prison, Citizen Tryon,” said the officer.

“True,” assented Leslie. “But I ought to be released and allowed to enter the city. And why am I to be detained. Is it because of the letter?”

“Yes, the letter.”

“I don’t understand it,” said Leslie. “The letter simply recommends me to the friendship and hospitality of the advocate—is it not so?”

“It is even so.”

“Then what is wrong? Is it possible that Jules Verneville is an aristocrat—that he is under the displeasure of the Republic?”

The startling thought brought a pallor to the lad’s cheeks.

“I do not know,” the officer answered coldly.

“And is he still residing in Paris?”

“Yes, citizen. I will tell you no more.”

“But how long are you going to keep me here?” Leslie asked.

“So long as suits the pleasure of the Republic,” was the insolent reply. “Have a care what you say, citizen. Be content until our return, lest worse things happen.”

With that the little man and the officer left the room, the latter taking with him the passport and the letter. The door closed and Leslie sat down on his bench to consider the situation, almost forgetting the presence of the red-capped soldier in the maze of dismal thoughts that worried him.

Why was he detained? What mystery attached to Jules Verneville, advocate of the Quartier St. Germain? How would the affair end? There was no answer to

these questions, as the lad soon discovered. To puzzle his brain was useless. One thing was clear—the letter had caused him to be detained just when he was about to be released. Perhaps Jules Verneville was regarded with some slight and proofless suspicion by the Republic, and now Mordecai Janeway's letter was believed to contain a hidden meaning between the lines—to be evidence of disloyalty or plotting on the part of the advocate. At the least, if Jules Verneville was a suspected man that would be quite enough to cast the shadow of suspicion on Leslie.

The morning wore monotonously on, and by noon the expected order of release had not come. So sullen was the aspect of the soldier that Leslie did not venture to approach the window. He listened to the never ceasing hum of the great city, and the rumble of the vehicles that kept constantly going in and out of the barrier. There was a clamor of savage voices, and plenty of coarse and bloodthirsty jesting. The sky had cleared about eleven o'clock, and the sun was shining hotly.

Early in the afternoon the red-capped soldier was relieved, and the man who took his place brought Leslie quite a substantial meal. He took this as a good sign, and as he had eaten nothing since the evening before he devoured every scrap of the food. The new guard on duty was as glum and silent as his predecessor, and finally, the room being close and warm, the lad was overcome by drowsiness. He stretched himself on the hard bench, and quickly fell asleep.

Hours passed, and night had nearly fallen when a tug at his shoulder roused Leslie. Hearing his name called, he sat up, blinking his sleepy eyes. A smoky, lamp was burning on a shelf, and outside it was twilight. He saw vaguely the sinister features of the soldier, the officer, and the man with the lantern-jaws.

"Come, Citizen Tryon," spoke a harsh voice.

Stupidly, and as yet but half-awake, Leslie floundered through the adjoining guard-room and thence to the street. The little spy placed himself on one side of him, and to the other side stepped a tall brawny-limbed patriot armed with a musket. They started forward.

"Where are you taking me?" the lad questioned.

"To the prison of La Force," Citizen le Clerc answered. "You are arrested on suspicion. Here is the commitment, properly signed."

He flourished a slip of paper.

The prison of La Force. The name was pregnant with all that was terrible and hopeless. The words seemed to scorch Leslie's brain, as though branded thereon with letters of fire. He staggered, recovered himself, and then marched on between his conductors. Suddenly, something seemed to snap inside the lad, and the full horror of his position surged upon him. He realized the futility of appeal, the folly of hope. He knew that he was an arrested suspect—that he was going to a prison where he would be cut off from all communication with the outer world, and where at the best he would languish for long months, possibly going forth in time to the guillotine. And as he pondered all this a mad and desperate plan flashed into his mind, and took a firm root there.

CHAPTER X

The stimulus of hope, wakened by the suddenly formed plan to escape—for that was the lad's idea—had a magical effect upon Leslie. His nerves became steady and his heart ceased its violent throbbing. He was alert to all about him now, and to the need of cool and decisive action. He walked with firmer steps between the two guiding ruffians, and their hold of him unconsciously relaxed a little.

“Yes, I am sure I can do it,” he said to himself. “I must do it, for it is my only chance. Once the prison doors close on me they may never open again. I will be dead to the world and to my friends, and will either perish in some damp dungeon or be hauled in a cart to the guillotine. Nothing can save me after I enter La Force. I have learned enough to know that. Men as innocent as I are being murdered every day in the flame of Liberty.

“It was folly to come to Paris,” he went on, “and yet how was I to foresee what would happen? That I am an American citizen counts for nothing with these bloodthirsty and suspicious fanatics. If I succeed in escaping I must abandon the search for my father's relatives until the revolution has ended in one way or another. I will try to slip out of the city and reach some seaport, whence I can sail for England. I still have my money, and I will be far safer without the passport; it would betray me at once if I was caught and searched. And now to watch for a suitable chance. It will be easy enough, I think, to break away from these fellows. I have that all planned.”

Sanguine of spirit and resolute of mind, Leslie walked on for nearly five minutes.

When the looked-for opportunity finally came the lad's heart beat high with hope. The barrier was now half a mile behind, and some disturbance off to the right had thinned that quarter of the town through which the prisoner and his guards were making their way.

“Now is my time!” decided Leslie, as he came opposite the mouth of a narrow and gloomy street on the left. Bracing himself for the struggle he instantly thrust out one foot and tripped the soldier on his right, at the same time giving him a violent push. Taken by surprise, the man fell heavily forward, dropping his musket with a clatter and striking his forehead on a sharp cobblestone. He lay

still as a log, stunned and bleeding.

With a jerk Leslie wrenched his arm from the hold of the little spy, hoping to escape into the darkness by a swift dash. But Citizen le Clerc was just as quick, and though his ravenous snatch at the prisoner missed by an inch or two, it caused the lad to leap back a few feet in the wrong direction. Then, with cunning understanding of what was intended, the spy held his position at the mouth of the narrow street, extending both arms to block the way.

“Help! help!” he yelled loudly; and several voices answered from no great distance.

For a second Leslie felt the horror of despair. His only chance was to gain the shelter of the dark, and apparently deserted, little street. Behind him and to right and left he could hear men clattering over the stones, shouting as they came. The whole quarter would soon be roused.

He hesitated no longer, but sprang forward. Citizen le Clerc, seeing the move, doubled his cries and danced about like an animated puppet. He knew he was no match in strength for the lad, but he counted on seizing and holding him until aid should come.

However, Leslie baffled this intention. Coming to close quarters, he evaded the spy’s grasp and launched a blow at him that missed. The little man, having dodged back, straightened up again in time to catch the lad’s clenched fist with terrific force between the eyes. Over he went in a limp heap, and past him darted the plucky young American.

Yells of rage and pain told that Citizen le Clerc was by no means disabled. There was a rush and scurry of feet, and a clamor of voices that woke similar shrill sounds in all directions. Leslie, his fighting blood thoroughly up, ran on fleetly. The tumult swelled behind him—such a ferocious outcry as only a Paris mob can make—and when he saw figures stirring down the dimly lit street in front he believed for an instant that he was lost.

But in the nick of time he spied an opening on the right, and dashed into a narrow passage between the backs of tall houses. He followed this to a squalid street, darted across it, and then threaded another dark alley. The noise of pursuit was now growing faint behind him, and he was satisfied that he had thrown his enemies off the track.

After that fortune continued to favor the lad—fortune, and the fact that the inhabitants of the neighborhood he was traversing had not yet returned from witnessing the guillotine's bloody work that day. He went on rapidly but cautiously, doubling and twisting a score of times, choosing the darkest and most lonely thoroughfares, and keeping as far as possible from the scattered lamps. The darkness concealed his well-dressed appearance from the few people he met, and by walking boldly and fearlessly he escaped suspicion or stoppage.

Presently, after an hour or more, reaction came with its natural depression of spirit. Leslie realized that he was alone in the heart of Paris, hungry and friendless, ignorant of where to go for food or shelter. A hot search was sure to be made for him, and by daylight the clothes he wore would speedily lead to his detection and arrest. To leave the city was a matter for time and careful planning, and he did not know how to find the only man who could aid him—Jules Verneville. Possibly the advocate was already a prisoner, and, at all events, it would be risky to venture near his house.

“That is the first place the spy will set a watch over,” the lad reflected, “and yet I think I would go there if I could find the way. I must have help from some one, or I can never get out of Paris. And whatever is to be done must be done before morning.”

Just then chancing to enter what he took to be a narrow passage between two streets, the lad found himself in a paved court surrounded by dark and rickety houses. And here he made a discovery that was both horrible and gratifying.

On the cobblestones lay two dead bodies, the one that of an elderly and refined-looking man with a pistol clutched in his hand, the other a younger fellow wearing the tri-colored cockade of the citizen-patriot. The former, clearly an aristocrat, had no doubt been chased to this cul-de-sac, and in the struggle which ended his life he had killed one of his assailants.

Leslie permitted no scruples to hinder him from the most of the opportunity thus offered. It was the work of a minute to exchange his own coat and cap for the rusty, long-tailed coat of the dead citizen-patriot, and the cocked hat ornamented with the tri-colored badge; they fitted as though they had been made for him.

Then, remembering his money, he picked up the discarded coat and searched it. The pocket was empty. The drafts had been stolen, possibly while the lad was

sleeping in the guard-room at the barrier, and now he was left with but a few francs in a pocket of his breeches.

CHAPTER XI

At first it was a severe blow to Leslie to discover that he had been robbed. He was now almost penniless. And it was more than ever necessary for him to engage in the dangerous task of obtaining an interview with Monsieur Jules Verneville. But on second thoughts, remembering the difficulty he must have had in exchanging the drafts for cash, he felt more reconciled to the disaster. Then he heard voices in some of the surrounding houses, and at once he slipped quietly from the courtyard to the street, intent only on escaping from so perilous a neighborhood.

“It is still early,” he said to himself, as he resumed his weary tramp, “and I have the night before me. Paris is a big town, and I know nothing of it, but by going from street to street I may stumble on the Rue Loire.

From street to street he wandered, walking as though he had a definite purpose in view, and so attracting but little attention; the tri-colored cockade and rusty black coat were passports to fellowship and security. The air rang with voices quarrelsome and voices triumphant, voices yelling and voices cursing; with the patter of thousands of feet and the crunching of cart-wheels; with the beat of distant drums and the hum of distant quarters.

Lights blazed from the windows of the tall, overhanging houses, where from story to story heads were thrust out to breathe the tainted air. In the narrow thoroughfares between the creaking lamps shed a sickly glare on the rickety cobblestones and on the slimy pools of water that lay in the ruts. And the people were everywhere. They stood on the corners, sat on the steps and curbs, danced and howled on the footways, thronged in and out the wineshops, fought and cursed around the bakers’ stalls—men with red caps, and faces stamped with ferocity and poverty; even more terrible women, dishevel-haired hags in tatters with the lust for bloodshed lurking in their eyes; plenty of wan and shrunken children, clamorous with hunger. And nearly all had some weapon—muskets, pikes, bars of iron, knives and cudgels.

Steadily the lad picked his way onward, sickened by what was taking place about him, and shuddering inwardly with repulsion and fear. Nor did he escape closer contact with the slaughter-crazed wretches. Twice he was halted before wineshops by well-meaning citizen-patriots, who forced gulps of sour wine upon

him, and once a soldier tossed at him in sport a hard loaf of bread, which he gladly stowed under his coat. Fortunately, no pertinent questions were asked, and he replied in fluent French to such remarks as required an answer.

Though sorely tempted to inquire the way to the Rue Loire, he fought down the inclination. And before long he had reason to be glad that he had not yielded, for at a corner by a wineshop he heard a man telling an eager audience of the escape of a suspected prisoner while going to La Force, and describing his dress and appearance. So, then, the news had spread already! With a shiver he pulled his coat closer about him and hurried on.

Gradually, and almost imperceptibly, the city became more quiet and respectable. There were fewer people and less noise; the air was sweeter and the streets gloomier and cleaner. Reaching a vast open space, dotted with lights and hemmed in afar by shadowy masses of buildings, the lad started across it at a quickened pace.

Suddenly he stopped. At his feet the paving-stones were slimy and stained, and just in front of him a tall structure, with a silvery object gleaming at its top, towered out of the darkness. Like a flash he realized the truth. He was on the Place de la Concorde, and this was the guillotine looming above him.

For an instant a lump caught in his throat and nearly choked him. He trembled in every limb, seeing an omen of his own fate in this incident which had led him to such a frightful spot. He seemed to hear the roar of the crowd, and the muffled drop of the heads which had fallen that day under the sharp and heavy knife. Then, detecting prowling footsteps, he turned and fled from the monster of blood as fast as his legs would carry him—ran on and on, blindly and recklessly, intent on getting far away, until sheer want of breath brought him to a halt. He listened first and was relieved to find all quiet, save for the murmur of distant and populous localities. He mopped the perspiration from his face with his coat-sleeve, and looked about him. He was on one of the quays of the Seine, with a row of trees in the background, and in front the river flowing below its granite parapet. Across the black and sluggish-rolling water lights twinkled and dusky houses blurred the starry horizon; a little to one side the stream was spanned by a bridge.

Leslie was both hungry and tired. He seated himself on the narrow top of the stone parapet that was elevated above the surface of the quay, and drew the loaf

of bread from under his coat. The thick trunk of a tree, scarcely more than a foot distant, hid him from the light of several near-by lampposts.

“I’m no better off, for all the distance I’ve come,” he said to himself as he looked down at the black water. “I’ll wait here a while—it won’t do to waste too much time—and when my hunger is satisfied I’ll start off again. I wonder if the Quartier Saint Germain lies across the river. I feel sure it must be somewhere in this neighborhood.”

He took a bite of the loaf, and for a couple of minutes he ate greedily, munching like a ravenous animal. Then a noise disturbed him, at first faint and distant, but swelling quickly to a roar of angry voices and scurrying feet. Nearer came the tumult, ringing more vengefully. What could it mean? Had his enemies tracked him?—no, that was impossible. He kept his place, trusting to the shelter of the tree, and hoping that the danger would veer off in another direction.

But instead of receding the clamor approached—such a clamor as only a Paris, mob could make. The lad thoroughly alarmed, thought of flight. There was still time, but he hesitated on account of the lampposts, fearing he would be seen.

Ah, it was too late now! The shrill din was close by, and he could see a dark mass in full tear straight toward him. Yes, here they came. Into the stretch of yellow light on the paved quay bounded a man with disheveled clothes, long, black hair fluttering to the wind, and on his face a rigid look of terror. He dashed on into the shadow, and behind him surged his pursuers, almost near enough to have touched him—at least a score of citizen-patriots, red-capped soldiers, and a sprinkling of fleet-footed women.

“We’ve got him!” they yelled ferociously. “He can’t give us the slip!”

“Death to the spy who serves Austria!”

“Kill the dog!”

“Off with his traitor head!”

“Hang him to a lamppost!”

There was a rush of feet close by Leslie, and, with a bound, the fugitive was over the parapet, dropping with a splash into the river.

He seemed to be a good swimmer, and already he was ten feet from the quay, with his head and shoulders dimly visible above the black water. Seeing this the fury of the crowd rose to a higher pitch, mingled with alarm.

“He will get away!” they cried. “He is swimming well!”

“He will reach the other bank!”

“Shoot the traitor! Shoot him! Dash over the bridge, some of you!”

At this half a dozen of the mob started for the bridge, and several of the soldiers leveled their muskets. One fired, and with the report the fugitive uttered a yell and turned partly around. Then he swam on again, but it could be seen that he was using only, one arm.

“He is hurt!” howled the crowd. “Another shot will kill him!”

“Aim well, and give it to him in the head!”

“Death to the spy—”

“Stop, stop, citizens!”

Clear and loud rang a youthful voice, and with a light bound the speaker mounted the top of the parapet. The light from a lamppost, shining full on his face, revealed to Leslie a superbly built lad probably two or three years older than himself, tall, strong, with a fiercely handsome face, and coal-black hair and eyes. Evidently this individual exercised considerable influence over his companions. A hush fell on the mob and two soldiers who had been about to fire at the fugitive lowered their muskets.

“Leave this spy to me, citizens,” cried the young Frenchman. “He cannot swim far, for he is hit in the arm, and to let him die by drowning is more mercy than the traitor deserves. Have patience! I will bring him back for the guillotine!”

“Yes, bring him back!” howled the crowd. “Hurrah for Armand Lockroy”

The object of his applause waved his hand, faced about to the river, and made a headlong plunge from the parapet. He struck the water with a splash, dove clear under, and rose to the surface nearly a dozen feet from the side of the quay.

Then, hand over hand, he swam rapidly after the fugitive.

CHAPTER XII

The excitement was tremendous, but hushed. All eyes were turned intently in one direction, and the sound of hoarse breathing could be heard. By this time the spectators numbered fifty or more, fresh additions having been drawn to the spot by the noise, and the whole rabble had moved farther down along the quay. So Leslie was close pressed on both sides by these bloodthirsty men and women, who doubtless supposed, if they thought about it at all, that he was one of themselves.

It was, indeed, a thrilling race, and a brief one. The spy, who had been twenty feet or more from the bank when his pursuer leaped after him, realized the peril and made strenuous efforts to escape. But he was exhausted from the chase, weak from loss of blood, and with only one arm to aid him his progress was slow and erratic. He drifted a foot down-stream with the tide for each one that he gained toward the opposite bank.

On the other hand, the young Frenchman, Armand Lockroy, seemed to be as much at home in the water as a duck. In spite of his clothing he swam fast and with ease, taking long strokes and rapidly lessening the distance between himself and his prey.

“Stop, traitor!” he called. “You sha’n’t escape me, you dog! Back you come to the guillotine!” Glancing over one shoulder, he added to his companions: “Find a boat if you can, and pick us up. I may have a struggle if this fellow tries to drown himself and me. Be quick!”

Suddenly the spy, who seemed on the point of sinking from exhaustion, stopped swimming and faced quickly around. Letting his body sink to the chin—he was probably treading water—he flung his good arm high up, revealing between the clenched fingers a glittering knife. With a husky malediction he struck hard at his pursuer, who was within easy reach and unprepared for the assault.

Where the blow landed none on the quay could tell, but it was evident at once that Armand Lockroy was hit. He uttered a gasping cry, and went partly under. Then he tried to pursue the spy, who was now retreating as fast as his single-handed strokes would carry him; but, thinking better of it, he turned and made for the quay. He swam slowly and painfully, gaining inch by inch. Behind him, if

keen eyes were able to see it, a red streak trailed on the lamplit water.

Leslie, whose sympathies had at first favored neither one nor the other, now felt some concern for the plucky young Frenchman. Heroism always appealed to him, and he remembered how manly and handsome this Armand Lockroy had looked when he leaped from the parapet. Surely he was not as cruel and ruffianly at heart as his fellows.

The fugitive was some distance out in the stream, and the current was drifting him steadily away. He was swimming with slow and easy strokes, and he may have hoped that his strength would take him to the opposite shore. But if so, he was doomed to disappointment. A fierce-looking soldier, bidding his companions give him room, rested his musket on the parapet and waited until the swimmer floated into the feeble glow shed by one of the lamps. Then he aimed and fired carefully, and with the flash and the report the poor wretch screamed with agony, tossed up his arms, and sank. He did not come up again, and the ripples spread over the spot where he had met his death.

The tragedy was finished in less than a minute after the spy's murderous assault on his pursuer, and the soldier's successful shot was greeted with fiendish yells of delight. Then the rabble, and also Leslie, turned their attention again to Armand Lockroy. It was well that they did so, for the young Frenchman was sorely in need of assistance, and he had been shouting vainly to make the fact known. He was still nearly twenty feet from the quay, submerged to the chin, and feebly beating the water with his hands.

"Help! help!" he cried. "I am stabbed and bleeding. My strength is gone!"

For a moment the crowd stared in horror. One and all seemed to be stricken with cowardice, and yet surely there were some among them able to swim. They shouted with alarm, but no attempt at a rescue was made.

"Save me!" the struggling lad appealed hoarsely, as with a desperate effort he floundered a little nearer the bank. "Don't let me drown! I can keep up no longer—"

The sentence ended in a gurgle, and the waters closed quietly over his head.

Like a flash Leslie stood to his feet, his cry of indignation, wrung from him by the craven conduct of the crowd, smothered in the roar of alarmed voices. He

was a good swimmer, and he resolved to save the drowning lad if it was not too late. Not an instant did he hesitate. He leaped to the top of the parapet, clasped his hands, and dived head first into the Seine. He went far under, and held his breath until he came to the surface. Then, shaking the water from his eyes and hair, he struck out lustily.

From the quay now rang a burst of cheering and applause. Eagerly the rabble watched the young American's progress. Two men, shamed into tardy bravery, stripped off their coats and dropped over the parapet into the water.

Splash! splash! Armand Lockroy rose to the surface, and beat the air with his hands. He was on the point of sinking a second time when his rescuer reached and caught him. Leslie kept afloat with one hand, and fastened the other in the French lad's collar.

"Keep cool and don't struggle," he said. "I'll save you. Just wait till I get breath for the swim."

"All right, citizen," was the brave reply. "Rely on me. You are a brave fellow, whoever you are, and I sha'n't forget this."

"Are you badly hurt?" Leslie asked.

"Yes, citizen, I fear so. The dog stabbed me in the right shoulder, and the wound is bleeding badly. I feel sick and faint. Don't let go of me."

Meanwhile the rabble had been cheering and shouting, and suddenly a cry arose that a boat was coming. Hearing this, and seeing that their friend was in safe hands, the men who had jumped into the water swam back to the quay and were pulled over the parapet.

The boat was fortunately close by—it had been procured up under the bridge—and its two occupants quickly rowed to the spot. Armand Lockroy was hauled aboard in a fainting condition, and Leslie clambered over the gunwale without assistance. Several minutes later the craft landed at a pier a short distance downstream, whither the eager crowd had followed along the quay.

Leslie found no opportunity of slipping away, as he would have wished. For the time being he was a hero, and the very men who would have clamored for his life had they known who he was now pressed around him with coarse gratitude

and praise. He bore his dangerous honors meekly, and when he was pressed to help carry the unconscious form of the young Frenchman he dared not refuse. But as he started off, bearing his part of the burden with three others, he wondered anxiously how this strange adventure would end.

Away from the river and back across the guillotine-haunted Place de la Concorde streamed the crowd, growing larger and more noisy each moment. A wineshop in the Rue St. Honore proved to be their destination, and when part of the rabble had entered the door was shut on the rest.

Explanations were hurriedly made, and what followed showed Armand Lockroy to be no ordinary individual. He was carried up-stairs by the keeper of the wineshop and two others, and a surgeon was sent for at once. Nor was Leslie forgotten. A suit of clothing was given him by the landlord to wear while his own drenched garments were being dried. He retired to an inner room to put them on, and was soon rigged out in coarse stockings, thick shoes, a workman's blouse, and a loose-fitting red cap.

Then he returned to the front apartment, feeling very ill at ease, and realizing that it would be imprudent for him to try to make his escape just yet; moreover, he was anxious to hear the surgeon's verdict on Citizen Armand Lockroy. Sitting down on a bench at the far end of the room, he watched for several minutes the ferocious-visaged soldiers and citizen-patriots who were drinking red wine at the counter. They were talking of the night's victim, who, it appeared, had been denounced as an Austrian spy, and had fled from his house by one door when the party led to arrest him by Armand Lockroy entered at the Other.

With his mind on the conversation, Leslie paid no heed to anything else. He was not aware that a certain individual had entered the wineshop, nor did he dream of his peril until he suddenly spied a familiar face across the room—a face that chilled him with fear and forced a gasp of surprise to his lips.

CHAPTER XIII

The man who had lately entered the wineshop, and who was responsible for the lad's terror, was none other than Citizen Alphonse le Clerc, the little spy of the revolution. His clothing showed traces of recent soiling, and his lantern-jawed face was more ugly and sinister than ever. One eye was half closed, his nose was swollen, and a clot of dried blood stained his chin.

Nor did he come as an ordinary customer—indeed, the shop was without doubt a rendezvous for the most active helpers in the revolution. Citizen le Clerc was received with respectful deference by all present, and room was made for him to approach the counter, where he accepted a glass of wine from the landlord. As he stood drinking it his companions began to tell him of the death of the man denounced for furnishing information to the Austrians, and he listened with keen attention.

It was a fearful ordeal for Leslie, and it was well that no attention was being paid to him then. To hide his feelings was impossible. He sat staring at the spy as though under a spell, fearing each second that the man would turn and see him. Should he be discovered and recognized nothing could save him from La Force, or, worse still, from the vengeance that Citizen le Clerc would probably try to wreak on his late assailant.

When a minute had passed thus the lad breathed more freely. As yet his presence was not suspected by the spy, and by promptness and cunning he might escape. But how? To attempt to cross the wineshop to the street-door would certainly lead to his being stopped, questioned, and identified. And each moment that he lingered added to his peril.

Suddenly an idea came to him, and he wondered that he had not thought of it before. He rose from the bench, glanced with assumed carelessness at the group by the counter, and turning his back on them strode with slow steps through the door that led to the little room where he had changed his clothing. He did not dare to close the door, or to blow out the lamp that was burning dimly. With a fast-beating heart he took the few francs from his pair of breeches that were stretched across a table to dry—he had forgotten the money until now—and then crept to the one window at the side of the room.

Fortunately this was open, for the night was hot. It was the act of an instant for him to drop into a narrow and foul-smelling passage between the walls of high houses, and, picking his way through slime and water, he quickly reached the street. On his left was the entrance to the wineshop, and after a hasty glance around to see that he was not observed he started off to the right.

He followed rapidly the length of the Rue St. Antoine, past palaces, mansions, and gardens. It was nearly midnight now—if not after that hour—but Paris was still noisy and bustling. Lights shone from windows, and on the street corners people were singing, dancing, and quarreling.

From the end of the Rue St. Antoine Leslie kept straight on, penetrating deeper and deeper into a part of the great city that he had not before visited that night. He neither knew nor cared whither he was going. Reckless of fatigue or hunger, he pressed forward. The horror of Citizen le Clerc was yet upon him, and it was enough for him to know that he had escaped the peril of the wineshop and was getting farther away from it every minute. For the time being his future plans were lost sight of.

So, wandering from street to street, attracting little or no attention from those he met, the lad came at last to a neighborhood that differed vastly from the Rue St. Honore and its vicinity—a neighborhood of tall and dingy houses with heads in greasy night-caps thrust from the windows of ill-smelling, winding, and narrow thoroughfares, of noisy wineshops, haggard men and women, and filthy children rolling in the gutters. And the talk was all of blood—of blood and the guillotine. Paris thought of nothing else. People would have stood on the Place de la Concorde until they were starved to death, if only the heads could have kept dropping that long from under the knife.

Leslie slackened his pace, and began to feel conscious of weariness. He was satisfied that he was in no immediate danger, and he thought it unlikely that his mysterious disappearance from the wineshop would lead to his being suspected by Citizen le Clerc of being the escaped prisoner. And his disguise was the best he could have had. The clothes he was wearing now were far safer than those he had taken from the dead citizen in the courtyard. In the coarse blouse, jean breeches, and red cap he would pass for a workman or a peasant.

“Yes, I have nothing to fear from the people,” he said to himself, as he trudged on; “at least by night. In daytime I might be suspected, or I might meet some one

who saw me at the barrier. It will be morning soon, and I must make the most of the hours of darkness that remain. Monsieur Jules Verneville certainly can't live in this neighborhood, but as likely as not the Quartier Saint Germain lies somewhere beyond in the way I am going. Still I will continue straight on, and if it comes to the worst I will venture to ask information.

"There is one thing I must remember about tonight's adventure," he added. "This Armand Lockroy, as they called him, seems to be well known and to have a lot of influence. If I fail to get away from Paris, and am caught and thrown into prison, it may help me to obtain my freedom if I made known the fact that it was I who saved Armand Lockroy from drowning. But it won't do to count too much on it. A stab in the shoulder is an ugly thing, and he may die of the wound. Poor fellow! I hope he will recover. I liked his face, and I am sure he is not as wicked and cruel as those ruffians he was with. He must belong to a higher and different class altogether, and yet it seems strange—"

The lad's reflections came thus abruptly to an end, and he stopped short with a gasping exclamation of astonishment, his eyes lifted slightly in the air and his feet on the cobblestones of a narrow street that he had been about to cross. On the opposite corner of the street was a dingy-looking wineshop, evidently of great age. From a beam that jutted out over the doorway dangled a sign-board, and on this, lighted by a lamp that hung a little above it, the following inscription painted in big red letters was conspicuous:

"LE FLAMBEAU ROUGE."

Leslie rubbed his eyes and looked again. Yes, there was no mistake. It was the identical wineshop—"The Red Torch" in English, to find which he had traveled thousands of miles from New York to Paris. Unknowingly, and by pure chance, his wandering footsteps had strayed into the Quartier St. Antoine. Here was the place to which the lad's father, Philip Courcel, had doubtless been in the habit, twenty years ago, of addressing letters to his friend, Andre Bellermont. But could anything be learned of Andre Bellermont or Philip Courcel after so long a time? Was Jacques Ferry still the landlord of the Flambeau Rouge?

Fearing to attract dangerous attention, for there were many loiterers about, Leslie crossed over to the wineshop and leaned in a tired attitude against a lamppost that stood on the corner.

“What shall I do?” he reflected anxiously. “Destiny seems to have guided me here tonight, and I will be a fool if I disregard this opportunity. And it is such a splendid chance to take the first step in the search for my father’s family—a chance that may never occur again, since the future holds for me either confinement in prison or a flight from Paris and France. It is dangerous, of course, for my questions will likely arouse suspicion. But I have been fortunate so far and I believe I will come out of this all right. If it comes to the worst I can trust to my legs to escape, and if I found the Quartier Saint Antoine when I was not looking for it I may easily stumble on the Rue Loire before morning. Shall I—yes, I will go in. I will risk it.”

With sudden determination he strode across the pavement, pushed back the partly open door, and boldly entered the Flambeau Rouge.

CHAPTER XIV

The interior of the wineshop was as ancient as the outside, but its decayed walls and furnishings were made to look almost inviting by a state of cleanliness that was indeed remarkable for the Quartier St. Antoine, and in such times as these. Half a dozen poorly dressed citizens of various ages stood drinking wine at the counter, behind which the keeper of the wineshop and his wife were on duty. The latter was a buxom woman with a ruddy face and great rings in her ears; her husband was short and broad-shouldered, with a rather pleasing face and a head of crisply curling black hair.

On the opposite side of the room four sinister-visaged men in workmen's blouses and caps were seated at a table, engaged in a game of cards. On a bench close behind them sat an old man, sound asleep. His head and arms rested on a small table in front of him, and his legs were stretched under it. He looked to be very tall and thin, and a quantity of thick, snow-white hair fell over his neck and clasped hands. His face was hidden, and could not be seen.

With a sweeping glance Leslie took in the above details of the Flambeau Rouge. Then, made more bold and confident by the knowledge that it was too late for retreat, he firmly crossed the floor and seated himself at a long table that was across the rear end of the room. The occupants of the place scanned him curiously for a moment, after which all but two went on drinking and card-playing. The woman whispered to her husband, and the latter came immediately out from the counter and presented himself before the lad.

"What will you have, citizen?" he asked; and as he spoke his keen eyes were taking in the new customer from head to foot.

"A glass of wine," Leslie answered.

He felt that it was necessary to order something, and he wanted to gain time for reflection. As yet he had not decided how to commence his inquiries.

The landlord strode to the counter and quickly returned with the wine. He pushed the glass to the lad, and sat down close beside him at the end of the table. To conceal his nervousness Leslie took a sip of the wine and produced a franc from his pocket. The man refused the coin by a shake of his head, and a troubled

and perplexed look brought some wrinkles to his brow.

“No, I don’t want your money,” he said, in a low tone. “I—I would have a word with you in private.”

“Yes, go on,” Leslie whispered hoarsely.

The man nodded.

“You doubtless know me, citizen—you know that I am Camille Pintard, the keeper of this wineshop. You also know that I am a loyal patriot and a friend to the republic, and customers must be above suspicion to enter yonder door. Such is my rule, and I assure you that every man in this room is as true a citizen as Robespierre himself. So why, knowing these things, have you come here? It is unjust, citizen, and may ruin my trade.”

“Why have I come here?” Leslie asked, in amazement, trying hard to conceal his fear. “I don’t understand—”

“Hush! be careful,” the man interrupted. “These friends of mine suspect nothing as yet, and I trust they may remain ignorant. But I, citizen, have always been accustomed to make good use of my eyes, and I am hard to deceive. It is true that you wear a workman’s garb, and would pass readily for one of the people with most men. But I can see that your hands are white and soft, in spite of the dirt. Your face as refined and intelligent, and your voice is such as one seldom hears in the Quartier Saint Antoine. Now do we understand each other? I am not to be deceived, citizen. I know that you are—”

“What?” Leslie asked; he was breathing deeply, and meditating a dash for the door.

“I know you to be a secret agent of the Revolution,” Camille Pintard replied sullenly. “In other words, a spy.”

The relief was intense—so strong, indeed, was the reaction from dread to hope, that Leslie very nearly betrayed his satisfaction. But he remembered timely that chagrin was the proper feeling to show. He took a sip of the sour wine, and pushed the glass from him impatiently. Then he leaned back against the wall, folding his arms, and stared fixedly at the table.

The lad was quick-witted enough to see his opportunity at once. He knew that a spy of the Republic was a man feared, respected, and powerful—a man who could do and say pretty much what he chose, and without the slightest risk of drawing suspicion upon himself. Here, he reflected, was a rare stroke of fortune—a lever that would prove of present and perhaps future advantage to him. It was too good a chance to lose, and in less time than it takes to tell he had decided on his course of action, and had even invented several little details to serve his new role.

“You are a clever man,” he said to the wineshop keeper, thus tacitly acknowledging the accusation; “if all were as cunning I fear I should trap but few enemies of the Republic. Yet in these times a spy is of the greatest service and benefit, and I am not ashamed of my calling—”

“No, no, it is not that,” interrupted Citizen Pintard. “I honor and respect you, my friend. It is only that my business will suffer if your identity is discovered—the customers of the Flambeau Rouge are above all things loyal, and this is no place for a spy to come in search of suspects. But perhaps it was thirst that led you to enter here at this late hour, or you were ignorant of the neighborhood and of the loyal fame of my wineshop?”

Leslie shook his head.

“It is true that I have no very great knowledge of the Quartier Saint Antoine, or of Paris itself,” he replied, slowly and calmly; “in fact, I came from the South but nine months ago, and have been serving the Republic since then. But I have heard of you, Citizen Pintard, and I know the Flambeau Rouge to be, as you say, above suspicion.”

“You are young to be a secret agent, citizen.”

“I am older than I look,” said Leslie, “and for that matter a young head is sometimes better than an old one. I have done good work, and I hope to do much more in the future. As for my visit tonight—why, it was made with a purpose.”

“Ah!”

Citizen Pintard leaned closer.

“Yes, I came to ask certain information of you,” Leslie went on in a low voice.

“The nature of my errand I cannot reveal to you, of course, so be content to know that I am seeking a man who is badly wanted by the Republic.”

“Yes, citizen. May you bring him to the knife!”

“And be assured that not the least shadow of suspicion rests on yourself or on any of your customers. You understand that?”

“Yes, I understand,” Camille Pintard glanced furtively about the room, and then moved a shade nearer to his companion. “It is long past midnight, and almost the closing-hour,” he added. “All have gone but the card-players yonder and Old Madcap. It is clear that none suspected your true character. So now speak plainly and quietly, citizen, and I will answer as best I can.”

Leslie nodded.

“It is a simple matter,” he began, “and may come to nothing. It goes back twenty-two years—”

“Twenty-two years!” muttered the wineshop keeper. “Then I fear I can’t help you. I have had this place fifteen years only.”

“Is that all?” whispered the lad, who was bitterly disappointed. “I hoped you had been here longer—you look older.”

“I am past fifty,” said Camille Pintard, “but what does that matter? Fifteen years ago I came to Paris from the provinces with a good sum of money in my pocket. Searching for a likely wineshop, I found and purchased the Flambeau Rouge—”

“From whom?”

“From the man who then owned it, Jacques Ferry.”

“That’s the name!” gasped Leslie. “And this is the right place—there can be no mistake.”

“What is it you seek, citizen?” asked the landlord.

“Information of two men who, I have reason to believe, were known at the Flambeau Rouge twenty-two years ago. Their names were Andre Bellermont

and Philip Courcel. Did you ever hear of either?"

Camille Pintard's face expressed blank ignorance.

"Never, citizen," he replied. "Both names are strange. And I have lived here in the quarter for fifteen years. Jacques Ferry is the only person who could tell you, and he—"

"Where is he? Is he still alive?"

"I don't know," was the disappointing reply. "When he sold the wineshop he retired to some suburb of Paris, and I have never heard of or seen him since. He may be dead, and if he still lives he would be a very-old man."

"I might find him if I had time to spare for the task," said Leslie, "but I have not. Do you not know of any persons—any old customers—whom it would be worth my while to seek out and question?"

"There are some such in the quarter, it is true," replied Citizen Pintard; "some aged men who drank their red wine at the Flambeau Rouge twenty years ago and more, and who doubtless knew Jacques Ferry. But I could not find them before tomorrow, citizen."

"Tonight would suit me better," said Leslie. "Still, since that is impossible, suppose you give me their names—"

He was interrupted by a hoarse and quavering cry. The old man who had been sleeping at the table—he was the only one left, the card-players having departed shortly before—was now awake and on his feet. He made a weird and impressive picture in the glow of the lamplight, as he stared at Citizen Pintard and his companion. He was poorly dressed, and so tall that his shrunken form looked thinner than it really was. A mop of long, white hair dangled on his neck and shoulders, and his face was as wrinkled and yellow as parchment. His fingers were like talons, and his eyes burned and snapped in their deep sockets like living coals. He made two trembling strides nearer, pointing one skinny hand straight before him, while with the other he clawed at a greasy red cap on the top of his head.

"I heard you!" he screamed in a shrill, cracked voice. "Ha, ha, Old Madcap is never asleep! I heard you talking of the Flambeau Rouge and of Jacques Ferry,

citizens. I knew Jacques Ferry. I used to come here to see him. Why, it was only yesterday— no, it was long, long ago. Jacques Ferry is dead, and they put me in prison. It was a cruel thing to do. They buried me alive, between stone walls, in darkness and solitude. Day by day it was the same. I watched and listened, but the door never opened and the light never came. Curse them! Curse them—”

The withered old creature paused, and began to mumble to himself.

Leslie jumped eagerly to his feet, heedless of a warning gesture from Citizen Pintard.

“Did you know Jacques Ferry twenty-two years ago?” he cried. “Did you come to the Flambeau Rouge then? Did you ever hear of Philip Courcel or Andre Bellermont?”

“Andre Bellermont!” echoed the old man. The name actually seemed to waken some long-lost chord of memory. He put a hand to his forehead, and a gleam of intelligence and surprise shone in his eyes. “Andre Bellermont!” he repeated. “Why, citizens, that was my—”

He stopped; the thread—if it ever existed—was forgotten again. A stupid look spread over his features, and this in turn quickly changed to a ferocious glare.

“I was dead and buried,” he shrieked, “but the prison doors opened at last. Who was I, good citizens? What was my name? Ah, you can’t tell me. Well, it matters not. Blood and revenge, these I live for, and I shall drink my fill of them. It is the turn of the people now, and the wicked kings are gone. Long live the Republic! Liberty, equality, and fraternity for all! No, not to the tyrants—not to the aristocrats! Kill them all, and spare none! Drop! drop! drop! so their heads fall from under the knife, and the red blood streams on the stones. A glorious sight, citizens! I shall be there to see it tomorrow—tomorrow—”

With a tragic gesture he tottered back to his bench, threw his head and arms on the table, and lay there as still and quiet as before.

CHAPTER XV

For a few seconds after the old man's passionate outburst the silence remained unbroken. Leslie sat down again, and to hide his agitation and astonishment—which he knew would seem inconsistent with the character of a spy—he drank what wine remained in his glass. Citizen Pintard tapped the table with his fingers, and said nothing. Perhaps he was anxious to be rid of this information-seeking customer.

Then Madam Pintard blew out the lamp at her back and came from behind the counter. She closed and locked the street-door, and approached her husband.

“It is long past the hour,” she said sharply. “You know that, Camille.”

“Yes, you are right,” assented the wineshop keeper. “It is time to close. Pardon me, citizen,” he added to Leslie, “but you will understand that even the Quartier Saint Antoine sleeps between sunset and dawn. Yes I would not hurry you off, and if there is more I can tell you—”

“Spare me a moment or two,” interrupted Leslie. “That old man yonder has roused my curiosity. Evidently he is mad, and yet he spoke at first as though he had really known Jacques Ferry and the Flambeau Rouge in the past—at the time of which I inquired.”

“No, no, not a bit of it,” declared Citizen Pintard. “Put no faith in his words, citizen. It is only Old Madcap's way—his talk is for the most part without meaning or truth. Should one speak in his presence of certain people or places, why, he vows at once he knows all about it. The same would have happened had you mentioned a wineshop of Marseilles or any friend from your own province.”

“Yes, it's a good name for him—Old Madcap!” snapped Madam Pintard. “Bah, the silly fool! If he could but remember who or what he was! It is true that he has suffered, and that he deserves well of the Republic, but others beside you should see after his wants, Camille. He will ruin us.”

With an angry glance at her husband, and her head in air, she marched from the room by a rear door.

Citizen Pintard gave a sigh of relief.

“She is a good and loyal woman, my wife,” he said; “but her temper is none too sweet. As for Old Madcap—surely you have heard of him or seen him, citizen. And yet Paris is a big town, and there is much doing—”

“Yes, the name is familiar,” Leslie answered, hastily, remembering the part he was playing and the need of cunning, “and I think I have seen him more than once. Has he a history, then?”

“Yes, citizen, a sad and a mysterious one,” the wineshop keeper replied. “Since it may be told in a few words I will spare you the time. To begin, when we destroyed the Bastille on that glorious day of July in Eighty-nine, we found in a cell deep under one of the towers a prisoner who had clearly been buried there for many years. Suffering had robbed him of his mind. He could not tell his name, who he was, or when or why he had been thrown into the Bastille. That prisoner was Old Madcap yonder, as he came in time to be called. You see, citizen, he grew into a public character, so to speak. For while he knows nothing of his early past, and babbles wildly of all he chances to hear—as a moment or two ago—it is true that the memory of his cruel, treatment is keen and fresh. Also he understands what has happened. He knows that France is free from the oppressors, and his thirst for vengeance never leaves him. He is stronger than he looks, and can handle a pike or a musket as well as many a younger patriot. He has taken part in all our triumphs. If there is a fight, or a chase after an emigrant, Old Madcap is sure to be with the mob. He attends the trials of the suspects, and his voice is the loudest as the heads drop on the stones of the Place de la Concorde. He is wedded to the guillotine, this terrible old man.”

“He lives in the quarter, I suppose?” asked Leslie, with a slight shiver of repulsion.

“Yes, but he has no fixed home,” replied the wineshop keeper. “There are many who pity him, and I am one. Tonight he will sleep there at the table, or perhaps on the bench, as he has often done before. In the morning ere he wanders off, I will give him a roll and a cup of wine. It is little enough, and my good wife does not begrudge it in spite of her hot words.”

“You are to be commended,” said Leslie. “In these times it is rare to meet with such kindness. I shall not forget you, Citizen Pintard. And, now concerning these

persons who may have known Jacques Ferry and the Flambeau Rouge twenty-two years ago, will you try to find them for me? I shall return here in a day or two.”

“I will find them, citizen,” the man promised.

Leslie was on the point of ending the interview when a sudden thought occurred to him. It was both a brilliant and a risky idea, and he sat still and silent for a moment to consider it. He reached a quick decision, and leaned toward his companion.

“I want you to do me a further service, if you will,” he said, in a low voice.

“What is it, citizen?”

“I will explain,” replied Leslie. “It concerns, in a way, the errand that brought me here tonight. I must go speedily to a certain part of the Rue Loire, in the Quartier Saint Germain, and as I am imperfectly acquainted with the city I fear I shall lose valuable time if I depend on myself. Will you guide me there?”

Citizen Pintard looked keenly at the lad and nodded.

“I will guide you,” he answered. “I know the locality well.”

“It is kind of you,” said Leslie. “I am sorry to take you from home at such an hour, but it is necessary that I reach the Rue Loire before daylight. And in the service of the Republic—”

“Exactly, citizen, in the service of the Republic,” interrupted the wineshop keeper. “That is why I obey—why I answer this call to duty. I am always ready to work for my country, as a loyal patriot should be. Wait but a moment and then we will start.”

Citizen Pintard disappeared through the rear door, and Leslie, left alone with the slumbering old madman, allowed himself a smile of satisfaction.

“It was a daring plan,” he reflected, “but it has succeeded. This fellow believes me to be a spy, and evidently has not the slightest suspicion to the contrary. I will get rid of him in the Rue Loire, and then I will try to obtain an interview with Monsieur Jules Verneville—provided he is at home and the house is not under

surveillance. If I fail in that I must find a safe hiding-place until I can devise a plan for escaping from Paris.

“I am sorry I have not been able to get the information I wanted at the Flambeau Rouge. Still, I have made a beginning and learned something, and when the end of the revolution leaves me free to go on with my task—if it ever does—I will search out these old customers who knew Jacques Ferry in 1771. Can it be possible, I wonder, that Old Madcap yonder was speaking the truth? But, of course, not. His mind is gone, and he would naturally have all sorts of crazy fancies and delusions.”

At this point Citizen Pintard returned, and signified that he was ready. He glanced at the sleeping form of Old Madcap, blew out the lamp, and locked the shop door behind himself and his companion. Then he strode off at a rapid pace, the lad keeping step beside him.

It was a long, long journey, and it was about two o'clock in the morning when they began it. They plodded on steadily through the sultry July night, and for the most part they found the streets comparatively quiet and empty. There were plenty of people stirring, but at this hour Paris was more soundly asleep than at any other time between sunset and dawn.

Citizen Pintard was not in a talkative humor. He led the way silently and unhesitatingly, and was clearly anxious to return as soon as possible to his bed. Nor was Leslie inclined to conversation. The long walk was a terrible tax on his courage and strength, for he had already tramped miles and miles that night. He was footsore and weary, and felt a craving for sleep. But he bore up well, without betraying his exhaustion, and when he finally crossed the Seine he was cheered by the prospect of soon reaching his destination; the streets were now quite lonely, and the neighborhood had a dully respectable look.

“It seems like a dream,” he said to himself as he strode with assumed briskness alongside of his guide. “I can scarcely believe that it is only a few hours since I escaped from Citizen le Clerc and the soldier. What an eventful night it has been! First the dash for liberty, then the rescue of that young Frenchman from the river, and next the flight from the wineshop in the Rue Saint Honore and the discovery of the Flambeau Rouge. And the strangest thing of all is the part I am playing now! Here is this man actually helping me to baffle the very spies of which he thinks I am one! If he knew the truth he would be savage enough to

tear me limb from limb. But perhaps he suspects—”

“Citizen, we have reached the locality you wish,” broke in the cold voice of Camille Pintard.

Leslie looked about him with anxious interest. He was in a narrow and dark little street, tree-lined, with low garden walls on the right, and on the left what seemed to be a row of stables.

“Is this the Rue Loire?” he asked.

“No, it lies yonder,” replied Citizen Pintard, pointing to the right. “These are the gardens of the houses that front on the Rue Loire; the next turn will bring you around to it. I know the locality,” he added. “This gate leads to the garden of an advocate named Jules Verneville. A nephew of mine was in his employ at one time, and I came here to see him.”

Leslie gave a start, and by a rapid glance he marked the spot so that he would know it again.

“Does the advocate still live here?” he asked carelessly, as he went on.

“So far as I know,” replied Citizen Pintard; and as he spoke he stopped at the corner of a cross-street, “This will take you to the Rue Loire,” he said. “If I can be of any further service, citizen—”

“No, you have done enough,” Leslie said hastily. “You may return. I know where I am now, and there are reasons why we must not be seen here together. I have a delicate task to carry out for the Republic.”

“Exactly, citizen. I wish you success.”

“I trust I shall have it,” Leslie answered. “You will see me in a day or two, and I promise you sha’n’t lose by the service you have done me.”

“I want no reward, citizen,” said Camille Pintard. “It is all for the Republic.”

He nodded farewell, and turning around strode swiftly back along the gloomy little street. In a minute he had vanished from sight and hearing.

Leslie waited a few moments longer, and then, reassured by the silence and solitude, he retraced his steps in the same direction, creeping as stealthily as a cat. He readily recognized the place, and on trying the gate he found it locked. But this did not baffle him, for the garden wall was low.

“I am in luck tonight,” he reflected. “Heaven has surely been helping me. Without Citizen Pintard’s valuable information I could never have found the rear entrance to Jules Verneville’s house. My enemies know this, and if they are on the lookout for me—as I strongly suspect—they will be watching the front entrance on the Rue Loire. Well, here goes. I wonder what is in store for me next?”

The lad drew himself to the summit of the wall, looked and listened for an instant, and then dropped lightly down on the other side. Before him stretched a narrow garden planted with trees and shrubbery, and from the farther end the house rose tall and dark. Stooping low, he crept forward along a narrow path bordered by thick bushes. He was more than halfway to the house when a rustling noise fell on his ear, and before he could so much as glance around two strong hands fastened on his neck and he was forced violently to his knees.

CHAPTER XVI

It was a rude assault, and it came so unexpectedly that Leslie had no opportunity of meeting his unknown foe on anything like equal terms; indeed, for an instant the shock and the fright made him helpless. Then he realized the situation, and what seemed the most natural explanation for the attack flashed swiftly into his mind. Either Citizen Pintard had suspected and followed him, or he was in the grasp of a spy placed on watch in the garden by Alphonse le Clerc.

His peril nerved the lad to make an effort to escape, and he suddenly began to struggle with all his might. But so strong and determined was the ruffian who was holding him that he could not even twist around, much less get to his feet. In a trice he was hurled flat, his arms outspread and his nose buried in the dewy grass, and his captor was crouching heavily on his back.

The encounter had been brief, and while it progressed not a word was spoken on either side. Now the cold point of a knife was pressed against Leslie's neck, and between deeply drawn breaths a husky voice whispered in his ear:

"The first move will mean death, monsieur. Be sensible and submit. And remember as well that I will surely kill you if you speak loud or call for help."

This was not what Leslie had expected to hear, and it puzzled him greatly.

"Why should the man tell me not to call for help?" he asked himself, "and why does he address me as monsieur?—a title that is forbidden by law. He is not Citizen Pintard, for the voice is strange. And if he was a spy put here to capture me he would act very differently." Aloud he added: "Take that knife away, will you? I'm not going to resist, and you may as well let me rise. Who are you, and what do you want?"

"It is I who should ask that question, monsieur," the fellow answered, "but I happen to know well what brought you here, you dog. It was a lucky thought of mine to watch the garden—"

"Who do you think I am?" interrupted Leslie.

An inkling of the truth—of wildest hope—was beginning to glimmer through the

mystery.

“I don’t know who you are, and I don’t care,” was the fierce and whispered reply. “But I know why you came, monsieur, and as you value your life I bid you tell me how many others are with you, and where they are posted. If you are wise, and answer truthfully, I will remove this knife and take you in to my master. And it depends on yourself what he will—”

“Your master?” Leslie whispered eagerly, while he trembled with delight at this discovery, which he might have guessed before. “Are you indeed in the service of Jules Verneville, the advocate?”

“This is the garden of Monsieur Jules Verneville,” the man replied gruffly, “and yonder is his house. I have served him for twenty years, and I have ever been ready, as tonight, to guard him from harm. But surely you know all this. Don’t hope to play any tricks—”

“I am not thinking of anything of the sort,” said Leslie. “Be assured of that. You have made a mistake, my friend, even as I have done. I came here to see your master, and for fear of spies of the revolution I climbed the wall.”

“And do you declare that you are not a spy, monsieur?”

“I am not,” Leslie answered. “On the contrary, I have been keeping out of the way of those rascals since I escaped last evening while being taken to La Force. I must see your master at once on a matter of life and death, and I beg that you will take me to him. If you refuse you will be sorry.”

There was a brief interval of silence. Evidently the man still doubted and suspected, and was looking about him to make sure that no more intruders were near. Finally he stood up, and permitted his captive to rise. He watched him closely all the while, and held the knife ready in one hand. There was light enough to show that he was a middle-aged man, tall and powerful, and dressed befitting a gentleman’s servant.

“I hope you believe me,” said Leslie, as he ruefully felt his bruised throat.

“Monsieur expects too much,” was the reply. “My master must be the judge of that. I will take you to him, and if you are lying be assured that you will never leave the house alive. Attempt to escape, and this knife shall find its way to your

heart. Are you armed?"

"I have no weapon whatever."

"Then advance, monsieur. Be quick!"

Leslie started up the path, the servant following a pace or two behind. At the rear door of the house he stopped.

"Enter, monsieur."

The lad obeyed, and saw a long hall dimly lighted by a single lamp. The servant closed and barred the door, and now for the first time he relaxed his precautions. Side by side the two paced to the middle of the hall, where a door on the right stood partly open.

"A visitor wishes an interview with Monsieur Verneville," announced the servant, as he drew his captive over the threshold.

It was a glad moment for Leslie, and the belief that he had found an influential friend in this time of sore need and peril made his heart beat fast. He looked with interest at his surroundings. The room was large and richly furnished; soft rugs and carpets covered the floor, and the walls were lined with shelves of books, paintings, and fine tapestries. In the middle of the apartment wax candles were burning on a massive carved table, which held quills of ink, a mass of documents, and an open traveling-bag.

Behind the table—he had risen at once to his feet—stood the advocate himself, attired as though about to start on a journey. He was a tall, elderly gentleman, with iron-gray hair worn long, clean-shaven face, intelligent and refined features, and keen black eyes that gazed with surprise and suspicion upon his visitor.

"Pray be seated, monsieur," he said calmly, "and state your business briefly. Your face, I believe, is not familiar." Turning to the servant, he added. "Charles, is it customary to bring my guests in by the rear door?"

"How was I to help it?" exclaimed the servant. "I found the fellow prowling in the garden, and captured him after a fight. I'll swear he is a spy, master."

“A spy?” curtly questioned Monsieur Verneville.

“Yes, a spy,” doggedly asserted Charles. He went on to describe the capture and repeat the conversation that had passed between the two.

The advocate turned to Leslie.

“My good fellow, you have heard the evidence,” he said. “Now what have you to say for yourself?”

“What will greatly surprise you, Monsieur Verneville,” Leslie replied quietly, “and will convince you that your faithful servant has made a mistake through zeal. I am an American, and have very foolishly come from New York to Paris on a matter of business. I brought with me a letter of introduction to you from a gentleman whose name you may remember—Mordecai Janeway.”

“Mordecai Janeway!” echoed the advocate, in a tone of astonishment. “Is it possible? Yes, I have the highest consideration for him. And so you are the bearer of a letter from him?”

“Unfortunately the letter is lost,” Leslie replied.

“To be frank, Monsieur Verneville, I fear I have done wrong in seeking you out. I must tell you that I have been arrested and have escaped. My liberty—perhaps even my life—is in peril. And by chance I have learned certain things concerning yourself. You will be wise to leave Paris without delay—”

Monsieur Verneville made a warning gesture.

“Charles, will you be so kind as to withdraw for the present,” he said. “See that the doors are all secure, but do not venture from the house. And be within hearing in case I summon you.”

The servant bowed and left the room at once, closing the door tight. With a grave and anxious face the advocate drew a chair over to the couch on which Leslie was resting his weary limbs.

“Now, my young friend,” he said, sitting down, “tell me the whole story. If you have learned that I am in danger it merely confirms a rumor that came lately to my ears. Be as short as possible, for I am now preparing to leave Paris. And I

trust I may be of service to you, though I can hold out no positive assurance.”

In low tones Leslie began. He explained fully the strange errand that had brought him to Paris, described his arrest and escape, and hurried on from one to another of the string of thrilling adventures and incidents that had ended with his capture in Monsieur Verneville’s garden. He told with special emphasis and care how the letter addressed to the advocate had caused his detention at the barrier, and he repeated as much of the conversation with the officer and the spy as he could remember.

CHAPTER XVII

At the conclusion of the lad's story Monsieur Jules Verneville rose to his feet, and for several moments he paced the floor with an agitated countenance. Then a hard and determined look suddenly changed his features. He nodded to himself, and seizing Leslie's hands he clasped them warmly.

"My young friend, I have listened with interest and dread to your narrative," he exclaimed. "I sympathize with you—I pity you from the deepest corner of my heart. You have pluck and bravery, for few men could have escaped from such perils as have encompassed you tonight. Yet to come to France at this time—no matter what the object—was the maddest folly."

"I realize that now," said Leslie, "but it was a natural error. Neither Mordecai Janeway nor I knew the true state of affairs in Paris. We both believed that my American citizenship would protect me from harm and gain me assistance in my quest."

"It was a mistake!" groaned the advocate.

"Yes, I am aware of that also," admitted Leslie. "And I should not have ventured near your house tonight. I will only add to your peril, if it is true that—"

"Stop, my boy! You are welcome for your own sake, and for the sake of my friend Mordecai Janeway. God forbid that I should throw you adrift again on this ravenous city! I will gladly do for you what lies in my power, but it will be little. And worse than that, it may amount to nothing. We are both in danger. You, if caught, will at the least be consigned to La Force for months. You will be dead to the world, beyond influence or aid, and your claim to freedom as an American citizen will be ridiculed and jeered at."

"Yes, all this is true," said Leslie, "and for the same reason I ought not to remain here another minute. It will be the worse for you if I'm discovered in your house—"

"No, you mistake me," interrupted Monsieur Verneville. "I want to help you—I insist upon it. It is only that I regret not being able to do more for you. At another time I should have helped you to trace the family of your father, in

whose history I am interested. But now you must abandon the quest at the very beginning, perhaps forever, but at least until this awful Reign of Terror has come to an end.”

“I am quite content to do so,” replied Leslie. “I wish no better fortune than to get safely out of Paris and off the soil of France.”

“A wish which I myself devoutly share,” cried the advocate, “and the good God grant that we both attain our heart’s desire! But it may not be denied that the difficulties are great, and that we are surrounded by perils.”

“Is it true, then, that you also are in danger—that you are suspected by the revolution?” asked Leslie.

“I fear such is indeed the case,” Monsieur Verneville answered. “Nay, I am sure of it, now that I have learned the effect produced at the barrier by the sight of a letter bearing my name. It was doubtless that which caused your detention and arrest. But listen! I will explain the situation in a few words. During the early months of the Revolution I remained here in Paris, unsuspected and untroubled. But knowing that danger was in the air I left last May to visit a sister in the South. I learned a week ago that I was still unsuspected, and that my name was not on the list of the proscribed. So, as I required some papers and had certain business to attend to, I resolved to return to Paris for a short time.”

“Ah, what a mistake!” exclaimed Leslie.

“Yes, a grave one it seems now,” said the advocate. “But to proceed. I arrived in Paris with my servant early last evening, and drove straight home. I was in the house but an hour when I received a mysterious message warning me that I was in danger, and that I should take immediate steps to elude the agents of the Revolution. I doubted the truth of the information, but, nevertheless, I resolved to leave the city as soon as possible. I have been arranging my papers most of the night, while my faithful servant Charles has been looking after my safety in his own way. From the first he stoutly believed in the peril—”

“And proved himself a most admirable watch-dog,” supplemented Leslie, thinking of his adventure in the garden. “But why—if I may ask, Monsieur Verneville—should the Revolution suspect you at this late day? Is there any reason for this warning you received?”

“Yes, there is,” replied the advocate, his face growing more pallid as he spoke. “A certain fact in my past life—a fact which from sheer indifference I never made public—is known to one man. That man was my enemy and hated me bitterly, and, though I have for years believed him to be dead, I now think it more than probable that he is alive and in Paris. Either he has already denounced me, or he intends to do so.”

“Ah, I understand,” said Leslie. “And this fact—is it of a serious nature?”

“It is grave, indeed,” replied the advocate. “It is a fact which places me above the level of the common people, of the rabble—which stamps me as next to an aristocrat. You know what a black and heinous crime that is in the eyes of the Revolution, my friend. If I am arrested nothing can save me—I shall surely perish by the knife. But if it comes to the worst I shall not be taken alive. I am resolved on that, and here is the instrument to cheat these human bloodhounds.”

He drew aside his coat, revealing the stock of a pistol protruding from his waistband.

“Would you kill yourself?” Leslie cried, in a tone of horror.

“Yes, rather than be captured,” declared Monsieur Verneville. “But cheer up, my brave friend. While there is freedom there is hope. If God wills it so we shall escape from Paris together, and that speedily.”

“How is it to be done ?” Leslie asked doubtfully.

“My carriage and horses are at a stable in the next street,” replied the advocate, “and a few moments’ notice will suffice to prepare them for the journey. Fortunately the driver has gone away on ten hours’ leave, and his place will be taken by Charles, who will thus require no passport. You will ride with me in the carriage, as my servant would have done otherwise—the passport allowing us to leave Paris is made out in the names of myself and Charles. You will not be suspected, for I will find you a suitable change of attire. Of course, the clothes you are wearing now would never do.”

“But is this thing possible?” asked Leslie, who was trembling with excitement. “To me it seems simple madness to hope to escape from Paris.”

For an instant Monsieur Verneville’s face was haggard with despair and doubt.

“God only knows what will happen!” he cried. “It is a slim chance, but it is not utterly hopeless, my friend. Had I already been denounced the bloodhounds would most likely have been here to seek me by this time. And since they have not come it is possible that my passport has not yet been stopped at the barriers. Be brave! It is too early to lose courage—men have escaped from worse perils.”

“Yes, that is true,” assented Leslie. “I will hope for the best. And thank God for giving me such a friend in time of need! I shall never forget your kindness—”

“Wait till you see what it is worth,” Monsieur Verneville interrupted grimly. “And now for the final preparations. There is an hour to spare before daylight, and I must lose not a moment of it. Sunrise must see us far beyond the barriers.” As he spoke he strode to the table, and snatched the open traveling-bag. “These documents are important,” he added. “I shall take some of them with me. I wonder what has become of Charles. If you will be so kind as to summon him, my friend—”

He paused abruptly, and looked up with an expression of anguish.

“I heard footsteps and voices in the street,” he whispered hoarsely.

“Are you sure?” Leslie muttered.

“Yes, I hear them still—they are on the step. Hark—”

Rap—rap, rap—rap! Clear and ominously the sound echoed along the hall.

“The bloodhounds of the Revolution!” exclaimed the advocate, with despair in his voice. “They are at the front entrance, and have come to arrest me! We are too late!”

“God help us both!” murmured Leslie.

The door was thrown open and Charles appeared on the threshold, his face stamped more with passion than with fear.

“Do you hear, master?” he said. “The spies at last! We are lost!”

“I fear so,” replied Monsieur Verneville, who now seemed quite cool in spite of the continuous rapping, “but there is still a meager hope left. Off to the garden

with you at once, Charles, quick! And return without a moment's delay. If the rear of the house is unguarded we will try to escape in that direction. It is the last chance."

Already the devoted servant had vanished, and his light footsteps were pattering along the hall. Rap, rap! rap!—the ominous pounding had begun again after a brief lull. Monsieur Verneville crammed some papers into his bosom, and tearing a drawer of the table open he seized a second pistol and thrust it into his waistband beside the other one. From the corner behind him he snatched a long unsheathed rapier.

"Come!" he whispered. "They are still at the front—there is hope! To save time we will follow Charles, and intercept him with the tidings he brings—"

His voice was drowned in a tumult that seemed to rise as suddenly as a lightning flash—a hoarse tumult of shrill and elated voices, scuffling feet, and sharp words of command. Instantly the crack of a pistol rang out, a second report almost blended with it, and then a cry of agony was followed by a heavy fall. And all this happened at the rear of the house.

CHAPTER XVIII

In the brief moment during which he listened to the commotion Monsieur Verneville seemed to become a different man. Alarm and eagerness turned to brave resignation. He shrugged his shoulders and folded his arms across his breast. There was something almost sublime about the expression of his face as he glanced at his companion.

“It has come—the worst!” he exclaimed. “I must quickly bid farewell to this world, my friend.”

“Is there no hope?” cried Leslie; the yearning he felt for life and freedom rang in his voice.

“A slight hope for you, perhaps,” was the reply. “Your prison doors may open in the far future. As for me—I will be dead before five minutes have passed.”

“But what has happened?” Leslie asked, while he listened to the buzzing sound of voices that had succeeded the tumult. “What does it all mean—the shouting, the slamming of the door, the two shots?”

“It means a clever and successful piece of cunning,” said the advocate. “It means death. Don’t you understand, my friend? The rapping at the front door was done purposely, so that the hope of escaping by the rear might suggest itself to me. Counting on this, a number of ruffians concealed themselves in the garden. When my servant opened the door they took him by surprise and rushed in. He, brave fellow! knowing that all was lost, shot one of his foes. Then they fired and killed him. Yes, poor Charles is dead—it was his cry of agony I heard.”

“The inhuman fiends!” Leslie muttered. “I suppose it will be our turn next. But what are they doing now? Why do they delay?”

“I cannot tell you,” Monsieur Verneville answered. “It is strange—Ah! here they come! Hark!”

Leslie’s face turned a shade paler as he listened. Along the hall came the leisurely tramp of booted feet, accompanied by the rattle of weapons and the hum of cursing voices. The advocate’s eyes glittered with the fire of a fixed and

terrible resolve. He quickly closed the door—it had been open an inch or two—and drove the single bolt on the inner side home to its socket. The massive table caught his eye. He dragged it forward, thus further strengthening the door.

“Are we going to fight?” Leslie asked.

“We? No, I alone shall do that.”

“But I claim the right to share your fate, monsieur. Give me a weapon.”

“No, my friend, I will not give you a weapon. Hush! Listen!”

The slouching footsteps were close now, and Leslie almost held his breath. But the ruffians did not stop at the room. They passed on along the hall, denouncing the advocate’s name, fiendishly exulting over the shooting of the servant, and swearing vengeance for the death of one of their number.

“Ah, so Charles did not miss,” muttered Monsieur Verneville. “It is some consolation, at all events. And when my turn comes to face the dogs—”

“Where are they going now?” interrupted Leslie. “Don’t they know you are in this room?”

“Yes. They are merely going to admit their confederates who are waiting in the street. They will return quickly. They are sure that I cannot escape them.”

“But is escape impossible? There seems to me to be a chance now, while the rear is unguarded—”

“Not so, my friend. Depend on it, men are posted in the garden.”

“But this room—where does it open?”

“On a side garden,” replied Monsieur Verneville. “The shutters could not be opened without noise, and, besides, the house is surrounded—”

As he spoke, the clanking of bolts being drawn from, their sockets was heard, and it was evident the next instant that the intruders had opened the front door. The tones of several authoritative voices mingled with the clatter of gruffer tongues. There was shouting out in the Rue Loire, and the hasty tramp of feet

over the cobblestones.

Monsieur Verneville clutched his long-bladed rapier more firmly in his right hand; he thrust the two pistols into the ruffles of his shirt-bosom, whence he could draw them more readily. Then he looked at Leslie, and a swift spasm of pain distorted his placid features.

“My poor lad!” he whispered, under his breath, “I had almost forgotten you. But there is a plan by which you may possibly escape these bloody butchers. And at the worst your life will not be taken, provided you can remain long enough in concealment. Come This way! And don’t utter a sound—your presence here is not known, I am certain.”

He pushed the lad hurriedly across the room, and, lifting a thick tapestry from the farthest corner, revealed a small recess in which stood a complete set of ancient armor mounted in a lifelike manner.

“Hide here,” he added, “behind the mail that was once worn by an ancestor of mine—an ancestor who would have done as I shall do tonight.”

Leslie scornfully turned his back on the refuge.

“Monsieur, would you make me a coward?” he whispered. “No, I refuse. I pray you give me a weapon—one of the pistols. I will help you fight those ruffians, and die with you—”

“Hush, my brave boy,” begged the advocate. “It is I who would be the coward if I yielded. What I am about to do is no concern of yours—there is no excuse for the sacrifice of your young life. I have a debt of vengeance to pay, and when that is finished I shall cheat the guillotine. Don’t you understand?”

“I shall share your fate,” Leslie said doggedly.

“But this is madness,” Monsieur Verneville answered fiercely. “Our circumstances are far different. To me capture alive means certain death by the knife, while to you it means no more than imprisonment. Be reasonable. Take this chance of escape, and suffer me to have my way.”

“Give me a weapon, monsieur.”

“Again I refuse. I could not spare you one, if I wished to do so. The sword is for the heart of the enemy who has betrayed me, if by good fortune he is of the party. One pistol is for the assassin of the faithful Charles, and the other—”

“Is for yourself, monsieur?”

“Yes, for myself. Now you understand. Do my bidding, quick!”

“And if I still refuse, monsieur? If I defy you, and swear to stand by your side till the end?”

“Then you would be the coward,” hissed Monsieur Verneville, with blazing eyes, “for you would drive me to this. Listen! To save your life I swear that I would sacrifice my honor and feelings. I will open the door, surrender, and give up my arms. I will endure the triumph of my enemy, the insults of the rabble, the miseries of prison, the horrors of a farcical trial before the tribunal, and the shameful death on the Place de la Concorde. Can you contemplate this with calmness?”

Seeing that the lad was wavering, he added:

“I trust to your honor, and I pray you choose quickly. Any instant it may be too late. And this chance is a gift from Heaven. There is every reason to believe that you will avoid discovery.”

Leslie hesitated no longer. He stepped into the alcove, and wedged himself alongside the figure in armor. “You have put me to a hard test, monsieur,” he said. “I know not if I am doing right or wrong—”

“You are doing right,” whispered the advocate. “Hush, they appear to be coming. Don’t move or utter a sound. When the fiends have gone remain in the house until the next night, and then try to escape from Paris. May the good God be with you. Farewell, brave lad!”

Monsieur Verneville dropped the tapestry to the floor and strode hurriedly away. There was a noise in the hall now, and the voices and footsteps were drawing near; after a lengthy conference the bloodhounds of the Revolution had decided on some move.

Leslie stood stiffly in his hiding-place, trembling with excitement, overcome by

the horror of the thing. Life was sweet to him, and yet he bitterly reproached himself for yielding to the arguments of Monsieur Verneville. He found a tiny hole in the tapestry, and glued his eyes to it. He could see the intrepid man standing calmly behind the table, his rapier in his hand, and the sight strangely moved him. He scarcely thought of his own chances of escape as he watched and listened for what was about to happen.

He had not long to wait. The muffled voices were suddenly hushed, the handle of the door was tried, and then a sharp rap made the panels quiver and the bolt rattle.

“Open, Monsieur Verneville,” demanded a hard voice. “It is useless to resist. We know you are here.”

“Why am I wanted?” asked the advocate.

“Do you not know, then?” was the reply. “Does not your conscience tell you that? You are denounced as an enemy of the Republic—as a foe to liberty, equality, and fraternity.”

“Is my accuser there, citizens?”

“Yes.”

“Is the coward afraid to speak? Does he fear to reveal his name?”

“Gaspard Arton is not afraid to speak,” came an answer in tones that shook with passion. “I am here, Jules Verneville.”

“I recognize your voice, traitor,” the advocate replied. “Of what do you accuse me?”

“Of being a cousin of the Marquis Saint Genys, who perished on the guillotine for his crimes against France.”

“It is true,” admitted Monsieur Verneville. “I do not deny it. And so you have marked me for the same fate?”

“That remains for the tribunal to decide,” answered the man who had first spoken. “Will you open the door?”

“No; if you want me you must take me,” said the advocate.

“Then you won’t surrender?”

“I will think about it, citizens. When you have forced your way into the room I will give my reply in person to that foul and lying dog, Gaspard Arton.”

“Very good, Jules Verneville,” the other answered. “To arrest you will be a pleasure that I have long desired.”

A tigerish look of satisfaction shone in the cunning advocate’s eyes, and he made a playful lunge with his rapier across the table.

“I am waiting for you,” he replied.

The actions of Monsieur Verneville seemed to puzzle his enemies, but they were convinced, at least, that nothing was to be gained by holding further parley with him. A brief and whispered discussion took place in the hall, and then, of a sudden, the door was furiously assailed by musket-butts.

CHAPTER XIX

Crash! Crash! Crash! Almost deafening was the noise of the attack, drowning the swelling tumult out in the Rue Loire; for, early as was the hour, the rumor of the advocate's denouncement had collected a crowd in this remote quarter of Saint Germain. Louder and faster fell the blows, and as the musket-butts were wielded by strong and determined arms the desired result was speedily arrived at. For a fraction of a minute the lad hidden away in the alcove peeped and listened with fearful interest. For a fraction of a minute Monsieur Verneville stood watching as calmly as though he expected a client for consultation. His face was flushed, and wore a defiant smile. He had thrust behind his back the right hand, that clasped the rapier.

Then the door, already split and splintered and started from its fastenings, gave way from the top and fell inward with a crash. Jubilant shouts arose, and the candles that were still burning on the table cast a yellow glare over the intruders—half a dozen ferocious-visaged soldiers in red caps, and to rear of these several figures that were less distinct. There was not a second's delay. At once, with their musket-butts, the ruffians beat the door to one side and pushed the table still farther back. They advanced a little and stopped, confident that their victim was safely in the toils.

It was a thrilling moment, and for very horror of what he knew was about to happen Leslie nearly reeled against the figure in armor. He recovered himself, and for fear of shaking the tapestry he drew his head back a little—not far enough, however, to spoil his view.

Monsieur Verneville had retreated to the middle of the room, and was proudly facing his enemies, his right hand still concealed behind his back. His attitude and expression seemed to say, "I submit to fate. Do with me what you will."

The sight of the intrepid man impressed even the vile wretches who were thirsting for his blood, and for a moment nothing was done or said. Then the silence was broken by the leader of the arresting squad, who was concealed from Leslie's view by his companions.

"Surrender in the name of the republic, Monsieur Verneville!" he cried.

Leslie gave a start. The voice of the leader, now that it was not muffled by the closed door, seemed strangely familiar to him. When, he asked himself, had he heard that voice before? Who was he? He tried vainly to catch a glimpse of the man's face.

"I am here," the advocate replied to the demand; and the words recalled Leslie to the coming tragedy. "What more do you want?"

"You have pistols in your bosom," growled the leader. "Step forward and give them up."

"Yes, I have pistols," admitted Mr. Verneville, "but I am not attempting to use them. Are you all afraid to take me? I know that one of your number, at least, is an arrant coward. If my false friend, Gaspard Arton, can boast a spark of courage, let him come forward and accept my surrender."

Leslie was breathing hard as he peered through the rent in the tapestry. There was a murmur of angry voices, and then the individual thus insultingly challenged stepped from the hall over the threshold of the room—a tall, slim man, well dressed, and with a handsome and sinister face.

"Liar!" he hissed. "You shall eat your words, Jules Verneville. And they are foolish and empty words, as you well know. This is the moment of my triumph, and I shall crown it by dragging you off to the prison which you will leave only when—"

"Be careful, Citizen Arton," interrupted the leader, who was still keeping himself in the background. "The aristocrat means mischief—I can see it in his eye."

"Watch his pistols," warned another. "He has them handy for use."

"Better leave him to us, Gaspard," added a third. "Don't you see that he is concealing a weapon behind his back?"

For a moment Citizen Arton hesitated, and a shadow of fear and doubt swiftly crossed his face. Then, a comrade unsheathing and extending to him a saber, he accepted it and stepped forward.

"It is as well to be armed, in case of treachery," he muttered, "but I have sworn to take the knave."

“He must be taken alive, all remember that!” cried the leader. “The guillotine is the only death for an aristocrat to die.”

Savage voices murmured approval, and with a nod Citizen Arton advanced. He strode beyond the soldiers and to within five feet of Monsieur Verneville, who had been quietly waiting in the middle of the room, for the discussion to terminate. Here he stopped.

“Deliver up your weapons. Jules Verneville,” he said harshly. “I call upon you to yield to the will of the Republic—”

“Traitor, I have you!” Like a flash the advocate whipped the rapier from behind his back; his eyes gleamed with the fire of assured vengeance. “Defend yourself!” he hissed. “I shall kill you fairly! Die, false friend, who robbed me in youth of what was dearer than life!”

It was done so quickly that none of the spectators could interfere or give aid. A spell was on them, and it held fast their limbs and tongues. Arton, turning white as a sheet, threw up his saber with a trembling arm. The advocate’s blade shot forward, and for an instant the two weapons clashed and struck fire. Then the heavier metal was skilfully thrust aside, and the doomed informer cried out with fear,

“Die! die!” exclaimed the passionate voice of Monsieur Verneville.

With all his strength he drove the rapier into his enemy’s breast—straight through ribs, and flesh to the heart. Gaspard Arton threw up his arms, reeled backward against a soldier who vainly tried to catch him, and fell like a log to one side.

Shrill voices cursed, and loosened tongues clamored for revenge. The leader’s appeal to take the aristocrat alive was scarcely heeded, and Monsieur Verneville might possibly have spared himself the finishing act he was resolved on. But he did not trust to the chance. He darted a few feet back, and then faced around with a pistol in each hand. The ruffians were almost upon him with uplifted muskets.

“This for Charles!” he cried, in a voice that was heard above the tumult.

Crack! went the first pistol, well aimed. With a groan of agony down came the foremost of the red-capped soldiers, a quivering, bleeding heap.

“And this for myself! I cheat the knife!”

Monsieur Verneville thrust the second pistol in his mouth and pulled the trigger. With the report he sank to his knees and then rolled over on his side. He shook convulsively and lay still, a red stream trickling from his lips over the carpet. With yells of rage the baffled hounds of the Revolution gathered about the body.

CHAPTER XX

For Leslie there was a chance of safety, had he been able to control himself and to remain perfectly quiet in his hiding-place. But the scene he had just witnessed partly unnerved him. Grief for the heroic death of Monsieur Verneville, and hot anger against his foes, blinded him to prudence. The tragedy, though over, danced still before his eyes. With a half-stifled groan he put his hands to his face, and shrank as far back as he could into the alcove. And as he did so he struck the figure in armor. It was a light touch, but it was sufficient to dislodge the heavy headpiece of steel, which fell with a clatter to the floor.

It was a fatal accident, and before Leslie could even realize his peril the room was noisy with eager shouts and the rush of feet, and rude hands had torn the tapestry from its fastenings above. The wolfish-faced soldiers, close-hemming the spot, glared at the lad crouching in the corner.

“Here is another!” they cried. “The dog thought to escape. Kill the servant of Monsieur Verneville!”

“No, he is an aristocrat in disguise!”

“Death to the enemy of the Republic!”

Roused to action, Leslie straightened up and confronted the mob with as much courage as he could summon. He expected to be slain instantly, and he was in no mood to parley with these scoundrels who had driven the advocate to death. But life was sweet, after all, and appealing words started almost unconsciously to his lips.

“You are mistaken,” he cried. “I am not an aristocrat. I surrender, you understand. What! would you shoot an unarmed man?”

Clearly the temper of the soldiers was such that they were quite ready to commit murder. Nay, they were resolved on it, for several of the ruffians had pointed their muskets at the lad, heedless of his pleading. Their fingers were on the triggers, and Leslie’s face grew white [sic].

But at this critical moment a commanding voice rang above the din. To right and

left fell the would-be assassins as the leader of the party forced his way through them to the front. With a shout he lifted his arm, and the grumbling soldiers lowered their weapons.

Leslie, cheered for an instant by the hope of life, met with an unpleasant surprise when he looked hard at the man who had rescued him.

“Alphonse le Clerc!” he gasped in a low voice. The leader—otherwise Citizen le Clerc, the spy—made a step forward and scanned the lad intently from head to feet. His eyes gleamed with satisfaction and hatred.

“Here is good fortune!” he cried. “So it is you, Citizen Tryon! We meet again, and this time you shall not escape me. I thought you would attempt to come here, and yet I know not how you managed to enter the house. I have been watching it for hours. Perhaps you entered by the rear?”

“Yes, I did,” Leslie admitted.

“Well, your trouble has proved vain. Monsieur Verneville is dead, and the treason you were plotting with him will bring you to the guillotine.”

“I was plotting no treason, Citizen le Clerc,” the lad declared. “I came here to ask Monsieur Verneville to help me to escape from Paris—that much I will not deny. As for the rest, you know that I told you the truth at the barrier. You know why I came to Paris, and how unjustly I was detained. You will be doing no more than your duty to the Republic if you return me my passport and let me go free. I realize that this is no time to search for my father’s people, and I am ready to leave France at once—”

“Impossible, citizen!” interrupted the spy. He shrugged his shoulders and smiled mockingly. “There are charges against you, and only the tribunal can pass upon your guilt or innocence. Be thankful that your life is safe for the present.”

He turned to his men.

“This is the prisoner who was arrested on suspicion at the barrier yesterday,” he said, indicating Leslie, “and who escaped later while on the way to La Force. He is an enemy of the Republic, but he must have a fair trial. Here is the order of commitment. Let it be attended to at once.”

He produced a slip of paper from his pocket and handed it to one of the soldiers. The latter, in turn, spoke to a couple of his companions, and then he approached Leslie and clapped him on the shoulder.

“Come, citizen,” he said gruffly. “We are waiting.”

Escape was out of the question, nor was any advantage to be gained by further argument or appeal, as the lad realized. The fate he had tried hard to avoid was upon him, and at the moment, so completely was he worn out and exhausted, he felt only a dull sense of relief. So he stepped promptly from the alcove, and while his wrists were being bound he took a last look about the room.

It was an impressive scene, made more weird by the blended yellow glare of the candles and the cold gray light of the dawning day. He never forgot that picture, for it stamped itself indelibly on his mind—the noisy, brutal-featured soldiers, the crowd clustered in the hall doorway, Monsieur Verneville lying motionless beside his victims on the blood-soaked carpet, the sinister face and authoritative mien of the little spy. Out in the Rue Loire the commotion was growing louder as Paris waked up to its daily orgies of slaughter and mock justice.

“Ready, citizen! Step quickly!”

Two red-capped soldiers led the fettered prisoner from the room, and two more followed behind. They turned to the rear of the house, and at the end of the hall Leslie shuddered to see the advocate’s servant lying in a pool of blood. The man he had shot had already been removed.

Down the garden, fragrant with dew and flowers, strode the little group. A blow from a musket demolished the lock of the gate, and they passed out. They went rapidly on from street to street, close pressed by a crowd that grew in numbers, and constantly threatened and execrated the prisoner. Leslie was so exhausted that he could scarcely walk, and his captors had to fairly drag him along.

They came at last to the Seine, glimmering in the first rays of the sun, and reflecting on its blue surface a panorama of bridges and quays, tall white houses and green trees. Reaching the farther side of the river, a carriage was found and taken possession of. One of the soldiers mounted to the seat with the driver, while the other three went inside with the lad. At the crack of the whip the horses dashed on a gallop, over the cobblestones, and the hooting mob was quickly left behind.

The blinds of the vehicle being down, Leslie could see nothing outside. In sleepy silence he leaned back on the seat, and the jolting was all that kept him awake. As it was, he dozed a little, and this made the ride seem very short.

He roused with a start when the carriage stopped. His guards pulled him roughly out into a dreary courtyard, paved with greasy stones, and surrounded by a high wall. They dragged him to a massive wicket, over which loomed the grim facade of that place of dreadful memories and pitiful sufferings—the detention prison of La Force. Such, at least, Leslie judged it to be, and he was right.

After a short delay, and a pounding on the bars, the wicket was opened by the jailer—an elderly, bloated-faced ruffian who looked as though he found his position the most pleasant task in the world.

“Another!” he muttered. “Name of liberty, how the good work goes on!”

“Yes, another,” said the leader of the soldiers, holding out the slip of paper. “Read this.”

The jailer did so.

“In secret, eh?” he asked eagerly. “So the prisoner is in secret? The charge against him must be grave—”

“Yes, in secret,” the other interrupted. “You understand?”

“I understand perfectly. Am I not the servant of the Republic? Good day, citizen.”

The wicket clanged shut, leaving Leslie within and the soldiers without. The latter entered the carriage and the vehicle rolled through the outer gates. Leslie sank down on a stone bench, shuddering at the gloom, the filthy walls, and the fetid smell of the air. With a glance at his new charge the jailer thrust the order of commitment on a file and scratched a few lines in a dirty register. Then he pulled a bell, and the summons quickly brought two turnkeys to the spot.

These, after a brief conference with the jailer, took hold of the prisoner and led him forward. It seemed a long distance—through numerous doors that had to be unlocked and locked, along damp corridors, by vaulted chambers, and finally up a flight of thirty winding steps. At the top was a little black door, which one of

the turnkeys threw open. A solitary cell was revealed, containing a chair, a table, and a coarse mattress of straw. High overhead was a grating that admitted a few rays of murky light.

Leslie staggered over the threshold, and as the horror of his position burst suddenly and forcibly upon him he uttered a low cry. Then he heard the clanging of bolts and retreating footsteps, and he realized that he was alone. He groped his way to the mattress and fell across it. Five minutes later he was wrapped in a sound and dreamless sleep.

Day succeeded day, but to the young American, buried alive between the walls of La Force, came no change of any kind. At first he expected, each morning, the summons to a trial that would be a mockery, and would swiftly send his neck to the knife. But when several weeks had passed these apprehensions faded, and he began to believe that he might lie in prison for months and even years.

One slim hope he had, but it was of brief duration. At a favorable opportunity he gained a short interview with the turnkey who brought him his meals, and after telling his story in a few words, with especial reference to the rescue of the young Frenchman from the Seine, he begged the man to inform Armand Lockroy that the one who had saved him was a prisoner in La Force.

The turnkey seemed surprised at this, and his manner toward the lad changed. He declared that Citizen Lockroy had recovered from the wound inflicted by the Austrian spy, and that he was anxious to find his rescuer who had so unaccountably disappeared. He evidently knew all about the affair, and his promise to carry the message gave Leslie at least one night of hope and happiness.

But in the morning his dream was rudely shattered. The turnkey coming with the breakfast reported that he was forbidden to take any message from the prison and that in future there must be no conversation whatever. It was useless for Leslie to plead or reproach. With tightly set lips the man departed, nor could he be induced to speak a word when he came a second time that day. The next morning his place was taken by a strange turnkey who showed from the first that nothing would tempt him to break the rules of the prison.

Divining what all this meant the lad abandoned hope.

“It is easy to understand,” he reflected bitterly. “The turnkey went first to

Alphonse le Clerc and revealed what I told him. That scoundrel hating me because of the fight we had and knowing that Armand Lockroy's influence might save me, threatened the man with punishment if he did anything more in the matter. And to make doubly sure, he put a new turnkey in charge of my cell. Without money—and I have none—I can get no message to the outer world. The spy hates me, and he has me completely in his power.”

This was sound reasoning, and, though Leslie could not be sure that he was right, what followed seemed to support his theory. Week after week found him a solitary captive, shut in from other parts of the prison, and denied the slightest communication with any human being. And, meanwhile, the Reign of Terror went on doing its bloody mission in Paris and France. The law of suspicion ruled, and the prisons were choked with innocent wretches who clamored in vain to be tried. The dread tribunal in Paris, and thousands of revolutionary committees all over the provinces, ruthlessly took away life and liberty by strokes of the pen. Day by day the tide of slaughter swelled and raged. Day by day the carts rumbled to the Place de la Concorde, and the guillotine unceasingly lopped off the heads of men and women, noble and ignoble, poor and rich.

Thus three months passed by, and when October had nearly run its course there came a sudden and unexpected change to Leslie. He was wakened late one morning by a rattling of bars and whispered voices, and when he sat up on the mattress he wondered what the noise meant. It could not be his breakfast, for that had already been thrust through the wicket. He rose to his feet, and the dim light from overhead shone on his haggard face and shrunken limbs, on the clothes that hung about him in tatters.

He staggered toward the door, but it grated open before he was halfway to it. Little wonder that for an instant the lad believed himself to be dreaming, and could not credit his own eyes! For on the threshold of the cell stood—Armand Lockroy!

CHAPTER XXI

It was indeed the young Frenchman whose life Leslie had saved. There could be no doubt of that. He seemed like a heavensent messenger of joy as he stood in the gloomy doorway, neatly and becomingly dressed, and with a look of sympathy on his handsome and refined features. He stepped into the cell, gazed hard at Leslie for a moment, and then touched him on the shoulder.

“Yes, it is you,” he said. “I was not mistaken. Though you are sadly changed, I recognize your face. And do you know me as well?”

“Yes,” Leslie replied, “you are Armand Lockroy—at least, that is the name I heard you called by that night. I thank God that you have come.”

“I would have come long ago had I known,” the other answered. “You saved my life at a great risk, and when I recovered from the stab-wound my first thought was of you. But I could learn nothing. You had mysteriously disappeared from the wineshop in the Rue Saint Honore, and there was none who could remember having seen you before.”

“And how did you discover who I was?—that I was a prisoner in La Force?” Leslie asked. “It must have been the turnkey—”

“Hush!” whispered Armand Lockroy. “We will speak later. And remember always to address me as citizen.”

The reason for his caution was quickly understood. There was a noise on the stairs, and a moment later two turnkeys brought into the cell a small writing-table, a chair, and paper and ink. They departed in silence, closing and locking the door after them.

At the command of his companion Leslie drew his chair to the table and sat down. Citizen Lockroy did the same, taking a bunch of quills from his pocket.

“Now,” he said, “we are ready. Time is short, and not a minute may be wasted. To begin, an explanation is due you, my friend. The message you gave to the turnkey to be delivered, was reported to the secret agent who signed your commitment to prison. That man, Citizen le Clerc, ordered the turnkey to

dismiss the matter from his mind and to hold no further conversation with you. He had reasons for doing this, which will appear later.”

“Yes, I suspected as much,” exclaimed Leslie.

“The turnkey was removed the next day, and a new one was put in his place,” proceeded Citizen Lockroy. “Weeks passed, and a few days ago the old turnkey, having quarreled with Alphonse le Clerc, came secretly to me and told me the whole story. I at once investigated all the details of the case, and while I was glad to discover you, my friend, I was distressed to learn of your misfortune. I believe in your innocence.”

“Thank you,” Leslie said huskily, and tears came into his eyes.

“Yes, I am sure of it,” continued Armand Lockroy.

“Perhaps it is because I have felt a brotherly affection for you ever since the night you saved my life. At all events, I resolved to save yours in turn, if possible. And that is why I am here this morning.”

“God bless you!” said Leslie. “How can I ever repay your kindness—your noble efforts in my behalf?”

“Wait until you see if I can do anything for you,” was the reply. “It is by no means certain.”

“I am just as grateful for your intentions,” declared Leslie. “But won’t you tell me something about yourself? You seem so different from the—the others I have met in Paris. I knew you had influence, and that is why I tried to get a message to you.”

“Yes, citizen.”

“And now I know that you are a person of greater importance than I believed at first,” Leslie went on. “It takes power to do what you have done—to get access to the history of my case and procure an interview with me in prison.

“I have a certain amount of influence, it is true,” admitted Armand Lockroy, “and some day I may tell you the story of my life. For the present, be satisfied to know that I am the secretary and assistant of Robespierre—”

“Of Robespierre?” Leslie muttered in astonishment; and he shuddered at the name of this bloodthirsty leader of the Revolution.

“Ah, you shrink from me!” said Armand Lockroy.

“No, no,” exclaimed Leslie; “it is not that, I assure you—”

“We will not talk of the Revolution,” the other interrupted gravely. “It is a subject better avoided. In confidence I will tell you this much, my friend: While my anger rises when I think of the wrongs France has suffered in the past, and my heart is still with all true patriots, I admit that the movement for freedom has passed that stage where I would have wished to see it stop. In these days deeds are done as bad as the crimes of the old monarchy, and tyranny and injustice go hand in hand with liberty. But understand that my life would not be worth a moment’s purchase should you repeat my words.”

“Could I be so base and ungrateful?” exclaimed Leslie. “Have no fear!”

“I am satisfied,” replied Armand Lockroy. “To look at your face is to trust you. As for Robespierre, I respect him in many ways, and my connection with him is due to the fact that my father once served him in time of need. Recently I have foiled the plots of enemies who would have ruined him, and so I can count on his favor and influence. Of course, I owe this interview to him.”

“Then I, too, am his debtor,” said Leslie. “I shall remember his name with gratitude.”

“I trust you may have further cause to do so,” replied Armand Lockroy. “But we have wasted much time, and must make up for it. Tell me your whole story, Citizen Tryon, and tell it clearly and briefly. That will give me the better chance of aiding you.”

Leslie obeyed, commencing with his early life and the mystery of his father. He told all about his visit to Paris, and related his various adventures up to the time of his imprisonment in La Force. Armand Lockroy listened attentively, asking questions now and then, and frequently stopping the narrative while he wrote on a sheet of paper.

“There is strong hope,” he said, when the story was told. “In the first place, the evidence was insufficient for holding you as a suspect, nor is there anything now

that will convict you—unless I am much mistaken. I think we shall foil Citizen le Clerc.”

“What do you mean?” Leslie asked; his face was bright with hope.

“I will tell you in a few words,” was the reply. “Alphonse le Clerc is one of the keenest and most determined spies in Paris, and the letter he found on you addressed to Jules Verneville—who was then a denounced person—was simply his excuse for detaining you. He gleaned your story from you, and he believed every word of it—”

“Then why did he arrest me?”

“Because he suspected that your father’s family would prove to be aristocrats. Because he hoped to bring you to the guillotine on that charge.”

“Then he has been working on the clue I gave him?” Leslie asked anxiously.

“Yes, I have found that out. But up to the present time I am satisfied that he has made little or no progress—certainly not enough for a conviction. That is why he concealed your message to me—he hoped to keep you in prison until he had the evidence he wanted. And there was another reason. He hates me because I am a favorite with Robespierre, and nothing would please him more than to hound to death one who had saved my life and had a claim on my protection.”

“Yes, I see,” muttered Leslie. “It is all perfectly clear. And by what means am I to be liberated?”

“By an immediate trial, Citizen Tryon.”

“A trial?”

Leslie turned pale.

“Yes, a trial,” repeated Armand Lockroy. “I have already taken the first steps to that end, and through Robespierre himself. You will probably be removed to the prison of the Conciergerie tomorrow, and on the following day you will appear before the tribunal. Of course Alphonse le Clerc will be notified of this step, and it will be his duty to accuse you. But since he has no evidence to offer—as I am convinced is the case—the prosecution will fail. You will be acquitted and set at

liberty.”

“Do you really believe it?” asked Leslie.

“I have every reason to think so,” Armand Lockroy replied earnestly. “Of course your defense must be prepared properly, and I shall undertake that task myself. Tomorrow morning I will visit you again for an hour, and will give you your final instructions as to what you are to say at your trial. You must tell everything, just as you told me.”

“Even about the Flambeau Rouge?”

“Yes, of course. That part of your adventure has already been communicated to Alphonse le Clerc by the wineshop keeper, who identified you when he heard of your capture at the house of Monsieur Verneville. So Camille Pintard will doubtless be a witness against you. But his evidence is worthless, so have no fear—”

“I was not thinking of that,” interrupted Leslie, “but of something else. I purposely made no mention of the Flambeau Rouge to the spy, and now it seems that he learned from Camille Pintard, months ago, of the inquiries I made at the wineshop.”

“Exactly—so he did.”

“And yet, with that clue to help him, he has made no progress in the search for my father’s relatives?”

“Had he done so you would have been summoned for trial before this,” replied Armand Lockroy. “The clue may have been worthless. It is difficult, in these times, to learn anything of the Paris of twenty years ago.”

“And the Paris of to-day—since my arrest?” asked Leslie, wishing to change the subject. “The Reign of Terror—”

“It continues the same,” broke in Armand Lockroy; “nay, it is worse. The prisons are full, the tribunal condemns mercilessly, and the heads keep dropping by the score. Marie Antoinette was guillotined on the sixteenth of the month, and in three days twenty-one of the leading Girondists—who were the political rivals of Robespierre’s party—are to perish by the knife. The Duke of Orleans will

shortly meet the same fate.”

Leslie shuddered.

“Will you tell me,” he inquired, “what has become of that Englishman, Monsieur George Barrington, who was arrested with me at the barrier?”

“He is still within these walls,” was the reply, “but his trial has been fixed for—”

The sentence was not finished, for just then footsteps announced the coming of the turnkeys. They opened the door, and informed Citizen Lockroy that his time was up. He followed them, first whispering a few cheering words to the prisoner, and the clanging of the bolts told Leslie that he was alone again. Yet not entirely alone, for now there was hope in his heart, and under the influence of it the cell seemed a brighter and a different place.

CHAPTER XXII

Through the dingy windows of the room the warm October sun shone upon a scene that had been of daily occurrence in Paris for months, and was likely to continue so indefinitely. The Tribunal of the Revolution was holding its court. The five judges sat on the bench in feathered hats, and the most ill-featured of them all was the president. The wretched prisoners were huddled together under the stern eyes of the public prosecutor and of the jury. The audience was large, ruffianly, and turbulent, ablaze with red caps and tri-colored cockades, and was menacing with various weapons.

Among the accused was Leslie Tryon. So far events had turned out as predicted by Armand Lockroy during the interview of the previous morning. On the afternoon of the same day he had been removed to the prison of the Conciergerie, where he spent a restless night. Now, after a final interview with his benefactor, the young American was about to be put on trial for his life.

It was evident that he feared for the result. His face was haggard and white, and it wore a strained and anxious look. As he listened to the proceedings, his eyes roved from the jury to the judges, as though he would read his own fate. Some slight encouragement he seemed to gather at times from the presence of Armand Lockroy, and now and then, when he caught a glimpse of the lantern-jawed features of Citizen le Clerc, his uneasiness became more marked.

The lad's turn had not yet come. He was forced to witness the trial of nearly a score of prisoners, one after the other, whose names were called before his. These miserable creatures were condemned with indecent haste, and hurried away, amid loud acclamations from the crowd, to the cells where they would spend their last night on earth. It was close to noon, therefore, when a voice called out:

“Citizen George Barrington!”

Leslie gave a start of surprise, aware for the first time that his former traveling companion was in the room. The Englishman rose, and bowed curtly to the judges. He was a little thinner and more pallid from long confinement, but his bearing was as cool and haughty as ever.

The proceedings that followed were brief but interesting. The public prosecutor, assisted by Alphonse le Clerc, made the most of a case that clearly had nothing to stand upon. His accusation against the prisoner was a tissue of unproved and unwarranted suspicions, and he admitted that he had no witnesses to summon.

Monsieur George Barrington, being permitted to speak and to conduct his own defense, produced several witnesses who testified that he was an English citizen, that his papers had been correct when he was arrested, and that he had come to Paris in the interests of a branch of a London banking-house, with which he was connected. Having submitted the evidence, he complained fearlessly and in bitter tones of his unjust detention and imprisonment.

Was this liberty? he asked. Was this fair dealing on the part of a people who had overthrown an ancient and monstrous tyranny? And now, after three months in a dungeon, he was subjected to the further indignity of a trial for his life! His life? And he had done nothing whatever to merit the displeasure or suspicion of the Republic!

The fickle audience, stirred by the appeal to justice, applauded and cheered. As soon as the tumult was stilled the jury, announcing that they had reached a decision, gave their votes aloud to the president. And the result was acquittal for the prisoner.

More applause followed, to which Monsieur Barrington listened with a cold smile and unaltered dignity. Then he stepped forward, and in passing Leslie the glances of the two met. The Englishman started, and for an instant his face worked with emotion. Then he recovered himself and passed calmly from the room—a free man.

Leslie, attributing the incident to the surprise of recognition, thought less of that than of the result of the trial that was just over.

“There is hope for me,” he reflected. “I have a better chance of acquittal than I believed a little while ago. This Englishman, who is really a returned and disguised French aristocrat, and killed a spy who discovered his identity, is now free. And if the jury found him innocent, how can they do otherwise in my case? Yes, I feel sure—”

Sharply on the lad’s ear broke the summons he was expecting: “Citizen Leslie Tryon! Stand up!”

The young prisoner rose, and at first, realizing the importance of the occasion, he trembled a little and turned pale. But he quickly nerved himself, and looked steadily at the judges. He was aware of the scrutiny of the public prosecutor and Alphonse le Clerc, and he knew that Armand Lockroy was close behind him. The red-capped audience, still under the influence of the kindly feelings roused by the former case, waited in silence.

“Who accuses Citizen Tryon?” asked the president of the tribunal.

“I do, citizen-president,” replied Alphonse le Clerc.

“And do any defend him?”

Armand Lockroy stepped forward. “I defend the prisoner,” he answered.

“By whose authority or instructions?”

“By the authority of him who ordered the prisoner’s trial—Robespierre,” Armand Lockroy said loudly.

There was a murmur of approval and applause from the audience, and judges, jury, and prosecutor somewhat relaxed their stern expressions. But the spy’s face darkened with wrath and hatred, and he bit his lip. Evidently he was not prepared to go on with the trial, and he liked the prospect still less now that Robespierre’s name had been mentioned in connection with the defense.

From this point the proceedings went on rapidly, and Leslie listened attentively and anxiously. The arraignment was cleverly delivered, but it was barren of incriminating facts so far as concerned cause for the lad’s arrest. Alphonse le Clerc did most of the talking, and for witnesses he produced Camille Pintard and several others. These men simply linked the story together, telling in proper order of the prisoner’s arrest at the barrier, of the finding of the passport and the letter to Monsieur Verneville—both of which papers were produced, of the explanation the prisoner had given of his journey from New York, and of his subsequent doings that ended with his second arrest at the house of the advocate. Camille Pintard’s evidence, showing how the lad had assumed the role of a secret agent, caused the judges to frown. But they smiled when Leslie’s heroic rescue of Armand Lockroy was told—the latter drawing this from a reluctant witness—and the admiring audience cheered loudly.

It was now Citizen Lockroy's turn, and he spoke eloquently and clearly. He began by appealing to all to witness that he would have thus risked his own life and honor without the heartfelt assurance of the prisoner's entire innocence. Then he went on to prove that Leslie was an American citizen, that his story was true, that he had come to Paris to search for his father's family, that he had no guilty connection whatever with the aristocrat Jules Verneville, and that his doings on that memorable night were simply what should be expected from one who knew that his life depended on avoiding capture and escaping from Paris. He wound up with a demand for the acquittal of the accused.

The crowd applauded, and the spy's face grew uglier with baffled rage. Then his expression suddenly changed, and he made a step forward.

"Citizen-president," he said loudly, "I admit that the evidence is not sufficient to convict."

"I am of the same opinion, Citizen le Clerc," replied the president.

"Yes, it is insufficient," the spy went on, "but I used it merely as a pretext for holding the prisoner on a graver charge which I have not yet been able to prove. Had this trial not been forced—"

"What is the graver charge?"

"This, citizen-president: I accuse the prisoner of having in his veins the blood of one of the noble and aristocratic families of France—of belonging to that class who are the hereditary foes of the Republic. I grant that he came here to seek his father's family. That family will be found to be titled and aristocratic."

"Can you prove this, Citizen le Clerc?"

"Not yet," replied the spy, "but I will be able to do so shortly. And until that time I demand that the accused be held safely in the prison of La Force."

"Then you have no real evidence to offer?"

"No; not at the present time. But I shall have it."

The president turned to the prisoner:

“What have you to say for yourself in regard to this new charge?” he asked.

Leslie, having previously been instructed by Armand Lockroy, answered boldly and promptly:

“I know nothing of it, citizen-president, since I am ignorant of even my father’s real name. But this must I will say: How could he be considered here in Paris anything but a good patriot, since he was a Frenchman by birth, and since he laid down his life on an American battle-field in the cause of liberty? And I am his son.”

The cheering and applause that followed were tremendous, and only by repeated ringings of his bell could the president restore silence. That accomplished, he turned to the jury:

“Have you agreed?” he demanded.

“We are ready to vote,” cried one; and amid breathless stillness a unanimous verdict of acquittal was rendered.

“Citizen Tryon, you are free,” said the president, “but for the time being you must remain in Paris.”

Leslie was overcome by emotion, and he could not speak as he clasped Armand Lockroy’s hand. But even in this moment of happiness he shuddered as he saw fixed upon him the eyes of Alphonse le Clerc, burning with a fierce hatred and menace.

CHAPTER XXIII

It was the morning after the young American's trial and acquittal, and yet Leslie could scarcely believe that the dread ordeal was less than twenty-four hours old. The uncertainties of the future, the condition attached to his release, the enmity of Alphonse le Clerc—all these could not dull the joy that had filled his heart since he heard the president of the tribunal pronounce the verdict.

The two lads were sitting at breakfast in the quarters of Armand Lockroy, to which he had brought Leslie on the previous day, and where the latter had enjoyed a restful night's sleep. They were chatting over their coffee and rolls, while through the open window they enjoyed the view of Paris, lying so still and beautiful in the gray of the morning that the horrors of the Reign of Terror seemed but a dream.

The apartments, two in number, were on the fourth floor of a narrow house situated in a good part of the city. The front room, where the friends were breakfasting, was used for general purposes; it contained several tables, a writing-desk, a stove, books, dishes, and various other things. In the back room was a bed large enough for two, and the colored prints on the walls testified to Armand Lockroy's good taste. The windows commanded near views of the Seine and of the Rue St. Honore.

"I am accepting too much of you," Leslie was saying. "Not satisfied with having procured my release at risk to yourself, you now insist that I shall make my home with you for the present."

"You saved my life, my friend," replied Armand Lockroy, "and one likes to pay a debt of that kind in full. And what would become of you without my aid at this time? You are penniless, you are forbidden to leave Paris, and there are cunning foes to guard against. So you must yield to my wishes. What do you say?"

"I consent," Leslie answered. "You are right—there is no other course. But I trust that some day I shall find an opportunity to repay your kindness. As to danger, do you think there is still anything to fear?"

"The spy hates you," replied Armand. "He will continue to search for your father's family, knowing that you are at hand in case he finds the proof to

rearrest you. But I doubt if he will succeed.”

“At all events, it will be a difficult task,” said Leslie. “In three months he has accomplished nothing.”

“Very true.”

“And I suppose I myself can do nothing in the matter now?”

“Assuredly not,” Armand Lockroy declared earnestly. “Should you succeed in unraveling the mystery, and your father’s people should prove to be aristocrats, no influence could save you from the guillotine. It is better, my friend, to forget this foolish mission that brought you to Paris. I have no love, no respect, for those of noble blood—”

“Then you believe that my people were—”

“How can I believe, when I know nothing?” interrupted Armand. “But I suspect,” he added, glancing meaningfully at Leslie’s handsome and refined face, “and I wish to forget even my suspicions. As plain Citizen Tryon you will always be to me as a brother. For my sake, as well as your own, abandon this search for your father’s past.”

“I will do so,” Leslie answered reluctantly. “I was foolish to come here, and I will be more than content if I can escape safely from France with your aid.”

“That, of course, is impossible at the present time.”

“Yes, I know. And is it equally impossible to send a letter to my guardian, Mordecai Janeway? He will think that I am dead—”

“He must continue to think so,” said Armand. “Have patience, my friend, and leave all to me. You will remain in my rooms while I am absent by day, and sometimes at night you shall venture out for a breath of fresh air. Of course, it will be known that you are here under my protection, and that fact will satisfy Alphonse le Clerc while he is proceeding with his investigations—”

“But suppose he suddenly discovers my father’s identity?” broke in Leslie.

“I have already arranged to have his movements watched by night and day,”

replied Armand. "If he learns anything harmful to you, I shall know it in time. And then I will promptly find a way to get you out of Paris."

"How good you are!" Leslie exclaimed. "But to do this would mean your own ruin."

"There would be danger, but what of that? You saved my life—I am determined to save yours. However, it is foolish to borrow trouble. There is not one chance in a thousand that the spy will succeed since twenty-two years have passed."

"And in the event of his failure, how long will I be detained here?"

"Perhaps several months," replied Armand. "At the end of that time I will use my influence to have Robespierre annul the decision of the president, and grant you a safe passport out of France."

"And you think he will do it?"

"I am sure that he will, in spite of Alphonse le Clerc."

Leslie gave a sigh of relief, and looked thoughtfully from the window across the roof-tops of Paris, seeing in imagination the distant blue sea that stretched thousands of miles to New York. How he longed to be back there, in that haven of peace and true liberty.

"You are thinking of home?" asked Armand.

"Yes, and trying to see it," Leslie answered. "Of course, you have never been to America?"

Armand shook his head.

"Never; but I should like to visit that glorious land. Paris is my home, though I was not born here."

"Tell me about yourself," urged Leslie. "You promised that you would some day."

"There is not much to tell," replied Armand, with a far-away look in his eyes. "My life has been happy in some ways and sad in others. I remember but little of

my early life. I was born at Rouen, where my mother died when I was three years old. Not long-afterward my father, Lieutenant Lockroy, moved to Versailles, near Paris. It was there that the worst of our troubles happened. It is enough to say that my father was unjustly robbed of his commission in the army, that his name was stamped with unmerited disgrace, and that he was thrown into prison for some years. During that time I resided in Paris, where my father's friend, Robespierre, found me a home with a relative of his. After my father was released in Seventeen hundred and eighty-six, we lived together again, and in poverty, at Versailles."

"And is your father dead now?"

"He might as well be," Armand answered bitterly. "Hating the monarchy as he naturally did, he took a leading part in the fall of the Bastille in Eighty-nine. There a fragment of a wall tumbled on him and injured his back. Ever since he has been confined to bed at Versailles, attended by a faithful old servant. As for me, I became the instrument to avenge his wrongs. Do you wonder that I am proud to be associated with the leaders of the Revolution, that I glory in giving my services to the cause of liberty and the people?"

"No, I cannot find it in my heart to blame you," said Leslie, "since you have confessed that you do not approve of the excesses and cruel bloodshed of the Reign of Terror. As for the fallen monarchy, I know well how France suffered in those days."

"We are done with kings," muttered Armand. "Long live the Republic!" He drained his coffee-cup, and rose to his feet. "It is time to be off," he said. "I have work to do—work for the people. I will lock the door and take the key with me. Yonder on the shelf are books that may interest you until I return. Have no fear—you are quite safe here."

A moment later he was gone, and Leslie was left alone to reflect on his strangely altered fortunes. He was still a prisoner, but his cage was a palace compared to the dingy walls of La Force, and Hope was written clearly on the curtain of the future.

CHAPTER XXIV

For a month Leslie lived a monotonous life on the top floor of the apartment-house, only once or twice in that time venturing out by night for a stroll along the Seine. Left to himself all day, he sought distraction in reading and in looking from the windows. Thus the weary hours passed, and each week his longing for release grew stronger.

He saw little of Armand. The latter was frequently absent from nine o'clock in the morning until a late hour of the night, and of how his time was occupied in the service of Robespierre he never spoke. Nor would he say much about Alphonse le Clerc, though he gave Leslie to understand that he was keeping the spy's movements under surveillance, and that there was as yet no danger of any discovery that might put the young American in fresh peril.

Though the two lads were seldom together, except at night, the friendship between them ripened steadily. Before long each felt for the other a sort of brotherly affection, which neither made any attempt to conceal. And this was all the more strange, since Armand's heart was in the terrible work of the Revolution, and Leslie hated Paris and its tyrants with an intensity that he could not entirely repress.

Meanwhile things in general were going from bad to worse. There was not a ray of light in the black clouds that were settling closer on France, and the so-called Republic was a monster that fattened and grew more savage on deeds of iniquity and slaughter. The terrible tribunal, the public prosecutor, the revolutionary committees, the swarms of secret spies, all worked at fever heat. There was no safety or justice for any. Scores of arrests daily kept the prisons full, and there would soon have been no room to spare had not the procession of tumbrils, bearing the condemned, rolled each morning to the place of the guillotine.

On a certain evening at the close of November, Leslie did a foolish thing, little dreaming of the consequences that were to result. He waited until nine o'clock for Armand, who had been absent all day, as usual. Then the temptation to escape for a while from his prison fell upon him and conquered him. It was long since he had been out of doors, and from the lofty windows Paris looked enchanting. The air was cold and frosty, and in all directions lights blazed under the wintry and starry sky.

No sooner decided upon than done. A few lines were scribbled on a bit of paper for Armand's eye when he should return. Of several spare keys in the two rooms one happened to fit the lock, and the lad was free. He fastened the door behind him, and crept down the stairs. He met none on the way, though there were many other lodgers in the house. The street gained, he looked up and down to see that his movements were not being watched, and then started off rapidly.

There was intoxication for Leslie in the throbbing life of the town and the crisp night air. Exulting in his new freedom he went on and on, yet marking his course so that he could return whenever he chose. No one paid any close attention to him, though the streets were thronged with the same crowds he had encountered months before. Certainly the people looked rather more starved and savage now. Everywhere he wandered were crying children with shrunken limbs, women with disheveled hair and faces like wild beasts, sullen men glaring from under their red caps and tri-colored cockades. The talk was all of the guillotine, of how its victims had perished that day, and how many were to die the next.

Leslie's enjoyment of liberty soon changed to horror and disgust. He paused by the lighted window of a baker-shop to consider whether he should go on any farther or turn back, and he decided on the latter course. But he was hungry, and the grimy-looking loaves displayed in the window had an attraction for him. He lingered a moment longer, vainly searching his pockets for a few sous. Then, as he was about to leave, he heard voices near-by.

The speakers seemed to be standing just inside a wineshop that adjoined the baker's window, and they were conversing in low tones.

"You have the information at last, then?" whispered one.

"Yes," replied the other; "I can take you straight to the place."

"And are you sure it is the same Jacques Ferry?"

"The same, citizen—there is no doubt of it." *

Jacques Ferry! That name revealed all to Leslie, and he was trembling with excitement as he pressed his face close to the window, seemingly intent on the loaves within. He was aware that the speakers had come out of the wineshop, and when they had passed him he turned cautiously to look. From one side he caught a fairly good view of the pair—a little, quick-stepping man, and a huge,

broad-shouldered fellow in a dirty blouse. And he recognized them at once as Alphonse le Clerc and Camille Pintard.

They went rapidly on side by side, the lantern-jawed little spy and the present landlord of the Flambeau Rouge. And Leslie, after a brief moment of hesitation, started to follow them. His face was flushed with excitement, and in his eyes was the light of a determined purpose.

“Providence works in strange ways,” he said to himself. “Thank Heaven for putting it into my head to come out tonight just when Alphonse le Clerc has found the clue he has been seeking so long in vain! I understand it all clearly. The spy has been working on the same thread that I would have followed, and now, by the aid of Camille Pintard, he has found the long-lost Jacques Ferry. That is the man who kept the Flambeau Rouge twenty years ago, and beyond a doubt he knew Philip Courcel and Andre Bellermont.”

The lad shivered as he realized what a black cloud of danger was beginning to gather about him. Yet it was not so bad as it might have been, he reflected. He was warned now, and his fate was in his own hands—depended on the cunning and skill with which he should play his cards.

“Yes, my course is clear,” he decided. “It is true that Armand, or his agents, are very possibly watching these rascals at the present time, just as I am doing. But on the other hand they may have relaxed their caution, and in that event, had I not made this discovery tonight, the spy would probably have had me fast in the toils. What I must do is follow these two and try to learn what information Jacques Ferry possesses, and report accordingly to Armand. Then, if necessary, he will help me to escape from Paris. I am on a dangerous quest, but it will not be any fault of mine if I fail.”

By this time a considerable distance had been covered, and Camille Pintard and his companion, unsuspecting of the lad’s presence, were pressing steadily on from street to street. Leslie followed at a prudent space behind, never letting the men out of his sight, and the chase soon led him into a mean and squalid quarter of Paris.

On and on went the tracked and the tracker, penetrating deeper and deeper into a neighborhood that was offensive to all the senses. The houses were tall, projecting, leaning over as though to topple on the passers-by. The streets were

narrow, uneven, rutted, and strewn with liquid and solid refuse that poisoned the air. The people who were out of doors—they were not many, but enough to cloak Leslie's purpose—were wrangling, cursing, and drinking. The moon was shining in the steel-blue sky, and a chill breeze blew from the north.

Just as a clock somewhere in the distance was pealing sonorously the hour of eleven, Alphonse le Clerc and Camille Pintard vanished mysteriously from sight. Leslie rapidly paced the thirty or forty feet that separated him from the spot, and found a small, arched-passage diving between two houses whose upper side-walls were as one. Here the plotters had turned off, as was evident from the faint sound of footsteps and voices.

The lad hesitated, feeling strongly inclined to give up the quest and retrace his steps. But the thought of what was at stake gave him courage, and he decided, in spite of the peril, to follow the spy and Pintard farther. But just then, seeing that a couple of red-capped patriots were observing him from the opposite side of the street, he lurched unsteadily against the side of the house and pretended to be in a state of intoxication.

The ruse succeeded, and presently the men passed on up the street and disappeared around a corner. Leslie waited several minutes longer, meanwhile keeping a watch in all directions, and then he boldly entered the passage. There was barely room for him to advance, and the darkness was intense. His hands came in contact with slimy walls, and under foot were pools of mud and filth between the broken paving-stones. But he kept on pluckily, and at last he emerged in a courtyard about thirty feet square.

A brief observation revealed no immediate cause for alarm, nor did it give any clue to the whereabouts of the spy and his companion. Walls pierced by unlighted windows hemmed in the court on four sides, and the high houses so nearly met overhead that the rays of the moon could not enter below.

After waiting and listening for a moment, and training his eyes to the gloom, Leslie heard a faint murmur of voices. He was quickly able to locate the sound, which, he was satisfied, came from a shuttered ground-floor window in the nearest angle of the court. He crept on tiptoe to the spot, and now he perceived a rotten shutter. And the voices had suddenly grown more distinct.

It was a thrilling moment, and the thought that he was on the threshold of

learning the great secret made his heart beat faster.

He leaned down, put his eyes to the crevice, and then quickly started back in terror as he heard a splashing noise from the depths of the passage by which he had entered the court

CHAPTER XXV

The fear of being detected at his spying operations chilled Leslie's very blood, and caused him for the moment to forget the important interview that was doubtless taking place behind the closed shutter. He was in an ugly scrape, for the sound he had heard surely meant that some intruder was approaching by way of the passage. The court being a cul-de-sac, there was no line of escape open. So he crouched down in the angle of the walls, beneath the sill of the windows, hoping that the gloom would conceal his presence. He waited a minute—two minutes. There was no further alarm. All was silent save for a faint hum of voices—the voices of Camille Pintard and the spy.

"This is strange," the lad said to himself. "What can it mean? I heard the splash plainly, as though a man, coming through the passage, had stepped in one of the filthy pools between the paving-stones. He may have turned back, and he may be lurking yonder in the darkness. At all events, I must make certain before I do any more spying at the window.

It was an ordeal that he heartily disliked, but he screwed up his courage and crept softly to the mouth of the passage. The exit at the farther end could be seen in a misty blur of yellow light, and no dark object of any sort was stamped against it. After watching and listening for a few seconds, Leslie boldly entered the passage. He advanced to within a few feet of the street, feeling the walls as he went, and expecting every instant to be clutched in the darkness. However, no foe was hidden there, and he returned to the court with a lighter heart, but, withal, a puzzled mind.

"I can't understand it," he reflected. "The passage is surely empty, and yet the noises came from there. Perhaps some drunken fellow blundered in and out. Well, I had better make the most of my opportunity, so here goes."

Seeing at a glance that the court was still dark and empty, Leslie crept to the window and placed his eyes to the hole in the shutter. The view of the interior revealed to him was better than he had expected. He was looking at a wretchedly furnished little room, the walls and floor of which were grimy with filth.

A candle was burning on a stool, and beside it an old man was sitting upright on a dirty pallet of straw. He was a very old man, with clawlike hands, a face as

wrinkled as a dried apple, and wisps of white hair hanging over his sunken eyes. A ragged sheet covered the lower part of his body, and he was staring eagerly up at two men who stood by the pallet.

These two were Alphonse le Clerc and Camille Pintard, and what they were saying came distinctly to Leslie's ears. The shutter itself was loose and broken, and there was no glass behind it. The lad shook with excitement as he listened, keeping his eyes glued to the crevice.

"Why do you continue to annoy me, citizens?" whined the shriveled creature on the pallet. "Go! Leave me in peace. I am an old, old man, and when I am cold and hungry I wish to sleep. And I have told you all I know. I am that Jacques Ferry who kept the Flambeau Rouge in the Quartier Saint Antoine, on a time. Yes, it is true. But that time was long ago. Since then I have had misfortunes, and now I am a friendless beggar. Aye, and a patriot. Mark that citizens. 'Long live the Republic,' is my daily prayer."

"It is for the good of the Republic that we came here tonight," interrupted the spy, in a persuasive voice, "and for that reason you, as a good patriot, must speak more freely. You have told us much, but not all that we wish to know."

He referred to a note-book in his hand.

"Listen, Citizen Ferry," he went on. "You say that twenty-two years ago you were the landlord of the Flambeau Rouge, in the Quartier Saint Antoine?"

"Yes, in Seventeen hundred and seventy-one," was the old man's reply.

"And this Andre Bellermont was one of your customers then? You remember him distinctly?"

"I remember him, citizen, but not very clearly."

"Refresh your mind," urged the spy. "To proceed, you have said also that on various occasions, while stopping at your wineshop in the year Seventeen hundred and seventy-one, Andre Bellermont wrote letters to a certain Philip Courcel, in America, the address being the town of New York?"

"Yes, it is true," admitted Jacques Ferry.

“And, furthermore, Andre Bellermont received, in your care, letters written in New York from this Philip Courcel?”

“That also is correct, citizen.”

“Very good!” said Alphonse le Clerc. “Now, then, we come to the most important questions. Remember, this is in the service of the Republic. Who was Philip Courcel? What was his true name?”

Jacques Ferry lowered his eyes, and his lean hands flailed nervously at the bed-covering. “How should I know such things, citizen?” he whined. “I never saw this Philip Courcel. He was simply the correspondent of Andre Bellermont.”

“You will remember presently,” muttered the spy, his ugly face made more repulsive by a scowl of annoyance. “And now for Andre Bellermont—surely you know all about him?”

“My memory is feeble, like my body,” whispered the old man, with a shake of his head. “And you are speaking of twenty-two years ago, citizen. It is all a blank when I try to remember—”

“Come, no lies, my good fellow,” interrupted Camille Pintard, in a surly tone. “Don’t think to deceive us.”

“No, it is useless,” added the spy. “We know better. It is impossible that this Andre Bellermont should have carried on a correspondence through your wineshop, writing and receiving letters there, unless you were intimately acquainted with him. Be sensible, Citizen Ferry. For the sake of the Republic, speak the truth.”

“I am a good patriot,” mumbled the old man. “Yes, I swear it. But my memory is very bad, citizens—”

“There are ways to refresh it,” growled Camille Pintard. “This is treason against the Republic, and you know the penalty. There are still empty cells waiting for occupants in La Force.”

“Take me to prison, if you wish,” said Jacques Ferry. “There, at least, one would have enough to eat. Here I am often hungry from morning till night, citizens—”

“Name of Liberty, what an obstinate blockhead you are!” cried the spy. “Let us see if this will persuade you.” He took a gold coin from his pocket and held it up. “It is yours if you will tell the truth at once,” he added. “It means meat, drink, and a fire. Be quick! I shall trifle with you no longer.”

A brief pause followed. Jacques Ferry’s lips remained closed, but there was a greedy light in his eyes as he stared at the gold. Clearly he had been playing for this end, and now he did not want to betray himself by undue haste in yielding. For the lad crouching outside, with ears strained and eyes glued to the shutter, the suspense was trying indeed. How would the interview end? Would the secret of Philip Courcel’s identity be revealed, or was the old man really ignorant of the fact so badly wanted by the spy?

“Citizens, my mind is clearing,” muttered Jacques Ferry. “Yes, the past is coming back to me. I recall a few things that happened in the year Seventeen hundred and seventy one, when I kept the Flambeau Rouge. Give me the gold, and I will speak freely.”

Outside, the lad quivered with eagerness, and Alphonse le Clerc was himself agitated by the promise of success. With a smile he handed the coin to the old man, who thrust it with his skinny fingers beneath the sheet.

“And what is it you want, citizen?” he whined.

“Blockhead!” snapped the spy. “All you know of Andre Bellermont and Philip Courcel—all you can tell. Quick!”

“It is not much,” was the reply. “I knew Andre Bellermont for a number of years before the time you speak of, and he often came to the Flambeau Rouge. He was a servant in a great house—”

“Whose? Be quick!”

The old man leaned forward, and, in a hoarse whisper he pronounced a name that Leslie could not catch.

The spy’s face flamed into sudden triumph and joy.

“Ah, I understand!” he exclaimed. “I have heard that story in the past. And Philip Courcel, as he chose to call himself in America, was his son? Am I right?”

“Yes, it is true,” said Jacques Ferry. “I knew it for long.”

“And what became of Andre Bellermont?” the spy asked.

“He disappeared suddenly,” was the reply, “in that same year of Seventeen hundred and seventy-one. He came no more to the Flambeau Rouge, and it was whispered afterward that he had died of a fever. Dead he might have been, but I had my suspicions, citizens. Yet I dared not open my mouth. You know it was under the monarchy—”

Just at that instant, Leslie, who was still listening at the shutter in hopes of learning what had so far escaped him, heard a faint footfall on the stones of the court. Before he could turn around a pair of hands were clasped tightly across his mouth, and he was drawn forcibly away from the window.

“Hush! it is a friend,” a voice whispered sharply in his ear. “Come! Don’t struggle or make a noise.”

With a thrill of relief and joy, the lad recognized the voice. He submitted quietly to be guided across the court and into the mouth of the passage. Then, as soon as the hands were removed from his mouth, he said in a low whisper:

“Armand Lockroy! So it is really you! And how do you come to be here?”

“I should ask you that question,” was the stern reply. “Are you mad, or have you been deceiving me?”

“No, no, I assure you—”

“Hush! Come this way, where we may talk with safety.”

Cautiously the two lads advanced up the court, Armand leading. They paused at the farther end, where the projecting buttress of the wall formed a sheltering recess.

CHAPTER XXVI

Dim as was the light, it could be seen that Armand Lockroy's face was sullen with suspicion. He placed a hand on his companion's shoulder.

"Now, my friend—if I may still call you that," he began sternly, "I want an explanation."

"You shall have it," Leslie whispered; "but tell me first, are we quite safe here?"

"Quite safe," was the cold reply. "How could it be otherwise? I have agents near at hand, and I know most of the occupants of the houses that open on the court."

"Ah, then perhaps you are already aware—"

"I am aware of nothing," interrupted Armand, "but I desire to know much. Quick! How came you here? How dared you leave the house without my permission or escort? And, by Heaven, you know that I am answerable for you!"

"You will forgive me when you hear all," said Leslie. "I have been guilty of no wrong. At the most it was a foolish impulse that brought me out tonight, and yet the hand of Providence was guiding me. I was tempted by the beauty of the evening to venture into the streets, and I yielded. I found a key that fitted the lock—"

"Bah! I care nothing for that. How did you find your way here—here, of all the places in Paris? It surely cannot be the first time you have played the spy on my movements."

"Ah, how can you think such a thing?" Leslie whispered indignantly. "You are unjust, Armand. Believe me, it is all owing to chance—"

"But how?"

There was still doubt in his voice.

"I will tell you," Leslie answered. "Listen!"

He briefly described his encounter with the spy and Camille Pintard outside the

wineshop, and the way he had subsequently tracked them to the court. Then, being pressed by Armand, he related almost word for word the conversation between Jacques Ferry and his visitors.

“When you caught me from behind,” he added in conclusion, “I was listening to hear the name repeated—the name of that man in whose house Andre Bellermont was a servant. But, as it is, I learned quite enough to be satisfied that Alphonse le Clerc now has me in his power.”

“Yes, it is true,” Armand whispered hoarsely. He pressed Leslie’s hands between his own. “Forgive me, my friend,” he said. “I have misjudged you. It was indeed the finger of Providence that guided you here tonight. Had you not made this discovery, I fear no power or influence could have saved you.”

“But since we have met here, you certainly were on the track of the spy yourself?” Leslie asked. “Until now, I feared otherwise. I thought it possible your vigilance had relaxed—”

“And you were right,” declared Armand. “Believing that Alphonse le Clerc was engaged in a hopeless search, I have ceased to watch his movements so closely of late. I intended in a few days to ask Robespierre to permit you to leave Paris. So you see how fortunate you were in finding the thread which I had dropped. But for this the blow would have fallen tomorrow like a bolt from a clear sky, for I had not the least suspicion that the spy was so near success.”

“Then it was by following me that you came here?” questioned Leslie. “Perhaps you caught sight of me on the street?”

Armand shook his head.

No, nothing of the sort,” he replied. “I came on a different purpose. But I saw and recognized you when you entered the court—”

“And was it you who made a noise in the passage?”

“Yes, I stepped in a pool of water. Fearing you had heard me, I returned to the street and waited there while you were searching. Then I came back and watched you for a time. I had good reason to suspect that your object in coming here was connected with mine. I certainly did not dream that Alphonse le Clerc was behind that broken shutter, or that he had found the man who knew the secret of

your father's past."

"Such is the case," Leslie whispered anxiously, "and you know what it means to me. Is there yet time to save me? Can you possibly get me out of Paris?"

"Cheer up, for there is hope," Armand replied evasively.

"And there is also danger," Leslie added. "I can read as much in your voice. But while we stand here we are wasting time. Suppose I listen at the shutter again. I may learn how and when the spy intends to act, and perhaps I can discover—"

"Hush!" whispered Armand.

At that instant a door was heard to softly open and close. Looking from their place of shelter toward the farther end of the court, the two watchers saw a man glide to the mouth of the passage and disappear. And they had no difficulty in recognizing the figure of Alphonse le Clerc."

"He is alone," said Leslie.

"Yes, that is true," muttered Armand. "Wait here but a moment, my friend. Keep close to the wall, and don't make a sound; I will return quickly."

Leslie, left alone, crouched in the shadow of the buttress for nearly five minutes. The time seemed much longer, for he was harassed by anxiety, and he knew how slim a chance he stood of escaping the terrible trap which the spy had, at last, succeeded in setting for him. And, mingled with his fear, was a burning desire to learn the secret, so nearly within his grasp, which had brought him to Paris. A single name—only that was needed.

Light footsteps approached, and Armand came around the buttress.

"What have you discovered?" Leslie asked. "What did you hear?"

"I have heard nothing," was the reply, "but I have seen much. Alphonse le Clerc has gone, my friend, and I am confident that he will take no steps tonight to secure you. He has left Citizen Pintard to watch Jacques Ferry—they are both sleeping now—and in the morning the old man will be taken before one in authority, and on his evidence an order will be issued for your arrest. I feel sure of this, and so we have plenty of time to consider how you are to escape from

Paris.”

“But can you save me without putting yourself in peril?”

“I think so. I have a plan partly formed, which promises well.”

“How can I ever repay you?” said Leslie. “You have been a brother to me, Armand, and I shall always regard you as one, no matter what the future brings. And now, before we leave, I am going to ask one favor—”

“The less said the better. But what is it?”

“You know why I came to Paris,” Leslie answered hesitatingly. “You know how nearly I have attained that purpose, quite by accident. A word would reveal the secret of my father’s past, and the two men in yonder room can tell that word. Would it be possible to get the information from one or the other—”

“Impossible, for the safety of both of us,” broke in Armand. “And more than impossible. Do you not understand, my friend?”

“I am afraid—” Leslie began.

“Listen! You remember what passed between Jacques Ferry and the spy. Twenty-two years ago Andre Bellermont was a servant in a great house. The master of that house was clearly a near relative to Philip Courcel—to your father.”

“Yes,” muttered Leslie.

“It is better that I should not know the name of that man—the owner of the great house,” continued Armand. “At present nothing is certain, and I refuse to suspect you of what is not proved. I remember only that you saved my life, that you are my friend, that you are a citizen of the Republic of America. It might be different if I knew you to have noble blood in your veins. In that case it would be my duty to denounce you. Now do you understand?”

“Yes, I understand,” Leslie answered, in a changed and husky voice. “You are a noble fellow, Armand. Be assured that I will say no more about this matter. For the present, at least, I will forget it.”

“You are wise,” said Armand. “And now come with me. Step softly, and don’t

peak.”

CHAPTER XXVII

Armand left the shelter of the buttress, and crept softly along the right-hand wall of the court. Leslie followed, dreading at every step to hear an alarm given by some crafty watcher concealed behind door or window. He was keenly alive to the danger that menaced him on the morrow at the hands of Alphonse le Clerc, and to the necessity of escaping from Paris before morning. But how was it to be done? The problem was a puzzling one, and he had other matters to worry him as well. It was vexatious to have so narrowly missed learning the secret that had brought him across three thousand miles of sea. And yet that secret, if revealed now, would likely cost him the friendship of the only person who could help him in this time of dire need.

“This way,” whispered Armand, opening a door that was not locked, and, as he spoke, he stepped into a dark hall.

He took Leslie’s hand, and led him up a staircase that creaked loudly as the two mounted. The top reached, Armand groped on for a few feet. Then he stopped and rapped softly on a door that was quite invisible. There was no sound at first, but, when the rapping was repeated, a drowsy voice demanded who was there.

“It is Citizen Lockroy,” Armand replied, in a whisper. “Open, Roger.”

“Yes, citizen, at once.”

There was a brief delay. The visitors waited in silence, and the mystery of the proceeding worried Leslie not a little. A few scuffling noises were heard, and finally the door slowly opened. A faint light from a window within the room revealed the head and shoulders of a man.

“So it is you, Citizen Lockroy?” he asked. “I was very sleepy, and I went to bed at an early hour—”

“No matter,” Armand interrupted curtly. “I want a word with you, Roger. Where is my man Ducos? Is he here?”

“No, citizen,” was the answer, in a tone of surprise. “He slept here night before last, and yesterday evening he was with me at supper-time. He promised to come

back, but when I returned at midnight—I was absent for some hours—he had not arrived. And I have not seen him since.”

“Strange!” muttered Armand. “And the lodger, Lagarde, at the end of the hall? Have you seen anything of him?”

“Not since yesterday morning, citizen.”

“Ah!” said Armand; and there was a world of meaning in the exclamation. “Roger, I must enter this fellow Lagarde’s room,” he added. “Get a light and come along.”

“Yes, citizen,” was the reply; “in a moment.”

“Be quick,” urged Armand.

He partly closed the door, and, taking Leslie by the arm, he drew him to the head of the stairs. Here he stood for a moment.

“It is all right,” he said. “The court is quiet.”

“But what does all this mean?” demanded Leslie, who could no longer repress his curiosity and anxiety. “Is it the first step toward getting me out of Paris,

“Hush, not so loud!” whispered Armand. “I have not yet decided just how to secure your safety, but that will come. At present I am attending to the business for which I came here tonight, and you shall help me.”

“I help you?” questioned Leslie.

“You are with me,” was the reply, “and that fact will be to your advantage should any disturbance occur and lead to our being found here together.”

“Then I am not to render you any real assistance?”

“I do not know yet,” Armand replied. “Briefly, the situation is this: For some time past I have suspected a man named Lagarde, who hired a room in this house and seldom left it. I have had him watched by my agent, Ducos, who, to play his part the better, has been lodging with old Roger yonder. Ducos was to have reported to me each day, but this morning he failed to come. So I am here.”

“Yes, I see,” replied Leslie. “And do you suspect—”

“I suspect the worst, now that I have talked with Roger,” said Armand. “Ducos is a clever fellow, and one. to be thoroughly trusted. As to Lagarde, I have discovered that he is most cunningly disguised, and that he is living here under a false name. His other name, which I know will be familiar to you.”

“What is it?” Leslie whispered eagerly.

“George Barrington, the Englishman,” was the startling response.

Leslie caught his breath.

“Is it possible?” he said. “Why, I can scarcely believe it.”

“It is true, my friend.”

“Then the man is not what he claimed to be?”

“Assuredly he is not. Consider! After being acquitted by the Tribunal a month ago, he might have left Paris safely. But does he do that? No! Instead, he gets the neatest of disguises, he takes a false name, and he hires a room in this squalid quarter.”

“It is a strange case,” said Leslie. “Have you any idea what—”

“I have no clue to his purpose,” interrupted Armand. “I only know what I have told you. Lagarde is George Barrington—the Englishman who traveled with you to Paris. For that reason I suspected at first that your object in coming here tonight was to see him.”

“You were wrong, Armand. I did not dream—”

“Yes, I am convinced of that now. I was convinced as soon as I heard your explanation. But hush! Here is Roger at last.”

“And we shall soon know what has happened to Ducos,” said Leslie.

A yellow light streamed through the suddenly opened door behind the two, and an old man holding a candle in one hand came slowly to the head of the

staircase. He had delayed to put on his clothes and his red cap, and it was evident that he realized the gravity of the situation, for, in addition to the candle, he carried a thick stave.

“Ready, are you, Roger?” asked Armand.

“Yes, citizen.”

“It is best to be prepared,” said Armand, drawing a pistol from his bosom, “for there may be trouble. However, I greatly fear that—”

He stopped abruptly.

“Come,” he added. “Let us lose no time.”

With noiseless steps, the three started along the hall toward the rear of the house, Armand leading, Roger coming next, and Leslie last. They reached the far end without rousing any of the other lodgers—if there were any to be roused—and paused before a rickety-looking door. It was locked, as Armand discovered by trying the knob. He rapped three times, but got no response.

“Lagarde is not here,” whispered the old man.

“We shall see,” replied Armand.

He put his shoulders to the door and pressed hard. There was a snapping noise as the flimsy lock broke.

“Come,” he said, pushing the door half-open.

The three entered, and a premonition of what was about to be seen made Leslie shiver. The first glimpse revealed a small room with bare and dirty walls, and containing by way of furniture only a broken chair and a bed. Then old Roger’s candle shed a bright light around, and Armand uttered a low cry.

“Look!” he gasped hoarsely, pointing to the far end of the room.

The three hurried to the spot. There, close to the wall, lay a huddled figure that had once been a living, breathing man. He was short and thick-set, with iron-gray hair. He was turned partly on his side, and a pool of blood, now nearly dry,

had gathered under his head. His hands were clenched, and his features wore a rigid look of agony.

“It is not Lagarde, surely?” said Leslie.

“No, it is Ducos,” replied Armand.

“And is he dead?”

“He has been dead for hours—at least twenty-four.” Armand took the candle from the old man and held it close to the corpse. “Stiff and cold,” he added, “and his skull is beaten in at the base of the brain. The weapon is gone.”

For a few moments no one spoke, and the silence became dreadful and oppressive. Leslie felt cold chills creeping down his back, and old Roger shook like a leaf. Armand’s face was livid with rage as he looked down at the murdered man, and presently he said, in a hard, stern voice:

“It is an easy riddle to read, citizens. The deed was done early last night. Beyond a doubt, Lagarde discovered who Ducos was, and the poor fellow, cunning though he was, allowed himself to be decoyed here in some manner. A blow from behind with some dull and heavy instrument killed him at once, and then Lagarde made good his escape. You heard or saw nothing, Roger?”

“Not after I returned home, which was at the hour of midnight,” replied the old man.

“It was done before that time, while you were absent,” muttered Armand. He hastily tore the coverings of the bed apart, looked under it, and then knelt beside the body. He searched the clothes and pockets of the dead man, but found nothing.

“It is as I feared,” he said, rising to his feet. “Ducos had a passport out of the barriers, which he was to have used under certain circumstances. Lagarde has taken it, and, most likely, he got safely out of Paris this morning. But the assassin must be caught, if human means can do it. There is still time to act, for it is a long journey to the nearest seaport.”

He looked doubtfully and anxiously at Leslie.

“I will see to your case first,” he added. “The body can remain here for a few hours, Roger, and until I return—”

Armand stopped abruptly as footsteps were heard in the hall, and all three turned to the door. On the threshold stood the white-haired old man whom Leslie had seen at the Flambeau Rouge—the Bastille prisoner of weak intellect. His skinny cheeks were flushed, and his eyes gleamed in their sockets like living coals.

“It is Old Madcap,” muttered Roger. “He has a garret at the top of the house.”

The madman took a step nearer, waving his arms wildly.

“Blood! blood!” he shrieked. “I can see it yonder, a red pool on the floor. Long live the Republic, citizens! Death to tyrants and aristocrats!”

“Hush, you fool!” cried Armand, approaching the door.

Old Madcap turned suddenly and fled, yelling at the top of his voice. It was useless to pursue him. He dashed down the stairs and into the court, still continuing his frenzied cries.

“The whole quarter will be roused,” exclaimed Armand. “A curse on that prowling idiot! Let us get back to your room, Roger—”

Even as he spoke a wild tumult began. Voice called to voice, doors slammed, and running feet echoed through the house and in the court without. In almost less time than it takes to tell, a motley crowd of men, women, and children had pressed through the hall to the scene of the murder, and Armand and his companions were powerless to keep them back. Yelling and scuffling, they surged toward the body, and when the excitement was at its height Leslie saw in the doorway a face that chilled him to the heart—the sinister, curious face of Alphonse le Clerc.

CHAPTER XXVIII

The face remained only an instant in the doorway. Though the spy was a small man, he was wiry and strong. With seeming ease he squirmed through the crush to the front, pausing where he could have touched the body of Ducos by reaching out his foot. He glanced first at Leslie, but with a look of indifference that fairly petrified the lad. Then he turned to Armand and old Roger.

“Ah, you here, Citizen Lockroy,” he said. “And what does this mean? Is it a case of murder?”

“Yes,” Armand replied.

He went on to relate the circumstances briefly, and the crowd, seeing that the two were talking, suddenly became quiet. But as soon as Armand finished they, broke into an uproar again, clamoring for vengeance on the murderer, and striving to get close to the body,

“Back, all of you!” cried the spy, drawing a pistol to emphasize his command. “Out of the room—out of the house! You have heard all there is to know. The Republic will avenge the dead man, who was a good patriot. Begone, citizens!”

The sight of the pistol, and the identity of the man who was pointing it at them, awed the excited people. Reluctantly, and with low-muttered curses, they withdrew. Alphonse le Clerc followed them up, driving them like sheep through the doorway.

This diversion afforded Leslie an opportunity which he was quick to grasp.

“What am I to do now ?” he whispered to Armand. “What is the meaning of the spy’s strange conduct? I was sure he had come to arrest me, but, instead of that, he pretends not to know me.”

“It is a cunning trick, that is all,” Armand replied hurriedly. “He wishes to put you off your guard. He doesn’t intend to arrest you until tomorrow, when he will get an order through the statement of Jacques Ferry, and he believes that both you and I are ignorant of what has happened tonight. We must be careful to keep him in that belief, remember.”

“Yes, I understand,” said Leslie. “But why has he returned so soon?”

Armand shook his head.

“Perhaps to get information from Jacques Ferry that he had previously overlooked. It does not mean that he has changed his plans in regard to you.”

“But this meeting with him will change your plans,” whispered Leslie.

“Partly,” admitted Armand, “but we will let the spy see us go home together presently, and he will be satisfied that you are safe until tomorrow. After that will be the time for you to escape. There are still some hours of the night left.”

“But how—”

. “Hush,” interrupted Armand. “Say no more. Leave all to me.”

The warning was timely, for now the last of the invading mob were in the hall, Alphonse le Clerc pushed the broken door shut, muffling the retreating clamor. Then he crossed the room, took the candle from old Roger, and turned the yellow light full on Leslie’s face. For a few seconds he stared hard at him, and the lad bore the ordeal well.

“Who is this with you, Citizen Lockroy?” demanded the spy. “His face seems familiar—”

“Which is not surprising, Citizen le Clerc,” broke in Armand. “Have you forgotten the young American who was acquitted by the tribunal a month ago?”

“Ah, I recall his features now,” said the spy, with well-feigned surprise. “He is under your protection, I believe?”

“Yes, by permission of Robespierre.”

“But he is forbidden to leave Paris?”

“He does not wish to leave, Citizen le Clerc,” declared Armand. “As a friend to the republic, he is safe in Paris.”

“And he is helping you in your work?”

“Yes, at times. That is why he is here tonight. But I did not expect to see you.”

“I happened to be passing through the quarter,” the spy answered indifferently, “and, hearing the tumult in the court, I hastened to see what it meant.”

He glanced coolly and contemptuously at Leslie, shrugged his shoulders, and returned the candle to old Roger.

“So poor Ducos is dead,” he added, bending over the body on the floor. “It is a strange case, Citizen Lockroy. Had it been in my hands I should not have blundered, I assure you.”

“Perhaps not,” curtly assented Armand. “Who knows? At all events, the murderer was a cunning fellow.”

“Ah, this Lagarde you spoke of. And who is he? What was his real name?”

“It will be time enough to reveal that when I have caught him,” replied Armand.

“As you please,” muttered the spy, scowling as he spoke. “And what are you going to do now?”

“Citizen Tryon and I are tired, and we are going home to sleep,” Armand said carelessly. “In the morning I shall take proper steps to find this Lagarde, whom I believe to be hiding at no great distance.”

“I, too, need rest,” replied the spy. “Come, citizens, my way is also yours.”

If Armand looked ill-pleased on hearing this, it was but a clever bit of acting. The suggestion was what he most desired, since if Alphonse le Clerc accompanied the two as far as their lodging-house, he would certainly be convinced that Leslie—his intended victim—was safe until the next day.

The body of the unfortunate Ducos was to be left in the room for the present, and old Roger promised to keep candles burning. This arranged, Armand and his companion crept down the rickety stairs to the court, which was packed with excited people. Not without difficulty the three reached the street, where also the news of the tragedy had gathered a crowd. They made their way through, and went rapidly on side by side.

It was now about one o'clock in the morning, and the air was keen and biting. Few persons were about, and the moon shed a silvery light on the quiet old streets of Paris. Armand and the spy talked in low tones, but Leslie would scarcely have heard them had they been addressing their remarks to him. Constantly before the lad's eyes danced the hideous black shadow of the guillotine. How could he escape it? How get beyond the walls of Paris by morning? There were only a few short hours left, and his heart sank as he considered the chances. It would be miraculous, indeed, he decided, if any aid or cunning could save him from the vengeance of the spy.

The better parts of the city were quickly reached, and here and there a wineshop flared on a corner. Within, red-capped patriots were drinking and making merry. Yet the night air was very quiet, and so, when a commotion suddenly arose at no great distance, the three paused in wonder. Louder and louder rang the tumult—a harsh, eager roar composed of many voices.

“What can it mean ?” questioned Armand.

“Some enemy of the republic has been caught,” exclaimed the spy. “Doubtless he is an emigrant or an aristocrat. The noise comes from the direction of the Rue Saint Honore. We will see what it means, citizens. It won't do to allow the guillotine to be cheated.”

“We must go with him,” Armand whispered quickly in Leslie's ear. “Have courage.”

Turning into a street to one side, the three pushed on rapidly. Here and there others were running the same way. Lights flashed in houses, and voices called loudly from open windows. There was a second turn, and now the Rue St. Honore was reached. Close to the left a mob of at least a hundred persons were yelling and struggling before a lighted cabaret, and every instant the number was swelled by additions. From all directions they were running—men, women, and children.

The moonlight shone on a sea of upturned, ferocious faces and fluttering red caps, and flashed on muskets, pikes, sabers, and various other arms. And the center of attraction seemed to be the interior of the cabaret.

“Quick, citizens, or we shall be too late,” cried Alphonse le Clerc.

He linked his arm tightly in Leslie's—why, the lad knew too well—and dragged him forward. Armand kept close behind them, and by sheer force the three plowed a way through the thick of the crowd. They gained the steps of the cabaret, fought to the top, and were driven over the threshold like a wedge by the crush from behind.

There was not much to be seen, after all. The room was densely packed with soldiers and citizens, who were trying in vain, owing to the noise from outside, to hear a man who was addressing them from the top of the counter at one side. He was a tall, ungainly fellow, wearing the coarse clothes of a French peasant, cunning-faced, and with hands and cheeks well browned by the sun. He seemed to have had too much wine, to judge from his excited gestures and wildly rolling eyes.

CHAPTER XXIX

The spy and his companions pushed their way on as well as they could, and when they had advanced a few feet they came upon the landlord of the cabaret, himself jammed tightly in with the crowd. The man recognized Armand, and at once appealed to him loudly.

“In the name of Heaven, Citizen Lockroy,” he cried, “rid me of this noisy fellow yonder. I can do nothing with him, and you see what a mob of people he has collected. There will be a riot presently, and my stock will be destroyed—”

“Who is he?” interrupted Armand.

“I know nothing of him, citizen.”

“And what is he doing here? What is he trying to tell the people?”

“He is mad or drunken,” the landlord shouted shrilly. “The fool declares he has seen the Marquis Saint Perroy—”

Those inside the room, vaguely hearing the name above the roar from without, caught it up instantly, and passed it hoarsely from tongue to tongue. It was borne out of the door, and a hundred frenzied voices echoed it in the street.

“The Marquis Saint Perroy!” they yelled. “Death to the marquis! Kill the aristocrat! Off with his head! Forward to the chateau!”

Armand and the spy glanced at each other, and on their faces was the same mixed look of doubt and amazement, of eagerness and ferocity. The peasant on the counter was still excitedly gesticulating and shouting. Within and without the cabaret the tumult was rising to a higher pitch.

The Marquis St. Perroy! Truly it was a name to conjure with—a name to fire the passions of a Paris mob as a spark ignites a powder magazine. Little wonder it had roused the sleeping city, and choked the Rue St. Honore with a mass of inhuman, bloodthirsty fiends.

The Marquis St. Perroy was a name to be execrated from end to end of France,

the name of that titled aristocrat of ancient family, that proud, cruel noble who had for years ground down and oppressed the wretches on his estates, robbed them, beaten them, and treated them as so many crawling worms! And had he really been seen by this drunken peasant? No, it was impossible. Months before he had fled to England and from there had come the rumor of his death. And, granted he still lived, would he have been mad enough to venture back on French soil?"

"We must inquire into this matter, Citizen Lockroy," the spy shouted in his companion's ear.

"Yes, you are right," declared Armand. "There is no telling what the man knows."

"Take him down, you and Citizen Tryon," the spy added. "There is a little room to the rear—get him in that. Meanwhile, I will hold the rabble in check."

At once, side by side, Armand and Leslie elbowed their way forward. The former was recognized, and, by virtue of his well-known authority, the crowd yielded a little. The two reached the counter and leaped upon it. Armand seized the peasant's arm.

"Stop, citizen!" he cried. "There has been enough of this. In the name of the republic, come down—"

"Let the people hear me," howled the man. "They won't listen, they won't believe that I have seen the Marquis Saint Perroy."

He struggled hard to get free.

"Tell your story to me," Armand demanded sharply, "and I will convince the people. There is a room yonder where we can be by ourselves. It is useless to try to be heard here."

The man became suddenly quiet.

"You are right, citizen," he said sullenly. "Come, I will do as you wish."

Armand and Leslie helped him down from the counter, to which that same instant mounted Alphonse le Clerc. The crowd in the cabaret knew him, and by

the first imperative gesture he stilled the noise to a great extent.

“You are sensible, citizens,” he cried. “In the name of the Republic I ask you to keep order until I can see what truth there may be in this drunken fellow’s story. But I am sure it is false. Who can believe that the Marquis Saint Perroy would dare return to France?”

At this the tumult broke out afresh, some shouting one thing and some another. The spy, satisfied that further words would be useless, sprang down behind the counter. He followed Leslie and Armand, with the peasant, into the little room to the rear, where a candle was burning. The door was hurriedly closed, and though it did not shut out the clamor of the mob, it muffled it sufficiently to carry on conversation.

The peasant stood with folded arms and flushed cheeks, drawing long, deep breaths. He was still visibly excited, but he was perfectly steady on his feet, and it was evident that he was not in the least under the influence of wine.

“Now for your story,” exclaimed the spy. “Quick! You declare that you saw—”

“The Marquis Saint Perroy,” cried the man. “Yes, I swear it was him. And I should know—”

“Stop!” interrupted Armand. “Let us begin properly. It will save time in the end. Compose yourself, my good fellow. Now, first of all, your name?”

“Emile Pons,” was the reply.

“What are you? Where do you reside?”

“I have a small farm, citizen, a league beyond the south walls of Paris. It is close to the Chateau d’Ort the home of the Marquis Saint Perroy. It has been unoccupied for months, and by Citizen Robespierre’s orders it was never pillaged or molested. None would dare to disobey him.”

“Exactly,” said Armand. “And now, are you not aware that the Marquis Saint Perroy died in England?”

“Pardon, but he is not dead, citizen.”

“Are you sure of it?”

“Yes, sure.”

“When did you see the marquis?”

“Two hours after dark, last night.”

“And where?”

“He was entering the chateau.”

“Tell us how it happened,” the spy exclaimed eagerly.

“It was this way, citizens,” the peasant replied. “A pig strayed off from my farm, and I saw it enter the gardens of the Chateau d’Or, through a hole in the wall. I climbed over after it, and, while I was searching in the bushes for the brute, in the part of the garden that is near the back of the house, I heard a footstep. I crouched down low, and presently I saw a man creeping along the gravel path. He wore a workman’s blouse, but his face and figure were those of the Marquis Saint Perroy. He went on to the rear door of the chateau, which he opened with a key. Then the door closed, and he vanished.”

“You swear it was the marquis himself?” asked Armand.

“I would stake my head on it, citizens.”

“And what did you do next?” questioned the spy.

“I first crept to the door and listened,” was the reply, “and I heard slow footsteps going along the hall and up the staircase. Then I started off on foot to Paris, wishing to bring the news as quickly as possible. I came straight to this cabaret, which I knew the Citizen Robespierre frequented. But when I found he was not here I became excited and revealed what I had seen. I am sorry I lost my head, citizens, but I remembered only what I had suffered in the past at the hands of the cruel marquis, and how he had my child beaten—”

“Enough!” said the spy, looking hard at Armand “What do you think of the story, Citizen Lockroy?” he added.

“It may be true,” replied Armand. “Less likely things have happened. It must be seen to.”

“Yes, and at once. But this rabble! They must be thrown off the scent—”

At that instant the keeper of the cabaret entered the room in mad haste, letting in a roar of voices that faded as quickly when he closed the door behind him. He was flushed and excited.

“The people are waiting,” he cried hoarsely. “Hundreds are assembled in the Rue Saint Honore. They believe the peasant told the truth, and they are about to march to the Chateau d’Or to slay the Marquis Saint Perroy. They want you to lead them, Citizens Lockroy and Le Clerc. They know you are both here, and they will take no denial.”

“What is to be done?” exclaimed Armand, in tones of anger and consternation. “Could we give them the slip, and reach the chateau first?”

“No, it is impossible!” declared the spy. “We must go with them. We must lead and control them. Otherwise the mob would tear the marquis to pieces. And that must not be—only on the guillotine can he atone for his crimes.”

“Yes, you are right,” assented Armand. “Ah, how Paris will be stirred if the Iron Marquis is caught.”

The spy glanced at Leslie, and in his eyes was a scarcely concealed gleam of the most savage triumph.

“Citizen Tryon, as a friend of the Republic, will go with us,” he said sharply.

“Yes, as a true patriot he will aid us to arrest the marquis,” replied Armand.

As he spoke, he gave the lad a quick and meaning look.

“Be on your guard,” it said more plainly than words.

“Let Citizen Tryon speak for himself,” the spy exclaimed sneeringly.

“I am ready to serve the Republic in any way possible,” replied Leslie, throwing a false ring of enthusiasm into his voice.

“Listen! the people are growing impatient,” cried the landlord, as the tumult swelled louder.

“Come, citizens,” said the spy.

He opened the door, and led the way out.

CHAPTER XXX

The appearance of Alphonse le Clerc and his companions at the outer door of the cabaret was the signal for a burst of wildest applause. Swaying right and left the mob speedily opened a winding gap, through which these four chosen leaders—the spy, Armand, Leslie, and Emile Pons—made their way to the front. Far on the frosty night floated the tremendous wave of sound, and moon and stars looked down on a scene that was common enough in Paris in those days, and yet never lacked a thrilling interest.

No less than five hundred people were now massed before the cabaret, choking the street from wall to wall, and the number was constantly swelling. The upturned array of faces presented a motley variety. Here were soldiers bronzed by foreign suns; red-capped ruffians of citizen-patriots, dyed with every crime in the calendar, bakers and butchers, in dirty blouses, old men and young, women and girls who might have sat for models of the Furies, and shrill-voiced gamins barely able to toddle. One would have thought a second Bastille was to be overthrown, seeing the weapons that skinny arms brandished in the air—muskets, pistols, axes, bars of iron and wood, knives, pikes, sabers, and cobblestones.

There was a brief delay while the spy, casting his glance over the crowd, selected and mustered a dozen citizen-patriots and soldiers—men who were personally known to himself and Armand, and who could be depended on for discretion and coolness. To these he addressed a few words of instruction.

“Keep close to me, citizens,” he said, “and see that the mob stay behind us. I will tell you further what to do when we approach the chateau. The marquis must be taken alive, bear that in mind. We must save him for the vengeance of the people—”

The rest of the sentence was drowned in a great roar, for the mob had grown impatient again.

“On! on!” they howled. “On to the chateau! Death to the Iron Marquis! Off with his head!”

In a frenzy of excitement the peasant, Emile Pons, snatched a long pike from a

companion, and quickly raised his own red cap aloft on the point of it.

“Forward, citizens!” he bawled, fluttering the emblem of blood high in the air.

“Forward!” shouted the spy, seeing that the moment had come.

With a roar like the breaking of the surf on a storm-swept coast, the living tide of human beings was in motion. Thirsting for the life of one poor old man, they swept along the Rue St. Honore, constantly gathering fresh additions to the straggling and disorderly rear. In front there was some show of discipline and restraint, for Alphonse le Clerc and his picked men marched steadily and in even formation. From time to time the spy glanced at Leslie, who was three removed from him, and was walking alongside of Armand. And the lad, intercepting some of these glances, shuddered with a fear that he could not repress.

On through the streets of Paris, rousing the sleeping inhabitants from their rest, rolled the sea of frenzied men and women, screaming, cursing, howling like wild beasts, and tossing from lip to lip the execrated name of the Marquis St. Perroy. The weak and lame soon fell behind, but they were not missed. From every court, alley, and side street, from the houses right and left, scores of new recruits came running with whatever weapons they could grasp on the spur of the moment. The rear swallowed these up, and still the leaders kept an orderly formation in front. The night air grew more keen and frosty, and over the face of the moon scurried angry, black clouds, as though they were hastening to warn the old marquis—if he was really in his chateau—of the vengeance that was whirling his way.

Leslie saw only the shadow of the guillotine looming over him, heard nothing but the verdict, “guilty,” fall from the lips of the dreaded tribunal. But by and by chance gave him the opportunity he wished. A brief hesitation to decide which of two streets to take slightly changed the formation of the leaders of the mob. Five men were now between the lad and the spy, and one of these was Emile Pons. He was still waving the red cap overhead, and shouting and yelling incessantly.

Leslie drew a little closer to Armand.

“I am surely lost,” he said, loudly enough to be heard by his friend alone. “What am I to do now? It is nearly morning, and by day you will find it impossible to hide me, much less to help me to escape from Paris. I see only one slim chance—to slip away in this crowd, and make what shift I can for myself.”

“That would be madness, at the present time,” Armand replied. “Have courage, my friend. You are now on the way to safety.”

“To safety! What do you mean?”

“The Chateau d’Or is a short distance beyond the walls of Paris, and we will all pass out of the barrier together. There will be no questions asked, no scrutiny, no passports demanded.”

“Ah, I see,” said Leslie. “That slipped my mind. And what then?”

“You will not reenter Paris,” Armand replied.

“Thank Heaven!” the lad exclaimed. “I begin to understand. Things have indeed turned out fortunately—”

“But you must leave all to me. Yonder, with Citizen le Clerc are several of his own secret agents, and he may have instructed them to keep a close watch on your movements, even though he believes you ignorant of his plans for the morrow. So I will give you the signal when the time comes for you to make your escape into the darkness of the night.”

“And when will that likely be?” asked Leslie.

“Not until after the capture of the marquis, provided he is actually at his home. Then will be the best chance, when the spy and his friends are made careless by the intoxication and triumph of success, and the mob are clamoring around the chateau.”

“I will wait for the signal,” said Leslie.

“That given, I can do no more for you,” Armand went on. “You must trust to your own courage and wits to reach the coast, and find a vessel to take you across the channel.”

“Heaven help me,” exclaimed Leslie. “And I will ever remember your name with gratitude and affection. You have been a brother to me, Armand—”

“Hush! We have talked enough. Say no more.”

The walls were close by now, and the mob swept on more rapidly, two thousand voices singing at once the inspiring strains of the “Carmagnole.” The wild music found an echo in Leslie’s heart, for dread and despair had yielded to the sweetness of hope. He little dreamed what fate had in store for him—what horrors were to fall to his lot ere the morning sun shone on the fair land of France.

The barrier reached, it required only a moment for those in charge to grasp the situation and fling open the gates. The tide rolled through, struggling like so many frightened cattle, and among those who crowded to the front row with the spy and his men was one known to all—the crack-brained old prisoner of the Bastille. Side by side with Emile Pons marched Old Madcap, his white locks streaming to the wind and his shrill voice exhorting the mob to deeds of bloodshed.

The distance was not far now. Faster and faster the frenzied tide of patriots rolled through the southern suburbs of Paris, then by fields of corn and rye, past lonely hamlets and streams, and finally to a hillcrest from the top of which a superb view was seen—to right and left a church tower, a windmill, and a little village lying white under the moon’s glow. In the foreground a great house nestled darkly in the trough of the valley. And all knew that it was the ancestral home of the hated Marquis St. Perroy.

To quiet the people and approach the place in silence was impossible, so the spy hurriedly instructed Citizen Pons and three others to run fleetly ahead and guard against the escape of the emigrant. The four slipped through the hedge at the roadside and vanished.

This desertion was not discovered. Led by the spy, Armand, Leslie, and Old Madcap, the clamorous horde swept forward down the dusty slope of the hill. Faster and faster they moved, and as the goal drew nearer the roar of voices and the rush of feet seemed to shake the very ground.

Over the level sward of the valley surged the living wave, and into the spacious grounds of the chateau, which now glimmered in the moonlight close ahead its high roof towering to the sky, and not a gleam in any of its casements. With mad shouts the people scattered right and left, and in a trice the sea of ferocious faces was tossing and heaving around the base of the building.

Among the first to gain the stone-paved courtyard were Leslie, Armand, and the spy. Amid the crush and clamor they struggled to the terrace, and mounted the broad steps leading to the main door. On both sides were carved urns and balustrades, and carved heads looked down with ghastly grimaces from the high portals.

Citizen Pons, breathless and excited, suddenly appeared and put both hands to the spy's ear.

"The marquis is safe," he cried. "I have just seen him peering from an upper window. The people are storming the house in the rear. They will soon have the doors down."

"I must be the first to enter!" shouted the spy. "Come, citizens! This way—"

It was already too late for a change of location. With torches glimmering here and there, and yells of rage and eagerness, scores of men poured up the steps and the terrace, and those behind were quickly wedged as tight and solid as a wall. The assault began, and the massive door groaned under the fusillade of blows that were rained on it with axes, clubs, and musket-butts.

CHAPTER XXXI

“Back! back! citizens!” Alphonse le Clerc roared loudly. “Back, I command you! The thing must be done properly! I am in authority here, and my orders must be obeyed. Yield, in the name of the Republic!”

The spy might as well have tried to check the waves of the ocean. His voice was utterly lost amid the frenzied howls, and his passionate gestures were unheeded. He, and the few cool-headed comrades who were by him, were tossed and buffeted in the crush of men, driven to and fro from the verge of the steps to the threshold of the door. But they held their ground obstinately, determined at least to be among the first to enter, if they could not control the mob or gain admission to the chateau at another point. And to do the latter was impossible. A cat could scarcely have forced its way through the screeching mass that packed the garden on all sides.

“Down with the door!” yelled the inflamed ruffians. “Beat it in! Death to the marquis! Death to the cursed aristocrat!”

The assault went on, the blows falling like a shower of hail, and the weapons flying so recklessly that more than one of the assailants was seriously hurt. Crash! Crash! Thump! thump! The stout panels groaned and creaked, shedding showers of splinters, but the door stood as firm as ever and gave no sign of yielding. Nor had there been anything to show that the Marquis St. Perroy was within.

The mob, growing impatient, redoubled their cries and threats. They tried to get nearer, and a terrible scene was the result. Men were squeezed and bruised, and their cries of agony rang above the din. The small and the weak fell, and were trampled under foot. Those on the upper steps tried to force back the living torrent, but with little effect. The crush before the door became greater, and it was difficult for the men who were working to wield their weapons of assault.

“Steady, citizens!” shouted the spy. “Hold your ground, and the instant the door is down be prepared to rush in. It will take all our courage and resolution to save the marquis from being torn to pieces.”

“Heaven grant that he does not cheat the guillotine!” cried Emile Pons. “Ah, if

we could only get to some other part of the chateau, citizens! By this time our comrades may have broken in at the rear, or climbed to some of the high windows.”

“It is impossible to leave here,” exclaimed the spy. “It would be madness to attempt it. We can only wait.”

Armand, taking advantage of a chance afforded by the excitement and noise, edged closer to Leslie.

“I am not forgetting you,” he whispered in the lad’s ear. “Nothing can be done now. Have courage and patience, and I will warn you when the proper, time comes.”

“Yes, I understand,” Leslie replied.

“The outlook is favorable,” Armand went on. “Citizen le Clerc does not suspect you. All he thinks of at present is how to capture the marquis alive. But enough! It will be imprudent for us to be seen conversing. Remember one thing—keep close by me.”

Leslie nodded. He had observed the lesser degree of attention paid to him lately by the spy, and his heart was bright with hope and courage—with the conviction that he would find it an easy matter to escape when Armand should give him the signal. To tell the truth, the lad was thinking less of the peril hanging over him than of the thrilling scene to which he was now a by no means unwilling witness. He was young and ardent, and the events of the night had fired his blood. As he gazed at the howling mass of ruffians who were surging about the chateau, he felt, in a remote degree, a touch of the same ferocity and eagerness that must have animated this Parisian rabble. He looked forward with mixed dread and longing to the moment when the door would yield and the Marquis St. Perroy would be at the mercy of his relentless foes.

Meanwhile the assault was going on hot and heavy, but still the door held to its fastenings, defiant with the ruggedness acquired by centuries of age. Nor as yet, so far as could be told, had egress been gained to the chateau at any other point. The delay added to the fury of the mob. Their shrill cries swelled to a higher pitch. They hurled missiles at the walls and windows; they strove again and again to mount the upper steps, bruising and trampling one another in the effort.

Then, of a sudden, the angry tumult changed to a triumphant note—to a burst of mighty cheering that spread from throat to throat like a wave. And over the heads of the people, being borne rapidly by skinny arms, came that which meant the downfall of the chateau—a massive pillar of wood, ten feet high, which had been wrenched from its place at one side of the outer entrance-gates.

“Look! look!” cried Leslie.

“At last!” shouted the spy. “It was a clever fellow who thought of that! We shall soon be in, citizens!”

A moment later, amid frenzied yells, the great column reached those who were waiting for it at the front. By the spy’s efforts some show of order and discipline was brought out of the confusion. He and his assistants, presenting drawn pistols, managed to clear a small space immediately before the door. At once a dozen red-capped patriots seized the pillar, swung it aloft, and drove it forward in unison with tremendous force.

Crash! crash! The door groaned as though in agony, and quivered from top to bottom.

“Harder!” yelled the spy.

“Steady! all together!” shouted Armand.

Crash! crash! Two panels fell in, and there was a rending, splitting noise.

Once more the huge missile was withdrawn. Once more it shot forward, impelled by twenty-four sturdy arms. Crash! Down went the door, locks and hinges shattered, and the chateau was at the mercy of the invaders. For a fleeting second those outside had a glimpse of the interior—of a grand old hall hung with boar spears, swords, riding-whips, pictures, and tapestries, all illuminated by a mysterious sort of light that was burning and snapping in the middle of the floor.

Then, with frenzied shouts and clamor, the rush began. And there was no delaying or checking it. The men who had wielded the pillar to such good effect flung it aside instantly, and they were the first to dash over the threshold. The spy and his companions would have followed next, but they were not quick enough. Others by the score made a mad and desperate onset, and in the struggle Citizen le Clerc was forced to one side of the doorway. Some of his right-hand

men were more fortunate and got in, but Armand, Leslie, and Emile Pons were driven back with the spy.

But an instant later, as they were struggling in the crush, their rage and disappointment was amply compensated for. A frightful explosion, accompanied by a lurid glare, took place in the hall of the chateau. The crash was so tremendous that the earth seemed to rock, and all believed for an instant that the building was falling in ruins. There was a quick succession of rattling noises, lasting a few seconds, and the scenes that ensued after that are beyond the power of words to describe.

Those who were still living of the victims of the Iron Marquis—for he clearly had exploded a quantity of gunpowder by a fuse—filled the air with their shrieks of agony. Mangled and bleeding men crawled or staggered to the threshold of the door, uttering most heartrending cries, and within the hall dead bodies were thickly strewn. The mob outside, fearing another explosion, lost their wits and fell into a panic. Those on the high steps and the terrace made a rush to get down, and the retreating movement spread in all directions like wild-fire. The clamor of the mob drowned the shrieks of the wounded, and the occasional loud crashes as the debris continued to fall from the shattered walls of the building.

In the first rush Leslie was knocked down and trampled upon, and after lying stunned and dizzy for a moment he was dragged to his feet. He was still at the top of the steps, close to one side of the door, and it was Armand who had picked him up. The spy was leaning against a balustrade, pale as death and bleeding from a cut on his head, and these three were for the moment alone. Smoke was drifting out the door of the chateau, and behind it dabs of red light were gleaming.

“Are you hurt?” Armand anxiously demanded of Leslie.

“No, I think not,” the lad replied hoarsely. “I am bruised a bit that is all.”

Just then half a dozen men, headed by Emile Pons and Old Madcap, rushed to the top of the steps. Encouraged by this example a general movement to enter the chateau began, and the most fiendish cries of rage rent the air.

“Now is our time!” shouted the spy, rousing himself from his stupor. “There is no further danger—we need dread no more explosions. Follow me, citizens! follow me in the name of the Republic! The Marquis Saint Perroy shall be ours!”

CHAPTER XXXII

Citizen le Clerc did not appeal in vain. The words were no sooner uttered than they brought a willing response. With frenzied yells all who had reached the summit of the steps made a dash into the chateau at the heels of the spy, and Leslie was among the foremost. Armand Lockroy, pushing after the lad, tapped him on the shoulder.

“Now is the time!” he whispered. “Be off! Go at once!”

It was a loud, shrill whisper, and he delivered it with his mouth close to the other’s ear. But Leslie failed to hear it, nor did he pay the slightest heed to the tap on the shoulder. In his mad excitement he forgot for the moment the promised signal—forgot the peril that threatened him on the morrow. He pressed on, and the chance was lost, for, when Armand sought to repeat the signal, he was suddenly forced farther to the rear by half a dozen men who thrust themselves between him and the lad.

Amid deafening clamor the spy and his followers swept over the threshold and into the hall, trampling under foot the dead and dying, and knocking down the less sorely wounded wretches who were striving to get to the outer air. Citizen Pons had acquired possession of a blazing torch, and this, waved aloft, lit up the whole terrifying scene—the powder smoke drifting to and fro in pungent wreaths, the shattered walls, the gaping black hole in the floor, around the edges of which lay half a score of bleeding and mangled bodies, and the heaps of debris and ornaments. From the heaps of debris little red tongues of flame were leaping. Of the Marquis St. Perroy himself there was no trace.

Immediately beyond the scene of the explosion was the great staircase. Its lower part had been blown away, and at a height of six feet the jagged beams and carvings projected in air, apparently without much support. The spy, looking up, saw something invisible to the others—something that brought a ferocious gleam to his face, and led him instantly to a daring and perilous act. With the agility of a cat he climbed through the timbers overhead to the upper part of the staircase, which was apparently uninjured. Claspings the balustrade, he turned and looked down on the mob.

“Come, citizens!” he shouted. “I want half a dozen of you—no more. Let the rest

remain here quietly!”

The crowd understood the gestures, but owing to the noise and confusion they did not catch the words. The spy, however, did not wait to see the result. He bounded on up the stairs to the floor above, noting as he did so that the whole mass quivered under his feet, and that it was partly detached from the side wall.

The rush that ensued was temporarily checked by the hole made by the explosion, which blocked the way. So it fortunately happened that those who first imitated Alphonse le Clerc’s example clambered over the ruins singly or in pairs, and in the same order followed the spy to the landing above. By this time the swarming crowd below, eager to be in at the capture of the marquis, were blind to prudence. And there was no standing against the crush from behind.

So they made a savage dash, yelling at the top of their voices, and while many fell into the gap in the shattered floor, the greater part gained the damaged stairs and wriggled and clambered upward. The natural and immediate result was a terrible disaster, which the spy vainly sought to avert by warning cries and gestures. When half a score of men were on it, the whole staircase suddenly gave way at the summit and the side. With a frightful crash it collapsed into a mass of ruins, squeezing and mangling many of the poor wretches who were beneath it and on top.

One only—and that was Armand Lockroy—saved himself by his agility and presence of mind. Making a prodigious spring he caught the edge of the landing, and Leslie and the spy dragged him up beside them.

“Thanks, citizens!” he exclaimed. “That was indeed a close call for me. Alas, our poor comrades! I fear many are injured. Listen! their shrieks are heartrending.”

“Yes, it is terrible!” cried Leslie, with a shudder. “Heaven’s curse seems to be set upon this night’s work—”

“Be careful!” interrupted Armand, who alone had caught the imprudent words. Drawing the lad aside, he whispered sharply in his ear: “Have you forgotten, my friend. I gave the signal.”

“What! you gave the signal?” gasped Leslie.

“Yes. Before you entered the chateau. And then I was separated from you.”

“I knew nothing of it, Armand. Gracious Heaven! what is to be done now? Is it too late to save me?”

“I trust not,” was the reply. “I will do my best for you. But hush!—this is not the place to talk.”

The two moved apart, and Leslie, sobered and anxious, awaited the next step in the perilous game he was playing for life and liberty. Among those who had gained the second floor of the chateau with the spy—nine in all—were the young American, Armand, Old Madcap and Emile Pons. The latter still held the blazing torch, which shone on the gloomy corridors to right and left, and revealed the sharp edge of the abyss left by the fallen staircase—an abyss that cut the little group off from their companions.

The scene down below baffled description. Amid the wreckage of balustrade and beams men were screaming with agony and struggling to get free, while from that point to the door the hall was jammed with a mass of yelling humanity. The flames caused by the explosion had long since been extinguished under foot, but a couple of torches waved over the compact surface of ferocious faces, red caps, open mouths, and skinny arms clutching weapons of every sort. Outside the infuriated mob surged about the walls of the chateau, making the night hideous with curses and clamor.

For perhaps a minute after the fall of the stairs Alphonse le Clerc gazed silently down from the isolated landing, and then, catching the attention of the people, he partly stilled the tumult by an imperative gesture.

“Hear me!” he shouted. “In the name of the republic I command you to be orderly. Remain where you are, and see that no damage is done to the chateau. There is plenty of work for you in helping these poor fellows who are injured. Leave the Iron Marquis to me—I promise you he shall not escape.”

Some effect was produced by these words, though the clamor at once broke out afresh.

“Now is our chance,” exclaimed the spy, turning to his companions. “It was a lucky thing, the falling of the stairs. The chateau is large, and it will be some time before the mob finds its way up here by the stairs at the rear. And the

marquis—”

“Have you seen him?” interrupted Armand.

“Yes, Citizen Lockroy,” was the reply. “I saw a figure vanish from the spot on which we are standing. It was undoubtedly the Marquis Saint Perroy. And you,” turning to the peasant, “declare you saw him from the outside at one of the windows?”

“Yes, I am sure of it,” Emile Pons answered.

“And can you find that window—that room—from within?”

“I can, citizen.”

“Then take us there at once. And all remember that the marquis must not be harmed—we must have him alive.”

“Death to the aristocrat!” yelled Old Madcap. “To the guillotine with him! Blood, blood! Ah, the heads are dropping—”

“Silence, you fool!” cried the spy. “Now, then, Citizen Pons,” he added. “Be quick.”

Turning to the left, the peasant led the way rapidly, twirling the torch in one hand to keep it ablaze. The others followed at his heels, and as they dashed from hall to hall, the clamor of the mob grew more distant and faint.

Bang! from the shadows straight ahead a pistol was fired. With the flash and the report, Emile Pons tossed up his arms, uttered a screech of pain, and fell heavily on his face. Rapid footsteps were heard retreating into the chateau’s maze of corridors. “Dead!” cried the spy, bending over the fallen peasant. “Dead, citizens. On, on! it is impossible for the marquis to escape.”

He seized the torch from the dead man’s limp hand, and himself led the way. There was a glimmer of light in front, and the footsteps were still audible.

CHAPTER XXXIII

For thirty yards, perhaps, the hunted and the hunters sped on, the latter gaining well. Then a door opened and closed, and for a brief second a dark figure was seen outlined against a square of yellow light. All was still when the excited little group reached the spot.

“The marquis is ours!” exclaimed the spy. “We have driven him to his lair.”

“It would appear so,” said Armand. “But he may cheat the knife—”

“Heaven forbid!” cried the spy.

As he spoke he tried the door, expecting to find it barred; but, to his surprise, it flew open, and, being unprepared for this, he stumbled over the threshold.

The accident saved his life. From within the dimly lighted room came a sudden flash, a loud report, and the whistle of a ball. The man just behind! the spy—a citizen-patriot wearing a red cap—was hit in the head. Without a sound, he reeled backward and fell dead.

Shouting hoarsely, the spy sprang to his feet. He dashed into the room, closely followed by Armand, Leslie, and the others. What they saw was this: Two candles, burning on a shelf, revealed a lofty apartment, with a polished floor, tapestries and paintings on the walls, great fire-dogs on the hearth, and to one side a heavily curtained bed. Leaning against a carved mantel, with his face to the door, stood an old man clad in a faded dressing-gown. He held a pistol in his right hand, and the muzzle was pointed directly at his heart.

“Stop him! Stop him!” the spy yelled madly. “He must not escape us!”

But it was too late for any to reach the spot in time, and that instant the Marquis St. Perroy—if it was indeed he—pulled the trigger of the weapon. A sharp click, however, was all that followed—the charge had missed fire. With a look of despair, the unfortunate man dropped the pistol, but by no other sign did he betray his disappointment. Folding his arms on his breast, he confronted his enemies with a cold and defiant stare.

“Surrender, in the name of the Republic!” cried the spy; and his voice was shrill with delight and triumph. “You are my prisoner, monsieur the marquis.”

“Heaven is against me,” the marquis replied. “I should have saved two shots, instead of one. But that may not be remedied now. I submit to your custody, vile dogs of the canaille. I have already had my revenge. I despise you, ruffians! I defy you to do your worst!”

These bold words infuriated Old Madcap and several others, and they began to clamor for the instant death of the prisoner, suggesting that he should be hung from one of his own windows. But Armand interfered in a way that speedily averted the danger.

“Fools!” he cried, “do you not see the game he is playing? He is taunting you with a purpose. He desires nothing better than to die at your hands. Does he deserve so merciful a fate—this terrible Iron Marquis? No! His head must fall on the Place de la Concorde. So put up your weapons, citizens, and be reasonable.”

“Yes, yes, that is true!” assented the malcontents. “You are right, Citizen Lockroy! The marquis must be brought to trial!”

The spy, meanwhile, had taken one of the candles in his hand, and his companions clustered around him as he held the light close to the prisoner. The latter, standing proudly erect, gazed with cold contempt at the knot of savage faces.

Clearly this was the hated marquis—the returned émigré. His fine features, noble and aristocratic beyond doubt, expressed power, relentless cruelty, and the most haughty pride. He was clean-shaven, and looked to be past seventy years of age. Wisps of snow-white hair lay thinly on the top of his head, and curled about his neck and ears. His cheeks were the color of ashes, except for a small red spot that burned in the center of each.

For nearly a minute the scrutiny lasted, and the spy seemed to be trying to satisfy himself as to the prisoner’s identity. Suddenly, while Leslie looked on, a startling conviction flashed into his heart. He pictured the marquis with an iron-gray wig, instead of the straggly white hair, with patches of rouge rubbed on his cheeks, and as he did so all doubt fled.

But before the young American could decide whether or not to proclaim his

discovery, a similar one was made by Alphonse le Clerc.

“Ha! is it possible?” he shouted, thrusting the candle closer. “Yes, I would stake my life on it! I am not mistaken. Monsieur the marquis bears an other name. He is the Englishman, George Barrington, who was acquitted by the tribunal weeks ago!”

“You are right!” Armand cried excitedly. “He is George Barrington. He lacks only his wig and the paint on his cheeks. What think you, my friend?” turning to Leslie. “Is not this the man who traveled with you to Paris?”

“Yes, it is the Englishman,” Leslie reluctantly admitted.

“And I know him by still another name,” Armand went on loudly; “He is the assassin, Lagarde, whom I have been seeking.”

“What! the murderer of your agent, Ducos?” cried the spy.

“Yes, the same. I knew, however, that he and Barrington were one. He deserves to die a score of deaths. Ah, what crimes he has committed against France!”

“He will surely perish by the guillotine,” said the spy. “But is he really the Iron Marquis? I wish to be assured on that point. Are there any here who knew him in the past?”

“Spare yourself further trouble, dog!” exclaimed the prisoner. “I am the Marquis Saint Perroy. I am also George Barrington and Lagarde. As I said before, I defy you. Bring me to trial and to the guillotine. It is better to be dead than alive in these days when France is ruled by the offspring of the gutters!”

He laughed sneeringly.

The spy laughed also, and it was not a pleasant sound to hear.

“If you are the Marquis Saint Perroy, I am more than satisfied,” he said.

He darted in turn at Armand and Leslie a look full of strange meaning, of ill-concealed elation and impatience. Then he strode to the door and listened for a moment to the clamor that came faint and muffled from the lower parts of the chateau.

“So far all is well,” he declared. “The people are still where we left them, and there is no danger that they will find their way to this apartment in a hurry. But they must not see the marquis.”

“How otherwise are we to take him from the house?” asked Armand.

“I will consider that later,” was the reply. “For the present, we are quite safe here.” As he spoke he shut the door softly and secured it by two bolts. “To pass the interval of waiting,” he added, with a grim smile, “I will perform a duty that has been too long delayed in the interests of justice. Are you aware, Citizen Lockroy—”

The spy was not permitted to finish the sentence. At that instant, while all were off their guard, an unlooked-for thing happened. Old Madcap, seized by a sudden fit of frenzy, uttered a fearful yell of rage. He drew a glittering dagger from his bosom, pushed between Leslie and Armand, and threw himself upon the marquis.

Instantly all was confusion and excitement, and the spy’s strange words were forgotten. A rush was made, and strong arms tore the madman from his intended victim—nay, his victim, in very truth, for the keen dagger had struck home, and the Marquis St. Perroy’s face was drawn with agony. He slipped helplessly against the mantel, and then to the floor, the weapon visibly buried to the hilt in his right breast.

“He dies, he dies!” shrieked Old Madcap, struggling to free himself from those who held him. “Citizens, we are avenged—”

“Fool, what have you done?” cried the spy. “What have you done?”

In a passion, he pulled a pistol from his waist and struck out heavily with the butt. The blow landed on Old Madcap’s head, stunning him at once. He sank down in a limp and unconscious heap, and a little stream of blood trickled over the polished floor.

The spy showed no compunction for the harsh deed.

“The marquis!” he cried anxiously. “See to him at once, citizens! He must not be allowed to die—he must not cheat justice and the guillotine!”

The curtains and coverings of the bed were jerked aside, and the stabbed man was picked up and laid on the snowy sheets. His eyes were closed, his face was like marble, and a red spot was spreading around the hilt of the dagger.

“Is he dead?” demanded the spy. “Is he dead?”

“No, he still breathes,” replied Armand, making a hasty examination; “but it is certainly a mortal wound.”

“Save him, Citizen Lockroy—don’t let him die. Pull the dagger out!”

“The moment that is done he will bleed to death,” replied Armand.

“Then don’t touch him—let him alone. Ah! if we had a surgeon here!”

“A surgeon would be useless,” said Armand. “Believe me, Citizen le Clerc, there is nothing to be done. The dagger is driven deep between his ribs.”

The spy made a gesture of despair.

“At least keep him alive for a time—bring him to his senses,” he cried. “Has any person got a drop of liquor?”

At once a bloated-faced soldier who was with the party produced a dirty bottle from his garments. “Here, citizen,” he said. “It is good old brandy.” With nervous haste, the spy forced a swallow of the fiery liquid between the lips of the marquis. The effect was marvelous, and showed what a strong vitality the old aristocrat possessed. His eyes opened and a faint flush came to his cheeks. When a pillow was pushed under his head he looked around him with perfect understanding and intelligence.

“Heaven is merciful,” he said huskily, and with the same haughty smile of scorn. “Dogs, you are robbed of your vengeance. The last of the Saint Perroys will not die by the guillotine.”

A spasm of pain checked him for an instant. He closed his eyes, and when they opened they were fixed on a portrait that hung above the foot of the bed—a life-size picture in oils representing a lad of about nineteen, dressed in the style affected by the French nobility of twenty or more years before. From this his glance wandered to Leslie, who was standing by the end of the bed.

“Listen, monsieur the marquis,” the spy said earnestly. “I have something of importance for your ear.”

The dying man paid no heed. He looked again at the portrait, then once more at Leslie. His cheeks flushed to a deeper red, and in his eyes shone a strange, excited gleam.

“We have met before,” he said hoarsely to the young American. “Ah, I remember now—it was you who traveled in my coach to Paris, who asked me questions that I have puzzled over from that day to this. But then I did not see the likeness—the likeness to—to him.” He feebly pointed one hand at the portrait. “Why are you so like him?” he added. “Why were you seeking information concerning Andre Bellermont and Jacques Ferry?”

“The truth is coming out of its own accord,” muttered the spy, in an undertone. “I will wait.”

“Speak!” the marquis continued. “Answer me. Who are you? What is your name?”

But Leslie was silent, seeming to have lost the power of speech. His face was a study of conflicting emotions. There was a lump in his throat, a chill at his heart, and he was ready to drop from dizziness. What did it mean? Had he rightly grasped the truth—the awful truth—or was it all a mistake? He looked with dread at the marquis, and with a greater dread at the closed and barred door. And Alphonse le Clerc and Armand stared hard at the lad, the one with mocking triumph, and the other with sudden aversion and suspicion.

“In the name of Heaven, answer me,” implored the marquis. “I have but a few moments to live. Why are you the image of him on the wall?”

“Do you not hear, Citizen Tryon?” exclaimed the spy. “Why are you dumb?”

Leslie pressed both hands to his forehead.

“I—I don’t understand,” he stammered.

“Shall I explain all? Shall I tell you the truth?”

“Yes,” the lad cried; and there was a savage ring of defiance in his voice.

CHAPTER XXXIV

For a few seconds the silence was intense, so deeply were all present absorbed in this thrilling culmination of the night's adventures. The spy purposely waited, shifting his ugly eyes alternately from the marquis to Leslie, and gloating over the suspense of his two victims. Then, when he was about to speak, a weird and tragic incident checked the words on his lip.

With a deep groan, Old Madcap struggled to his knees and then to his feet. Wiping the clotted blood from his brow and cheeks, he tottered forward. But what amazing change had come over him? The vacant, idiotic expression his face was wont to wear had now yielded to a look of new-born intelligence, not unmixed with bewilderment and surprise. He was like one wakened from a long slumber, and at a loss to realize his surroundings.

"Where am I?" he cried shrilly. "Who brought me here? I know this room—the furniture—I know him yonder on the bed. He is the Marquis Saint Perroy, who sent me to the Bastille. I should be there yet, in that lonely cell. Merciful Heaven! am I dreaming, or am I really free at last?"

"You are free, my friend," exclaimed the spy. "Try to think—try to recall the past." In a lower tone he added to his companions: "This is a wonderful thing, citizens. The blow on the head has restored his lost intellect. He is as sane now as any of us. Hush! Wait patiently, and, unless I am much mistaken, you will hear something of interest."

Old Madcap put his hands to his forehead.

"It is coming back," he cried, "but it is still very dim--"

"I will help you," interrupted the spy, placing a supporting arm about the old man. "You remember the fall of the Bastille, in Eighty-nine? You were found! there, buried in a dark cell. And your mind was gone. You were ignorant of your name. You could reveal nothing about yourself. Since that time--"

"Ah, I remember!" shouted Old Madcap. "It is coming bit by bit. I was released from the Bastille, and since then I have lived here among you, citizens. I recall the Revolution, the guillotine, the trials of the suspected. And then the attack on

the Chateau d'Or, where I am now! When did this happen?"

"Tonight," the spy answered eagerly. "You have reached the present, my friend. You know yonder man on the bed?"

"Yes, he is the Marquis Saint Perroy. I stabbed him, and I glory in the deed. None had a better right to slay the monster."

"Ah! and who are you?" demanded the spy. "If you remember so much, you can surely tell your name."

For an instant Old Madcap was silent. Then he replied very slowly: "I am Andre Bellermont."

Leslie gave a start and his face turned very pale. The dying marquis was no less agitated.

"After all these years!" he whispered huskily. "Andre Bellermont!"

"Andre Bellermont!" echoed Armand, with a keen glance at Leslie.

"Yes, the same," declared the spy. "I suspected as much when he came to his senses and recognized the room."

"And what is he to—to the marquis?" Armand asked.

"Citizen Bellermont," said the spy, "will you answer that question?"

Old Madcap's face grew furrowed with passion, and he pointed a lean arm at the bed.

"Yes, I will answer," he said hoarsely. "I was the servant of the marquis more than twenty years ago, and though I hated him as he deserved, I was attached to his son Maxime. The marquis quarreled with his son, and disowned him. Maxime, who was in the right, left France and went to America. I alone knew what had become of him, and for a time we corresponded. Maxime's letters were sent to me at the address of a friend, a certain Jacques Ferry, who kept the Flambeau Rouge in the Quartier Saint Antoine."

He paused to gain breath. Armand and the spy looked at Leslie, whose haggard

face was now a study of horror and expectation.

“The marquis hated his son most bitterly, and had sworn never to forgive him,” continued Andre Bellermont. “He discovered that I was in correspondence with Maxime, and he punished me by means of the arbitrary power that the aristocrats had in those days. A letter de cachet sent me to the Bastille, and in that frightful palace I was buried alive for years, until my reason gave way. Such is my bitter story, citizens.”

An angry murmur arose, and ferocious glances were cast at the marquis.

“You have suffered, Citizen Bellermont,” said the spy; “but your hour of vengeance has come. Do you recall the name by which Maxime Saint Perroy was known in America?”

“Yes. It was Philip Courcel.”

“Good! And now look at that portrait on the wall.”

“I see it, citizen. It represents Maxime Saint Perroy at the age of eighteen.”

“Very well! Turn your eyes on that person yonder at the foot of the bed.”

“He has the features and eyes of Maxime,” cried Andre Bellermont, when he had stared hard at Leslie for a few seconds. “Yes, yes, he is the image of him! How marvelous! And yet he cannot be—”

“He is the grandson of the Marquis Saint Perroy!” interrupted the spy, in a ringing voice. “The son of Maxime Saint Perroy! Philip Courcel married the sister of a merchant of New York.”

A gasping cry fell from Leslie’s lips. He knew that he was doomed to the guillotine, and yet, in his terror, he tried to make a dash for the door. But two men seized him from behind, and the spy whipping out a pair of irons, slipped them deftly on the lad’s wrists.

“In the name of the Republic, Citizen Tryon,” he exclaimed.

Leslie submitted. He looked at Armand, but read in his friend’s face only aversion and scorn.

Andre Bellermont stepped toward the lad.

“Is it possible?” he cried. “Is this indeed the son of Maxime Saint Perroy?”

“Yes, it is clearly proved,” said the spy.

“But he is young, and he has done no wrong. Spare him for the sake of his father, whom I loved in the past—”

“What! spare the grandson of the Iron Marquis?” the spy cried, in a passion. “You forget yourself, citizen.”

For an instant a look of agony distorted Andre Bellermont’s face, but it quickly gave way to a hard and stern expression.

“Yes, you are right,” he said. “There can be no mercy for those who are of the blood of the Saint Perroys. Long live the Republic!”

A groan was heard from the bed. The marquis, whose eyes were growing glassy, was striving to lift himself on his shoulders.

“Is this true?” he gasped. “Is that indeed my grandson?”

“It is true,” replied the spy, when he had slightly revived the dying man by another drink of brandy.

“There is little to tell beyond what you have already heard. Your sins have come home to you, monsieur the marquis. Yonder is Andre Bellermont, whom you sent to the Bastille for befriending your son. And this lad is your grandson, the child of Maxime and his wife.”

“Why did he come to Paris?” asked the marquis.

“To trace his father’s people,” was the reply.

“Heaven be merciful to me!” groaned the marquis. “Heaven forgive me for my harshness to my son! And this poor lad, my grandson— Ah, if I had only stayed in England!”

“Why did you not do so, monsieur the marquis?” the spy asked, in a mocking

tone.

“There were papers and money that I wanted—that I had left behind when I fled,” was the faint answer. “And I longed to see Paris and France again, after months of exile. And it is I who, unconsciously, have denounced my grandson.”

“I should have discovered his identity in any event,” declared the spy.

“And what will you do with him?” whispered the marquis. “Have mercy! He has done the Republic no wrong.”

“He is the last of the Saint Perroys!” cried the spy. “There can be no worse crime than to be tainted with the blood of your hated race. On him the people will take their vengeance. He will die by the guillotine!”

A look of agony and despair burned in the eyes of the marquis. He lifted himself on one elbow and tried to speak. But a torrent of blood spouted suddenly from his mouth and he fell back dead.

“So perish all aristocrats!” exclaimed the spy, drawing the bed-curtains about the body.

CHAPTER XXXV

The light of dawn was streaking the sky when the Marquis St. Perroy breathed his last. Leslie, placed under guard in a corner of the room, watched the yellow glow of the candles fade before the brilliance of the new-born day. He paid no heed to the anxious discussions of the spy and his companions. The final act of the night's tragic drama seemed for the time being to have dulled his senses, to have given him a numbing shock. He realized but vaguely that the mystery he had come to Paris to unravel was a mystery no longer; that the dead aristocrat was his own grandfather; that Old Madcap was Andre Bellermont. One thing he understood clearly: He knew that he was fast in the net spread by the spy, and that no power could save him from the guillotine.

The deliberations between Alphonse le Clerc and his companions concerned the safe conduct to Paris of their young prisoner—this lad who was the last of the hated race of the St. Perroys, and would on that account be an object of fury to the people should his identity become known. The problem, however, was solved in an unexpected manner, of which only brief mention need be made.

It seems that certain high officials of the revolutionary committee, learning at an early hour of the morning what had taken place, sent a strong force of soldiers to seize and guard the Marquis St. Perroy in case the rumor of his return should be true. They reached the Chateau d'Or just at the time when the mob, after doing considerable damage below, had found their way to the upper floor of the house.

From the window of the room in which they had locked themselves, the little party saw the arrival, and they were soon in communication with the officer commanding the troops. That individual, accepting the advice of Armand and the spy, had his men clear the chateau at the point of the bayonet. Then, after proclaiming the death of the marquis, he ordered the crowd to disperse. There was some delay, and much grumbling, but in the end the greater part of the rabble set off on their return to Paris.

The soldiers took possession of the chateau, where they found plenty to do. With the aid of the peasants who had flocked to the scene from the surrounding country, the dead and wounded victims were extricated from the debris of the explosion and the fallen staircase, and the ancestral halls and rooms of the St Perroys were utilized for a hospital. Meanwhile, the young prisoner—whose

identity was known to but few—was started by a roundabout way toward Paris, in the custody of the spy and his companions, and escorted by a score of the national troops. With the party went also the body of the marquis, covered with blankets, and borne in a rustic cart.

It was close to noon when they entered the city through one of the barriers, and by this time Leslie was in a mood to realize clearly all that had happened, and to accept, at least with outward resignation and fortitude, the fate from which there was no possible chance of escape. He was faint and weary, but his brain was too active for drowsiness, though he had not slept for nearly twenty-four hours.

The irons had prudently been removed from his wrists, and as he marched steadily between his captors there was nothing to indicate that he was a prisoner. A drizzling rain was falling and freezing on the cobblestones, and it was such a wretched day that the grim procession gained little attention or following. Moreover, the citizens were mostly at the two great centers of attraction—the Court of the Tribunal and the Place de la Concorde.

On one side of the lad walked the spy, his lantern-jawed face stamped with a ferocious smile of triumph. Armand was on the other side, and ever since leaving the chateau he had studiously avoided speaking to Leslie or meeting his eye. The cart, with its ghastly, unshapen burden, was in front. Mounted on the seat with the soldier who was driving was Andre Bellermont, his long white hair dripping with rain. The ex-prisoner of the Bastille, known so long as Old Madcap, was an altered man in more ways than one. In this the hour of his revenge he was grave and silent, buried in deep thought.

The cart turned off presently into a side street, and a little later the red-capped soldiers melted away, the Seine appeared wrapped in rain and fog, and with a start Leslie saw before him the grim gates of the Conciergerie. They opened and closed, and the spy went forward a few steps to speak with the jailer.

Leslie turned abruptly to Armand, looking him full in the eye.

“I supposed I was going to the prison of La Force,” he said hoarsely.

“No, to the Conciergerie,” was the stolid reply.

“And that means a speedy trial?”

“Yes, Citizen Tryon.”

“How soon?”

“Possibly tomorrow; perhaps the day after.”

“And then the guillotine? Is it not so?”

“Yes, assuredly. You will be condemned.”

Leslie’s face turned paler.

“Is there no hope?” he asked. “Can you do nothing for me?”

“Nothing, citizen.”

“Ah, and you would not if you could. What have I done to lose your friendship and regard?”

“Citizen Tryon, you are an aristocrat of the hated family of the Saint Perroys,” Armand answered coldly. “Besides that fact, what we have been in the past is nothing—it is forgotten.”

“Forgotten? Can you so easily forget that night by the Seine?”

Armand’s face softened a little, and a blush of shame tinged his cheeks. He was on the point of replying, but before he could do so the spy returned and the opportunity was lost. A few moments later Leslie was in solitary confinement within one of the strongest cells of the Conciergerie.

That afternoon the body of the Marquis St. Perroy publicly exhibited to the savage populace of Paris, before night it was known from end to end of the city that a grandson of the hated aristocrat was a prisoner awaiting trial.

CHAPTER XXXVI

Again the scene is the terrible Court of the Tribunal, and the time is the next day but one following the death of the Marquis St. Perroy and the rearrest of Leslie Tryon. At the hour of ten in the morning the very elements of nature seemed to be arrayed against the preparations for the intended vengeance of the people. It was bitterly cold, and the sky was overcast with thick, lowlying clouds, that wrapped Paris in a gloom almost as deep and cheerless as twilight. Fine snow was falling, whirled this way and that by a wind whose steady roar suggested the roll of the tumbrils that still went daily with the condemned to the Place de la Concorde.

Within the court humanity was packed densely, row upon row. Only the faintest humming of voices could be heard, and the silence and the unusual crowd showed the thrilling degree of expectation that prevailed. The accused had not yet appeared, but he was due at any moment. It was well known that the name of the grandson of the Marquis St. Perroy was the first on the trial-list, and it was understood with no less certainty that his conviction was a settled thing. The people had come to listen to the evidence in a case that was said to be full of dramatic incidents, to enjoy the sight of this scion of a hated family on trial for his life before the bar of the tribunal, to applaud and cheer when the death-sentence should be pronounced. All eyes watched alternately the rear door and the places where sat the judicial servants of the Republic, themselves seemingly as expectant as any present.

At last, when the prisoner suddenly appeared, there was a buzz and a stir. Murderous-looking eyes gleamed, hands were clapped, and the tumult swelled louder and louder. Scores of voices execrated the name of St. Perroy. Three times the president rang his bell, and by degrees the storm died away to low mutterings.

Leslie removed his hat and took the seat that was indicated to him. Except for the pallor of his face, he looked in good health and spirits, so perfect was his self-control. He was fortified by the courage born of hopelessness. He had come prepared for the farce on justice, resolved to betray to his enemies no agitation or fear. The trial, he knew, was merely the stepping-stone to-day to the guillotine tomorrow. He wore clean linen and a new suit of black, provided by the authorities in mock deference to his newly acquired rank and title—for by the

laws of the fallen monarchy he was the Marquis St. Perroy.

There were a few moments of delay, during which the prisoner looked calmly and fearlessly about him. His eyes rested by turn on the multitude of spectators, on the president and his four fellow judges, on the hard and cruel face of the public prosecutor, on the menacing countenances of the jury, on the group of waiting witnesses; among the latter were Armand, the spy, and Andre Bellermont.

There was a hush as the proceedings began. At the word of command, Leslie stood up.

“The accused, called Citizen Tryon, otherwise Paul, Marquis Saint Perroy,” said the public prosecutor, in a loud voice. “Tried once before, but acquitted by the tribunal. Rearrested and reaccused two days ago, denounced as an enemy of the Republic, an aristocrat, as a member of a family proscribed for their infamous crimes against the people of France. Therefore, he can claim no rights or privileges of law.”

“Who denounces the accused?” the president asked.

Three men rose—Armand, the spy, and at Bellermont. The latter leaned heavily on a stick, and seemed to have become much more aged and feeble in the past forty-eight hours.

“Prisoner, your name?” said the president.

“Leslie Tryon.”

“Your rightful name?”

“My adopted name—given to me by my uncle.”

“When and where were you born?”

“In the year Seventeen hundred and seventy-five, in the city of Philadelphia,” Leslie answered.

“Who were your parents?”

“My mother’s name was Elizabeth Tryon, and she was the daughter of a merchant of New York. My father was a Frenchman, and he came to America in Seventeen hundred and seventy-one.”

“When did he die, citizen ?”

“In the year Seventeen hundred and seventy-eight,” Leslie replied. “He was killed at the battle of Monmouth, while fighting for the liberty of the American colonies. My mother died of grief a few days later.”

At this some in the audience began to cheer, but the temper of the people was such that the approving demonstration was quickly smothered in hoots and hisses.

“A Saint Perroy! A Saint Perroy!” echoed savagely through the room.

The president rang his bell and restored order.

“What happened after the death of your parents?” he continued, to the accused.

“I was adopted by my uncle, Digby Tryon,” Leslie answered. “He gave me the name I have borne ever since, instead of that of Paul Courcel.”

“Were you the only child of your parents?”

Leslie shook his head.

“I had a brother Henri, two years older than myself, but—”

The rest of the sentence was drowned in a burst of savage cries. The audience had readily understood the significance of the words, and they thus testified to their anger at the possibility of a member of the detested race of the St. Perroys being alive and at liberty. It was a long time before the disorder could be quelled.

“Citizen, does your brother Henri still live?” was the president’s next question.

“There is every reason to believe that he is dead,” Leslie replied.

“And why so?”

“For this reason: When my mother heard that my father was mortally wounded

at the battle of Monmouth, she started from Philadelphia to see him, taking my brother and myself with her. But one night, in a lonely part of the Jerseys, Henri strayed away. He was never found, though a search was kept up for weeks, and beyond a doubt he perished in some swamp or river.”

The audience, convinced that their fears were groundless, gave vent to brief applause.

“To return to your father, citizen,” resumed the president, “when did you first suspect that Philip Courcel was not his real name?”

“Less than a year ago.”

“And is it true that you came to Paris to trace your father’s family?”

“It is.”

“You admit that?”

“Yes,” Leslie answered firmly.

Here the examination terminated. The public prosecutor, stepping forward, bade the accused be seated. Turning to the jury, he briefly outlined what he was about to prove, and then the trial went rapidly on to its predestined end.

The court and the people listened to the witnesses, who said what they had to say with directness and simplicity. Alphonse le Clerc repeated the story told him by the prisoner, dealing with the motive for the latter’s journey to Paris. Others who had heard the conversation at the barrier corroborated the same. Then followed the spy’s account of his arduous task, the discovery of Jacques Ferry, and the death of the Marquis St. Perroy. Armand testified stolidly, and the last witness was Andre Bellermont. In a broken voice, with his eyes fixed on the floor, the old man forged the last links in the chain of proof.

He had to be helped to a seat when he had finished, and then one mighty roar filled the room. Hundreds of voices clamored for the vengeance of the law. The evidence was more than sufficient. Beyond doubt, the accused was an aristocrat, a foe to the Republic, and the last Marquis St. Perroy. Death was the only punishment to fit the crime.

And death it was to be, of course. That could be read in the determined faces of the jury and the judges, in the complacent smiles of the public prosecutor and the spy. The president, after ringing his bell repeatedly, managed to silence the roar of the populace. But, as he was about to speak, a most unwarranted and daring interruption checked him and brought a gleam of anger to his eyes.

A man who for several minutes past had been wedging his way forward through the crowd, stepped suddenly into the open space before the bar. He was about forty years of age, intelligent-looking, and wearing high boots and a traveling-cloak with a cape. His face was greatly excited, and in one hand he waved a folded document.

“Pardon, citizen-president,” he cried hoarsely, “but I demand to be heard!”

“It is impossible!” thundered the president. “Retire! Go! Have you no respect for the tribunal?”

“But I must be heard!” He took a step nearer. “It concerns this case—the case of the accused Marquis Saint Perroy.”

The president hesitated.

“You shall prove the assertion,” he said. “Proceed!”

“I desire to see Citizen Lockroy,” the man exclaimed.

“I am here, Doctor Vansant,” Armand replied, coming forward. “What is it?”

“Much,” was the cold answer. “To begin with, your father died at midnight—”

“My father dead!” cried Armand, in a tone of anguish.

“Yes, Lieutenant Lockroy is dead. I attended his last minutes.”

Armand’s eyes filled with tears, and he was unable to speak. He sank down on a bench, and covered his face with his hands.

“You have lied to me,” the president cried. “What has this statement to do with the case of the accused?”

“I am coming to that,” the man replied. “May I tell my story properly?”

“Yes, but be quick.”

The president, the judges, and the jury craned their necks forward. The audience listened with the utmost attention, and Leslie wondered what was about to come. The utmost surprise could be read on the face of the spy.

“I am Doctor Vansant, of Versailles,” the man commenced, in a loud tone. “For some years I have known Lieutenant Lockroy, of the same town. He is, or was believed to be, the father of Citizen Armand Lockroy yonder, and he has been confined to his bed ever since he was crushed at the taking of the Bastille—”

“I see no connection with the case,” the president Sharply interrupted.

“But I must tell this first,” replied the doctor.

“However, I will hasten. To be brief, then, Lieutenant Lockroy was taken suddenly ill of the heart last evening and sent for me. I could do nothing for him, and he died within an hour. But first he told me where to find a certain paper, and directed me to read it myself, and then to convey it with my own hands to his son Armand, in Paris. I did so, and without loss of time I mounted my horse and rode to the city. On arrival I learned where Citizen Lockroy was to be found, and I came straight here. Seeing that a trial had begun, I seated myself in the rear of the room, to wait until it was finished. But I listened attentively, sir, and I was soon made aware of the terrible nature of the document that Lieutenant Lockroy put into my hands—of the astounding connection it establishes between the accused and one of his accusers. Of all this Lieutenant Lockroy was perfectly ignorant, since the revelation of the secret lay in certain new evidence that was given this morning—““And what is this document?” demanded the president. “Explain yourself.”

“I am about to do so,” replied Doctor Vansant. “I have long numbered Lieutenant Lockroy and his son as my friends, but my duty to the republic comes before all human ties. Therefore, I take this terrible step. I denounce Citizen Armand Lockroy, and demand his immediate trial with the accused at the bar.”

“On what grounds?” demanded the president.

“Yes, on what grounds?” Armand echoed fiercely, his face pale as ashes.

“This explains all,” replied Doctor Vansant, handing the document to the president. “Let it be read aloud as evidence.”

There was deep silence as the president opened the paper and glanced at the contents, and his quick change of countenance whetted still more the appetites of the people. He rang his bell twice, and a pin could have been heard to drop when he began to read aloud as follows:

“MY DEAR ARMAND: The conviction that my days are numbered, and that the messenger of death will come soon and unawares, urges me to write this letter, or confession, to be found and read by you when I am no more. Perhaps it were better to keep silence, but having put pen to paper I will go on with the task. How will the secret affect you, I ask myself? Will you blame me for a crime committed in the name of affection, or will you remember only that I loved you as a true father should?

“But to proceed. I must write briefly, for the forming of each word is a severe labor. You never knew that in the year Seventeen hundred and seventy-eight I was serving, as were a number of other French officers, in the American army. During the week following the battle of Monmouth, while carrying despatches to the town of Trenton, I found a child about five years of age in a lonely part of the Jerseys, far from any human habitation. You were that child, Armand, and you were nearly dead from starvation and exposure. I had lost my own child and my wife within a year, and you were so much like my dead boy that my heart went out to you then and there.

“Selfishly giving no thought to your parentage, I took you with me to Trenton, and secretly nursed you back to health. It was a shock to me to learn shortly afterward, from the most indisputable evidence, that you were the son of a fellow countryman, Philip Courcel by name, who had for years been settled in America, and had married there. He was killed on Monmouth field, and his wife, while journeying to seek him with her two boys, lost you along the way at night. Your mother died of grief for her double loss, and I learned from the papers—where I got all my information—that the only relative you and your younger brother had was a merchant of New York. This fact I used as an argument with myself for concealing your existence, and I really believed that in adopting you as my own son I was acting in your best interests.

“At all events, I was tempted and yielded. I speedily returned to France, taking

you with me, and from there until the present time I have cared for you as though you were my own flesh and blood. Your real name is Henri Courcel, and if you wish to assume it in future, do so. Try to pardon my deceit. Put yourself in my place, and perhaps you will not blame me. At another time, when I am stronger, I will write more.

“Lovingly, your adopted father,

“LUCIEN LOCKROY.”

CHAPTER XXXVII

The silence that had prevailed during the reading of the letter lasted a few seconds after the concluding words were pronounced by the president. Then the meaning of what they had just heard dawned upon the people—they had been listening attentively—and they gave vent simultaneously to their excited feelings. Assuredly, such an uproar had never vibrated against those four walls, silent witnesses of many a stirring scene in the past! The mighty clamor, poured from hundreds of throats, seemed to shake the building to its foundations.

In vain the officials of the court tried to restore order; in vain the president clanged his bell. When the tumult was finally stilled it was by the volition of the audience themselves, who were eager and expectant to see the final act of the drama played to its end.

All eyes were turned on the prisoner or on Citizen Lockroy. The latter had not stirred since the commencement of the letter was read aloud. Now he was terribly agitated, and his face was deathly pale. He swayed on his feet, and he would have fallen to the floor had not the spy and Doctor Vansant caught and supported him. Leslie was staring, as though dazed, at the fatal document which the president still held in his hand.

With a savage imprecation, Armand shook off the detaining grasp of the two men. They suffered him to go, and a few steps brought him face to face with Leslie.

“Are these things true?” he cried hoarsely, “or am I going mad? You have heard the reading of that letter?”

“Yes,” Leslie answered, “I heard it.”

“And do you understand it? Do you know what it means? So Lieutenant Lockroy was not my father! He found me in the woods of America! I am the son of Philip Courcel—the grandson of the Marquis Saint Perroy, who was slain in the chateau! And my real name is Henri Courcel. We are brothers.”

“Yes, brothers,” exclaimed Leslie. “Thank God that the truth has been revealed. And yet there is a gulf between us.”

“Impossible! There can be no gulf!” cried Armand. “You saved my life—we are of the same blood. Ah, forgive my base ingratitude, Brother Paul!”

He threw his arms around Leslie and kissed him twice on the cheek.

“I forgive you,” Leslie replied, his voice showing how deeply he was moved. “I cannot, blame you. But we must part now—>”

“Stop! Let me think,” Armand interrupted fiercely. “This is terrible—terrible! Why did Heaven choose such a time to reveal the truth? Why did I not know of it before? Alas, it is too late now. I am the elder brother, and therefore I am the Marquis Saint Perroy. I am doomed! It is useless to expect mercy.”

“Surely they will not condemn you?” cried Leslie.

“You will see. There is no hope. At least, we will die together.”

“God forbid!” exclaimed Leslie. “For me there is indeed no hope, but with you it is different. Robespierre is your friend; the people know you to be a good patriot and republican.”

“I am the Marquis Saint Perroy,” Armand said doggedly. “Beside that fact all things else—”

It was no longer possible to be heard, the people, made impatient and exasperated by the inaction that prevailed while the two lads were conversing, broke into fresh clamor.

“Try the accused!” they howled furiously. “Judge him at once! Try the Marquis Saint Perroy with his brother! To the guillotine with the enemies of the Republic! Off with their heads!”

The jury looked expectantly at the objects of the people’s vengeance. The public prosecutor exchanged significant glances with the president, and the latter rang his bell with energy.

“Clang! clang! The roar of voices was as loud as ever.

Clang! clang! clang! The tumult subsided a little It grew fainter and fainter, dying into silence. The president cleared his throat. Alphonse le Clerc scanned

Armand and Leslie with savage elation. In secret he had always hated his rival, Armand, and he was eager to see both lads condemned.

At that moment another incident interrupted the proceedings of the court. With a feeble, staggering gait, Andre Bellermont came forward. A vivid red patch burned on each of the old man's sunken cheeks, and horror shone from his eyes.

"Citizen-president," he cried, in a shrill voice, "Mercy—mercy for both the accused. I ask it in the name of Liberty, of Justice! They have done no wrong! They are not enemies of the Republic! And their father was free from the crimes that stained his race in those days. I loved and respected Maxime Courcel, and for his sake I love his sons."

"Silence, Citizen Bellermont," exclaimed the president, "lest you yourself be denounced. Are you still mad, that you ask mercy for those in whose veins flows the blood of the Saint Perroys?"

"But they deserve only good at the hands of the Republic," urged Andre Bellermont.

"The verdict of the people must decide that," the president answered. "This has lasted too long, citizen. Go!"

"They are lost—lost!" cried the old man.

He stretched out his arms, as though to make a further appeal. Then a change came swiftly over his face, and a sharp groan was stifled on his lips. He clutched at his heart, swayed, and fell heavily to the floor. He lay there without sound or motion.

A scene of confusion followed. Leslie and Armand, who were horrified and deeply moved by what had happened, were only prevented from rushing to the spot by the interference of the court guards. Amid deafening clamor from the audience, the public prosecutor and the spy lifted up the stricken man; Doctor Vansant, joining them, made a hasty examination.

"He is stone-dead," he announced to the president and the jury. "Strong emotion killed him."

The news spread, and after it had passed from mouth to mouth with various

comments, the people again became silent and expectant. The body of Andre Bellermont was removed, and without further delay the court proceeded to the step that was made necessary and inevitable by Lieutenant Lockroy's confession.

Swiftly and briefly the double trial ran its course.

"Henri Courcel, Marquis Saint Perroy, formerly called Armand Lockroy," announced the public prosecutor, "accused with his brother, Paul Courcel, of being an hereditary enemy of the Republic. Denounced by his adopted father, now deceased, and by Doctor Vansant, of Versailles."

Lieutenant Lockroy's letter was reread. The public prosecutor and Alphonse le Clerc made short speeches, and the president wound up with a few words. The prisoners, when granted permission to speak, remained silent. Then the case was submitted to the jury, and each man, in a loud voice, gave the same answer.

The verdict was guilty. Death within twenty-four hours was the sentence. The satisfaction of the people found vent in a mighty roar, which swelled louder and louder as Armand and Leslie, after a fervent clasp of hands, were rudely torn apart and hurried from the room. Ten minutes later they were locked in separate cells of the Conciergerie.

The clocks had just finished striking the hour of twelve. It was midnight in Paris—a calm, cold night, with thin patches of snow strewn here and there on the frozen ground. Leslie, after pacing the floor for hours, had fallen asleep on his wretched bed. But not to rest in peace, for he was disturbed by hideous dreams—by ghastly visions of the morrow's ride in the tumbril, of the yelling crowd, of the guillotine towering from the Place de la Concorde, of the heavy knife whistling down its sockets.

Suddenly he awoke with a start and sat up. He was trembling in every limb, bathed in perspiration. As he rubbed his eyes he saw vaguely that his cell door was open, and that a man, muffled in a cloak, stood before him, holding a lantern from which but a feeble ray of light escaped. Was this, too, a dream, or was it a reality? And what did it mean?

"Come, citizen," spoke a low voice. "Be quick! There is no time to lose. Attire yourself in these."

Leslie rose and obeyed the command. He pulled a pair of boots over his feet, and

wrapped himself in a long cloak with a high collar; on his head he put a cocked hat decorated with the tri-color.

“What are you going to do with me?” he asked hoarsely. “Are you taking me to execution?”

He believed that such was the case, strange as so unusual a proceeding seemed.

“No, it is not that,” was the reply. “Have courage! Be assured no harm is meant! Are you ready? Then come. Don’t speak, and follow me as quietly as possible.”

They left the cell, and the man closed and locked the door. Flashing the lantern in front of him, he led the way through the great prison, which at this hour was for the most part dark and silent. Leslie followed passively, his heart torn by conflicting emotions of fear and hope—followed from corridor to corridor, through door after door, down various flights of stone steps.

Then came a courtyard, more doors and corridors beyond, and finally an exit into a lonely and narrow little street that nestled under the shadow of the Conciergerie. The air was keen and frosty, and from behind thin clouds the moon shone dimly on a closed carriage, attached to four horses, that was drawn up by the curb. The door was open, and a man wrapped in a heavy black cloak was talking in low tones to some person within.

The conversation ceased at once, and with a faintly audible “Farewell,” the man in the black cloak retreated to the deep shadow of the prison wall. Leslie’s guide led him to the vehicle and helped him to enter. The door closed with a click, the postilions called softly to the horses, and the carriage rolled away into the night.

For a moment the lad was too dazed to speak, or to realize that in some miraculous and inexplicable manner the shadow of death had been lifted. Then, as his eyes grew accustomed to the gloom, he made out a shapeless figure sitting on the opposite seat.

“Who is it?” he asked. “Tell me, I beg of you—”

“Hush! As you value your life!” was the whispered reply.

“Armand!” Leslie cried sharply. “Is it indeed you?”

“Yes, it is I—your brother.”

“Thank God! And we are saved?”

“We are saved, I trust. But hush! Don’t utter a word—yet.”

There was silence within—joy, gratitude, thrilling hope. The closed carriage rolled on through the lonely, wintry streets of Paris, and after a journey that seemed painfully long, but was really very short, it stopped at the barrier. The custodians appeared at length, sleepy and ill-humored. They examined by lantern-light the paper that one of the postilions presented, and without hesitation opened the gates. The vehicle rumbled through, and the trotting steeds bore it swiftly on toward the open country—toward life, and hope, and safety.

“Yes, God be thanked, we are safe!” explained Armand, after the two brothers had fervently embraced, and when Paris was nearly a league behind. “Heaven has aided us! We are leaving the city of bloodshed, of death, of the guillotine. We are on our way to freedom and new life in America. And to whom, after Divine Providence, do you think we owe our marvelous rescue? Can you not guess?”

“To Robespierre?” hazarded Leslie.

“Yes, he is the man. You saw him talking to me—he wore a black cloak.”

“Ah, was that indeed Robespierre?” exclaimed Leslie. “But how was he induced to defy the judgment of the tribunal? And how comes it so much was accomplished in so short a time?”

“In this way,” Armand replied: “You must know—I think I have told you before—that both Lieutenant Lockroy and myself had done valuable service to Robespierre in the past. Therefore, when he learned early in the evening what had happened, he came disguised to my cell in the Conciergerie. He reminded me of the two occasions when I had saved his life, and we had a long conversation. In the end he promised to save us both—only his tremendous influence made such a step possible—and you see how he has kept his word.”

“Nobly, generously!” cried Leslie.

“It was a simple matter to win over the authorities of the prison,” Armand went

on. "Our passports, bearing false names, took us safely out of Paris. The postilions driving us are in Robespierre's service. I have money for all expenses, including even our passage to America."

"But what will happen when our escape is discovered?"

"There will be a storm—perhaps. However, Robespierre is cunning and powerful enough to either invent a plausible excuse or defy the anger of the people. And I am reminded that he exacted one condition from us."

"What was that?" Leslie asked.

"I swore faithfully, in both our names," Armand replied, "that we would never in future return to France, or lay claim to the title and property of the Saint Perroys."

"It is an easy vow to keep," said Leslie. "If we get safely to America, we will stay there for the rest of our lives. We shall not want for money, and it is a glorious country to live in. There we were born, there our unfortunate parents are buried. Ah, dear brother, God has been good—"

Leslie could say no more, for emotion choked his utterance. He clasped Armand's hand, and so they sat for a long time, silent and happy. So they were sitting hours later, but fast asleep, when the gray wintry dawn broke over the hamlets and hills of France.

But little more need be written, for the story is, to all purposes and intents, finished. The young travelers, snatched from the fury of the Revolution, went on safely to the destined end. They reached Calais, took packet for the friendly shores of England, and sailed later for the United States of America. On a day in the early part of the year 1794 they entered New York harbor, and that night found them relating their wonderful adventures to Mordecai Janeway, in the room where the old lawyer had read to Leslie the legacy of his dead uncle.

Armand took the name of Henry Tryon, and the two brothers carried on together the business of their mother's family, thereby earning riches, and gaining social standing and respect in the prosperous metropolis of the New World. They did not forget that in their veins flowed the blood of the ancient and titled French family of the St. Perroys, and in later years, when France was dominated by the great Napoleon, they might have returned safely to claim their rights and

property. But they considered the pledge given to Robespierre too sacred to be broken, and, moreover, they were happily married, wealthy, and content with the home of their birth.

So there they remained, satisfied to have the Atlantic between them and Paris, and yet never tiring, as the years rolled by, of recounting to their children and friends that terrible period of their youth, when they witnessed the horrors of the Reign of Terror and stood in the shadow of the guillotine.

THE END