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A TATTER OF SCARLET

A TATTER OF SCARLET

ADVENTUROUS EPISODES OF THE COMMUNE IN THE MIDI 1871

BY

S. R. CROCKETT

SECOND EDITION

HODDER AND STOUGHTON

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A TATTER OF SCARLET

CHAPTER I

HOW THE TRICOLOUR CAME DOWN

Deventer and I leaned on the parapet and watched the curious things which were happening in Aramon across the river. We were the biggest boys in the school and kept even the Seniors in awe, being "Les Anglais" to them—and so familiar with the "boxe"—though Deventer was an Irishman, and I, Angus Cawdor, a Scot of the Scots.

We had explained the difference to them many times by arguments which may have temporarily persuaded some, but without in the least affecting the fixed French notion that all English-speaking people are of English race.

Behind us circulated the usual menagerie-promenade of the "Grands," gabbling and whispering tremendous secrets in files of two and three.

Hugh Deventer was a great hulk of a fellow who would take half a dozen French Seniors and rub their heads together if I told him, laughing loudly at their protestations as to loss of honour. He had been challenged several times to fight duels with small swords, but the Frenchmen had given that up now. For Deventer spat on his palms and pursued the seconds who came with the challenge round and round the playground till he caught and smacked them. Whereat he laughed again. His father was chief of the Small Arms Factory, which of late years had been added to the arsenal works of New Aramon opposite to us on the left bank of the Rhône.

My own father was a clergyman, who for the sake of his health had retired to the dry sunny Rhône valley, and had settled in a green and white villa at Aramon because of the famous *lycée* which was perched up on the heights of Aramon le Vieux.

There was not much to distinguish Aramon the Old from Aramon the New, that is, from a distance. Both glowed out startingly white and delicately creamy between the burnished river and the flawless sapphire of the Provençal sky. It was still winter time by the calendar, but the sun beat on our bowed shoulders as we bent over the solid masonry of the breastwork, and the stones were hotter than in English dog-days as we plucked away our hands from it.

Deventer and I looked across at the greater New Aramon where his father lived. It was the Aramon of shops and hotels and factories, while Aramon le Vieux, over which our great *lycée* throned it like a glorified barracks, was a place of crumbling walls, ancient arcaded streets, twelfth-century palaces let as tenements, and all the interesting *débris* of a historical city on the verges of Languedoc.

Our French *lycéens* were too used to all this beauty and antiquity to care anything about it, but we English did. We were left pretty much to ourselves on our rare days of liberty, and as the professors, and especially the *proviseur*, knew that we were to be trusted, we were allowed to poke about the old Languedocian outpost much as we pleased.

It was the month of January, 1871. France was invaded, beaten, but not conquered; but here in the far South, though tongues wagged fiercely, in his heart the good bourgeois was glad to be out of it all.

At any rate, the *lycée* was carried on just as usual. Punishments were dealt out and tasks exacted. *Pions* watched constantly over our unstable morals, and occasionally reported misdemeanours of a milder kind, not daring to make their position worse by revealing anything that really mattered.

But, generally speaking, Aramon le Vieux dreamed away the hours, blinking in the sunshine. The war did not touch it save in the fierce clatter of *café* dispute. Only in the forts that rose about the arsenal of the newer city opposite to us a feeble guard of artillery and linesmen lingered as a protection for the Small Arms Factory.

For the new Paris Government was still far from stable, and some feared a renewal of the White Terror of 1815, and others the Red of the Commune of 1848. The workmen of the arsenal, hastily gathered from all quarters, were mostly sealed to the "Internationale," but it was supposed that the field-pieces in Fort St. André could easily account for any number of these hot-heads.

Besides Hugh Deventer and I there were several other English boys, but they were still screeching like seagulls somewhere in the Lower School and so did not count, except when an anxious mamma besought us with tears in her voice to look after her darling, abandoned all day to his fate among these horrid French.

To "look after" them Deventer and I could not do, but we gathered them into a sort of fives team, and organised a poor feckless game in the windowless angle of the refectory. We also got hockey sticks and bastinadoed their legs for their souls' good to the great marvel of the natives. Deventer had even been responsible for a trial of lacrosse, but good missionaries though we were, we made no French converts.

The Juniors squealed like driven piglings when the ball came their way, while the Seniors preferred walking up and down their paved cattle-pen, interminably talking with linked arms and lips close to the ear of a chosen friend.

Always one or two read as they walked alone, memorising fiercely against next Saturday's examination.

The pariah *pion* or outcast usher, a most unhappy out-at-elbows youth, was expected to keep us all under his eye, but we saw to it early that that eye passed leniently over Deventer and myself. Otherwise he counted for nothing.

The War—the War—nothing but talk of the War came to our ears from the murmuring throng behind us. How "France has been betrayed." "How the new armies of the Third Republic would liberate Paris and sweep the Prussians back to Berlin. From every side brave patriots were even now closing in upon the beleaguered city. Ha, then the spiked helmets would see!"

Still, a few facts grew more clear to us. At Lyons and Grenoble, Bourbaki was organising the army of the South-East. There came a sound from nowhere in particular that this army was to be joined and led by Garibaldi himself with thirty thousand of his red jackets from Italy.

Deventer and I were immensely excited. We made plans for immediate invasion. We would fight for France and wear a red cardigan in the Foreign Legion. But the *Lycée* St. André was well guarded, and so far no one had succeeded in escaping. I do not know that they tried very hard. They were French lads and brave—as many of them showed afterwards—but they were of the Midi, and even then the Midi was proverbially hard to budge. Not as in the North and East had the iron of the invasion entered the soul.

The parapet upon which we leaned was of very ancient masonry, solid blocks laid clean and Cyclopean with very little visible cement. It had formed part of the defences of an ancient castle, long since overwhelmed by the college buildings, the materials of which had mostly been quarried from its imposing mass.

Beneath us ran the Rhône in a fine, broad, half-mile-wide sweep, five or six miles an hour, yet save for the heaped hillocks of water about the bridge piers, and the swirl where the far bank curved over, as smooth as a mirror.

Hugh Deventer and I had been talking of the great '61 campaign of Garibaldi in Sicily and through Naples—a thousand red-shirts and a kingdom in the dust! Ah, the glory of that time!

But as we leaned and looked we fell silent. We saw Aramon the New opposite to us, as it were at our feet, across only that span of water. The factories were curiously silent, and from one fort after another darted the white spurt of smoke which meant artillery practice.

We listened, knowing that in a little we should hear the report.

Boom! Boom! Rattle-rattle-chirr!

Fighting—they were fighting in Aramon! Deventer's father would be in the thick of it. We looked and longed, but the way was closed. What could it be?

Deventer knew that there were continually troubles between the operatives and the "masters," or rather the representatives of the masters of whom his father was the chief.

The great *Compagnie d'Armes de Guerre Aramoise* was not distinguished for generosity. The men were well lodged but poorly paid. In these war times they had been over-driven. So many hundreds of rifles to turn out daily—field artillery, too, and a new department to be set up for the manufacture of mitrailleuses.

Outside, Dennis Deventer said little about the politics of the works, nothing at all to his son Hugh.

We of the *lycée* knew that France was already fairly evenly divided between true Republicans and those others who looked upon Gambetta's republic as a step to a monarchy or even the restoration of the Napoleons. The sons of functionaries mostly held the latter opinion. The scions of the aristocratic families of the neighbourhood, the old Whites of the Midi, prayed for the Bourbon flag and the coming of Henry V to his own again.

So when we heard the ripple of musketry fire and the sullen boom of the artillery, Deventer and I supposed that a mutiny of sorts had broken out at the works, or that news had come from Paris of some sudden change of government.

We were not far from the mark. There had been news from Paris and a mutiny had broken out. At any rate, they were fighting over in Aramon, and we must find out what it was all about.

For the moment this was impossible for us. The cliff was too sheer on the side of our recreation ground. There were over many eyes upon us. We must wait for the night, and in the meantime Deventer could only sniff the battle from afar, and hold in the desire to set off and help his father.

"The Dad doesn't want me," he said. "Of course, I know that. He would most likely tan me well for breaking bounds, but I can't bear being cooped up here doing silly mathematics when over yonder——But listen to them!"

A patter of what might have been heavy rain on a tin roof came faintly to our ears. A little

white cloud hung over the statue in the market square, and presently flung down devilish fingers earthward. We did not then know the signs of the explosion of shrapnel.

By this time the school was crowding about us, as curious as ourselves. The bell clanged for classes to resume, but no one moved. The *pion* screamed impotently in the rear. None took any notice, and the windows above were black with the gowns of the professors.

Some thought that the noise was only the letting off of blasts in the Pierre de Montagne quarries, but it was pointed out that such explosions took place only at eight, one, and four, the hours when the men would be out of the quarries at their meals. Besides, the crackle of small fire was unaccounted for, and each moment it became more lively.

Practice at the Chassepot factories? Very likely—but at human targets.

Finally the college authorities caused discipline to prevail, and Deventer and I watched alone by the parapet. We had both passed our *bachot*, and were an honour to the college. So the strictness of rule and line was relaxed in our case.

Our hearts beat, and in the instancy of our watch we would not have turned our heads if the *proviseur* himself had been at our side.

Presently we could see soldiers marching, the flash of bayonets, and groups of a dozen, as if pushed beyond their patience, turning and firing with rapid irregularity. All this in flashes of vision, mostly at the bridge-end, or at the intersection of two streets. Through the northern gate a kind of uncertain retreat began to dribble—the red breeches of the linesmen, the canter of the artillery horses attacking the hill, with stragglers here and there looking about for their regiments.

Neither Deventer nor I knew enough to explain these things.

"There are no Germans nearer than Toul or Besançon," he said, with a puzzled anxiety.

The field guns answered him smartly. From all the houses about the northern gate a storm of rifle fire broke out. The soldiers on foot hastened their retreat. The artillerymen, better led or of firmer courage, faced about, and with one volley pitted the façades of the houses from which the attack had come. They withdrew regularly, covering the retreat of the infantry, and spat out their little devils' claws of shrapnel over every group which showed itself outside the wall. Slowly the soldiers passed out of sight. The artillery bucketed over the knolls of the Montagne of Aramon among the evergreen odoriferous plants and the faint traces of the last snow wreaths.

There was nothing left for us to see now except the town of Aramon, its green and white houses sleeping in the sun, the tall chimney of the Small Arms Factory, now smokeless—and the broad Rhône sweeping grave and placid between them and us.

Nevertheless we waited alone on the recreation ground, our heads a little dizzy. The swooning hum of the class-rooms awoke behind us, but we heeded not at all.

We saw the tricolour of the Republic come down with a run from the tall flagstaff on Fort St. André, and presently, irregularly tugged, rising a few feet at a time, a red flag fluttered out, probably an improvised table-cover or bedspread. It flapped out bravely in the brisk breeze off the water.

We had had our first glimpse of "The Tatter of Scarlet."

CHAPTER II

KITH AND KIN

I don't think I troubled much about my father when I resolved to run away from the *Lycée* St. André. He had, as I thought, never troubled much about me.

Afterwards I found that I had been mistaken, but perhaps not more than most. For it is the rarest thing in the world to find a son entering upon life, able to do justice to his father's ideas and motives.

Yet it was for my sake that he had given up the society of his fellow savants and had exiled himself to Aramon le Vieux, with only his books for company. At Nice, Mentone, or Cap Martin, the author of "The History and Growth of Italian Art" could have lived a great part of the year among kindred spirits, but because of me and St. André, he had shut himself up with his books and collections in the Villa Gobelet on the piney southern slopes of the long convent ridge, the summit of which was crowned by the immense acreage of rambling white masonry which constituted our *lycée*.

My father, Gordon Cawdor, mixed freely enough with the engineers in New Aramon. But I knew very well that he endured rather than enjoyed their society.

They talked of springs and hoppers, of pauls and recoil tampons, and my father sat with his gentle wise head nodding as if taking in each point. But he never spoke to them of his own work, and, excepting Deventer's father, there was not one who knew more about Italian art than a dim memory of a bad lithograph of Da Vinci's "Last Supper" could recall to him.

Dennis Deventer, a tall dark grey man with the most mobile eyebrows I ever saw in my life, lives much in my early memories of my father's house. He seems now to have been always there, though of course he could really have come but seldom—a massive, slow-moving, swiftly scrutinising man, who bent shaggy eyebrows upon his son and myself, and in whose presence it was not good to make the easily forged excuses which served so well for my scholarly father.

Hugh said that it was because he listened all day to excuses and explanations over at the Arms Factory, without believing any one of them.

He had succeeded a manager who had been driven from Aramon because he was afraid of his men. But now the men, though they hated him as the representative of the Company, freely acknowledged his courage and austere justice.

His house was the largest in New Aramon, and he had within it three daughters all verging on, or just overlapping early womanhood, besides a comfortable wife who purred her way contented and motherly through all domestic storms. She alone could tame her husband's furies. They sank before her eye, her husband changing obviously to all men's sight, his factory oaths silenced, his bullying temper visibly crumbling, and the man growing sweet and wholesome as newly ground meal.

These were the two houses best known to me as a boy, and indeed to the edge of manhood. Judge ye which I liked the best?

My father was a beautifully profiled Scottish minister of the old school, whom an unexpected fortune had enabled to follow his impulses in the matter of work. He had long ago retired from his parish, indeed before I could remember, and as I learned from his steadfast retainer, old Saunders McKie, immediately after the death of my mother.

"Irongray Parish was no more for him, oh no," Saunders would say, sententiously pausing in the polishing of my father's silver shoe-buckles. "He laid down his wark as if he had been stricken. He never preached again, and his pulpit was silent for three whole weeks after her death. Assistants and siccan cattle werena sae common to come at then as now—when ye send a telegram in the morning, and the laddie is down on the six train wi' his baggie. So the elders juist read a portion, and sent down to the Cameronian meeting-house for a man fit to put up a prayer. We were Established, ye see, so the like was no to be expected o' *us*!

"Eh, a broken man was your farther in thae days. He would wander from room to room, tak' down a book here, look at it a while and then put it up again with a muttered 'Tush' as if he could make nothing of it. I doubt if he so much as saw the print line by line, but all troubled-like, as one might through a green whorl of skylight glass. Then he would dawner into the room where you were lying, or maybe being fed, and at sight o' ye, the state that man would be in!

"He could not get out o' the nursery quick enough, yet for all that he would be back within the hour."

Saunders was a great standby. His humour jumped with mine far more nearly than my father's. This, too, in spite of the fact that I rarely saw him without calling down the vials of his wrath. My father seldom reproved me, never in anger, but Saunders, with the care of my young soul heavy on his Calvinistic conscience, laboured faithfully with me in season and out of season.

One good he did me. He kept me from forgetting my Scottish tongue, and there was never a day that he did not supply me with some phrase sappy with mother wit and drowned in Scotland.

"Aängus," he would say, "I kenna wha it is ye favour—nane o' your faither's folk at any rate—all chestnut-brown and quick as an eel. No wonder ye can tie knots in yoursel' at the parallel bars that were siccan a trouble to set up for ye to caper on, and your e'en like sloes after the first frosts. It's a gipsy ye are and no real Cawdor of all. Though they do say that the Cawdors have gipsy blood on the distaff side. At ony rate ye will never be the 'sponsible sober man your faither is."

In spite of all this I stood high in the good graces of Saunders, and he would sometimes ask my father for the additional pocket-money which I dared not hint at myself. Saunders often wandered back into reminiscence of the time when he had been a jobbing stonemason on the Cromarty Firth, a companion of Hugh Miller's, and "the very deevil for raking the country."

He had tramped scores of miles with Hugh Miller only for the sake of hearing him talk, yet I gathered that he had not believed a single word he had been told about the great fishes and curious monsters that once swam in the lakes of the Old Red Sandstone.

"But I never telled him sae," he would conclude; "oh, no, Saunders kenned better. Hugh

Miller was no doubt a wonderful genius, but at that time he was a man easily angered, and when roused, violent of his hands."

So now I have sketched the school, and the several domestic surroundings which we proposed to leave behind us. I do not think that we thought much about these. I know that I did not, and I don't believe that Deventer did either—not, that is, till we saw the soldiers retreating from the barracks and forts of Aramon, and that little oblong blot of red in the sky which meant insurrection, and God only knew what of terror and destruction, fluttering in the brisk mistral wind from the tower on which we had so long seen the tricolour.

At that time we had only the vaguest idea of what the Commune was, and none whatsoever of the new ideas of justice and equality which underlay that cumbrously ill-managed business.

CHAPTER III

THE LAUNDRY DOOR

After a while Deventer and I went back to our joint study, where we essayed to do some work. But mostly we spoke apart, with lips that hardly moved, of our plans and all that lay in liberty-land beyond the walls. Deventer would go nowhere but to his father's house, and though I meant to end up with the red blouse of Garibaldi on my chest, I did not see how I could fail him at such a time.

We had to wait till night, and the time was almost unendurably long. The lines in our text-books which our eyes followed did not bite upon our minds. We were thinking so hard of other things that philosophies slid aside impotent and discomfited.

We began immediately to plan our escape, or at least I planned and Deventer, his great shaggy head on his hands and his eyes tight shut to concentrate thought, gave himself to the task of spotting the weak points.

At the bottom of the junior promenade was a door which opened upon the river, and on the opposite side dwelt a man who owned a skiff. The elders of the upper school used to employ this man, Jules Rameau by name, to ferry them across as often as they had enough money for a secret supper at a cabaret in some shy street. But some ill-paid *pion* must be bribed to allow the key to be "lifted" from the inside of his door. He must also take care to be in the deepest of sleep when it was returned. But this would not do for us. We were not coming back at all, and we could not allow any wretched usher to be sent about his business on our account.

In our leisure time we had studied the whole of the ground plan of St. André. The school buildings occupied an enormous amount of space, far more than was needed for educational purposes. By sticking to it we made some astonishing discoveries. For instance, after passing through the kitchen, by descending a flight of steps which led to an unoccupied wing, where all sorts of educational rubbish had been accumulated—globes, wall-maps, ancient copy-books with headlines set by hand, and a good bust of the first Napoleon—we reached a clean-smelling, brightly lighted range of offices all set out with tubs, soap, boiling vats, and blue stains which ran over smooth boards.

We had come upon the laundry of the college. On pegs, which ran all round, overalls were hung. There was even a shawl here and there, or a bonnet or two, as it were, flaunting their sex in this temple of the masculine virtues.

Not Crusoe on his island was more astonished when he came on the footprint. For it was not known to any of us, not even to the *pions*, that a single feminine foot profaned any part of the *lycée*.

But, whatever our surprise, it did not prevent us from locking the door and extracting the key of one of the range of exits which led out from the fixed washtubs upon the narrow drying ground, a terrace wholly invisible and unsuspected from our quarters on the opposite waterfront of the building.

Of course, Deventer and I said nothing about our discovery. We did not want the whole upper school playing leap-frog through the kitchens, or telling lies as to their conquests among the laundry maids.

It was possible that the lock of the door might be changed immediately, but we considered it more likely that the forewoman or caretaker in charge would say nothing at all about the loss, and trust to the key turning up.

We thought the whole matter well over, and considered it probable that a gate in the wall would be left permanently open to facilitate the comings and goings of the workwomen in the early morning. Such an opening in the wall must lead immediately out upon the main road that wound circuitously up the hill, and by which all stores and provisions were brought to the porter's lodge.

Then we made ready for the trip, laying out our most comfortable and inconspicuous town-going suits to take the place of the brass-buttoned *lycée* uniform.

With our door carefully locked, we raised a piece of the skirting board of our study and examined our store of arms, a couple of revolvers procured by Deventer in some vague inexplicable way at the works, three packets of ammunition apiece, and a couple of "surins," or long Apache knives—the use of which we had learned from the sous-préfet's son, a youth precondemned to the gallows, who before expulsion had sojourned an eventful and long-remembered three months at St. André.

We profited by his instructions as to guards and undercuts by practising with models whittled in wood. This we were enabled to do in open playground by the simple expedient of calling the exercise legerdemain.

Except what we could carry in our pockets, and the warlike accoutrement mentioned above, we left the whole of our property at the college. At the last minute Deventer packed away a Globe Shakespeare, and I found room for a limp Bagster Bible of small size, which my father had given me.

The clatter of the bedward-driven flocks began to tramp past our study door. The hum of lesson preparation in the schoolrooms ceased. We carefully set our house in order, for it was time for our evening visit from Professor Renard. But he was called "Renard by Name and Renard by Nature" among the Juniors whose small deceits he had the knack of seeing through, even before the explanation was well under way. He was a Jesuit of the newer school, of an educated candour, which seemed natural to our young eyes, and a ready sympathy for our misdemeanours, which made him the most popular professor in the *lycée* of St. André.

He always tapped at our door before entering. He never listened nor made use of the information of the common school spy. These things counted for much.

"Well, gentlemen," he said, as he came in and sat down in our one arm-chair, "you were too long on the terrace to-day to have a good report of your studies!"

We convinced him to the contrary. For we had always gone on the principle that who does his work early and well has his way made plain for him, and in him a thousand things are overlooked for which a "slacker" would get himself jumped upon.

After he had examined our exercises and approved of them, he looked up at us suddenly from under his overhanging brows.

"You understood what the disturbance was about over there?" he demanded.

"I knew," said Deventer, before I could stop him, "that if my father was left behind with his factories to look after, he would find himself mightily short-handed. He would have only the English staff to support him."

"Ah," said Professor Renard, "you look at it from a personal point of view, as is natural. Your father——"

"I have also a mother and sisters over there——"

"I think I can promise that they will be safe whatever happens to your father. And you can trust to my judgment. By custom and training my class, the clergy of France, parochial and regular, are royalists. The fight over yonder was only tiger eating leopard. The reds of Gambetta's hue were chased out by the deeper scarlet of the Commune. Did you see that flag of theirs to-night, just before sunset? It glowed with the true hell-fire light."

I had been in the habit of arguing in favour of the working men who were to constitute the brain and brawn of the Commune, but to-night I said nothing. Renard did not notice my silence, however, but continued his diatribe.

"We have had Napoleons of victory and Napoleons of disaster—republics of guillotine and republics of veiled Cæsarism. And now we have a third which is a house divided against itself. Listen well, young men—the Bible speaks the truth—it cannot stand. Even now the time for its fall is almost come. The little financier Thiers will pay off the Germans from the chimney-corner hoards of the peasants. Oh, make no mistake, lads, we are beaten as a nation, because we have not obeyed God and His anointed king. The atheist Garibaldi, spoiler of churches and enemy of the Pope, will do nothing for France, except to widen the area over which the German flood will spread. Their armies of Rouen, of the Loire, and of the South-East are condemned in advance. It is as if the Lord of Hosts had said, 'I am against thee, O France! Thou wast once the eldest daughter of the Church. Now thou hast defiled thyself with the unbeliever, with the captains of Assyria, and art become a castaway.'"

He seemed to recall himself. He was speaking as he did in the pulpit. The glow faded from his features. He smiled a little contemptuously at himself.

"I am gabbling like a novice of the first year, and withal to a couple of Protestants," he said, getting up and extending his hands, one to each, as was his habit. "Forgive me!"

Cramming our special themes into his pocket for after-consideration, he went downstairs with a heavy regular tread, and the noisy dormitories hushed at the sound. The Renard could not be taken in with the usual explanation that they had been reciting their prayers. Not till he was safe in his own room did the hum and clatter begin all over again.

It was past midnight before we judged it prudent to begin our descent. Safe of course it was not, nor could ever be. In a school directed by clerical influences, supervision is personal and unceasing. The two of us owed our comparative immunity to our having passed our recent *baccalauréat*, and to having done honour to the college in the national examinations, but still more to the fact that we were English heretics, whose eternal damnation was assured beforehand, and whose lesser transgressions, therefore, mattered little, so long as they did not flaunt themselves before the pupils, devout, Catholic, and Roman.

There was a faint sufficient light from the southern windows, for the moon was nearly full. The empty class-rooms smelt heavy and sour, and their doors stood open like the portholes of a battery, setting our hearts fluttering. We did not mean to let anything stand in the way of our purpose, but as we had been on good terms with the heads of the *lycée* of St. André, we did not want any trouble now at the eleventh hour, or rather when for us the time was close on the stroke of twelve.

We passed through the schoolrooms unchallenged. The dormitories were hushed and silent. We could see the dim light of the *pions'* watch-candles under the doors. We considered that we had passed the zone of danger, and were hurrying forward with less precaution, when a light in the open door of the kitchen pulled us up all standing.

I was lighter than Deventer, so I slipped my shoes and went forward on my stocking-soles to spy out the land.

A "mitron," or cook-boy, was writing a letter to his sweetheart with incredible pains. He wrote with his hands, with his body, with the wrinkles on his brow, and the tongue which stuck out of his mouth, responsively vibrant as a compass-needle to the spirit of his composition.

Here was a pretty pass. We must wait on this white-capped, dirty-aproned rascal who seemed in no hurry to finish his task. He had a file of feuilletons bound in brown paper before him, and he turned over the leaves of these in search of expressions which had pleased him, and which he now desired to appropriate. There seemed no end to his literary zeal, and if he was not hurried morning might come before we could get clear.

Then I remembered that among Deventer's accomplishments was that of being able to imitate the wheezy asthmatic breathing and hollow cough of the *proviseur*. So I sent him back with instructions to carry out his imitation at the foot of the kitchen stairs.

At the first wheeze and accompanying shuffle of a hand on the smooth wooden stair-rail, out went the "mitron's" candle. I could hear him gathering up his home-bound books of feuilletons, and whisking away his letter paper. I drew back as close to the wall as possible, for I suspected he would pass my way in order to reach his bedroom. I was no more than in time, for he stumbled over my foot, which had been carelessly thrust forward into the passage way. He did not stop to inquire into this, probably thinking that someone had put out their shoes to be cleaned in the morning. It was a narrow escape, for if it had chanced to be the boot-boy instead of an amorous 'prentice-cook we might not have escaped so easily.

Deventer and I crossed the kitchen quickly. The wick of the "mitron's" candle was still smoking red, as we stole down the corkscrew stair which led to the laundry. Everything here smelt strongly of damp clothes and lye, but somewhere a window was open, for the current of air was pronounced, and suggested possible alternative if the lock of our door had been changed.

But in this we were fortunate. The key which I had carried so long in the inner pocket of my jacket turned easily. The door swung noiselessly inwards, and the clean breath of the salt breeze from the Camargue marshes made our faces pleasantly chill and our lips sticky. We locked the door on the outside, and in another minute stood in the roadway, looking back at the great ghostly pile of the Palace of the Monks—as Louis the XIV had called it, when he cut down the plans so that it should not rival in dimensions that "abyss of expenditure" which was Versailles.

But it was no time to stand sentimentalising upon architecture. We turned and went down the vacant white road as fast as our legs would serve us.

CHAPTER IV

THROUGH THE ENEMY'S LINES

"Halt there!" cried Deventer suddenly to me. We were passing a pleasant white and green villa with a light in one ground-floor window.

I stopped, and Deventer took me by the arm, with forceful compulsion.

"I am going to help *my* father," he whispered. "Don't you run off without telling yours what you mean to do. He can't prevent you, if you have made your mind up."

"He won't try—he will only be glad to get back to his books."

"Perhaps, but at any rate tell him yourself. He will like it better than when the hue and cry gets up to-morrow over yonder. You take my word for it, Angus Cawdor."

I did not want to go, for at that time I did not understand nor much like my father. But Deventer said that if I would not walk he would carry me, a threat which at any other time would have made me smile. However, to please him I walked carefully to the window. With his habitual thoughtlessness about external things, the sash swung a little open and the light air blew the curtains back. My father was sitting like a student, with a shawl over his knees, a quite necessary fire of olive roots smouldering on the andirons, and his head, shining and silvery, bent over a book in which he was making notes.

I did not wish to startle him, so I spoke in English, and in as commonplace a tone as I could muster.

"Father," I said, as if my calling hours were the most ordinary in the world, "will you come across to the window for a moment?"

He rose instantly and came over to the open window, one half of which I had pushed wide. The note-book was still in his hand, and the breeze ruffled its leaves so that he shut and clasped it.

"Why, Angus, where do you come from?" he said. "Is it late? Won't you come in? Are you on your way back to college?"

"No, father," I said; "I ought to be, but I have made up my mind to go to the war. I have had enough of learning, and examinations disgust me even when I come out first."

He looked at me long and quietly, and then nodded his head.

"I know—I know," he said, "it is the riot in the blood. I do not say that you do wrong to go, but you will need some money. I have a few hundred francs by me for which I have no use. They will not come amiss. Let me see—six, seven, eight hundred and fifty. Does Deventer go with you?"

"He is waiting on the road below."

"I thought as much—well, bid him good luck from me, and now good night, and God be with you, boy! Get your wild-oat sowing done as soon as possible and come back. You will find me waiting for you. You and I will do something yet."

My father coughed a little in the draught through the open window, whereupon I made haste to be gone. The movement was purely unconscious, yet it was just such slight things that kept me such a long while from understanding my father. He seemed to be so careful for himself in little matters of health, that he had no care to spare for me, his only son, and this thought, I am ashamed to say, I carried away with me, even while my fingers caressed the eight hundred and fifty francs nestling safely in my breeches pocket.

On the road I found Deventer waiting for me.

"Well," he said, "I see you are glad you went?"

"Yes," I answered, "eight hundred and fifty francs glad, but the old man hurried up my going, because the open window made a draught that irritated his cough."

Deventer did not answer directly.

"My governor thinks a lot of yours!" he said, and left the reproach to sink in. The which it did, all the more because *I* thought a lot of Deventer's father, and was presently to think more and better.

We took our road between the rows of sleeping houses, alternately black in shadow and mildly radiant under the moon. Not a light showed anywhere, not even in the *auberge*, with the huge branch stuck over the door in token of the excellence of the wine served out within.

A vagrant cat or two, a baying dog spasmodically darting in and out of an alley-way, alone took note of our bygoing.

The crowning buildings of the *lycée* on the Convent Ridge showed up massive and almost martial among the dark pines. Then, after a sprinkle of villas, we struck the close-packed town with the clean water from the Gardon river prattling in the sewers at either side of every street. Aramon was one of the towns of the Midi (now rare) where they had not forgotten ancient Roman lessons as to the value of running water.

As we descended the flat plain the river-meadow came up to meet us. We crossed the market-place among the splotched trunks of the plane trees, and turned along the quay of the great canal of the Little Rhône. Barges in long lines and solid tiers occupied it from end

to end, and on each of these was a dog. So that we passed through a chorus of yelping curs, till the massive pillars of the great suspension bridge rose stark and marble-white in the moonlight. On the Old Aramon side the *douanier* was asleep in his little creeper-covered cabin. We saw his head pillowed on his crossed arms as he bent over the table, and a smoking tallow candle guttered low at his elbow.

Along the wide quadruple track of the bridge, stretched like the taut string of a bow for half a mile ahead of us, we saw nothing except the glistening planks underfoot, and overhead the mighty webbing of chains.

But as we were stepping down the little descent which leads into the newer town of Aramon-les-Ateliers, we found our way suddenly barred. A couple of fellows, not much older than ourselves, suddenly sprang out of the shadows, and set shining bayonets to our breasts, demanding at the same time where we came from and whither we were going. It had been arranged between us previously that in any difficulty Deventer was to let me do the talking. Somehow he did not tell his lies with conviction, at least not yet.

I gave our names, and said that we were runaway Seniors from the *lycée* on the hill, on our way to enlist with the red-shirts of Garibaldi. I think that on hearing this one of the youths would have let us go on our way, but the younger, a cautious lad, spoke out in favour of taking us to head-quarters.

"What! And leave the bridge unguarded!" cried his companion. "Either shoot them out of hand, say I, or let them go on to seek their Garibaldi. They wear the red as well as we. We have heard of his army at Dijon, but his son is recruiting at Orange, so your tramp will be so much the shorter."

Finally they permitted us to pass after a whispered consultation, but the younger put several questions to us to prove whether we really came from the college or not—what days certain meats were served, the names of the lay brothers, the woodman, the *ramoneur* or sweep, with personal details of several others. These we answered promptly, and to his apparent satisfaction. He knew much about the *lycée*, but we could not place him. His smooth face was hidden under a great Biscayan bonnet with red tassel, and his common speech was probably assumed.

They directed us to follow the outer boulevard which skirted the town, and which should bring us to the Avignon gate without our needing to enter Aramon at all. The younger drew out a small box filled with inkpads and brass *tampons*, with which he stamped an order that would permit us to pass the opposite gate without annoyance.

Naturally we took the road between the scant white poplars, as it had been indicated to us, and stuck to it faithfully so long as we were in sight of the post at the bridge-end.

Then, at a particularly dark corner where the blank gable of a workshop loomed up to meet the overhanging flange of a fitting-shed, Deventer, who was now on his own ground, slid suddenly aside, and was lost in a devious track along which I had hard work to follow him. I could see his big figure, black against the glimmer of white-washed walls. I stumbled over anvils and heavy gearing scattered about, among which Deventer steered his way with the crafty experience and dainty serenity of a night-raking cat.

From this labyrinth we emerged on innumerable tiny little gardens, with the stubs of cabbages and a few trenches of early vegetables for sole contents. Rickety cane hedges leaning over at every angle surrounded these, and Deventer pushed his way through them with the silent expertness of an Indian on the trail.

Soon we came out on a wide park which was surrounded by a high wall. Deventer made directly for this. He struck it at a spot where a tree had thrust a sturdy limb through a fissure. The crack had been mended with plaster, but perhaps from curiosity, perhaps owing to carelessness, the branch of the tree had been allowed to go on growing. It was easy to swing oneself upon it and so gain the top of the wall.

Deventer and I had made a good straight rush from cover, and flattered ourselves that we should be able to mount unnoticed, but a patter of bullets went buzzing like bees over our heads, while others buried themselves with a sullen "spat" which threw up little fountains of black leaf-mould in the ground at the foot of the wall.

None, however, came our way, and the next moment Deventer and I were crouching among the lean spiky laurels and green-bedripped statues of his father's garden.

"They are besieged," he whispered; "we must be careful. We are not inside yet, and you may be sure they will shoot quite as readily as the insurgent jacks behind there, and with better aim too. Dad kept the English and Americans on the ranges every evening all last summer."

It was I who had the idea this time.

"Lend me your lantern and I will Morse them a message."

"The sentinel may not be able to read it off."

"No, but he will bring someone who can. At any rate let us try."

We established ourselves in an old summer-house at the edge of a pond, with a foolishly rustic door which opened straight upon the front of the house. Our light would be seen only by someone on the balconies, or at the windows of the upper floors. It was entirely dark, of course, but Deventer had no doubt that his father was there with all his faithful forces, "keeping his end up like a good old fighting Derryman," as his son expressed it.

"Hugh—Deventer—and—his—friend—Cawdor—are—down—here. Answer—by—Morse—by—which—door—they—can—enter—the—house."

I had Morsed this message three times before any notice was taken from within, and I had begun to give up hope. There must be nobody inside Château Schneider, as the place was called. But Deventer was far more hopeful.

"They have gone to waken my father," he whispered. "You see, they daren't do anything in these parts without the old bird. He is quite a different man from the one you saw poking about among your father's books, or drinking in his wisdom. Here he makes people do things. Try her again."

It was tedious work, but I flashed the whole message over again, according to the Morse code. This time the reply came back short and sweet.

"What—the—devil—are—you—doing—there?"

"That's Dad," said Hugh Deventer triumphantly. "Now we shall catch it."

I answered that having seen the soldiers retreat, we had come to help.

"Did—anybody—send—word—that—you—were—wanted?" twinkled the point of fire somewhere high among the chimney-stacks on the roof. These were a rarity in a district where one chimney for a house is counted a good average, but after one winter's experience of the windy Rhône valley, Dennis Deventer had refused to be done out of an open fireplace in every room.

Now he reaped the fruit of his labours, for in summer he had sat behind his low wall and taken the air of an evening, and now it needed little to convert the chimney-stacks on the flat roof of his house into reliable defences.

It was difficult to say in slow Morse alphabetage what we were doing down in the old summer-house, but at least I managed to convey that we had run the insurgent pickets and were in danger of being captured.

We got our reply quickly enough.

"Hugh—knows—the—door—under—the—main-outer—staircase."

"Of course," said Hugh, "I always went in that way when my feet were dirty. Come on!"

And we hurried across the sward, keeping between a sundial and fountain-basin railed about, into which half a dozen copper frogs sent each a thin thrill of water, with a sound quite unexpectedly cheerful and domestic thus heard in the darkness of the night.

This time there was no clatter of firing behind us. The sharpshooters of the insurrectionaries had learned a lesson of caution near the house of the manager of the Small Arms Factory. Dennis Deventer had been training his assistants and lieutenants the whole year at movable butts. He had rigged up a defile of six men-shaped figures which passed in front of a firing party, or, bent forward in the attitude of men running, dashed one by one across the men's field of vision as they lay at the firing line.

Hugh Deventer and I took for our goal the great double flight of steps, broad as a couple of carriage ways, which in the style of the Adams architecture united in front of a debased Corinthian portico at the height of the first floor windows of the Château.

"What, Jack Jaikes!" cried Hugh to the grinning young man who opened the door for us.

"Aye, just Jack Jaikes same as yesterday, and eh, but the chief is going to leather ye properly afore he sends ye back to school."

"But we are not going to school any more!"

"Maybe not—maybe not, but in this house we mostly go by what the master says. 'Tis more comfortable like all round. Eh, but ye have come in time to be leathered proper. If the lads of the Internationale yonder had been brisk at the firing ye might have gotten off, but as it is the auld man has nothing better to do than attend to ye on the spot!"

This made me a little uncomfortable as to our reception, but Deventer did not seem greatly disturbed.

"You tell me where my sisters are, and then go and find somebody else who will believe your lies, Jack Jaikes!"

The dark young man with the large hands grinned still more.

"Where should the three young ladies be at this time of night but in their beds? Go and take

your dose, young gentlemen. No use stopping to think it over. In an hour, maybe, the worst of the sting will be by with—and at any rate there are sofas in the parlour!"

"Get out, Jack Jaikes! Hannah and Liz may be in bed, but I warrant that Rhoda Polly is somewhere on the look-out with a gun ready."

"Correct!" admitted Jaikes, with a chuckle. "I saw her at the window just over this old stone staircase a minute before t'owd man shouted the order for me to let you in."

"Come on then, Cawdor," Hugh cried; "let's find Rhoda Polly!" He ran upstairs as fast as he could, anxious to find his sister before having the first interview with his father. For though he knew that Jack Jaikes had been lying, he could not be sure on what basis of fact so much imagination reposed.

And then there was the message flashed from behind the chimney-pots, "Did anyone send you word that you were to come?"

"You did not want to go and see your father," he whispered, as we stood close together, panting in the dark of the second landing. "You came away with well on a thousand francs in your pocket—got without asking, too. I run a thousand dangers to see my father, and all I am likely to get is a hiding."

The moon was lighting up one side of the landing, and showing where mattresses and corn-sacks had been used to block the windows damaged by rifle fire. The house was wonderfully still, astonishingly so when one thought how many people were in it on the alert. But we must have made more noise than we had supposed in coming up the stairs, for as we stood here out of breath with the speed of our rush, a voice came calmly from the shadows by the window curtains.

"Come over here, Hugh—and you, Angus Cawdor—I am Rhoda Polly."

CHAPTER V

THE DEVENTER GIRLS

I suppose this is as good a place as any to bring in and explain the daughters of the house of Deventer. I had known them ever since I could remember. First as "kids" to be properly despised, then as long-legged, short-skirted, undistinguishable entities, useful at fielding, but remarkably bad at throwing in to the wicket.

During our long stay at the *lycée* these creatures had been at schools of their own. Their hair had gradually darkened and lengthened, so that it could be more easily tugged. It had been gathered up and arranged about their heads at a period which synchronised with the lengthening of their skirts, and the complete retirement of the ankles which had once been so freely whacked with hockey sticks and even (I regret to say) kicked at football practice.

There was no great difference in age between the girls. They might have been triplets, but denied the accusation fiercely and unanimously, with more of personal feeling than seemed necessary. Often as court of last appeal the arbitration of their mother had to be referred to. In her gentle cooing voice she would give the names of the various medical men who had ushered them into the world. These were settled in various mineralogical centres.

"There was Doctor Laidlaw of Coatbridge. He was Rhoda Polly's. A fine sharp man was Doctor Laidlaw, sandy-whiskered, but given to profane swearing. Not that he ever swore in *my* presence, but he had the name for it among the colliers and ironworkers."

"It's from him," insinuated Hugh, "that Rhoda Polly gets her vocabulary."

"That's as it may be," his mother would reply patiently, her thoughts travelling before her to pick out number two.

"Let me see. For Hannah I had Doctor Butterworth—Tom Butterworth of Barrow-in-Furness—and of all the upsetting conceited creatures on this earth, commend me to Tom. Tom-Show-a-Leg he was called, because he came to the balls in knee-breeches and silk stockings. But for all that I will never deny that he did his duty by Hannah, though at times I had my own adoes to keep Dennis from heaving him out of the window.

"And there was Liz, poor thing. She had to put up with a 'locum' at Herbestal, in Belgium, before your father came here. There was not an English doctor in the place, but it made no great difference, for Madame Batyer was wiser than a whole college of doctors, and I will always think that beginning to be used to the language so soon has improved Liz's French accent!"

Obviously it was impossible for me during my salad days to escape from falling in love with one or other of these three pretty girls. I solved the question by falling in love with all three in turns, the rotation of crops being determined chiefly by whose vacations coincided with mine.

This bred no jealousies, for the girls were large-minded, and at that time a sweetheart more or less had no particular significance for them.

Rhoda Polly was the learned one; she had been to college at Selborne, and still retained in speech and manner something Oxonian and aloof. But really she was gentle and humble-minded, eager with sympathy, and only shy because afraid of proffering it where it was not wanted. Rhoda Polly was a creamy blonde with abundant rippling hair, clearly cut small features, and the most sensitive of mouths. Yet she was full of the most unselfish courage, ready for long smiling endurances, and with that unusual feminine silence which enables a woman to keep her griefs to herself and even to deceive others into thinking she has none.

Did anyone want anything, Rhoda Polly would find it. Had two tickets only been sent for the theatre, Rhoda Polly would not mind staying at home. Rhoda Polly never minded anything. She did not cry half the afternoon like Hannah over a spoilt dress, nor fall into any of Liz's miniature rages. She was Rhoda Polly, and everybody depended upon her. The girls confided in her largely, and never expected her to have any secrets of her own for truck, barter, or exchange.

Hannah had been delicate always—or at least had been so considered by her mother.

Her character had been formed between her mother's favour and her elder sister's habit of giving way rather than face an argument. She was dark and slender, placidly sure of being always right, and of looking best in a large picture hat with a raven plume.

Hannah had been sent to school near Lausanne, which was kept by the daughter of the famous Froebel, assisted by a relative of the still more famous Pestalozzi. An English lady was in residence at the Pestalozzi-Froebel Institute, to teach the pupils the aristocratic manners, so rare and necessary an accomplishment in a country where the President of the Republic returns from his high office to put on his grocer's apron, and goes on weighing out pounds of tea at the counter of the old shop which had been his father's before him.

Liz was all dimples and easy manners, the plaything of the house. She knew she could do no wrong, so long as she went on opening wide her eyes of myosotis blue, now purring and now scratching like a kitten; she would often dart away for no reason whatever, only to come back a minute after, having apparently forgotten the cause of her brusque disappearance. She was accordingly a good deal spoilt, not only by the young engineers who frequented the Château Schneider, but by her parents and sisters as well.

One of the former, asked the reason of a decided preference for Liz, declared that it was because she could never be mistaken for a French convent-bred girl. It was pointed out to him that the same might be said for the other two, but he stuck to his point. Rhoda Polly with her Oxford manner of condescending to undergraduates, and Hannah with the Pestalozzi Institute refinements, might speak and look as if they had a duenna hidden in the background, but Liz—never! She was more likely to box somebody's ears.

CHAPTER VI

AN OLD MAN MASTERFUL

Deventer and I came upon Rhoda Polly while we were getting our breath after the rush upstairs. We were old friends, and Rhoda Polly did not even put aside her rifle to greet us.

"Come from school without leave—run away—good!" she exclaimed. "Have you made it all right with father?"

"Not yet—that is—the fact is—-we thought you might as well come along with us, Rhoda Polly."

"You think there will be a storm, Hugh?"

"Sure of it, but at least you can tell the Pater that Cawdor here is no prodigal. He comes with his father's blessing and a whole pile of paper money."

"Father is among his entrenchments on the roof," said the girl; "better wait till he comes down. He is never quite himself when he is up there and the wind is blowing. Now tell me what made you run away?"

"We are going to enlist among Garibaldi's volunteers, and fight for France—at least that's what Cawdor says. But I mean to stay here till all is safe for mother and you."

At this moment Rhoda Polly nudged us. There was a sound of heavy decided footsteps grating on the steel ladder which led to the roof, then a thump and the noise of feet stamping on the floor above us.

"He has been lying behind the chimney till he is stiff," whispered Rhoda Polly. "Give him time to limber himself."

For a minute all was quiet along the Potomac, and then a mighty voice was heard demanding "those two young rascals."

Deventer's smile was somewhat forced, and it might only have been the moonlight, but he certainly looked both sick and white about the gills. I was not greatly affected, but then I had not had his discipline. My case and credit were clear. All the same, it was obvious that the Dennis Deventer who captained his forces against the insurgents within the walls of Château Schneider, and the seeker after knowledge who prowled about my father's library or listened modestly to his interminable expositions, were very different persons.

"Better not keep him waiting," said Rhoda Polly. "I will take you. He has a room for himself fitted up on the third floor."

At the opening of the door we saw a long table covered with guns and revolvers, each ready to the hand, while behind the centre ran a continuous mountain range of ammunition in packets of gay-coloured green, red, and yellow.

"What's all this, boys?" said Dennis Deventer gruffly, as soon as he caught sight of us. "Now, you Rhoda Polly, hold your tongue! You are not put up to tell their story. Come—out with it. What is it?"

He thrust his hands through his crisping mane of hair with quick, nervous movements.

"Come, get it into word, Master Hugh Deventer. You were put to do your duty at school. Why didn't you stay put?"

Hugh Deventer had a difficulty about articulation. He was bold and brave really, besides being extraordinarily strong of body, but something in the tones of his father's voice seemed to make all these qualities, which I had seen proved so often, of no use to him. I looked at Rhoda Polly, and, to my amazement, even she appeared a little anxious. I began vaguely to understand the difference among parents, and to realise that with a father of the calibre of the Old Man Masterful I might have turned out a very different sort of son.

Finally Deventer managed to stammer out his account of the retreat of the troops and the hoisting of the Red Flag.

"I knew that they would be besieging you," he said, "so I came. I could not stop there doing mathematics, hearing the shots go off, and thinking what might be happening to my mother and the girls!"

I could see in a moment that he had taken good ground with his father. The strong muscular hands were laid flat on the table, with a loud clap which made the pistols spring.

"You did pretty well in your examinations—they tell me?"

"Second—Cawdor was first. He coached me, or I should never have got within smelling distance. As it was we halved the honours, and were asked to dine with the *proviseur* and professors when we got back."

"You look a perfect ox for strength. Let me see if you can lift this table without disturbing anything."

Deventer smiled for the first time, and after trying about for a little time so as to find the proper centre of gravity, he lifted the table, guns, ammunition and all, holding them with flexible arm on the level of his father's eyes. I think he was perfectly happy at that moment.

Old Dennis did not smile like his son. He only nodded, and said, "Yes, you may be useful. Can you shoot?"

"Fairly," Deventer admitted, "but not so well as Cawdor; and you should just see him send the Frenchmen's foils twirling to the roof of the gymnasium. He has fought three duels, Pater, and won every time. Even the Frenchmen could not deny it!"

"Gilt-edged nonsense—duelling," old Dennis broke out, "though your grandfather was out a score of times in County Down in his day. But what do you do when the Frenchmen challenge you?"

"Oh," cried Hugh gleefully, "I just chase them or their seconds till I catch them, and then I spank them till they agree that honour is satisfied. Generally by that time they are crying with rage, but that does not matter. However, they mostly let me alone now."

"Well done, Hugh," said his father; "have something to eat, and then come up and find me on the roof. We ought to have something lively to amuse you before the morning. By the way, Cawdor, what does your father say to all this?"

Deventer forestalled me, for he was anxious that I should say nothing about the draught from the window or my father's sending me off.

"His father sent him along with his blessing, and eight hundred and fifty francs."

"Well," rapped out the old man with the mane of grey hair, "you can keep the blessing, but I will take care of the money for you."

And with that he held out his hand. Quite instinctively I gave it to him, without thinking what I was doing. Then, the next moment, I regretted the act and strove to undo it. I remembered muttering something about fighting for France and joining the levies of Garibaldi, when I should need all the money I could get.

But old Dennis calmly locked my banknotes away in his safe, and assured me that I might 'list if I liked, but that it would be a downright fool's trick to carry about so much money among a parcel of Italians. He would send it on to me as I wanted it—twenty francs at a time. I could pick it up as I went, either at a bank, or from a correspondent of the Small Arms firm.

Once left to ourselves, Rhoda Polly seemed to think that we had come rather well out of the scrape.

"But it was Cawdor being there that saved you," said Rhoda Polly. "Father got so keen about Angus not spending his father's money, that he forgot about you. Now, you have only to run straight and do as you are bid——"

"Do you think I shall be able to go with Cawdor when this simmers down? I want to wear the red blouse as much as he does."

"As to that I don't know," said Rhoda Polly. "I don't believe he took it that you wanted to go soldiering as well. He means to put you into the works—fair field—no favour—up at five in the morning, breakfast in a tin can—that sort of thing—and as for Garibaldi's red jackets, he will sell them guns, but I rather fancy he will keep his son at home."

"Well," said Deventer, "I shall be ready for the works all in good time, but if Cawdor goes off with Garibaldi, I go. I could not stay behind. Nor could even the Pater keep me. He would not chain me to a wall, and——"

"At any rate," broke in the watchful Rhoda Polly, "here you are now, and the better you please the commander-in-chief the better chance there will be for you afterwards when the time comes. I shall do what I can for you, Hugh."

"Thanks, old girl," said Deventer. "Where are Hannah and Liz?"

"Where should they be but in bed, where, of course, I ought to be also. Only I have a dispensation to get what sleep I can in the daytime. I can see in the dark better than anyone in the house. I saw them gathering for the attack under the shadow of the pines on Thursday night, an hour after the moon had gone down. The Pater said it was a near shave, and spoke about my 'high-power vision' as if it were an attachment he had had fitted before I was born."

The defence of the Château was undertaken by the entire English-speaking colony of Aramon. The wives and children of the overseers and foremen were lodged in the rooms looking on the inner quadrangle, but took their meals in the great hall floored with many-coloured marbles. Their husbands and the younger unmarried men looked in occasionally when they could get off, ate what snacks stood handy on the sideboard and disappeared.

It was their duty to keep a watch over the workshops of the Company, and on the roof of the stables were half a dozen mitrailleuses ready to sweep the open square which lay out flat as a billiard-board beneath the windows of the Château Schneider, surrounded by workshops and storehouses on every side.

But a far more dangerous task was the raid through the ateliers themselves, which Dennis Deventer ordered to be made at irregular intervals.

"The divils would be breaking up the Company's machinery if I did not keep all their little plans in the back of my head. And that's none so easy, young Cawdor, for mark me this, 'tis easy to keep track of what a clever man will imagine to do. You have only to think what you would do yourself in his place. But you never know where ignorant stupid fools will break out, and that's the danger of it, Angus me lad!"

"But," I said, "they cannot all be such fools, for with my own eyes I saw them send the regular soldiers to the rightabout."

"The regular soldiers—raw levies mostly, I tell you," burst out old Dennis fiercely. "I should know, for I armed them man by man out of my own gun-sheds and rifle-racks. And I tell ye that beyond a few instruction sergeants from the artillery, there was divil a man among them who could point a chassepot or lay a piece. Our noisy revolutionaries simply frightened them out of the town, and if it had not been for our little stock company here, the biggest manufacturing arsenal in France would have been in their hands. Even as it is they have found enough rifles to arm themselves, but so far we have saved the mitrailleuses and the field artillery. The deputation which came from Marseilles did not go away very much the richer."

"But what is it that they want, sir?" I asked.

Dennis Deventer looked at me straight between the eyes.

"They want what they ought to have, Angus me boy, and what they should have, if I were not

a servant of the Small Arms Company."

I was taken aback at his answer, though I had heard something like it from my father. But in his case I had taken it for mere poetry or philosophy, and so thought no more about it. But a man like Dennis Deventer, who was fighting these very insurgents—why, I tell you it was a curious thing to listen to, and made me wonder if I had heard aright. The old man continued, his bold blue eyes looking straight over my shoulder as if he saw something beyond me.

"You ask me why in that case I am fighting men who are in the right? Right is right, and wrong is wrong, you say. But bide a moment, Master Angus. I agree that these poor devils should have better wages, shorter hours, and a chance to lead the lives of human beings. I agree that at least half of the net profits we make ought to go to the men who made every penny. The proportion would not be too large. I should be willing that my own share should be cut down to help this along. But, also, Angus me lad, I know that murder and arson are not the best way for men to get their rights. General insurrection is still worse. They have tried to kill me, who am their best friend. That is nothing. It belongs to the business of manager. It is one of our risks. But they have also tried to break the machinery and to set fire to the buildings. They would burn Aramon if they could—they are so ill-advised. And what for? Only to find themselves left stranded without work or wages.

"This is a flea-bite," he went on. "I defend the Château because of my wife and daughters. But the business began when the men saw the masters flaunting their riches, entertaining the Emperor and Empress at the cost of millions on the very day when processes were being served from door to door of the rows of cottages belonging to the Company. A man may burn his hand or hurt his foot, but he must by no means get behind with his rent. If we had not laid a dozen firebrands by the heels without troubling the police, blood would have been shed in Aramon that day of the Imperial reception."

Dennis Deventer had spoken with such determination and cold anger, that it took me with a new surprise to see him spring like a boy up the steel ladder on to the roof in answer to some call unheard by me.

Rhoda Polly followed, and Hugh and I did not stay behind. Rhoda Polly gave us both a hand.

"Mind your feet," she whispered, "there are all sorts of things scattered about."

I could hear the voice of Dennis Deventer somewhere in the darkness. The stars were still keen and bright, though the morning of the Midi was nigh to the breaking.

"Clear machine-guns three, four, and six," he ordered. "Train them on the doors of the fitting-shed. There are lights over yonder I don't like, and I can sniff the paraffin in the air!"

Deventer and I stood quite still with Rhoda Polly between us. Neither of us knew what to do. We had received no word of command, and what we had just heard had somehow dislocated our simple world of duty. We had imagined all the right to be on one side, all the wrong on the other. Now quite unexpectedly we saw the "tatter of scarlet" from a new angle. Its colour heightened till it glowed like a ruby. After all it stood for an idea—the ideal even which had brought us from school, and sent us on our wild-goose chase for Garibaldi.

The weak were to be supported against the strong. Perhaps, after all, those who had been long driven to the wall were at last to hold the crown of the causeway.

Meanwhile, peering into the night we could see the dark masses of men clustering about the street corners of Aramon. The stars were paling a little when we saw them suddenly bunch together and run towards the long tiled roofs of the fitting-sheds, filled with valuable new machinery. Lanterns winked and tossed as they went, torches flamed high, and there came to our ears a kind of smothered cheer.

"Are you there, Jack Jaikes?"

"Here, sir."

"Aim well in front of them, and let them have it as soon as they get close to the buildings. The ricochet from the walls will scare them as well as anything else."

There was no hesitation in the Old Man's fighting dispositions, whatever he might think privately of the men's cause. He would protect his master's property, and point out in the most practical way to the men that they were going the wrong way about to get their wrongs redressed.

"B-r-r-r! B-r-r-r!" whirred and spluttered the mitrailleuses. These first machine-guns made a curious noise like the explosion of many sulphur matches held one after the other over a lamp chimney. The effect, however, was wonderful. The black rush of men checked itself a score of paces from the fitting-sheds. Several fell to the ground, with a clatter of spilt petroleum cans, but the most turned tail and ran as hard as possible for the shelter of the streets and the trees along the boulevards.

One man only, very broad in the shoulders, bareheaded and belted with a red sash, kept on. He was carrying a torch dipped with tar, and this he thrust repeatedly under the doorway of the atelier.

"Give me Number 27, quick!" commanded Dennis Deventer. "I know who that man is, and I am sorry, but he must be stopped."

Jack Jaikes placed the rifle in the old man's hand, and everybody held their breaths. The lintel of the fitting-shed protected the fire-raiser a little. We could see him thrusting with his torch till the sparks and smoke almost enveloped him. Then he threw down the torch and ran heavily back. He took hold of the first jar of petroleum which had been abandoned in the flight, and was hastening back with it when Number 27 spoke. The man appeared to gather himself up. Then he made a spring forwards, spilling the oil in a gush in the direction of the smouldering torch.

But there came no answering burst of flame. The distance was too great. Dennis watched a moment after reloading, then shook his head gloomily.

"He was a good workman too—yet that does not help a man when once the maggot begins to gnaw underneath the brain pan."

The next day broke fresh and bright, with only that faint touch of Camargue mist which the sun dissolves in his first quarter of an hour.

From the roof and northern balcony we could hear a curious thudding sound in the direction of the moulding-works.

"The steam hammer," said Jack Jaikes; "pity we did not think to put her out of gear."

When he came down the chief listened a moment with his better ear turned towards the sound. Then he smiled ironically.

"They are trying to get a big field-gun ready for us. Luckily we have sent off the last we had in store. But they can't do it. At least they can't do it in time. There are good workmen and capital fitters among them, but who is to do their calculations?"

"No matter," grumbled Jack Jaikes, half to himself, "they will go by rule of thumb, and though their gun would not pass army tests, they will make it big enough and strong enough to drive a solid shell in at one side of this house and out at the other."

At that moment the girls came down for breakfast, and there was no more talk about the insurgents, or the state of siege at Château Schneider.

CHAPTER VII

OUR FIRST COMMUNARD

Hannah and Liz Deventer came in arm and arm. Hannah grave and sweet, with her air of taking admiration for granted and being rather bored by it; Liz dimpled and glancing from one to the other, deciding which of the young men would best serve her for cavalier that day. As for Rhoda Polly she had been in and out of the room for an hour, enforcing authority in the kitchen, rousing new courage in frightened servants whom only her example and abounding vitality shamed into remaining at their duty.

Dennis Deventer did not appear. Jack Jaikes came down presently and carried him up a pot of strong coffee and some rolls. Most of us hardly made even a pretence of sitting down, so eager were we to get back to our posts, but Hugh Deventer and a young apprentice, Laurent, the son of an English mother and a French father, stayed to keep the two younger girls company. As for me, I followed Rhoda Polly out upon the roof.

There I cleaned her rifle for her carefully, while she sat and watched me, her chin upon her palms. We were both quite comfortably hidden behind the stack of north-looking chimneys.

Rhoda Polly had always been a friend of mine, and there was no false shame between us, any more than between two college comrades of the same age and standing.

In quickly lapsing phrases she told me how the trouble had begun.

"It was," she said, "altogether a political matter at first. It had to do with the position of Procureur of the Republic, held by young Gaston Cremieux of Marseilles. He had been appointed by Gambetta in September, in the war year. But he was a 'red' and belonged to the Internationale, so that the solid people of the department, royalists for the most part, set about to try and dislodge him. He used to come often to our house, and he and father sat long arguing. I think we all liked him. He had great influence with the men up at the works, and so long as he was permitted to speak to them and go to their reunions, we had no trouble.

"But when Gambetta lost his power, and Thiers became dictator, or president, or something, Gaston Cremieux could not long remain Procureur. They stripped him of his office, and gave it to a dry-as-dust lawyer who did as the military tribunals bade him."

I put a question here.

"No," continued Rhoda Polly, with a flash of indignation, "if you knew my father better, you would know that he does not shelter himself behind anyone. Still, Cremieux was undoubtedly a help. My father can explain better than I can, but the men down here wanted to make our department a sovereign state like the American ones—New York, Massachusetts, Ohio, and so on."

"But," said I, "over there they have just fought a long and bloody war for the purpose of proving that no state is sovereign, but each must be subordinate to the central authority at Washington."

"Well, I don't know," said Rhoda Polly, "at least, that was the idea of these people down here, and I suppose all over France wherever there are many workmen. The peasants and agriculturists are different. They want only two things: low taxes and high prices."

Rhoda Polly was swinging herself back and forward on the low parapet which ran round the roof in so careless a fashion, that I begged her to take care that she did not lose her balance. At my words she stopped, cast a glance behind her, was instantly brought to her feet by what she saw, and ran towards the steel ladder crying, "It is Gaston Cremieux. I must let him in."

I went to the parapet holding the cleaned gun idly in my hand. A tall young man, with dark hair and a slight pointed beard, was coming straight across from the head-quarters of the insurgents. He walked easily and with a confident swing up the wide Stair of Honour which led to the front door.

Before he had reached the top the bolts were already shooting from within, and the door soon stood open; for Rhoda Polly had gathered in Jack Jaikes on her way, to help in undoing the intricate barrage and strengthening of the defence.

I am not sure that Jack Jaikes looked with much favour upon the welcome which Rhoda Polly gave to the young ex-Procureur of the Republic, but the lady knew well what she was about. In losing his office he had neither lost in influence nor authority, and she knew that if anyone could help to end the strife, it was this polite and deferential young man.

"I have been over at Nîmes seeing the family of my friend Rossel," he explained. "I heard there was some trouble at the works, so I took Aramon-les-Ateliers on my way back to Marseilles."

"That was good of you," said Rhoda Polly, "if anyone can set things right, you can. You know what my father thinks, and what he has done for the men, but he will not have the firm's machinery tampered with if he can help it."

Gaston Cremieux nodded his head of crisp black curls.

"*I* understand," he said; "but there are men over yonder who cannot understand the uprightness of a man like your father. Worse still, they cannot believe that he wishes them well, just because he is a manager in the pay of the Company. He must on that very account be their enemy, they say, and they remain blind to the fact that he alone can put their needs and demands before the masters."

"Come up and see my father," said the girl, and without waiting for any word of consent, she turned and led the way, flitting before him with the lithe grace learned in the gymnasia of Selborne College.

Some minutes afterwards I encountered Jack Jaikes who had returned from re-bolting and restrengthening the door.

"If I could break that young scoundrel's neck I would be doing some good. He is at the bottom of all this trouble. I went to one of his speechifyings to see what he was after, and he led them like a flock of lambs. He was preaching revolt and red revolution, so far as I could make out—the works to belong to the workers and such-like clotted nonsense—and now Rhoda Polly receives him like an angel from heaven, and up they go to throw dust in the eyes of the old man. If I had my way of it—*augh*!"

And here Jack Jaikes turned away snorting to express the suddenness and certainty with which he would regulate the case of ex-Procureur Gaston Cremieux, if the matter were left in his hands.

On the roof another view was being taken. I heard the details from Hugh Deventer, who at this time was constantly with his father, now that he had been forgiven and, as it were, taken back into the general scheme of things as conceived by Dennis Deventer.

"Rhoda Polly brought him up" (so ran his narrative), "and it was like watching a hen with a new brood of chickens to see the pair of them. Rhoda Polly is like that. She was quite sure that she had found the specific remedy for all our woes, so she could hardly let the man speak at first, so anxious was she that he should say the right thing.

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"She kept at it interrupting so long, that at last the Pater, who was not specially patient just

then, told her to go away and let them talk it out in peace. And that is pretty strong from the Pater to Rhoda Polly, for mostly he encourages her to say and do just what she likes. She is not like the others. There is nothing of the mother's-apron-string-girl about Rhoda Polly. She likes running about the works in a dirty blouse much better than sitting all day, with embroidery on her knee, listening to mother purring.

"As for Cremieux and my father, they understood each other from the first. It was wonderful to find how much they had in common. And he will help to stop the rioting. He says he will not go away from Aramon till the men are back at work. Cremieux's opinion is that these sporadic risings do no good, even when run on the best lines, without personal violence or destruction of property. To succeed, the thing must be a national movement, concerted and directed from each one of the great towns, otherwise the bourgeois government merely waits till its feet are free elsewhere, and then tramples out one by one all the little revolts."

At that moment Deventer caught me by the arm.

"Hold hard," he whispered, "here he comes with the Chief. I declare they are as thick as thieves, and yet in an hour he may be leading the rascals over yonder to burn down the Château."

The restless eyes of Dennis Deventer spied me out.

"Ah, Angus me boy," he hailed, "come this way. You two ought to know one another. This is our philosopher's son from Gobelet, who has run away from college to take service under Garibaldi."

"If he casts his eyes in that direction," said the dark young man, smiling, "I can find him more profitable work nearer home."

"Come, none of your proselytising on my ground!" said Dennis Deventer, laying a heavy hand on his companion's shoulder. "If he chooses to go and get a bullet in him for the sake of France, that is his own affair. But I will not have him mixed up in your little revolutions about which he knows nothing at all."

"But I will teach him. He is intelligent—of a fine race—it is such men we need. Let me speak to him, I beg."

But Dennis Deventer would listen to nothing. He pushed his visitor out of the hall, laughing and shaking his head good-humouredly.

"Take anyone you like from my rank and file," he said, "but leave my staff officers alone."

But I did not forget that tall, grave young man, who talked so earnestly and pleaded so strongly for a chance to teach me the wisdom of insurrection.

CHAPTER VIII

I SEE THE SCARLET TATTER NEAR AT HAND

I might have thought much more about Gaston Cremieux and the dark fatality of his eyes, if other things had not immediately distracted my attention. The garrison had had its noon dinner in the great hall, and at one o'clock the family were served in the fine red and gold dining-room, the furnishings of which had been the gift of the Emperor. Dennis Deventer sat at the top of the table with the gleeful air of having dispatched the business of the day.

There was a feeling of picnic unceremoniousness about the feast. The servants were somewhat thinned by flight, and as there was no hard-and-fast etiquette in Dennis Deventer's house on any occasion, several of the younger apprentice engineers assisted in the service, partly from a general feeling of loyalty, and partly because they liked to steal glances at the three Deventer girls—glances of which only Liz appeared conscious and or in any way prompt with a return fire.

Even Jack Jaikes, a dark figure of a Spanish hidalgo, in engineer's blue serge and pockets continually bulging with spanners, looked in and said with brusque courtesy:

"Anything I can do for you, Chief?"

"Nothing," said Dennis Deventer, over his shoulder, "except to come in and sit down with us."

"Thank you, Chief," answered Jaikes, "but I have dined already. I am watching the rascals from the roof. They have gone away for a while to their 'speak-house,' where doubtless they are talking over the matter. But it will not do to trust to appearances. I wish you would let me run that live wire from the big dynamo in the power-house. That would curl them up by the score if they tried any more of their rushes."

Dennis Deventer turned on him savagely, the carving-knife in hand and upheld

threateningly.

"You pirate," he cried, "do as I tell you, and if I hear of your meddling with the wires I will blow your brains out. Don't you see that we have got to go on living here, and the men we have to work the factory with are the fellows out in the brush yonder? They will try to kill us now, but they will not bear any lasting malice if a few of them are bowled over while we are defending ourselves. But electrocution by a live wire is a different thing. They can't fight us with those weapons, and I am not going to have our lives made impossible by any wholesale scientific butchery."

Jack Jaikes held his ground in the doorway, his thin body flattened against the panels to let the hurrying servants and apprentices pass.

"I don't know about 'scientific butchery,'" he said, "but I do know that some one of them is pretty handy with the trick of short-circuiting our new Gramme armature. It wasn't any garlic-smelling 'Gugusse' who worked that out. I have put it right three times, so I know it was no accident. But at any rate I am going to watch, if I have to slink about the dynamo-sheds all night. I shall carry the new Henry thirteen repeater I had from Edinburgh yesterday, and if I don't touch up that other gang of scientific ruffians my name is not Jack Jaikes, and I never smelt the good Clyde water from the Broomielaw."

Having thus had the last word, he shouldered his notable new Henry rifle and strode off with his head in the air.

"Bit of buccaneer blood in that fellow," said Dennis Deventer, "a hard horse to hold in sober times, but deuced dependable in an emergency. Hates the Frenchmen, however, and does not get on with them. Mostly I have to keep him on special duty, or in the office, though he is a capital engineer, and a capital 'driver' with Englishmen or Scots of his own breed who understand him. But if he is not careful he will get something for himself one of these days—a knife between the shoulder-blades as like as not."

Gentle Mrs. Dennis had her lament to make.

"I wish you would give him to me to look after. He can do almost anything. He mended my spare sewing-machine which has not worked for years, and made the missing parts himself. I believe some of them were given to Liz to play with when she was a little girl, and I have never seen them since."

"By all means have Jack Jaikes to tinker at your embroidery frames—that is, if you can tame him. For myself I do not see him in the rôle of family emergency man. But you must wait till we get the things all fixed here and the shops running handily. Then I dare say it may be just as well for Jaikes to eclipse himself for a day or two. If you can persuade him to spend his time in the Château without coming into the works till things cool off a bit, it will be best for all of us. He will not find himself exactly popular for a while."

"Of course I can, Dennis," said his wife, who never doubted her powers of persuasion. "There are hundreds of things that need to be done, and the girls and I can easily find him work for a year. The place is going to rack and ruin. High or low hardly a bolt will slide. Not a door will lock except the outer ones which you yourself have had looked to recently. What do you say, girls?"

"It is quite true, father," said Rhoda Polly. "I was trying to get Hugh to do some little things down in the kitchen yesterday, but whatever they teach him up at St. André, to make himself useful is certainly not among them. He was as dense as a French plum-pudding, and I had far more idea of how to handle a tool, for all he is older and twice my size."

Both Hannah and Liz agreed that there was a decided missionary call for the assistance of Jack Jaikes in the Château as soon as possible. Something in the tone of his youngest daughter touched Dennis Deventer's educated ear.

He looked up sharply from his plate.

"Now, Liz," he said, "I will have no nonsense of *that* kind!"

Liz blushed and dimpled, but kept her eyes well on her knife and fork without a word. But there was a smile which lurked about the corners of her mouth which said that her father, though a wise and masterful man in his own house, could not control what was in the mind of a young girl.

It was a family tradition that at table Dennis Deventer should not be argued with. Their mother might say inconsequent things in her purring fashion, but only Rhoda Polly was allowed to stand up to their Old Man. Even she rarely interfered, except in case of flagrant injustice or misunderstanding, or when the subject matter under discussion had been agreed upon beforehand in the family conclave. In Liz's case Rhoda Polly judged there was no cause to interfere. It had become too much Liz's habit to count all males coming to the house as "her meat," hardly excluding the halt, the maimed, and the blind. If her father had noticed this growing peculiarity, he had done so "off his own bat," and on the whole it was a good thing. The knowledge that she was under suspicion at head-quarters might do something to keep Liz within bounds. At least if she did get tangled up in her own snares, she would not have the face to go to their father for pity or demands for disentanglement. Rhoda Polly

hoped that this would put some of the iron which was in her own blood into that of her more temperamental and impulsive younger sister.

The turmoil, the constant clatter of knives, forks, and plates, the discussion which swayed from one side of the table to the other, the well-worn family jests, which, because I held no key to their origin, shut me out from the shouts of merriment they provoked—all produced on me a feeling of dazed isolation. I liked the Deventers singly, especially Rhoda Polly and her father. I could talk to each with ease and an honest eye to my own profit or amusement. But I will not hide it from you that I found the entire Deventer family, taken together, too much for me.

I think I inherit my father's feeling for a "twa-handed crack" as the only genuine method of intercourse among reasoning beings. More than three in a conversation only serves to darken counsel by words without knowledge. In a company of four my father is reduced to complete silence, unless, indeed, he assumes his gown professorial and simply prelects. In this way alone, and on condition that nobody says a word, my father could be induced to give forth of his wisdom in company.

But a sympathetic touch on the shoulder from Rhoda Polly, one of whose peculiarities was that she understood things without being told, delivered me from my awkwardness.

"I don't think you have been here since we all grew up," she said, with a smile. "We *are* rather *assommant*, I admit. We stun people with our trick of throwing ourselves at each other's heads. But you will soon get used to the clamour. Meantime, if I were you, I should go out and walk in the acacia avenue. It is a good place to be quiet in, and I have it in my mind that you may learn something there"—she paused a moment—"something that will take the taste of Jack Jaikes' threatenings and slaughters out of your mouth."

She had moved back her chair a little so as to let me slip out, and then with a nod and half-smile she launched herself into the fiercest of the fray. So keen was challenge and *réplique* just at that moment that I was outside the fine old tapestried dining-room without being perceived by anyone.

I ran downstairs and reported to the sentinel on duty at the front door. I told him that I did not feel well and was going to take the air. He asked if I had my revolvers with me, and was only pacified at sight of them. He had gone often with messages from the Chief to my father at Gobelet, and so took an interest in me.

I skirted the house, and was just plunging into a belt of woodland through which I could gain the acacia walk without being seen, when I was hailed from the roof by Jack Jaikes. He wanted to know where I was going, and what I was going to do when I got there.

Instead of being rude and obvious I made him the reply which I knew would baffle him.

"Ask Rhoda Polly!" I said, and he swore aloud. If he had not been safe on the roof he would have come after me at once. As it was I advised him that he had as much responsibility as one man could safely shoulder, and that he would do wisely not to fret about me.

With that I waved my hand and stepped into the thickest of the bushes. The little wood ran round an artificial lake, and was prolonged right to the great wall of the Château policies half a mile away. It was the part of the grounds most distant from the works, and from what might be called the centre of disturbance.

I climbed a young but good-sized plane which overtopped the wall. It had been pollarded, and the step from the tree to the top of the wall was rather a long one. I managed it, however, without difficulty, thanks to the bough of an acacia which came swaying and trembling over from the highway beyond. The next moment I had dropped like a cat out of the acacia boughs into the road. A young man was sitting on a fallen tree trunk, pensively smoking a cigarette, his hat pulled low on his brow, and his eyes on the road.

I had no chance to escape his notice, for the sound of my feet attracted him and he looked up at once. He rose smilingly and held out his hand. It was Gaston Cremieux.

CHAPTER IX

A REUNION OF THE REDS

"Did Rhoda Polly send you?" Cremieux asked, though I am sure he knew.

"She bade me come here, saying that perhaps I might learn something to my advantage."

He looked at me queerly, and with a shade of suspicion which I quite misunderstood.

"Then I may take it that she does not mean to come herself?"

"I am sure she has not the least idea of that. She was in the very thick of a discussion upon the possibility of factories and ateliers being run entirely by working men. The whole family

had taken sides, and when I came away I expected every moment to see them leap at each other's throats."

"They are extraordinary, but quite admirable," he said, throwing away his cigarette and rising. "We cannot breed anything of the kind in France. Our spirit of family discipline forbids it. We have the cult of ancestor worship as in China, only we do not get farther back than father and mother. It is mainly the mother who leads the young men of France. We have them among us too, these good mothers, women who teach their sons to fight to the death for the great Day of Freedom. But they are scarce. Our women are still under the heel of the priesthood, and the young men, though they may follow us, still keep the inmost corner of their hearts for their mothers; and one day when we most want them, we may find them missing at roll-call. His mother cannot bear that her son should be outcast and accursed. He need not go to Mass, but if he will only see her favourite priest a moment in secret, she is sure that he will stay at home with her. Like you, Rossel is a Protestant and has not this to put up with. He is now in Metz with Bazaine, but he will return, and then you and the world will see a man."

I asked him what the men meant to do, and if he thought he could not prevent further fighting and burning.

Before he had time to answer a bell began clanging furiously in the town.

"That is the signal," he said; "the Commune of Aramon is to meet in general assembly. Will you come? You will be quite safe with me, even though I am going to make them very angry. And besides, as Rhoda Polly says, you will learn something to your advantage."

"Do you think she meant that?" I asked.

"Ah, you may go far and look long before you find out all that is in Rhoda Polly's mind, but at any rate I suppose she meant that you would be safe with me, and might hear a few things that are not included in the curriculum of the *Lycée* St. André."

We took our way towards the clanging bell, and it had the weirdest effect as we topped a knoll, where the noise came so fierce and angry as to put a stop to our conversation. Anon descending into deep dells out of which the pines shot straight upwards like darts, sheer trunks for a hundred feet before the first branch was poised delicately outwards as if to grasp the light, we lost the sound of the rebellious tocsin, or it came to our ears soft as the Angelus floated over the fields to a worshipping peasantry in days that were yet of faith.

But Gaston Cremieux kept on his way without paying much notice to the woodland sights about him. His colour rose, and his shoulders were bent forward with a certain eagerness. The bell seemed to be calling him, and I doubt not he was thinking of the responsibility of guiding aright these darkened souls. His convictions, his aspirations were theirs. But their volcanic outbursts of destructive energy, sudden, spiteful, and inexplicable, vexed and troubled him.

Yet the reason plainly was that they had been hurt by those in authority over them, and they struck back as naturally and instinctively as bees fly out to sting when their hive is overturned. That the affair is partly an accident does not matter either to bee or workman.

Presently we began to pass little villas—"Mon Plaisir," "Mont Dore," and "Château des Roses." The mountain path among the pines began to widen into a made road, and to carry traces of wheelmarks. My leader quickened his pace, and after a few minutes of threading our way among the houses of New Aramon, we turned aside and entered a wide space in the centre of which was a hall roofed with corrugated iron. Doors wide and high as those of a barn stood open, and in the interior we could see many people, men and women, already seated on rude benches.

There were also groups outside, but these were mostly younger men, sullen-faced and furtive of eye. To me it seemed as if they regarded my companion with no favourable looks. Several had been wounded in the fighting, and now carried bandaged arms or white-wrapped heads. Somehow I knew at once that this was the dangerous element, and I knew that the whirring machine guns behind which glanced the pitiless eye of Jack Jaikes, had had something to say to them.

Outwardly the Reunion of the Reds had nothing to distinguish it from other political gatherings in the Midi. Indeed the type had been struck out in the earlier pre-Robespierre period of the great Revolution, improved upon in 1830 and 1848, and had now imposed itself even upon the anarchists.

A president was appointed, who had his pair of vice-presidents and a couple of secretaries to prepare a report of the proceedings exactly as you may find described in Mirabeau's *Courier de Provence*.

The Hall of the People at Aramon had been an old riding-school in the days before Solferino, when the scheming Emperor was hotly preparing for his campaign across the Milanese plains. It was now a rather dimly lighted, well-ventilated meeting-place, with a clean light-varnished platform in front for speakers, and behind a broader space on which cane chairs had been set out for the "assessors"—as we would say "members of committee." These were being filled as we entered the hall. Names were called out, and sturdy fathers of families

rose from beside their spouses to tramp up to the "assessors" chairs, not without a certain conscious dignity as citizens whose worth was unexpectedly made apparent to all men. I have seen the same expression since on the faces of men pressed to become members of a municipality, or even a village council, and I suppose Cabinet Ministers look like that when the new Prime Minister hints at the object of his visit.

The entrance of Gaston Cremieux called forth a kind of shrill cheer, but the Latin races had not at that time learned the full-bodied roar which greets and encourages a favourite orator in England or America.

I was seated at the right of the speaker's platform, and a little behind in shadow—which was as well, for there I could see without being seen. And what I saw astonished me. There were nearly a couple of thousand people in the riding-school by the time that Gaston Cremieux had shaken hands with the President and taken his seat. The iron galleries which ran round contained the younger people, many girls and their sweethearts, while at the far end were a score or two of long-limbed fellows clustered together—probably day labourers whose dusky tints and clustering black curls indicated their Italian origin.

So long as the great doors remained open, I could see outside the restless hither and thither of the young men who had scowled at us as we came into the court.

It was not long before the President and Bureau of Workmen of the Ateliers des Armes at Aramon declared that this properly called and constituted general meeting was open.

It was evident that some of the elder men were ready enough to speak, and a grave-faced grey-headed man rose to make his way towards the speaker's platform. But long before he reached the *estrade*, it had already been taken possession of by a young man with a shaggy head and wild beady eyes. This was Georges Barrès, a moulder in the new big gun factory. He had but recently arrived from St. Etienne, and had instantly become a notable firebrand.

The speech into which he plunged was a fierce denunciation of the masters and managers, through which ran the assertion that all property was theft. The workers, therefore, were justified in redressing their wrongs with the strong hand, and he and his companions would see to it that they did not die of starvation with so many rich and fine houses all about them. As for Monsieur Deventer and his English vermin of overseers, they must be killed out like rats. Only so would the town be purified. Only so would their dead comrades be avenged, and a solid foundation be laid for the Free Commune in which the works and all within them, the profits and everything included in the year's trading, should belong absolutely to the workers.

There was some applause from the groups that had gathered in, ceasing their rapid caged-wolf sentry-go to hear their leader. But for the most part the meeting sat silent and unresponsive.

At a nod from the chairman a sturdy mechanician rose. He was an "assembler," or skilled workman, who takes the parts of the gun as they are sent in from the various departments, and then with file, saw, and sandpaper, but especially by the wisdom of the eye, "assembles" them into one complete weapon such as can be issued to fill the orders of the Government. Père Félix was a man much regarded in Aramon les Ateliers, and a silence followed his taking of the speaker's place. He was in no hurry to begin. He knew his power and the worth of his opinion, and was determined to conduct himself with the restraint and gravity which he demanded from his audience.

Père Félix opened by a word as to the speaker who had preceded him on the rostrum. Comrade Barrès had spoken (he said) with an earnestness which would have been noble if it had been allied with wisdom. But of course their companion laboured under the double disadvantage of being a foreigner himself, a Spaniard from Catalonia, and of knowing nothing about the district. The Englishmen who were to be killed like rats had been for the most part of them friends and neighbours ever since the works were opened, and in any case for a much longer period than Comrade Barrès had spent in France. Besides, like themselves, they were men with wives and families. They had aided each other in sickness, their wives had interchanged kindlinesses, their children had played together—why should they be doomed to a slaughter of the innocents worse than that of Bethlehem?

As for Director Deventer, he had defended himself when he was attacked in his own house as every man has a right to do. And what was the use of founding an Internationale in Aramon to bring about universal peace if its first action was to send men sneaking forth under cloud of night to kill women and children? Blood had been shed and he regretted it, but the lesson learned was a useful one, bitter in the mouth, but sweet in the belly.

When Gaston Cremieux rose to give an account of his mission he was received with a storm of applause, but the young men at the back, clustered near the door, were conspicuously silent. But lately Cremieux had been their idol, and would be so again; but for the moment he was under deep suspicion, and they stood sullenly glowering at him, occasionally murmuring to each other the accusations so typical of men of Latin race, when their idol does not exactly fulfil their expectations.

Gaston was a traitor. He had sold himself. So much was evident to them, though as usual it was difficult to see who would have money or interest to buy the traitor to the Cause.

But after all there is something communicative in the thunderous applause of a great assembly, and many of those who had come to hoot were readiest with their cheers before Cremieux had uttered a score of sentences. He spoke rather slowly, with marked emphasis, and repeated each point of his argument in different words till he had firmly impressed his meaning on his audience.

Yes, he had seen the manager. He had talked with him on the subject of their grievances, and he knew that so far as the power lay with Monsieur Dennis Deventer, their demands would be granted. Moreover, the Director would use what influence he had with the Government to prevent reprisals for the expulsion of the garrison from the town on the 21st of January.

They, on their side, must return as good workmen to take up their jobs. Nothing would be said. No man would suffer for the past, and pay on the higher scale would begin from the day they started work.

"And the comrades who died fighting, what of them?"

The question came bitter and scornful from the back of the hall, deep under the shadow of the gallery.

"What of them?" answered Gaston Cremieux calmly. "Well, we are all travelling the same road. We shall all end the same. They a little earlier, I a little later. We are not making revolution by sprinkling rosewater. From the beginning your Aramon outbreak was a mistake, as all such things done in a corner must be. When the bells ring for that august Twilight of the Newer Gods, you must waste no time storming through the streets of Aramon, shooting and destroying. You must go in mass to the railway, requisition trains, get yourselves instantly transported to Marseilles, to Lyons, or to Paris. There your brothers will have formed governments which your disciplined bayonets must sustain. Then, having established a firm rule over the big towns, the submission of the rural districts is only a matter of time.

"But," he added, with slow emphasis, "we can only succeed by being sure of our comrades. They must wait for the signal, and the signal may not be long in coming."

He concluded with a moving picture of the new Heavens and earth which would arise when the workman was made part owner of his factory, and when wars were no longer made by kings and emperors against the will of the people—a glad peaceful world, well ordered, well content, and without poverty.

It was very noble and very convincing, delivered with a kind of austere fire strange in one so young and fragile. The people shouted for "Gaston" as if he had been a son of each of their houses. The motherly women shed tears, and I heard prayers spoken aloud that this and that saint, or more especially the Holy Virgin, should protect him.

There was no doubt at all that he carried the meeting with him. The works of Aramon would be reopened next day, and the director's terms would be accepted.

This was the sense of the meeting as interpreted by the President. It was put to the vote and carried unanimously, but the sullen young men under the gallery had already opened the doors and passed silently out. I could see them resuming their wolf's prowl in little packs of four or five, keeping quite distinct from the decent burgesses who had so lately filled the body of the riding-school, and were now pouring towards their homes in Aramon in dense black streams.

CHAPTER X

JEANNE'S VELVET EYES

"These are our potential Troppmanns," said Gaston Cremieux, as we passed through the grounds of the riding-school. "We must not blame them too much. It is partly our fault. We have taken their religion from them, and they have not yet enough moral sense to balance the loss. They have learned at our meetings and conferences that they have not come to their own, and they want to break their way to immediate wealth and independence by the stroke of their own hands. All they can see is that the rich have pleasures from which they are shut out—wine, women, and feasting chiefly. This orgy of their imaginations heats the blood so that the younger of them have come to think such things the only good. The schoolmasters also are to blame. They have not instructed them in noble thoughts and duties. The Church which has let them slip without effort is to blame. But we of the liberating societies are most to blame, for we have given them nothing to replace the Catechism they learned, and the mystic trappings of that religion in which we have taught them not to believe. Hence they are our Troppmanns in haste to be rich, on edge to taste every sort of forbidden fruit, and in order to reach their pleasure they are ready to slaughter men, women, and little children with as much cold-bloodedness as did the murderer of the Kinck family at Pantin."

Gaston spoke of a terrible crime which had shaken France the year before, when a young man of twenty, active and intelligent, had with devilish cunning slain an entire family of eight, his friends and neighbours, in order that he might "get rich quick," and begin a new life in a new country.

Cremieux seemed to feel himself in some measure responsible for these lost sheep, but he made no attempt at present to conciliate them, feeling perhaps that the pains would be thrown away or his motives misunderstood.

"If we can keep them from active mischief till we want them, all will be well," he kept repeating. "A time will come when such as they will be invaluable, but at present they exist in every town and village in France—budding 'hooligans' or 'Apaches,' ready for robbery and murder, counting their own life a light thing and the taking of another's a jest. If only they would take service with Garibaldi and be made into men! That is where the North and East are going to outstrip us in the coming years. Their Troppmanns are all being swept into the fighting line, and will come out honourable citizens, while we of the South, untouched by the German armies, have our idle rascals on our hands, becoming a greater curse and burden every year, and a standing menace to the next generation.

"But," he paused thoughtfully upon the phrase, "when the day for the real struggle begins, we can find them work to do, and shoot them if they will not do it. To keep them quiet in the meantime is the difficulty."

By the time Gaston Cremieux had thus delivered his soul upon the question of the town-bred ne'er-do-weels—the Vauriens of the Midi—he was striding along the edge of the Rhône, till at the end of the quay we turned in the direction of the Durance, the swift river which comes rushing from the mountains, and the muddy torrent of which makes turbulent the clear glaucous-blue of the Rhône from a little below Avignon.

By this time my stomach, always on campaign, began to remind me that, though I had been learning the secrets of Communism, particularism was still rampant within my body.

"Let us go to see Madame Félix," I suggested. "Her husband spoke at the reunion to-day. He is a chief among the workmen, but his wife is worth a score of him when a fellow is hungry, and his daughter Jeanne Félix is the girl best worth looking at in these parts—our friends at the Château alone excepted."

Gaston Cremieux smiled indulgently and with a sort of patient scorn for my enthusiasms.

"I hardly know what it is to be hungry," he said gently; "and except some of our brave mothers of the Commune, and of course Rhoda Polly, one woman is much the same to me as another."

It was on the tip of my tongue to say, as I should have done to Deventer, "Then the more fool you!" But there was actually something about the young ex-Procureur of the Republic which made one shrink from familiarity. Instead, I turned through a growth of tall rushes, the cane-brakes peculiar to Provence, in the direction of the little ferry-house. It was war-year, and nobody had thought of cutting them. The stiff leaves whistled frostily as we pushed our way through, the supple yellow *cannes* clattering behind us as they sprang back. After them came a tangle of withered vines, still clinging to the trellis of a dismantled house, and then we found ourselves on the river bank overlooking the cottage belonging to Mère Félix of the Durance Ferry. The boats were all on the other side, so I was obliged to make a trumpet of my hands and call loud and long for "Mariana," which besides being the baptismal name of the lady of the house, is an excellent resonant word to carry across an estuary. Now the Durance, though an absurdly tricky river, is no arm of the sea. Its race is short and turbulent, though it makes as much trouble as possible (which is no little) for those who dwell on its banks. It plays with inundations, whirlpools, eddies, and deceitful currents, as a child with toys. You cannot row for ten strokes straight upon it, for it will bubble up and snatch the oar out of your hand, or failing in this, it will suddenly send the bow of your boat deep into a reed-bed as if it were part of a conjuring trick. I knew somewhat more of the matter than most, for had not Jeanne Félix taught me? I had often gone over to spend a day there during the long vacations. For my father, buried among his books, made no objections to my roaming the country at will.

Cremieux and I presently stood at the top of a rough and tumble-down flight of steps which led to a pier in somewhat better condition. I recognised the work of my own hands upon this last. For Jeanne and I had coopered it up only last year, so that her passengers might land without risking their lives each time. Paths extended both up and down stream, but as yet nothing had been done to the flight of rough-hewn steps of split pinewood leading to the forest above. These things I did not communicate to my new revolutionary friend, for I was busy wondering what effect Jeanne Félix would have upon him.

My fourth or fifth shout brought the Mère Félix wrathfully down to the river edge where her white cap and broad head ribbons showed between the tall *cannes*. She had a couple of oars upon one shoulder and called across at us, "Who is making such a noise with their Marianas? There is no Mariana here except to my husband, the Père Félix, who is now from home, doubtless at one of his foolish reunions——"

"Dear Mariana," I answered, showing myself at the end of the little pier, "push out a boat

and you can kiss me for it. My father says you may. Also send Jeanne quickly, for she and I can row so well together."

"It is that rascal of an English student, Monsieu' Aügoose from Gobelet. Well, I might have guessed. Yet it is not playtime at St. André that I have heard. I shall have you sent back and whipped. What, they do not whip at St. André? Ah, it is no wonder, then, that you young people wax so impertinent. If only you were *my* boy, I should not call upon Père Félix to help me. No, no—I would——" and the old lady, smacking one hard hand upon the other, conveyed her meaning exactly.

"Send Jeanne," I repeated, taking no notice of her pantomime.

"Send Jeanne," she imitated my college-trained voice, "Jeanne—Jeanne—it is always Jeanne!"

"Perhaps," I ventured, "when you were Jeanne's age it was always 'Mariana'! I'll wager that more people than Père Félix called you that in those days, petite mère!"

"Here comes Jeanne at last," she called, so that I could hear. "Do not put up with his insolence, Jeanne. He is a spoilt schoolboy, nothing more."

Jeanne stepped sagely into the skiff, with a foot so light and practised that the frail craft hardly quivered in the water. She was a tall, dark girl with a supple figure, both light and well-rounded, remarkably Diana-ish in a land where the women, save a few, are inclined to shortness, and in addition are already overshadowed by the stoutness which inevitably overtakes them after marriage.

Jeanne Félix received us without the least embarrassment into her boat. When I mentioned my friend's name in introducing him, there was one rapid up-and-down flicker of the drooping eyelashes, a flash of velvet eyes, and then without a word or a salutation she handed me the bow oar as if we had parted only the night before.

When we landed on the neat little *embarcadère*, below the Restaurant Sambre-et-Meuse, Madame Félix had vanished. I knew her to be already busy with the *menu* of our dinner, a matter which, in spite of her abuse of me, she would entrust to nobody.

There was a great chestnut tree before the door, and though the month was January, my pocket thermometer registered 62° Fahrenheit in our shadowed nook.

Here we sat and waited, talking with Jeanne till her mother should call us in to lunch.

The reformer smoked innumerable cigarettes, but he said little. I fancy he had not much small talk, and at times he seemed so far away that I wondered whether he heard the light badinage in which Jeanne and I are fond of engaging. Jeanne is freed from all fear of her mother's reproof and I do as I like, because I am a choice favourite with that lady, being the only person in the world she permits herself to abuse grossly, except her goodman Père Félix—who, according to her, is still more *impayable* and gifted with a faculty of irritation not to be told.

As for me, I am younger and not her husband, but she has known me since I could really receive from her palm the manual chastisement she had so familiarly illustrated.

Still, I must admit that so far as Cremieux was concerned, interest in the Restaurant Sambre-et-Meuse awaked only when from the river-path along the Durance we heard the sound of voices, and presently Père Félix emerged talking eagerly with Pipe-en-Bois Soult, nicknamed the Marshal, and several of the Old Guard of the Commune. Then his eyes lit up suddenly. He rose as if throwing a weight from his shoulders. He had come to his own again. This man bore the weight of a bullet he had gained on the day of the *coup d-état*. Pipe-en-Bois had been in front of the battle about the Luxembourg that morning of 1848 when Cavaignac's fusillade proved the futility of moderate Republican promises.

In the kitchen was great rattling of dishes, the voice of Mère Félix calling on her daughter Jeanne, summoning from a great way off her "torchon" Babette, a kind of scullery-maid gathered chance-wise from among the numerous squatter families clustered along the river's edge.

Such long-limbed slatterns were plentiful as blackberries and of as rank a growth all along the Durance. Monsieur Brunet, horsemaster and former "Red of the Midi," owned the water meadows all about, and smilingly allowed the little street of wooden houses fringing the banks. A stray rabbit might be caught out of the pine knolls, but Monsieur's grazing rights must be respected, and his ponies and brood-mares left in peace.

Probably none except the family Félix all along that riverine sweep of reed-bed paid a penny of rent or a tax to the Government. The rural guard with his sash and his great brass plate of office must, of course, have known of the colony. But for some reason or another he said nothing, and all the time the huts of the "zoniers" tailed out at both ends into more and more ramshackle sheds and *bicoques*.

Here arose the danger of the community. They could only exist by attracting no attention, and many of the ancient inhabitants, in good odour with the Sieur Brunet, were compelled to replace the fences which had been torn down to burn, or used as building material by their less scrupulous neighbours.

Hence came quarrels, sharp words, and occasionally the breaking of heads. The chief penalty was that no offenders against the unwritten law of the settlement were allowed to drink under the cool shade of Mère Félix's vine trellises.

The men who had come back with the proprietor of the Restaurant Sambre-et-Meuse were, of course, the fine flower of this scattering Faubourg Durance. They were full of admiration for their host, but every man of them knew that Père Félix would occupy a very different position at the Sambre-et-Meuse from what had been his in the late great meeting of citizens at the riding-school of Aramon. They seemed to be wishing to make up to him all the way for the coming loss of prestige.

At the journey's end he would have to submit to his wife's inevitable dictatorship, and support in his own proper person the reproach of the whole company. He became responsible (among other things) for the misdeeds of the half-wild cook-maid, for the uncertainties of the weather, for the lack of fuel, and for the vicissitudes of the lady's culinary apparatus. Like many a high officer, colonel, or commandant, whose word is law to a thousand men in barracks, the Père Félix came home to do pack-drill and practise the goose-step under the eye of a severe drill-sergeant armed with a broomstick.

But the good woman allowed no one except herself to treat her husband lightly, so that in a measure his self-esteem was re-established before company. The more guests there were at the Sambre-et-Meuse, the more consideration was it necessary to show for the proprietor.

A chicken had been set aside for me, and of that I was not to be deprived, or at least of as great a portion as could be piled on my plate within her inviolable kitchen, by Mariana of the liberal hand. Gaston Cremieux, though she looked upon him as a perverter of youth, and the worst of examples for her husband, was still a guest of honour, and he had come there in my company. Therefore he should have a share in the chicken. Roast mutton, soup, and boiled beef out of the soup-pot which had simmered all day by the fire were good enough for the others. There was plenty of good bread, better than rich men could buy in Paris at that moment—let the newcomers "bank up" with that and be thankful. These, with regard to food supply, were the conclusions of Mariana of the Restaurant of Sambre-et-Meuse among the reed-beds of the Durance.

CHAPTER XI

HOW MEN SEE RED

I need not tell at length of the wonderful talk, so new and strange to me, in which men and things were judged wholly from a revolutionary point of view. But all the same I began to perceive that the men before me were really and fundamentally simple souls, to whom the future state of Liberty and Equality appeared as a kind of fairy godmother. Out of some inexhaustible bag she would pay each man according to his family needs, money sufficient for his wants and pleasures. He would labour just long enough to place an equivalent in the Fairy Godmother's hands, but no longer. Their wives would keep in order the wardrobes of the bachelor leaders and orators. They would at certain hours also set their houses in order. Others would clean the schools and public-buildings, and for such services additional monies would accrue.

The immediate settlement with the Small Arms Company and its manager was considered purely a temporary matter. Oh, yes, Monsieur Deventer was a good man, and no one could find any fault with him so far as the work was concerned. But, of course, there would be no real peace till they themselves owned the mines and factories, the rolling-mills, the assembling sheds and the hard-stone quarries. Then, indeed, a golden flood would flow directly into their pockets, and in a year or two they might be busily building houses "like proprietors." It was their own word, and even then they did see the delightful incongruity of the proposal. I did not think it worth while to point out that if they disinherited the mill-owners, a younger and still more advanced generation would very hastily expropriate any villas they might build.

But one question I did put to them. "Supposing," I said, "that you take possession of the Arms Factories and carry them on dividing the proceeds among you in proper ratio, after all machinery such as you use is delicate. It wears out quickly. Who is to replace it? Will you keep back so much each week from your wages? Whom will you entrust with the money? How do you know that he will not escape to Switzerland or Italy, carrying your new machinery with him in his breeches pocket?"

This they could not answer themselves. They had not thought of it. Of course, they were accustomed to seeing Deventer and his gang installing a new machine, but where it came from or who paid for it never crossed their minds. With one accord they looked to Gaston Cremieux. He would know what to reply, for he had taught them all they knew. Only by his teaching did they understand even so much. His answer was ready.

"The Commune will lay aside so much of the factory profits each week or month for repairs,

the renewal of machinery, the introduction of new types, and so on. This deduction shall be made before wages can be paid."

Such was the oracle's decision, which to me seemed just and natural, but it was wonderful to see the swiftly darkening brows of those who listened.

"What, the Commune would keep back a part of our earnings!" cried Pipe-en-Bois. "Then I say that we will only have exchanged one master for another, and it is not worth the trouble."

Nor could he be moved from his position. Gaston Cremieux could silence him, telling him that doubtless he would himself be a member of the Commune of Aramon. But the man's dark mask as of a gargoyle only took on a deeper scowl, and he looked from one to the other of his companions, sure of their sympathy as he repeated, "What is the use of changing when the Commune will steal from us the earnings of our hands even as the masters do now?"

These were early days and militant theorists (as at present) found construction as difficult as destruction was easy.

Marvelling I sat, and viewed about me these grave men, the elect of the factories and mills, accomplished artisans, yet even now incapable of leadership, or even of submitting to the guiding brain which would give them a chance of success. This thoughtful young advocate of Marseilles was their idol, yet for a mere difference of opinion they were ready to cast him down from the throne they had just set for him. I conceived a new opinion as to the value of popular favour, and I noted that the head of an iconoclast had no easier a resting-pillow than that of the king whose crown he threatened.

We waited till the feast had begun to degenerate a little. Sundry jests and snatches of song seemed to offend the austere thoughtfulness of Cremieux. So I made a signal to Jeanne, previously agreed upon, and she hastened away to get ready the boat, while Gaston and I regulated the expenses with the good hostess, her face still shining from her culinary labours.

While she was changing a ten-franc piece from an immense pocket which swung from her side under her blue rep petticoat, she seemed suddenly to become aware of the noise within. She stepped to the door of the dining-room, listened a moment, and then opening it sharply, said, "Père Félix, if you continue as you are doing, I shall ask you to leave my house!"

"Pardon, Madame," said her husband instantly, rising to his feet and bowing, and the company, feeling themselves somehow vaguely in the wrong, rose to their feet and bowed also in the direction of the door at which appeared the heated face of Madame la Ménagère.

There was no doubt about it that Mère Félix intended to be both master and mistress in her own house, and behind her back the men rubbed their hands and thought how differently *they* could manage a woman.

We stepped outside into the clean well-aired vault of the twilight. The breeze was from the east, which in Provence of the South has not the terrors of our wind of that name, but is soft and perfumed with the early blossoms along the Gulf of Genoa. The Coast of Azure was sending us up an evening blessing.

We strolled a long way in silence, taking the river road which leads towards Aramon. Then Cremieux broke the silence by asking me brusquely if I had known Rhoda Polly long. I did not think the question ought to have been asked in that tone, but he had done a good deal for me that day and I most certainly owed him a civil answer.

"I have known Rhoda Polly," I said, "ever since I can remember. We used to fight in the garden for pig-nuts and in the woods for acorns. Rhoda Polly scratched my face with long sharp nails, and I thumped her back with little attention to chivalry. She could run faster than I, scratch more savagely, and when trapped she would sometimes bite like a little squirrel taken in the hand—yes, bite till the blood came."

Gaston Cremieux listened with a rather forced smile upon his lips. "And the others—were they present? Were you two allowed to run about the woods all by yourselves?"

You can change anything about a Frenchman except his idea concerning the co-education of the sexes. Here the anarchist is at one with Monsieur the Count de Mun, and Monsieur Jean Jaurès with the Archbishop of Paris.

The convent rule, whether applied by lay mistress or sister of the Sacré Cœur, constant supervision, a fiction of ignorance of things of the commonest knowledge, the girl never to be out of sight of her mother or aunt till the day she is delivered to her husband—these are what the heart of every Frenchman believes to be the only path which the girls he would marry should be allowed to tread. He may praise English and American methods, allow the charm of the result, but in his heart he prefers for himself his "snow-white gosling."

"Tell me about the college to which Rhoda Polly went," he continued, putting aside the early fightings and scratchings as too unsatisfactory for comment.

I told him of the restless yet ordered activity of Selborne College, of the work and of the professors, of the days when the students were permitted to receive young men of other

colleges, properly introduced and vouched for. I dwelt mischievously upon the friendships which arose during the common intellectual life of these years. I pitched it all a little strong, because I could not see why in the world he could not take Rhoda Polly as she was, and accept her marked kindness to him without submitting her past to hostile analysis.

When I told him all, he seemed to shake himself suddenly as a man half awake by force of will breaks his way out of a bad dream.

"Good night," he said, "I must go back to Aramon."

And so he left me planted open-mouthed upon the river bank.

CHAPTER XII

"GOOD-BYE, RHODA POLLY"

At Château Schneider I was received with tumultuary questioning on my return from the reed-beds. Where had I been? What had I been doing? I might easily have got my throat cut and no one would have been sorry. It was a scurvy trick I played them, slipping off like that. And so on—Hugh De venter being the loudest and most persistent.

"My friend in whom I trusted," was his cry. His grievance was not that I had broken bounds and would give no account of myself, but that I had sneaked off alone without giving him a chance to come along with me. However, a glance from Rhoda Polly and the smiling response of her eyes shut my ears to all this hubbub. She understood, and that was enough. I would, of course, tell her about it, making only a mental reservation in the little private matter of Jeanne Félix, and the spraying shadows which her long lashes cast on her eyes of purple-velvet. With a woman, there is no use of talking of another woman—not at least till the listener is well over fifty, and even then it must be done with circumspection.

But I knew my duty, and with another glance at Rhoda Polly I demanded to know where her father was, and in five minutes was sitting among the chimney-pots with that old fighter and captain of men stuffing a pipe bowl and preparing to listen. He nodded his head gravely when I told of my meeting with Gaston Cremieux. He grew restless as a caged beast himself when I described to him the hither-and-yon wolf's prowl of the sullen young men in front of the riding-school. But when I told him of the men's resolve to go at once to work, he rose suddenly to his feet with a shout.

"Jaikes, Irvin, Allerdyce, Brown, Macallister! Here!"

And at his cry these subordinates came running to him like dogs at the shepherd's whistle. Eagerness was in their faces, and confidence in their leader showed in their eyes.

"Young Cawdor has brought good news," he said. "The men are coming back. It may not be for long, but they are coming. They have taken the terms, and now I shall have to fight the masters single-handed. However, I can manage that. Run, fellows! Get the squads together. Set the furnaces going, and steam up in the boilers. It will be the easier for the men when they come in if they find everything ready for them. A few will troop in first in a non-committal way, then will set in a steady trickle of the secretly willing, and lastly the factory benches will fill up with a rush. In two days we will have the ateliers working at high pressure, and we may begin to send out our orders by Saturday."

The engineering sub-chiefs swung their hats in the air and yelled. It was the best of news for them, and they did not even wait to ask how I chanced to be so well informed. Dennis Deventer had doubtless assured himself of that. That was his business, not theirs. They rattled down the ladder one after the other as quickly as a barrel would roll the same distance. They simply fell through the trap-door and disappeared from sight. Presently we could see them leading their emergency gangs across the courtyard to the entrance of the works. In Jack Jaikes's contingent I noticed the broad shoulders and rough blond head of Hugh Deventer, towering like a Viking among the wiry Clydeside and bearded Tynemouth men about him.

His father must have noticed him too, for he turned to me with a smile.

"Yonder goes our Hugh. He is a strong lad, but has no spring. He falls all over himself at present. If you are still set on soldiering, you can take him with you. He has little sense as yet, but I can see that he will do what you tell him."

"Thank you, sir," I said; "war is a stranger business than we young fellows dream of. I cannot be responsible for accidents, but if you trust me with Hugh—well, he is my comrade, and I shall look after him as myself."

He held out his hand, after first glancing about to see that we were not overlooked, and grasped my fingers. Such demonstrations of emotion were by no means in his way.

"With Hugh it is a case of thews and brawn," he said. "When it comes to the marching, see

that you make him carry your musket as well as his own. He has no heavy load in his top story."

Of course I had to see Rhoda Polly before our final marching off towards the north. As I came down the great front steps of the Château Schneider I saw her crossing the lawn far away to the right. She was going in the direction of the vegetable garden, and I stood still on the steps till I watched her into the potting-house. With her hand on the latch she cast a look over her shoulder in my direction.

"Amaryllis desires to be first seen," I muttered, and after a comprehensive tour of the grounds I approached the potting-house from the rear.

Rhoda Polly was sitting on a bench with peat and leaf-mould in little boxes about her, and a red flowerpot held firmly between her knees while she kneaded the black flaky mass down with urgent little knuckles.

"If I don't get those Alan Richardson roses to do this year—why, the devil fly away with me!"

She spoke in French, and the words had not the same sound as in English. Something gay and Rhoda Polly-ish rang cheerfully in my heart.

"Really you should not swear!" said I. "What would Miss Balfour-Lansdowne say to that at Selborne College?"

"Oh, sometimes we said a good deal worse than that on the hockey ground, or in the heat of an argument. Besides, if you did not want to hear, you need not have followed me."

"Rhoda Polly," I said, "you know that I followed you because you made me a signal that you wanted to talk to me."

"Yes, I know," owned up Rhoda Polly, who scorned concealment. "Well, what have you to tell me now that you are here? I let you go just now and unbosom yourself to the Paternal without complaining. That was only playing the game, but certainly you owe it to me to stand and deliver as soon as you got clear."

"Well, and here I am, Rhoda Polly—which will you have—plain narrative—question and answer—the Socratic method, or a judicious mixture of the two?"

I knew the inquiry would resolve itself into the latter. Rhoda Polly went on with the potting of her Alan Richardson, biting her under lip at critical points, but ever and anon flashing a pertinent query at me over the boxes of mould without once raising her head.

With the exception of my talks with Jeanne and the harmless little philandering we had indulged in to pass the time, I confided the whole of my day's adventures to Rhoda Polly. I told her also of the permission that her father had given that Hugh should go north and join the new armies with me.

Then at last Rhoda Polly did lift her eyes with a vividness of reproach in them.

"You cannot find enough to do here?" she said. "You trust these men at the works? I tell you they are not to be trusted. I know them better than either you or my father, I have heard their women-folk talking, and I know what they mean to do."

"I know what they *say* they mean to do," I retorted. "I also have heard them in their cups, but it is only folly and emptiness."

"Do not be too sure," she said, patting the flowerpot round the edges and squinting down at it as if it were a work of art symmetrically finished. "I warn you we may need you here sooner than you think, and then Gaston Cremieux may not be so friendly as he is to-day."

I asked her why, but she only bent more over her work and shook her head. It had been clear to me from Cremieux's questions that he was in love with Rhoda Polly, and now from Rhoda Polly's prophecy of his future unfriendliness that she had made up her mind to reject him. But, in the meantime, it was my clear duty to go on and do what I could in the army.

We could not hope to defeat the Germans, but at least every additional man in the ranks added to the chance of withstanding them. If we could only hold them at bay till the politicians did their work, all this peaceful Southland would be spared the horrors of war and the more wearing pains of occupation and pillage.

I said this to Rhoda Polly and she could not help agreeing. Her assent, however, came from her clear head and trained intelligence, but her heart was still unconvinced that Hugh and I ought to go, leaving that houseful of women in Château Schneider. All this was perhaps natural enough, and certainly it made me feel warmer within to know that Rhoda Polly would regret me.

"I owe you a grudge," she said, as she stood up and rubbed the black crumbly mould briskly from her hands, "for without you we should at least have had Hugh. He would never have thought of going by himself."

Rhoda Polly had finished with her roses. She set out the boxes in a row, and then stood up facing me. Her eyes were steady and level like a man's—I mean a man of the North. They did

not droop and flutter like Jeanne's at the Ferry. Her breast did not heave nor her full throat swell. The pent-up emotion in Rhoda Polly's bosom found no such commonplace feminine vents. Only the firm lines about her mouth betrayed her, and perhaps a certain moist luminousness of eye.

"I would not hinder you, Angus Cawdor," she said steadily, "let a man do what he knows he ought. But at least you owe it to me to come back the very day the war is over. It is not till then that the storm here will break. I have it from the women. They advise us to go out of the country, but I have a better plan in my head. You must be here to help me carry it out."

"I shall be here, Rhoda Polly, if I get through all right!"

"If you get through all right——?" The words fell uncertainly.

"If I live, Rhoda Polly."

"Ah, if you live," repeated the girl, mechanically holding out her hand. And even as I looked, the bold bright look in her eyes was dimmed, as a pool greys over with the first coming of a breeze.

And thus I took my real farewell of Rhoda Polly. There was some of the black mould on my fingers as I went over to the shops to search for Hugh Deventer.

CHAPTER XIII

WE SEEK GARIBALDI

Hugh Deventer and I reached Orange only to hear that the recruiting parties of the Garibaldians had gone away north. But on the railway, hundreds of wagons laden with supplies were moving in the same direction, and with the conductors of these we made what interest we could.

We showed the letter we had brought from Gaston Cremieux, but these were men of the Saône and Isère, who had never heard of the agitator. But Hugh's willing help during heavy hours of loading and "transhipment," and perhaps also the multitude and flavour of my tales of Scotland, gained us a footing.

From them we heard with pride of what had already been done by Garibaldi, with such wretched material, and how the great Manteuffel himself, in his dispatches, had allowed the excellence of Garibaldi's tactics.

What we were most afraid of was that the whole war would be over before we got a chance. The men of the Isère, however, who on the strength of six months' campaigning considered themselves veterans, laughed scornfully at our young enthusiasms. They would march. They would fight. But as for beating the Germans in the long run it was impossible. That time had gone by when Bazaine had let himself be locked up in Metz.

"All we can do is to help the Republic to get out of the mess with some credit!" said a tall sergeant who sat in the open door of a bullock wagon. And the others agreed with him. They were on tenterhooks to know why we English should be so eager to take up their quarrel. The thousand Italians they could understand. They came because Garibaldi did, touched by the glory of his name, but we English—what had we to do with the affair?

Me they suspected of Southern blood from my quick slimness and swarthy colour, but Deventer was a joy to them. "That Englishman!" they cried, and laughed as at an excellent jest. His big hearty blundering ways, his ignorance of military affairs kept them perpetually on the grin. But when they saw him strip and repair a chassepot with no more tools than a pocket screw-driver and a nail file, they changed the fashion of their countenances. Hugh was not the son of Dennis Deventer for nothing.

Presently we found ourselves privileged stowaways, whirling in the direction of Lyons, protected by these good fellows, who hid us carefully from the rounds of inspection which visited the wagons at every stopping place. Mostly, however, no severe examination was made, and the word of the sergeant was taken that all was right inside.

But as soon as the train slackened speed we sprang on a shelf which ran along one end of the wagon, and there lay snug behind a couple of bags of potatoes.

At last, near Civry, a little town on the foothills of the Côte d'Or, we were abruptly ordered down.

It was a dark night and raining as we set our noses out. We would much rather have remained behind the potato sacks, but there was no help for it. Out we must come along with the rest, for Manteuffel's Uhlans were off on a raid and had cut the line between us and Dijon. At first we could only see the blackness and the shapes of the trees bent eastward by many winter blasts, but after a time our eyes grew accustomed, and we became aware of a long line of wagoners' teams drawn up on a road that skirted the railway.

We did our best to assist at the changing of the provisions and ammunition, and would have been glad of permission to accompany the convoy through the hills to its destination.

But we had the ill fortune to fall in the way of a captain of regulars who asked us our business there, and on our telling him, he answered with evident contempt, that in that case we had better go and look for "Monsieur Garibaldi." As far as he was concerned, if he found us in his convoy again he would have us shot for spies. Hugh Deventer and I could not rejoice enough that we had left our two beautiful Henry rifles and our stores of ammunition on our sleeping shelf. We knew well that our protector the sergeant and his men would say nothing about the matter, though they looked with unrestrained envy and desire of possession upon our repeating rifles.

Accordingly I advised Hugh to confide to the sergeant in private the name of his father, and promise that a similar rifle would be sent to him with the next consignment of chassepots.

The sergeant's eyes glowed, and he told us that he was under orders for his native town of Epinal, which he hoped to reach in about a fortnight. Hugh promised that he would find a Henry repeater with an abundant supply of cartridges waiting for him there at his mother's house. And accordingly he sat down in the empty wagon, and by the light of the lantern wrote a note to his father which he gave into the sergeant's hands to be posted at the first opportunity. He in his turn entrusted it to the care of the engine driver, who was getting ready to take his empty wagons rattling southward again to bring further supplies from the rich Rhône valley.

The sergeant also arranged that we should accompany the rear-guard so far as was possible during the night, when we were to strike off diagonally to the west to pick up Autun, where Menotti Garibaldi was reported to be waiting with a large force to cut off the retreat of the German raiders.

So we started on our march, and had soon reason to be glad that we were not stumbling at hazard up and down those leg-breaking vine-terraces.

The convoy had relays of peasants as guides, and at least we were kept along some semblance of a path. We could hear the rumbling and creaking of the wheels before us, but for that night the goad superseded the loud crack of the whip, and the language beloved of all nationalities of teamsters was, if not wholly silenced, at least sunk to a whisper. We marched far enough in the rear to be rid of the cloud of dust raised by the convoy, which fell quickly in the damp night air.

Occasionally an orderly would gallop back, dust-mantled in grey from head to heel. He was sent to see that we of the rear-guard kept our distance and did not straggle. The Isère and Grenoble men with whom we marched were veterans and in no ways likely to desert, so that the adjutant's report was at once accepted, and the officer galloped back. All the same we two regularly sneaked aside into a belt of trees or took refuge behind the vine-terraces as soon as the sound of hoofs was heard.

We had marched many hours in the darkness—from eight or nine of the evening till the small hours were passing one by one with infinite weariness. I was lighter on my feet than Hugh, having less to carry in the way of "too, too solid flesh." Consequently he suffered more, both from the weight of his rifle, and the dumb remorseless steadiness of the marching column. Forward we went, however, stumbling now and then with sleep, our feet blistered, and the rattle and wheeze of the ammunition wagons coming back to us mixed with a jingle of mules' gear through the dark.

At last, when it seemed as if we could do no more, the column halted, and our grateful sergeant came back in order to set us on the road to Autun.

"Yonder," he said, "you can see a hill which cuts the stars. It is high and steep, but to the right of it is a pass, and when you reach the top you will look down upon the lights of Autun."

He bade us a rapid good-bye, and hastened away to his own place in the column. With a final word of thanks to the adjutant (who is here a kind of sergeant-major), we left our kindly rear-guard and set out to find Garibaldi.

The night grew suddenly darker as we missed the shoulder-touch of a comrade on either side of us. We rolled over vine-terraces, clutching at the gnarled roots, or stumbled with a breath-expelling "ouch" into dry ditches all laid out for the summer irrigation. Fence rails and the corner posts of vineyard guard-shelters marked us black, and blue, but aloft or alow we held firm to the Henry rifles which were to be our chief treasures, when we should at last don the red cardigan of the Garibaldian troops.

To us it seemed as if we never would reach the top of that pass. We could see the mountain towering up on our left hand, and once a shower of stones came rumbling down as a warning not to venture too near. The wind was now soft and equal, and the unusual warmth had served no doubt to loosen the frost-bound rocks above, as well as to keep us in a gentle perspiration while we climbed the corkscrew pathway towards the hill crest. Things became easier after we had left the vineyards beneath us, and our road lay over the clean grassy plateau on which the sheep had that day been grazing. We rested a while in a shepherd's

shelter hut, and did not scruple to refresh ourselves with some slices of bread and sausage, washed down by a long swig from a skin of wine. We left a franc in payment, stuck into the cut end of the sausage, with a note appended that we were two recruits on our way to join Garibaldi. Little did we imagine that in a few weeks we should, without hurt to our consciences, simply have transferred the whole supply to our haversacks without thanks or payment.

There was still no hint of dawn when we started out, but beyond the lowest part of the ridge immediately above us a kind of faint illumination appeared. It burned steadily, and for a long while we could not explain it. It could not be the approaching sunrise, for our compasses told us that we were marching as near as possible due west.

Quite suddenly we topped the crest, and saw beneath us the lights of Autun gleaming hazily through a kind of misty drizzle. But that which struck our faces was in no wise wetting. It only struck a chill through us, making our greatcoats welcome. We had so far carried them *en bandoulière*.

The west side of the ridge was, in fact, already spotted with fine sifted snow, which blew in our faces and sought a way down our necks. Its coming had caused the fluorescent light we had seen as we were mounting the eastern slopes, and now with bowed heads and our rifles as well "happed" as possible, we strode downhill in the direction of the town.

At the limits of the chestnut woods the vineyards began again, and our troubles threatened to be as great as they had been after we left the convoy. But though fine snow fell steadily, its clinging whiteness showed up the stone-dykes and terraces as black objects to be avoided. There was, therefore, less tumbling about among the ledges of loose stones, and presently we came out upon a regular "departmental" road, with drainage ditches on either side, rows of pollarded willows and poplars, and kilometric pillars, with numbers on them which it was too dark to see.

Along this we made all haste, for we were bent on getting to Autun as soon as possible, and indeed it was not long before we were in the way of getting our wish.

"Halt! Who goes there?" came a challenge out of the unseen. Well was it for us that we had attempted no stealthy approach upon the town, but serenely clattered down the middle of the turnpike. Luckier still that we fell into the hands of regular mobiles of the army of the Vosges, instead of a stray company of *franc-tireurs*, who as like as not, would have cut our throats for the sake of our rifles, the stores of ammunition, and the few silver coins we carried.

We had come upon a picket of men of the regiment of Gray on the borders of the Haute Saône. It was like one of Napoleon's levies after Moscow—young lads of sixteen and men of forty or fifty standing by each other cheerfully, and without distinction of age or previous occupation.

We stated our purpose and asked to be taken to head-quarters. Like most of such casual recruits, we thought we would be taken directly into the presence of Garibaldi, but the Gray men astonished us by the information that the great soldier was almost a recluse, and indeed so much of an invalid that he could only review his troops from a carriage. His sons, Menotti and Ricciotti, were his fighting generals, but all directing power was centred in Colonel Bordone, through whom all orders came to the army.

In the meantime we were conveyed amicably to the temporary head-quarters of the 14th Mobiles of the Haute Saône. Here we found several officers, but after a look at us and a civil enough demand for the production of our papers, we were permitted to betake ourselves to the snug kitchen of an ancient monastery, where the soldiers of the outpost guard were sitting around a huge fire, or lying extended on couches of straw, sleeping the sleep of men who had marched far the day before, and expected to do as much more on the morrow.

Our clothes were soon dry, and our overcoats spread out to the blaze, after being well shaken and thumped to get rid of the clinging snow. The morning began to come tardily, and as if reluctantly. The snow had ceased, but a thin whitish mist had been left behind, softening and dimming all outlines.

The town of Autun bethought itself of waking up. A few shopkeepers took down their shutters in a leisurely fashion, the first of these being a couple of ladies, venders of sweet cakes, both pretty and apparently exceedingly attractive to the young Italian officers, all of whom had the racial sweet tooth as well as the desire to rival each other in the eyes of beauty.

Our men of Gray were rather contemptuous, but could not deny that these young sweet-suckers fought well and bravely whenever it came to blows.

"And I dare say, after all," said a tall brigadier, "it is better to munch sugar cakes flavoured with cinnamon than to swallow the filth they serve out to you in the *cafés*."

The others agreed, but we did not observe that their teetotal sentiments were more than platonic. At least, during all our stay with the 3rd Corps in the town of Autun, the Frenchmen went to the *café* and the Italians to the *pâtissière*.

It was nine o'clock when the brigadier of the post detailed two men to accompany us to the Cadran Bleu, the inn where the army head-quarters was established. We had a short time to wait, for the officers within were judging the case of a spy, a dull heavy-witted fellow who had formerly served in a line regiment, but who had had the ill thought to turn his knowledge of the army of the Vosges to account by compiling a careful estimate of the strength of Garibaldi's command, and offering it by ordinary letter post to General Werder of the Prussian service. The letter was addressed to his brother-in-law at Macon, who was to arrange terms. He, however, preferred patriotism (and the chance of a possible heritage) to his relative's life. So the officer of the day was already picking out the firing-party, for, as was the way of the army of the Vosges under Garibaldi, a very short shrift was given to any traitor. Though the supreme judges were Italian and the man a Frenchman, the good sense of the soldiers supported them in the certainty and rapidity of such military punishments. I saw the man come out between a couple of Mobiles with fixed bayonets. His hair fell in an unkempt mass over his brow. His face was animal and stupid, but he had little pig's eyes that glanced rapidly from one side to the other as if seeking for any way of escape. But there was none for him, as the rattle of musketry testified almost before we had reached the antechamber.

Here there were half a dozen young French officers and many Italians all talking together, who turned from their conversations to gaze at us. We had made what toilets we could, and the men of the Gray regiments had rolled up our overcoats in military style.

"Two English come from Aramon to enlist," we heard them say, with a certain resentment as if they had been offered an affront. "Do all the foreigners in the world think that France has need of them to fight her battles?"

However, one of the sub-lieutenants, a handsome lad, from a Protestant family in the Isère, came over to talk to us. The ice was at once broken, and the next moment we had quite a gathering round us admiring our Henry repeaters, and asking questions.

"That is the new Remington action!" said one who stated that he read English and American periodicals, but became appallingly unintelligible as soon as he attempted to speak a single sentence of the language.

"No," said Hugh Deventer, "the movement was invented by my father."

"And who may your father be? Are you travelling for the firm?"

"My father," said Hugh steadily, "is Monsieur Dennis Deventer, director-in-chief of the Arms Factory at Aramon-sur-Rhône, and he will supply as many of these repeaters as the Company is paid for. The Government have the matter under consideration, but if they do not hurry, the war will be over before their minds are made up."

An officer in the red cloak of the Italian corps pushed a door open, spoke an order in imperfect French, and the next moment we found ourselves in an apartment where two men were sitting rolling cigarettes at opposite sides of a long table. They were both tall, dark-bearded men with swarthy faces, clad in uniforms much the worse for wear. I knew them by instinct to be Menotti and Ricciotti Garibaldi. Both had a look of the common lithograph portraits of their father, but perhaps no more than one weather-beaten shepherd on a Scottish hill resembles his comrade on the next.

We stood at attention after the English manner instilled into us by Jack Jaikes and the numerous old soldiers who by Dennis Deventer's orders had taken us for drill during vacation time at the works.

The two grave men looked at one another and smiled. "We have seen something like this when the English lads came to us in Sicily eleven years ago, eh, brother? Tell us your names, little ones! Can you speak Italian?"

We could, and that made us, if not of the "children," at least something very different from the dull peasants whom Gambetta's conscription supplied, or the innumerable company of ne'er-do-weels who appeared from nowhere in particular, drawn by the mere sound of Garibaldi's name.

Hugh Deventer did not much like to be called a "little one," but the Italian speech is not like our English, which lends itself more easily to oaths and cursing than to the "little language" and the expression of emotion.

We presented the letters with which we had been furnished—one a personal epistle to Ricciotti from Dennis Deventer—the others for the most part addressed to the General himself.

That, however, made no difference. His sons opened them all without hesitation or apology. Indeed, we soon learned that, excepting the conduct of the campaign, Father Garibaldi was not allowed to concern himself with anything.

"Ah, Dennis Deventer," said Ricciotti, starting up and embracing Hugh on both cheeks. "I owe much to your father, more than I am likely to pay for some while. He took our word for it that the chassepots for the new troops would be paid for, even though he knows that the Government is likely to fall into the hands of those who hate us. Also the new twelve-

pounders—Menotti, brother, what shall we do for this man's son?"

"I must stay with my comrade, Angus Cawdor," put in Hugh Deventer. "He is far more clever than I am, and I should be lost without him. I am only a boy, but he——"

"Has the thoughts of a man—I see," interrupted Menotti, who had been considering us from under his hand without speaking. "I think it would be no kindness to add two recruits of such mettle to the number of the admirably combed and pressed young gentlemen in the anteroom out there. You had better take them, Ricciotti. You will be sure to find old Manteuffel hammering away at you on your return to Dijon, and the lads can take bite and sup with the 'Enfants.' Since they speak Italian no explanations need be made. They can be fitted out by the commissariat adjutant."

"The favour is an unusual one, brother. There will be grumbling."

"The circumstances are unusual, and so are the lads. There is but one Dennis Deventer, and we must do the best we can for his son."

And in this manner we became part of the personal following of Ricciotti Garibaldi, and were destined to take part in the war game which he played out successfully against Manteuffel and Werder till the coming of the armistice stopped all fighting.

CHAPTER XIV

"THE CHILDREN"

"The Children" were young men, some of them hardly more than boys, who had followed the Dictator from Italy. They came from all parts of the Peninsula, but the wide windy Milanese plain supplied most of them. A curious exaltation reigned in the camp. It was like the mystic aura of a new religion. One became infected with it after a few hours among the troops.

They were already veterans in their own opinion, and, feeling that the eyes of their General was always upon them, they claimed as their monopoly all desperate ventures, the front rank in stubborn defences, the rear-guard in retreat, and they died with an "Evviva, Garibaldi!" upon their lips. One snatched the standard from a falling comrade that he might carry it closer to the Prussian lines, only in most cases to fall in his turn under the fatal steadiness of the needle-gun.

The rest of the army of the Vosges fought under the tricolour of France, but for "Les Enfants" Garibaldi had devised his own emblem. It was sufficiently striking and characteristic of the man, but in France at least it only excited astonishment among the masses, and hatred and contempt among the clerical and aristocratic party, which was at that time in a great majority in the provinces. The flag was of a vivid crimson, darker a little than the "Tatter of Scarlet" I had seen go up at Aramon when the Communards expelled the troops from the town. There was no device upon it—only the one word in large letters:

"PATATRAC!"

I saw the rustics gazing open-mouthed upon it every day, yet it was a word admirably descriptive and one which I have heard in frequent use among the peasant folk of the South. "Patatrac!" or "Patatras!" the labourer will exclaim when he lets a bucket fall at a stair-head and hears it go rumbling down. "Patatrac!" a housewife will say when she describes how a careless maid drops a trayful of crockery. It is the crashing sound of the fall that is represented, and in this fashion Garibaldi had been so accustomed to bring down in thunderous earthquake ruin all the brood of century-old tyrannies.

It was his well-earned boast that he had made the device good against all comers (except his special *bête noires* of the Papacy) until the fell day at Mentana when the French chassepots rather belatedly gave him as we say at home "his kail through the reek!"

Yet here he was, only five years after, a broken man, fighting for that same France, just because she had shaken off the yoke of the tyrant and become a republic.

Wonderful always to hear the soldiers speak of their leader. They did not cheer him as did the French corps. They clustered close about his carriage as he moved slowly along, his thin hand, which had so long held a sword, touching their heads, and his feeble sick man's voice saying: "My children—oh, my children!"

Neither of his sons accompanied him on these pilgrimages in the shabby hired barouche in which he drove out every day, but Bordone was always with him—watchful, stern, and devoted, the real tyrant of the little army. Menotti and Ricciotti were always with their troops, perhaps from jealousy of Bordone, perhaps because they had enough to do licking their raw levies into some manner of fighting shape.

The winter was bitter even among bitter winters, and the snow soon began to be trampled hard. The troops, continually arriving, were quartered all over Autun, and in the villages

about. Finally the churches had to be occupied, and though nothing was done there that would not have happened with any army of occupation, Garibaldi the polluter was cursed from one end of France to the other as if he had torn down the golden cross upon St. Peter's dome. Not that it mattered to the old Dictator. In silence and solitude he made his plans. He read the reports and dispatches as they came in. He issued his orders through Bordone, before driving out in the halting ramshackle barouche, sometimes with two horses, more often with only one. At every halt he spoke a word or two to the troops as he passed among them, words treasured by the true "Children" like the oracles of God. Then he would return to his lodgings, sit down to his bowl of soup, his loaf of bread, and his glass of water, exactly as if he were on his own island farm within hearing of the waves breaking on the rocks of Caprera.

We found ourselves among Ricciotti's fourth corps of Guides. We were sent to the outfitting captain whose quarters were established in a long hangar overlooking the river. There we found a little rotund man, very bright of eye and limber of tongue, who fitted us out with many compliments and bows. We had brought a letter from the commander himself.

Our first uniform was the gayest ever seen—too picturesque indeed for sober British tastes. It consisted of a red shirt, blue-grey riding breeches, and high boots with jingling silver spurs (for which last we paid from our own purses). On our heads we wore a fascinating "biretta," or cap with a tall feather. The captain of outfitting showed us how to sport it with a conquering air, and with what a grace to swing the short red cloak over one shoulder so that we should not be able to pass a girl in Autun who did not turn and look after us.

This was what the master of the stores said as he stood with his back against the rough pine door-post of his quarters and rubbed his shoulder-blades luxuriously. But in practice I looked like a carnival Mephistopheles, while Hugh Deventer's feather generally drooped over one eye in a drunken fashion. We were not long in suppressing these gauds, though we did our duty in them as gallopers for several days. Finally we went to Ricciotti and begged to be allowed to carry our rifles in one of the foot regiments. We did not want to leave the foreign troops, knowing something of the ostracism and persecution which would be our part among the French regiments. So we were allowed to return our chargers to the remounting officer, and make another visit to the small rotund outfitter in his wooden barrack by the river. There of all our gallant array we retained only our red shirts, and for the rest were rigged out in sober dark blue, a *képi* apiece, and a pair of stout marching shoes on our feet.

We mounted knapsack and haversack, shouldered our Henry rifles, and in an hour found ourselves established among the first "Etranger," a Milanese regiment with three or four mountain companies from Valtelline and the Bergel.

Now it chanced that I had spent some part of my vacations climbing among the peaks about Promontonio. There I had taken, more as companion than as guide, a Swiss-Italian, or to be exact "Ladin"—of my own age or a little older, by the name of Victor Dor. He was a pleasant lad, and we talked of many things as we shared the contents of our rük-sacks on the perilous shoulder of some mountain just a few feet removed from the overhang of the glacier.

And here and now, with the chevrons of a sergeant, was this same Victor Dor, who embraced me as if he had been my brother.

"Oh, the happiness to see you!" he cried. "And among the children of our father. I know you do not come to save the French who shot us down at Mentana. You are like us. You come because our father calls, and yet to think of those long days in the Val Bergel when we never knew that we were brothers. And yet I do not know. You spoke of the Man who was a Carpenter at Nazareth, and who called his disciples to follow him. So our father came, and we followed him. Princes and Emperors scatter honours. Republics give decorations and offices. But look at our lads lying on the straw yonder. Where will they be in a week? In the hospital or in the grave? Some of these men are well off at home, others are poor. No matter! All share alike, and all are equal before our father. Ah, that is it! You see there is nothing to be gained except the joy of following him. Our poor dear father Garibaldi, what has he to offer? He has nothing for himself but a barren isle, and even that he owes to you English.[1] The liberty of following him, of seeing his face when he passes by, of hearing his voice as he calls us his children, the pride of being his very own chosen, who have shared his perils and never deserted him to the last. These are our rewards. Tell me if they are of this world?"

[1] See Hamerton's "Round my House."

CHAPTER XV

FIRST BLOOD

On the third morning after our entry into the Ricciotti's first foreign legion, both Hugh and I awoke stiff and chilled by the frost. The lucky among us had early found quarters in byres and cattle-sheds, where the closely packed animals kept the place warm. We had to make

the best of it on a floor of beaten earth, still sparsely strewn with heads of wheat and flecks of straw. The fodder had been requisitioned to the last armful, and not enough was left to build a nest for a sparrow. The barn was doorless, and, except for the shelter of the roof, we might as well have slept in the open air. At least so we thought, but next day men on the outposts told us a different tale. That night the head-quarters thermometers had showed twenty below zero, and many men slept never again to waken, under the open sky—slept leaning on their chassepots, and so died standing up, no one guessing they were dead till they fell over all in one piece like an icicle snapped.

But even Hugh Deventer and I were sorely tried in our open barn. We had lain soft and fed well all our lives. We were not yet broken to the work like the campaigners of Sicily, or even like those who had passed through the war since the autumn.

"If I bored a hole or two where the joints are," groaned Hugh, "one of Jack Jaikes's oil cans might easy my bearings greatly this morning!"

"From what I can guess," said Victor Dor, "you will find it warm enough in an hour or two. Manteuffel is going to make a push for it to-day. Ricciotti managed to capture a couple of Werder's Uhlans, and one of our *franc-tireurs* says that the whole Pomeranian army corps is coming upon us as fast as the men can march."

"A *franc-tireur* always lies," said another Valtelline man, Marius Girr, scornfully, but enunciating a principle generally received in the army.

"Still, it is possible that this one told the truth by mistake—at any rate, it is not a safe thing to lie to Ricciotti about a matter which, in a few days, will prove itself true or untrue. Ricciotti knows the use of a firing party at twelve yards just as well as Bordone."

The morning grew more and more threatening as time passed. The chill tang of coming snow clung to the nostrils. We had breakfasted meagrely on the last rinds of bacon and scraps of sausage in our haversacks. We longed for hot coffee till we ached, but had to content ourselves with sucking an icicle or two from the roof of the barn, good for the thirst, but very afflicting to the tongue at a temperature of minus twenty.

Presently the inexorable bugles called us forward to the trenches, which extended in a vast hollow crescent from the Arroux bank opposite Autun to the hills above St. Leger on the borders of the Nièvre. We could see against the snow dark masses of overcoated Prussians defiling this way and that among the valleys, and at sight of them our field-guns began to speak. With eyes that hardly yet understood we watched the shells bursting and the marching columns shred suddenly apart to be reformed automatically only an instant after, as the narrow strips of dark blue uncoiled themselves towards the plain.

Hugh and I lay close against a railway embankment from which the rails had been ruthlessly torn up. I was inclined to make an additional shelter of these, and indeed Hugh and I had begun the work when Victor Dor stopped us.

"As much earth as you like," he said; "earth or sand stops bullets, but iron only makes them glance off, and often kill two in place of one. Scatter all the rails, plates, and ties down our side of the slope. I will show you something that is far better!"

And with the edge of the shallow iron saucepan which he carried like a targe at his back, he scooped up the earth so that we soon had in front of us a very competent breastwork, giving sufficient cover for our heads and shoulders as well as a resting-place for our rifles.

During the next hour we heard the roar of the German artillery away in the direction of St. Léger, and the resounding "boom-boom" of our heavy mortars and twelve-pounders answering them.

"What would Jack Jaikes give to see these in action," I said in Hugh's ear.

"And still more my father," he answered.

Our outposts began to be driven in, but they had stubbornly defended our front, nor did they yield till the masses of blue battalions showed thickly, and then only to give the artillery free play.

It was in waiting behind us, and the first crash as the shells hurtled over our heads made Hugh and I feel very strange in the pits of our stomachs—something like incipient sea-sickness. The veterans never once looked aloft, but only cuddled their rifles and wriggled their bodies to find a comfortable niche from which to fire.

"Dig your toes into the embankment, you English," Marius Girr of our company called to us; "if you don't, the first recoil of the rifle will send you slipping down into the ditch."

It was good advice, and with a few kicks we dug solid stances for our feet, in which our thick marching shoes were ensconced to the heels. We excavated also hollow troughs for our knees, and, as Hugh said, we behaved generally like so many burying beetles instead of gallant soldiers. All this was not done easily, for the ground was frozen hard, and in the river behind us we could hear the solid blocks of ice clinking and crunching together as the sullen grey-green current swept them along.

It was Sunday, and upon the town road a little behind our line, but quite within the zone of fire, comfortable mammas and trim little daughters were trotting to Mass with their service books wrapped in white napkins. Hugh and I yelled at them to go home, but it was no use. Luckily I remembered their fear of the Iron Chancellor, and assured them by all the saints that "Bismarck was coming," whereupon they kilted their petticoats and made off homeward, their fat white-stockinged legs twinkling in the pearl-grey twilight. It was like a Dutch picture—trampled snow, low brooding sky, white-capped matrons and little girls wrapped in red shawls.

But in a few moments we had other matters to occupy us. The Tanara regiment was on our right, and the sweep of the crescent being farther advanced than at our position, they received the first rush of the Pomeranians.

But there was no waiting, for suddenly out of the woods in front of us stiff lines of blue emerged and began moving forward with the Noah's Ark regularity of marionettes. It seemed impossible that these could be soldiers charging. But we were soon convinced. The dip of the ground hid them for a long time, and then suddenly they appeared not four hundred yards off, no longer in column, but in two lines close together, with a supporting third some distance in the rear.

We could see them extending companies far away on either side. But this we knew to be in vain, for the river protected us on the right, while on the left our entrenchments reached as far as the St. Leger hills which were crowned with our forts.

Then came the splitting growl of the mitrailleuses behind us. These were still held to be rather uncertain weapons. Men familiarly called them pepper-pots, and it was as likely as not that a few bullets might come spattering our way, spread-eagled as we were on the railway embankment, and offering a far more practicable target than the advancing Germans.

But there were no casualties, at least near us, and in a moment the Germans fired a volley which swept the embankment like hail. The rifles of the first Milanese cracked on every side, but I bade Hugh hold his fire till the charging enemy was only a hundred yards away. Our Henry rifles gave us an immense advantage in speed of firing. They came on, breaking at last through a dark barrier of yew and poplar hedge, and as they came we could see their bayonets flash like silver in the dull light. Their colonel was mounted on a black charger, a tall fine-looking man who pushed his horse up every knoll in order the better to see whom and what he was attacking.

But he dropped a little way from the yew hedge, and almost before he reached the ground two men with a stretcher were lifting up their officer, while a third had taken the horse by the bridle and was leading him to the rear, as composedly as a groom in a stable-yard.

"Now, then, Hugh," I cried, "you take the right of the line and I will take the left. But sight carefully and don't aim high."

"*Crack—crack—crack!*!" went our magazine rifles, and the big Pomeranians went down as if an invisible sickle had mown them. As I expected, Hugh was finished before me, but we had scarcely time to adjust our new cartridge holders before the line broke and the blue coats turned and ran. A few officers and a man or two immediately in their wake got as far as the curve of the embankment—only, however, to be shot down.

The air rang with the shouts of "Evivva Garibaldi!" And a few minutes afterwards the Tanara regiment, encouraged by our success, repulsed the enemy's bayonet charge, so that in an instant our whole line was disengaged. Only out in the open the trampled earth and the glistening crushed-sugar snow were starred here and there with spots and splotches of red and the contorted bodies of men, some still moving, but mostly stricken into the strange stiff attitudes of death.

It was our first battle in the service of Garibaldi. It was destined to be our last. For that night the news of the fall of Paris and the signing of the armistice stopped the fighting everywhere, except at Belfort and along the desperate rear-guard line of Bourbaki's army, which was being driven like a pack of famished wolves into the passes of the Jura.

CHAPTER XVI

THE COMING OF ALIDA

It was the evening of the 27th of January, and we were back in Autun. The Milanese were later than most in getting inside the gates. We had pushed far forward after the retreating Pomeranians, and now our lot was to bivouac in the square. The houses were full, and the churches with their damp floors did not tempt us. Besides, we were full of the glow of victory, and for that night a camp-fire in the middle of the square satisfied us. The evening had fallen mild and still—clear too, though rapidly growing misty under the red loom of camp-fire smoke. There was not much open rejoicing. The French would not believe that the

end had come, and the Italians, still flushed with victory, felt that they had come a long way to do but little. Still, as we lay close to our camp-fires or threshed our arms about to keep warm, we could not keep out of our minds the hope of better days. I know not of what Hugh Deventer thought, but for me I was talking to Rhoda Polly, or lazily steering the ferry-boat across the river while before me Jeanne Félix bent lissomly to the oars. It was clear that I had not yet reached the age of the grand expulsive passion which ignores partage. Indeed, given a temperament like mine, no youth is worth his salt who at twenty-one cannot drive several teams abreast.

Hugh and I put in the night wandering up and down, rendered restless by the thoughts of peace, and unable to sleep about the camp-fires before which we had spread our blankets. Upon the advice of a stranger in a doorway we penetrated into a school, and from the first class-room brought out benches and desks enough to feed our camp-fires all night in the square of Autun. With a stroke or two of the axe Hugh smashed these across the middle, and we soon built up such a range of blaze that the heat drove back the sleepers, some of whom, caught betwixt two, were in peril of being roasted. Those who did not waken we dragged off by the shoulders, usually to be soundly cursed for our officiousness. Then we went back to find the man who had told us of the school-house treasure. He was standing at his door grimly regarding our bonfires. We thanked him courteously in the name of the regiment.

"At least the Jesuits will teach no more lies to poor children on those benches," he said. "You are true Garibaldians, though you do speak French like Linn and myself!"

He was a tall man with a grey beard that came half-way to his waistbelt, and when he invited us in we were wondering who Linn might be.

We found ourselves in a comfortable little kitchen, floored with red brick. On the walls, trophies of matchlocks and Dervish swords on a ground of palm leaves and alfa grass told us that we were in the dwelling of one who in his day had made the campaign of the Atlas.

Over the mantelshelf, and framed in oak in a rough but artistic manner, was a document which attracted me. One side was written in Arabic of the dashing and ornamental sort. I had seen many such in my father's library. The other side was ruled with a pencil, and there the writing was that of a schoolboy just beyond the stage of pot-hooks.

"Is it permitted to read?" I asked, for my curiosity was great.

The man with the long beard was talking to Hugh, but he turned to me with a courteous wave of the hand, and said with a ceremony that was never learned in Autun:

"Sir, this house and all that it contains are at your service."

I followed the ill-traced letters of the translation. It was dated "From my prison-house, in the fortress-city called Amboise," and was signed "Sheik Abd-el-Kader." It contained, after the usual compliments, greetings and affection to the brave fellow soldier and commander of his forces, Keller Bey—with a congratulation on his release from imprisonment.

So it became immediately evident to me that our host had indeed made the campaign of the Atlas, but that he had fought against and not for the tricolour.

He seemed to watch out of the corner of his eye the effect of the framed certificate.

"You are English," he said, "and though you have stolen much yourselves, you can still feel for a great man defending his country, and not condemn the little man who helped him."

"You are Keller Bey?" I asked, pointing to the name on the much crumpled sheet.

"I am Keller," he said, "Keller grown old and staid. Linn keeps me at home. She had the devil's own job ere she got me buckled down, but she did it, and now there is only Linn and our daughter Alida for me to think about."

And in the silence of the house he lifted his voice and called aloud for "Linn."

Presently we heard footsteps coming swiftly along the passage which led from the inner rooms. A woman entered—tall, gaunt, and angular. Her aspect was severe to the borders of being forbidding, and she frowned upon us as Keller, ex-officer of Abd-el-Kader, made some brief introduction.

But the smile with which she held out her hand was transfiguring. The face which had been almost ugly suddenly became attractive and even fascinating. One saw that her eyes were of forget-me-not blue, and when she said "You are welcome" to one and the other of us, it was clear that Linn Keller possessed gifts of attraction which do not depend upon age or external beauty.

She was taller than her husband, but awkward and angular in her movement. She walked with a curious shuffle as if the slipper on one foot was always on the point of coming off, yet —in a moment we found ourselves at home with her, and in five minutes we were calling her "Linn" just as her husband had done. The assurance of youth can surely no farther go.

The lamp on the mantelpiece was of an Oriental design. Curtains and rugs were abundantly scattered about, and in one corner a looped-up hanging showed an oblong bath sunk in the tiled floor.

"This house is our own," said Linn; "we have arranged some things to suit ourselves, having been so long abroad that it seems impossible to do without them. But at any rate you must stay and see Alida. You must rise early, for she has to go out to give her lessons. Alida is a teacher of music. We have put everything except this house and a provision for our old age into Alida's education."

I explained to the pair that we would indeed be most grateful for the warmth and refuge of the kitchen, but that if that were inconvenient we could return at any hour of the morning, always provided the regiment did not march.

"They are fine lads, eh, Linn?" said Keller, turning to his wife. "Can we not do something better for them than the kitchen floor?"

I assured them that we asked no more than permission to stretch ourselves on a couple of rugs with knapsacks beneath our heads. But Linn's housewifery instinct was roused. She took us to a room on the entresol, with two beds, and even insisted on helping us off with our boots. There we should sleep, and she would keep an eye on the regiment, and have us on parade in good time. As for her she was a barrack's child and understood such things. Besides, Keller and she were back and forward all night like the Arabs among whom they had lived.

Never had the touch of sheets felt more caressing. Never did sleep fall upon us so deep and dreamless as when our heads touched the pillow. It was still dark when we were awakened by a light touch on the shoulder, and sitting up each on an elbow we beheld Linn stalking about the room and putting back our uniforms all carefully brushed and folded. A candle stood on a stand, and farther back a gigantic Linn was grotesquely shadowed upon the walls.

"Breakfast is ready," she said, when we had somewhat got over our first blankness. "You have a good hour before you, and if you dress now you will have time to breakfast, and besides you shall see Alida."

I do not know whether it was the breakfast or the prospect of Alida seen in the flesh which aroused us, but no sooner was the door closed behind Linn's back than we flung ourselves into our uniforms with that ordered rapidity which only a soldier understands.

Everything we touched had been warmed and cared for with that affectionate motherliness which looked out of Linn's eyes. We had never experienced any kindness like this before, and it seemed the more marvellous that by merely putting aside the blinds of our sleeping-room we could see our comrades still lying about the fires, and the cooks for the week beginning with their bayonet butts to crush and grind the berries for the morning coffee.

Yonder were Victor Dor and Marius Girr looking down at our sleeping places, and presently beginning to roll up our blankets. It seemed a shame that we should have passed the night between sheets, thus basely abandoning our comrades among the trampled snow of the market square of Autun.

But there interposed between them and us two necessities: a "made" breakfast which we must eat—eat till we could eat no more, and—we must see Alida Keller, daughter of the Atlas "goums."

I don't know what Hugh expected. But for myself I mingled Linn and the ideal music mistress. Tall, forceful, and striding she must be, with energy to bring into such evident subjection Keller Bey and his wife. Something younger and less weather-beaten than Linn, of course—perhaps with a certain passing glow of good looks which would fade out like the mist bloom upon the peach trees in the frost of April.

But when at last she came in, and stood a moment to give a hand to each of us, before nestling into her familiar corner of a low old Oriental couch—I think both our hearts cried out at the same moment: "Oh, the perfect creature!"

She was not like Linn in the least. Her father still less resembled her. It is almost impossible to describe this girl of the South, nevertheless I can but try, Alida Keller was little, but shaped with such delicate perfection that she gave the impression of a greater height. Her skin was of a creamy duskiness through which went and came colour now as faint as that of a rose leaf, which anon flamed out into a vivid red, the colour of the pomegranate flower.

Her father and Linn served her like a princess, and to this she seemed accustomed, for except that she patted Linn's hand, or with a smile said "Petit Père" to her father, she seemed unconscious of their attentions.

As for Hugh and myself, I declare that we were completely cheated out of that admirable breakfast. We had meant to square our elbows, grasp our knives and forks, and fall on. We had rank appetites, sharpened with fighting and hard fare, but the mere presence of Alida cut at the roots of hunger as a scythe cuts down reeds.

We simply sat and gazed at her. She was not in the least put out, ate well and daintily, and looked at us impartially from under her dark lashes. For the instant—I will not admit more—I forgot Rhoda Polly and Jeanne Félix.

But I am not much to be blamed. For the burden of the conversation fell on me. Hugh Deventer could only sit and gape, lifting the same morsel half a dozen times to his mouth without once getting it safely in. He uttered not a word, save sometimes in answer to a direct question he would produce a "yes" or "no," so jerky and mechanical that I was obliged to kick his shins under the table to keep him aware of himself.

Of this Keller and Linn saw nothing. They were all eyes and ears for Alida, and had not a glance for us. The table was covered—we were soldiers and could help ourselves. Meantime I was kept busy answering the questions of Alida. She spoke in a low and thrilling contralto, a voice that had a *ron-ron* in it, something like the pulsing whisper of a bell after it has been rung in a church tower.

How had we left school? We must tell her. Tell her I did, describing as vividly as possible the laundry and the secret way out upon the road, then the good-bye call at my father's house, and our escape from the sentinel at the bridge end. It was lovely to see the cheeks of Alida now going pale now flaming scarlet, and I admit that I made the most of my opportunity. I passed rapidly over the troubles in Aramon-les-Ateliers, both because I knew such things could not interest Alida Keller—also (and chiefly) because I gathered that Keller and Linn would be altogether on the side of the workmen, and I did not feel called upon to defend the difficult position of Dennis Deventer as Manager of the Small Arms Factory—at least not just then.

Our later adventures with the transport train, our march by night, our incorporation in the Garibaldi army, and the many skirmishes culminating in the big fight when we had defeated the Prussians, were all easy to tell—and I had scarcely finished when Linn came in with the news that the regiments were forming up for roll-call.

We had hardly time to promise to come back before we were equipped and pushed out by Linn with well-plenished haversacks. We scurried across the square and appeared in our places out of nowhere in particular, to the great astonishment of Victor and Marius, who hastily arranged our blankets across our shoulders so that we might pass inspection.

"You English fear nothing, I know," said Victor Dor, "but you almost ran things a trifle fine this morning. See yonder!"

He pointed with a finger towards a narrow street which debouched into the upper end of the Market Square. At first we could see nothing—and then—lo, the ramshackle barouche, and the two fatigued white horses of the General himself!

"*Garibaldi! Garibaldi!*"

The "Children" of the Milanese regiment could hardly keep their lines. We front-rank men felt an impulse as if someone were pushing us from behind. It was the concentred yearning of a thousand men.

Our officers kept whispering to us, "Stand firm. Not just now. He will return. See how the Tanara regiment is standing—would you have them put us to shame before our father?" So the Milanese men stood quivering each like a tuning-fork while their General passed by. Bordone was with him, and Ricciotti rode on the side farthest from the lines. I saw him clearly, and noted the waxen pallor of his face. But his eye was still bright, and the smile kindly on his lips as he passed down the lines. It was the face of a philosopher, a thinker, or a prophet, rather than that of the greatest leader of irregular troops the world had ever seen. But when the carriage turned at the end of the square, the men could no longer be held. They surrounded the old barouche, hanging round it in clusters, like grapes, or more exactly like bees about their queen in her summer flight. Hugh Deventer and I stood a little back, for we felt that this was, as one might say, a family matter, and no concern of ours. But Ricciotti spied us out, and putting his horse into the press, brought us forward to introduce us personally to his father.

The old man extended his hand which, instead of kissing, we shook in the English fashion. The difference pleased him.

"It is like Sicily to see you here. I had once over eight hundred of you, and not a white feather or a faint heart among them all. I trusted them as I trusted my children. They were as my children. Well may I love England. They fought for me seeking no reward, and afterwards when there was talk of expelling me, they bought my island and gave it to me, so that none could take it away for ever."

He moved on, nodding his head and smiling, while Bordone glooming on the seat opposite seemed vastly relieved. Ricciotti was in high spirits.

"The Chief is better to-day than I have seen him for years," he confided to us. "He said we had done well against Manteuffel—yes, even I, his son whom he never praises."

Victor Dor and Marius Girr came and shook hands with us repeatedly. It was an honour to the company that the General had so distinguished us, and would we tell them what he had said—yes, every word.

From their archway Keller and Linn had beheld, one standing on either side of the door, and a slight vibration of the window curtains suggested that perhaps Alida herself was not

wholly without curiosity.

Then the troops were dismissed. The town was placarded with the white oblongs reserved for Government proclamations. The Armistice (they said) had been concluded with the Emperor of Germany, but in the meantime its army of the Vosges was to remain under arms for the reason that poor Bourbaki's army of the East was excepted from the cessation of hostilities. At first no one could imagine why, because it was now little more than a broken troop, hardly able to fight a rearguard action, and ready to be driven through the perishing cold of the mountain passes to surrender to a Swiss colonel beyond the frontier. Later the truth appeared. By their own politicians the army of the East had been wholly overlooked and forgotten! And Bismarck, irritated by the stubborn resistance of Denfert at Belfort, was willing to take advantage of this fact to overrun two additional French departments.

Thus it came to pass that we remained full three weeks more kicking our heels in Autun. We were allowed to make our own arrangements for *billets de logement*, which carried us naturally to the house in the square inhabited by Keller Bey, his wife Linn, and—Alida.

The officers all knew that the war was over and chafed at the delay. So I think did most of the soldiers excepting ourselves. Hugh and I alone were content, of all the army of the Vosges encamped in and about Autun.

CHAPTER XVII

A DESERT PRINCESS

We occupied the two big gable rooms looking east on the second floor of the Kellers' house in the market square of Autun. This suited us admirably, though we were obliged to keep quiet so as not to disturb Alida, who had the corresponding suite on the first floor below. We found that the room in the entresol where we had slept the first night was the proper bedroom of Keller and Linn his wife.

But as a matter of habit, neither of them appeared to care very much for a regular night's rest. You would catch them, indeed, closing their eyes after dinner over a newspaper, or when Alida was practising on her noble grand piano, the chief pride and luxury of the Keller house.

But Hugh and I, who slept with our door of communication open in order to talk to one another in case of sleeplessness, could hear Keller and Linn moving about at all hours of the night down in the silence of the ground floor—sometimes advertising their presence by a little silvery rattle of glass set on a tray, the dull fall of a log on the chimney and irons, or the curious slip-shuffle of Linn's walk. Sometimes, too, we heard voices, but that not often. Once about the end of the first week, when I could not sleep, I slipped down for a stroll about the town. It was half-past two of a black February morning, and the snow swirls were waltzing like spinning tops all about the market square. But there in the archway, his back to the carven lintel, stood Keller Bey, calmly smoking his pipe and looking out on the black turmoil as though it had been the cool of an August evening. Linn heard us talking, and came quickly to see who was there. Even at that hour she was in her ordinary dress, and she dried her hands composedly on a long sheath apron of blue *toile nationale*.

"Why are you not asleep?" she demanded sharply. "Keller, you are teaching this young man bad habits."

His wife's accusation only made Keller wag his head wisely. Instantly I took all blame upon myself. I had not been able to sleep, I said, I was ashamed to disturb Deventer by my restlessness.

"You drank too much of that black coffee last night, Monsieur Auguste" (thus had Angus gone wrong). "I must ration you in future, so that you can get your natural sleep as young folks should."

I hastened out into the night with Keller's huge "pellerine" cast about my shoulders, and the hood reaching my ears. It was a comfortable garment of some unknown African cloth, rough as frieze and warm as wool. The sudden dashes of snow swooping upon me were turned victoriously aside by its formidable brown folds, and I felt as I wandered in the black of the streets with the buildings towering dim and shadowy above me, like one who in a storm has by some magic carried his house along with him.

No soldiers were bivouacking in the streets that night. The squares were void of bonfires. All the red shirts and blue breeches had alike found shelter, for the superfluous regiments were now quartered upon the neighbouring villages, or had marched to their head-quarters at Dijon.

Back and forth I tramped, from the Mairie clock with its dim one-candle power illumination of face to the dark mass of the towers of the Holy Trinity, I patrolled the town from end to end.

It was perhaps an hour or a little more that I wandered so, tiring myself for sleep, my face beaten upon pleasantly by the fierce gusts of snow charging down from among the chimney-pots, or driving level across the open spaces. At last I turned my face towards the market square, which I entered by the little dusky street of the Arches, and so came suddenly upon the Keller house at the angle opposite to the mayoral belfry.

I had expected Keller in the same position waiting for me, but when I sheltered in the archway, no Keller was in sight. Behind me, however, the door stood open, and as I stood dusting down and shaking out the thick folds of Keller's pellerine, I was conscious of a stir behind me. I turned my head in doubt, and was just in time to see the man himself whisk upstairs with the curious enamelled iron water-jug in his hand, which is known through all the South as a "bouillotte."

The fire had newly been made up in the kitchen, and glowed warmly. The kettle sang shrill, and even the German stove, used on the occasions of great feast, had hastily been put into commission.

Feeling sure that something was gravely wrong, I took off my boots to dry slowly on the high bar alongside those of Keller and Hugh. I tiptoed upward, hoping to gain my room without running across any one. But on the first floor the door of the sitting-room stood wide open, and all was bright within. I saw Alida sobbing bitterly, Linn kneeling beside her with bottles of Cologne water and smelling-salts. She was murmuring something evidently designed to be comforting. The girl's long dark hair fell around her in loose masses, overspreading and almost inundating the low canary-coloured divan of soft Oriental silk on which she was reclining. Keller hovered helplessly about the couch, or proffered a suggestion, to be swept off the scene with a sharp word from Linn which sent him to the far end of the room, only to begin again a stealthy approach.

I promise you I was passing the door as cautiously as might be, and giving myself no small credit for my excellent management of the business, when suddenly I heard my name called as only one in the house could speak it.

"Aügoos Cawdori—Aügoos, I want you—I want to tell you!"

Alida, leaning on her elbow, had caught sight of me, and I could see Linn's gesture of something like despair, which I took to mean—"There—-the secret is out. We can never stop it if once she speaks."

She bent forward and spoke earnestly into Alida's ear. But the girl merely signed to Linn to retire. The gesture was made unconsciously, but with all the dignity of a princess accustomed to be unquestioningly obeyed.

"Let Monsieur Cawdori come hither at once. I must speak with him. His advice is good. You and Keller Bey are old and speak as the old. Aügoos Cawdori is young as I am young, but he has the wise heart. So much I have seen from the first."

She spoke in French, but with a curious redundancy and largeness of phrasing unnatural to a language which is an exact science. In all moments of agitation Alida seemed to be translating from another and more copious tongue.

Obedient to her command I entered the sitting-room where she was lying among the cushions of the yellow divan. The room was fitted up with a certain barbaric splendour, and the only touches of modern life to be seen were a bookcase of prettily bound books—red, green, and gold—set in a corner, the big Steinway Grand with its cabinets of music ready to hand, and the piano-stool upon which Alida often amused herself by spinning round and round, her tiny feet in their heelless slippers of golden brocade showing beneath the flutter of her light silk robe.

As she lay on the divan, I could see that she wore under her dressing-gown a blouse of white silk flowered with gold, and an abundant pair of trousers of the same gathered close about her ankles by a button and a knot of golden cord.

"I will speak," she cried. "This young man is worthy of my confidence, and you know it, Linn. If my father had wished me to go with Said Ali Mohammed, the slave prince, he would not have committed me to you. No, he would have sent me to nibble sweetmeats among the women behind the veil. But I am not a woman of the harem. I am free and French. Obey I shall not. I would rather die!"

She suddenly threw off a slipper, reached out a bare brown foot exquisitely moulded, deftly picked up a letter from the floor with her toes, and handed it to me. It was in Arabic, and at the sight of the characters I shook my head.

"My father could read it, but not I," I said mournfully, wishing that I had spent less time on Greek and Latin at the *Lycée* St. André.

"Then you must learn—you must—I shall teach you to speak, and your father shall drill you in the verbs. Listen, Aügoos Cawdori, I am not, save in love and in the kindness which not even my life could repay, the daughter of these best and dearest folk in the world. No, parents are not so kind as Keller and Linn. They are more selfish, though God forbid that I should speak so of my father. He was, ever since I can remember, a prisoner of war—even

the great Emir Abd-el-Kader himself. I am the daughter of his one Queen, his first wife—no child of the 'Smala,' but a princess, the daughter of a princess. Abd-el-Kader, thinking himself near his end, committed me to the care of his old officer and his wife, instructing them that in all things I should be brought up as a maiden of the Franks. This they have done. You Linn, and you Keller, have kept watch about me day and night. The God who is the God of Jesus and of Mahomet reward you, as surely he will. I am a European girl in that which I have learned. I have chosen a profession in which I can be happy, here in this little town among the hills, till I seek larger fields and try my fate in other cities."

She paused in her tale and smiled. The tears were falling steadily down Linn's face, and she seemed suddenly to have aged a quarter of a century. But Keller Bey, no longer restless, stood stiffly at attention as if he had been listening to the commands of his master, the great Emir. Alida looked from one to the other. Then lightly as a cat leaping from the floor to a window-sill, she sprang to her feet and embraced them tenderly.

"I am your true daughter always. Do not forget it. I owe everything to you, and I shall never quit you if you will let me stay."

She sat down again, and taking her letter, she began:

"This is from my father, Abd-el-Kader, presently living at Brousse in Syria on the road to Damascus. He is old, he says, and he desires to see me about him in his latter days. All is good in Syria. The water of Brousse is sweet, and the French Government gives him much money. He has found a husband for me, a prince royal of Egypt, though not of Arab race. Sidi ben Mohammed is his name, the man whom he sends with a letter that I may see him, upon receipt of which his servant Keller Bey and his wife will hasten to bring me to Brousse under the protection and escort of this Prince of Egypt. Upon my arrival the solemn rites shall be observed, and I shall be the first wife of Ali Mohammed the Prince, a worthy man and one of great power in his own country.

"So it is written, and my father signs and seals, but whether it was written for him or by him, I cannot tell. At any rate he has made his signature with the flourish which none can mistake, and an order is an order. What say you, Aügoos Cawdori? Must I obey, and become the chief wife of this coffee-coloured fellah, no Arab of my father's race, say the Egyptians what they will?"

Alida sat among the scatter of cushions regarding me fixedly.

"Tell me," she said, with a pitiful little gesture of appeal, "must I obey my father? *They* think so, though I know well it will break their hearts as it would mine. Rather would I use this little toy" (she showed a dainty pair of golden scissors, with which the high born of her people sometimes open their arteries in a bath) "than I would go to Brousse to wed the brown man with the skin greasy like that of a toad—A-ä-ä-ch!"

She shuddered and flung herself back on the cushions.

I stood there in my stockinged feet as if I had been in a mosque, but no one remarked my bootless condition.

"Now," said Alida, "you have heard the letter of the Emir, my father—what am I to reply to him? Tell me and I shall say it. You are the gift of God. The messenger with the message. I knew as much when I saw you passing the door. You have come out of the darkness to bring me light."

It was a difficult position for my father's son. I was conscious of no message from heaven. But on my spirits preyed the same disgust as had fallen on her own. It was a thing impossible that this delicate girl, educated, well-read, accomplished, should mate with an African brute, with his Oriental ideas of the servitude of woman.

"Princess Alida," I began, but she cried out instantly, "Alida—just Alida the music mistress—no princess at all!"

"Well, then," I acquiesced, "Alida be it. You ask for my opinion. I will give it you. But I warn you that perhaps I am not the best of advisers, for having a good father after his ideas (which are not mine) I have not obeyed him very well, nor, indeed, has he asked me to obey.

"But it seems to me that your father, by making you over to Keller Bey and Linn there—by ordering you to be brought up as their daughter, by allowing and encouraging you to acquire the tastes and arts of the Western people—has now no right to summon you back to a life which would be worse to you than death. I should refuse now and always. If necessary I should make good my French citizenship, and claim the protection of the Government. The mere threat of the loss of his great pension would be sufficient for Abd-el-Kader!"

The delicious little brown head was bent low, and Alida's fingers pulled nervously at the gold threads on the sleeve of her long dressing-gown. She was carefully considering my advice, but I could see that she flushed her brightest scarlet at my words about her father. The proud little spirit within her spoke freely of the Emir, but resented the speech of others. I regretted that I had been so plain, but it was my manifest duty (so at least I regarded it) to save this daintiest of human creatures from the pollution and mental death of a harem, surrounded with evil-talking slave girls and sweet-sucking, moon-faced concubines. Alida

was a product of the West, in spite of her ancestry. The whole business appeared ludicrous and impossible. I seemed to be listening and talking in a dream from which I would presently awaken. Alida would don her smart walking dress, and with her brown leather music roll under her arm would set off to give the Sous-Préfet's young wife her daily music lesson, Linn stalking majestically beside her like a great Danish hound on guard.

At last she spoke, but without looking at me.

"Though I agree that the thing itself is impossible—that I cannot marry Ali Mohammed the slave and slave's son—tell me what is to be done? I shall ruin these good people whom I love, who are paid to take care of me. Or if I do not ruin them, I shall be obliged to live on their scanty savings, for I know that they have spent the moneys they received from the Emir on my education."

Linn gave one look at Keller, and flung herself down beside the girl.

"Whatever we have is yours—we shall do very well. Everyone is pleased with you. Your professors prophesy great things for you. Keller, you dumb dog, tell her we shall manage very well, and that she shall never know the difference!"

"If she decides to disobey her father," said Keller Bey, "we must do as things will do with us. But I wash my hands of the responsibility."

For the first time I saw the flash in Linn's eyes.

"Wash your hands of the responsibility, will you, Keller? So did Pilate. But I cannot hear that much good came of that! You and I must stand between, and prevent a Calvary for our Alida —or a Golgotha, for she will never marry that man alive!—I know her—I brought her up, and I never mastered her once. No more shall her father by one letter brought by a brown thick-lipped prince in a frock coat and glossy hat!"

"Let us say no more about it," murmured Alida. "I will send away the slave's son to-morrow. I shall write to my father also. Doubtless he will be angry, but then—surely it is true that he and those about him are imagining a vain thing. He should have kept me veiled and cloistered, without a book, without music, without a mind. Then I might have been fit for the plaything of an idle man, but that time is past. I am a woman of the Occident, fitted to carry out my life alone, to earn my living, and to be the mate of some man who shall be altogether mine!"

CHAPTER XVIII

THE PRINCESS COMMANDS

We slept late the next morning, Hugh and I. Indeed, Hugh always slept late unless he had the luck to be awakened. We did not breakfast till Linn had returned from her watch-dog march along with Alida to the house of the Sous-Préfet.

There was now no regular drill, and instead of roll-call it was regarded sufficient if we reported to the guard which remained in permanence playing at cards and "bouchon" under the central bastion of the fort. This Hugh and I did, remaining a little while to gossip with Victor Dor and others of our company who were lounging about the barrack square. I fear that during those weeks we passed for rather sulky dogs who would not share our bone with our neighbours. For, having little to do, the young fellows of the first Milanese often followed with admiring eyes the daily progress of Alida and Linn in the direction of the Sous-Préfecture. We had requests for introductions even from the younger officers, but all such we referred to Keller Bey, knowing that the old man would be able to deal with any intrusion. And indeed matters stopped there till the regiment was disbanded, and the Italians were sent home at the expense of the French Republic.

Meantime we continued, as Saunders McKie would have said, "living at hack and manger," free of the privileges of the house of Keller Bey and Linn his wife.

Since Alida had taken my advice and written to her father that she would not marry the brown man, nor leave the life for which he had educated her for that of the harem, she had treated me as an intimate friend and adviser. We had long talks together, so often and so long, indeed, that I could see that Keller Bey and Linn were seriously troubled. Perhaps they were a little jealous also, but for all that they did not dream of opposing their wills to the slightest wish of their ward.

"What shall I do when you are gone?" Alida cried one day. It was still early forenoon, for the Sous-Préfet's lady had to attend a Government function. Besides, it was a dismalish day outside with a low crawl of leaden clouds overhead, and along the horizon only one swiftly eclipsed streak of gold bead-work to show where the sunshine was at work.

"I can *not* stay on here, content with only the round of teaching visits, and the love of these two good souls! 'I have had playmates—I have had companions,' as your poet sings, and now

there is you—and Hugh—who have come to me to show me how lonely I was."

She thought a while, and then in her imperious way she sketched a programme.

"There is no reason why Keller Bey and Linn should stop here. The house is well placed, and one of the best in the town. It would let to-morrow. Why should we not all go to Aramon and be happy? We could find a house there and company—all those girls, Hugh's sisters, of whom you have told me. I should be so happy. And we would get away from the brown man. He would not know where to find us if he should come back!"

She clapped her hands joyfully, as if the matter were already settled, and ran upstairs to break the matter to Keller and Linn. When next I saw these two I was conscious of a little chill in the atmosphere. They thought that I was responsible for the wish of Alida to leave Autun and go to Aramon.

"Do you think it is a proper thing," said Linn, "that a maid should follow two young men?"

"I think you wrong her," I said, "unwittingly of course, but certainly you mistake Alida. It springs from no feeling of love for either of us, but she has now tasted comradeship and the equality of years for the first time. She thinks there is nothing else worth living for in the world. She will change her mind by and by. Her mind and affection will turn again to her elders."

So I spoke from the unplumbed depths of a youthful self-sufficiency—that curious malady (happily fleeting) which compels all clever young men to feel called upon to lay down rules for their elders and for the world about them, at or about the age of twenty-one.

Linn and Keller looked at one another in a kind of hopeless bewilderment. I think they felt that this was only the first of a series of changes from the quiet life they had been leading. They told themselves that they need expect no more happy uneventful days and delicious nights when they used their house as of old they had done many an Arab encampment, a place to wander and dally in, to lie down and rise up, to drowse and wake, to smoke in, and to play bezique together when the heart told them to. A sort of terror seized them as they saw themselves going off to bed at reasonable hours like mere untravelled burghers, each with a candle in hand, and nothing but the drum of the rain on the roof or the gnawing of a mouse in the wainscot to help them over the dead hours till the sun should rise.

It was Keller who this time broke the silence.

"Of course," he said, speaking slowly, and poising each word carefully, "if Alida has set her heart upon it of her own free will, there is nothing to be said. Linn and I must obey, at whatever cost to ourselves. For all we have is hers, and has come to us because of her. On that score we need not fear. We have enough for ourselves, and enough to leave to Alida. We can go to Aramon, but the business will need to be carefully gone about, and not too soon after your return. Alida is a girl among ten thousand. You are well-looking young men, and doubtless there are as many evil tongues in Aramon as there are in all places where human creatures herd together."

This was a great concession, and accordingly I plucked up heart and began to make plans and suggest ways and means, eager to get ahead of all possible objections on the part of Linn.

"There is an empty house at the corner of my father's property of Gobelet—not one so large as this, but quite large enough and pleasantly situated within the grounds. My father has never let it, but I know that he would be glad of a brave soldier and his wife to take care of it and keep it in order. The place is retired and he would feel protected. The gate in the wall opens on to the road to the *lycée* of St. André, so that you would come and go without any overlooking. Besides, my father is a student and interferes with no one. He would talk as much Arabic to you as you wish. So too would old Professor Renard up at the College. He was once Vicar Apostolic out in your parts. You would have the best companions for Alida, in the sisters Deventer and their friends. If you like I will write to my father to-day? Not that there is any need. I know that he will be delighted, nay, that he will offer you a wing of Gobelet itself, which is much too large for him. But do not accept, the Garden Cottage is ten times as amusing, and infinitely prettier."

I could see that I was making some way. Linn and her husband looked at each other, and if they did not smile, at least there was a more hopeful look on their faces. Linn was touched by the thought of the companionship of the Deventer girls, for in this matter Autun had been gravely lacking.

Nor did the bribe of Arabic-speaking students to talk with appear to be wholly lost upon Keller Bey, even though he spoke still somewhat restively.

"I have little acquaintance with book Arabic beyond the Koran, but it is a noble language in which to vent one's thoughts."

I reassured him that both the ex-Vicar Apostolic and my father found it so. They would sit smoking and talking Arabic all a long evening over their parchments.

"All this must I come and see for myself," said Keller Bey; "such a plant as Alida is not to be

pulled up by the roots till we know where we shall find better ground and more fertile in which to reset her. But tell me, is not this Aramon of yours an unsafe town? The mob had possession of it for some days lately, attacking the works and the manager's house—can we safely take Alida to such a place?"

Then in mighty haste I showed him the difference between the unceasing activity of Aramon-of-the-Workshops and the scholastic calm of Aramon le Vieux. I extended the width of the dividing river to a three-quarters of a mile, a size to which it only reaches in times of flood when the tall ladder of the painted scale by the bridge-end is wholly covered, and still the flood creeps up inch by inch till the people of Vallabrègues and Saint Jacques are crying for succour from the roofs of their drowned-out houses, and the pigs and poultry go out to sea feet up on a six-knot current.

Keller and Linn sat and listened—Linn with a lost air of someone whose scheme of life has suddenly become impossible. I think Linn had expected the quiet days, the morning promenades with Alida, the cheerful suppers of the house in the square in Autun to go on always. Alida would always be as content with them as she had been when a little girl. Had she not come back from school to the warm love and unbounded spoiling which awaited her there?

As they sat and pondered, Alida entered, her roll of music in her hand.

"What," she cried, "you are all sitting as gloomy as crows in a cemetery. Where is Hugh? I want you both to come out and walk by the river. The early violets are out, and yesterday Madame the Sous-Préfet found a daffodil."

"Alida," said I, "at Aramon all the flowers are out, and the broom runs along the river banks like a mile-wide flame of fire. Everywhere is yellow in spring, ranunculus, buttercups, celandine, and the yellow wallflowers sprouting among all the old walls of Gobelet. When will you come and see them?"

Alida went prettily to Linn and kissed her. Then she put her arms about Keller without saying anything. The game was won. No more remained but to make the arrangements.

"As soon as these two dear people will let me!" she said.

Bless her! She might have started next morning if she had been set upon the matter! That is, so far as Keller and Linn were concerned.

Afterwards while we were walking home Hugh looked edgeways at me.

"Angus," said he gravely, "I should not like to have your responsibility. Are you sure that she will take to the family at Château Schneider? Or they to her? We are rather a handful, you know, and she—well, she is not exactly ordinary."

"As to that I don't know," I said sharply, for I did not like to hear my darling project decried or even suspected, "and what is more, I don't care. The garden and the Garden Cottage at Gobelet are large enough and safe enough."

"Pardon," he retorted, more unpleasantly than he had ever spoken to me. "I was under the impression that Alida was going to Aramon for society."

"Well, and suppose she finds it without crossing the bridge—what then?"

"Oh, nothing," he said, "I was only considering what you meant to do for yourself in the way of a career!"

CHAPTER XIX

KELLER BEY COMES TO ARAMON

Keller Bey came to Aramon ten days after the time of our return. Before letting us go Alida decided that I must write her every day, and Hugh once a week. She had never seen a line from either, but she judged from our faculty of conversation—often quite a false test, as witness Cowper and Gray.

For the details of that first visit of Keller to Aramon I must have recourse to the daily letters which I wrote at that time to Alida.

Monday, February—, 1871.

"Noble and Sweet,—

"The Bey came last night into the station of Aramon-les-Ateliers, where Hugh and I met him. A manifestation of the Internationale was crowding the platform to welcome some delegate who was to address the companions in their hall. I could see the old soldier quiver at the sight of the red flags they carried. If the St. André diligence had not been waiting at the station portico, I hardly think we could have persuaded him to go on. Any

opposition to the tricolour, which he hates with the hatred of an old Atlas fighter, appears to excite him. We shall have trouble with him at Aramon if events thicken as they seem to be doing.

"But for the time being, everything marched as to music. The Bey was installed beside me, and Hugh very considerately took his leave. I am sending him over a message to-day telling him how matters fell out. The view from the bridge enchanted Keller. Aramon the Elder was rich with sunset glow—'a rose-red city half as old as time,' with the tall Montmorency keep standing up from its rock as firm and proud as the day it was finished five centuries ago.

"He asked concerning the fort on the top, and gloom overspread his face when he heard that St. André had long been a famous *lycée*. I think he feared the neighbourhood of hosts of Jesuits. But I tranquillised his mind, telling him that he would find Professor Renard as free a thinker and as tolerant a listener as even my father.

"Before long we stopped at the gate of Gobelet, and to my astonishment and delight my father opened it in person. He had even made toilet to the extent of a rough pilot suit and a pair of patent leather slippers.

"Keller instinctively saluted as my father held out his hand. He seemed unaccountably shy of taking it, but at last he did and even shook it warmly if somewhat jerkily, 'after the English fashion' as he was eager to inform me afterwards—making a useful comparison of French and English characteristics between 'serrer la main' and hand-shaking.

"I let the old gentlemen go on by themselves, sure that they would thus become better friends, and if you will believe me, Alida, they were not at the corner of the path leading to the Garden Cottage before they were deep in Arabic, and the next thing I knew was my father leading the Bey prisoner through the open windows of his study that he might show him some singular and infinitely precious manuscript.

"Well, I left them till supper time. We are simple folk and sup early. Then I went into the study, where I had some difficulty in awakening them to a world where people washed hands before eating and drinking.

"'Well, we must thresh that out again,' I heard my father say, and I am sure he never showed himself so much interested by any of my performances, not even when I brought home the gold medal for the first place in the *baccalauréat*. They could hardly let each other go, and if you, Alida, were present at that moment in the mind of the Bey, you were relegated to some distant hinterland, by me unexplored.

"At supper, before Saunders McKie and the domestics I steered my barque with care. For the ears of Saunders were growing long and lop like a rabbit's, with sheer intensity of listening. Once or twice things became a little sultry, as when the Bey described the bannered procession he had seen at the station.

"'Ah, politics,' said my father. 'I am glad they do not manifest over on this side of the water. White, red, or tricolour, it is all one to a man among his books.'

"'Not to me!' said the Bey, somewhat explosively.

"'Of course not—you are a soldier, and these things have been your life's business. But you must make allowances for a recluse and a scholar!'

"I did not think my father could have been so tactful.

"So *Salaam*, for to-night, dear lady! I kiss your golden feet."

"*Tuesday.*

"The freshness of this high air to you! I take up my tale. The Bey and my father have continued inseparable. Twice have I guided Keller to the Garden Cottage, and twice has he beheld it with wandering eyes. I am so sure that he has taken little in and that he will be able to give Linn no proper satisfaction, that I have made a plan of each floor to scale, marking all the cupboards deep and shallow, all exits and entrances, and the distance from Gobelet itself, with the garden walks and coppices on a separate plan. These I send now, so that you can have them well studied before the Bey's return, when Linn and you will know a great deal more about the Garden Cottage than he will. The third expert in Arabic came to dinner to-night, and to my relief he wore his college gown. I was afraid that he might appear in the full black uniform of the Company of Jesus. Keller did not turn a hair. They addressed each other in the current Arabic of Algeria, and in a clapping of hands they were deep in the discussion of Abd-el-Kader and all manner of recent tribal matters among the clans of the Atlas.

"I did not understand very much, and indeed even the scholarly Arabic of my father was momentarily put out by words and expressions so richly local that the recollection of them caused the Vicar Apostolic to laugh aloud.

"As far as I could make out, however, there was talk of a threatened rebellion because of the defeat and humiliation of France, and how, from his home in Brousse, Abd-el-Kader was doing all he could to prevent it. The dinner was a great success, but my chief amusement was to watch the face of old Saunders McKie.

"'Losh-an-entie, Maister Aängus,' he said afterwards, 'to think that men wha can talk a reasonable civilised langwage like English, or even a chatter-chatter like the French,

> should bemean themselves to roar at yin anither like the beasts o' the forest!'
>
> "I told him that in all probability Jesus of Nazareth and his disciples spoke a dialect of it. Now I did not know how closely Aramaic approached Arabic, but I did know that the argument was calculated to impress Saunders. However, he only said, 'Maybe, but I think none the mair o' them for a caper like that, and I have ay been informed by them that kens a deal mair than you, Maister Aängus, that when the disceeples spak' or wrote, they set their tongues to the Greek, which is a decent responsible dead language, and weel thocht o' amang learned folks, or they would never spend sae muckle time learning it to the puir divinity laddies at the college.' I argued, somewhat foolishly, that most universities now had a professor of Arabic, but Saunders only said, 'Guid peety them that has to sit under *him*!'
>
> "Before going out, for I had stayed behind to smoke a cigarette and enjoy the dismay of the old servant, Saunders betrayed the reason of his anger at the use of Arabic.
>
> "'And to think,' he grumbled, as he went about dumping trays on the sideboard, 'that there's Mistress Syme and a' the rest o' them in the kitchen waiting for me to tell them a' that was said, and me has to gang doon never a bit the wiser, wi' my finger in my mouth like a bairn that hasna learned his lesson!'"

So much I wrote to Alida of the successful reception and early doings of Keller Bey, ancient war-leader under the Emir of the Atlas. He had taken enthusiastically to Aramon le Vieux, and certainly Aramon in the person of my father and Professor Renard had taken enthusiastically to him. My father duly made the offer that I had side-tracked by anticipation. There was room enough for half a dozen families of that size in Gobelet. The servants were lazy, and needed something to do. Renard should come down, and all of them should dwell together in a haze of Arabic poetry and tobacco smoke. Besides, my father found the Bey a night-bird after his own heart, and absolutely rejoiced in having someone under his roof whom at any hour he might find awake and smoking in the library, if he should find himself restless.

But this I would have at no price. I begged Keller Bey to remember that he was here to arrange for Alida and Linn. If they were to be under my father's roof, they would be eternally exposed to the jealous spying of Saunders and of the other servants, while at the Garden Cottage they would have a wall, and if necessary a locked gate, between them and any espionage.

But by far the most delicate part of my mission was to break the news to the Deventer family. I had sworn Hugh by solemn oath not to forestall me in the matter, and I think he awaited my attempt with a kind of malicious pleasure.

Certainly it was a large task to explain an unseen Alida to such a contradictory and turbulent family as the Deventers. Yet upon them and their manner of receiving Alida, befriending or showing her the cold shoulder, the whole success of the plan depended.

I might indeed bluster to Hugh that we could make a society sufficient for her within the garden bounds of Gobelet, but even as I spoke I knew the emptiness of the boast. To be happy Alida must meet and mix with girls of her own education and, so far as the Western world was concerned, social position.

I resolved to begin with Rhoda Polly, and a Rhoda Polly not argumentative and combative as in the family circle, but Rhoda Polly walking along the river bank, her eyes full of the sunset light, and the reeds whistling musically in a gentle fanning wind from the west.

Not till two days after the return of Keller Bey to Autun did I get my chance, which brought us to Saturday afternoon. The occupancy of the Garden Cottage was decided upon, and after a severe struggle on my father's part a rent, low yet not merely nominal, was agreed upon. But I knew from the expression of my father's face that he meant to be even with his tenant for all that.

CHAPTER XX

I PLAY "THREE'S COMPANY"

I met Rhoda Polly by arrangement made openly on a post card, which could be discussed in conclave and passed from hand to hand. I should be walking over to the restaurant of Mère Félix, and as the river Durance was in flood it might be worth while seeing. The day I mentioned, Saturday, was generally chosen by Hannah and Liz for their private outings, and I judged that the project would be unlikely to interest them in any case, not even if the Durance swept the plain, so long as the railway to Aramon remained open to them, by which to bring home their finery. Hugh was back with his father in the works, and Mrs. Deventer might be counted a fixture at the Château Schneider.

Remained, therefore, only Rhoda Polly, but would Rhoda Polly come? That would depend on how Hugh Deventer had kept his promise to me. Still, I thought that in any case, there being

no jealousy in the matter, I could trust Rhoda Polly's curiosity in the matter of Jeanne Félix. It must be admitted that in taking her over to the Restaurant of Sambre-et-Meuse I was sailing very near indeed to the wind. For though my conscience (such as it was) remained clear of any overact of love-making with regard to Rhoda Polly, it was by no means the same when I came to review my dealings with Jeanne. Not that I mean for a moment that Jeanne thought anything of the matter, or cherished any deep feelings for me. She was no daughter of the sainted bourgeoisie. She was frankly of the people, and had not been educated out of her sphere. She was just a simple frank girl, such as one might find by Dee or Nithwater, not ignorant of the world, nor of the designs of man, and for a French girl wonderfully capable of looking after herself.

Still, whether Jeanne was capable of recognising in Rhoda Polly a mere comrade of mine after the manner of the English, was a problem which could only be solved by experiment.

Rhoda Polly met me at the corner of the garden of the Château Schneider about half-past ten of that Saturday morning. The works were crashing away behind, and the new big gun factory especially was noisy with roaring blast furnaces and spitting jets of white steam.

We did not shake hands nor make any demonstration beyond the lifting of a hat on my part and a slight nod on Rhoda Polly's. We might have been the merest acquaintances, yet no sooner were we alongside each other, walking on the same path, than the old understanding, trustful and confident, took hold of us. The spring on the slopes of the Rhône and the Durance comes early, and is the fairest time of the year. On the sandy tracts between the rivers we passed a world of fine things. The whole peninsula, almost correctly V-shaped, had been so often overflowed by the turbulent Durance that the permanent shrubs, the bushes of broom, thyme, and cistus had ascended the little rocky knolls which could keep their heads above water. But where our path wound was a delightful wilderness of alternate sun and shadow, black umbrageous stone pines, laurel, myrtle, and clove, planted out as in a nursery garden, yet all wild, the seeds brought down by the river, and now (like Shem and his brothers scattering from Ararat) true Children of the Flood.

On the way Rhoda Polly ran hither and thither gathering flowers. With us at Aramon the spring is well under way before the autumn flowers are tired of blooming. She gathered purple colt's-foot and orchis, yellow iris and goats' honeysuckle. Troops of butterflies attended us, especially the Red Admiral and the swift poising Humming Bird Moth, some of them so large as to look like the bird itself. Even Bates on his beloved Amazon was deceived by it, as I took care to tell Rhoda Polly.

We arrived at the edge of the crossing, and from the bank I shouted for Jeanne to take us over. She came down tall and nonchalant, an oar over her shoulder, unlocked the padlock and rowed unconcernedly across. She stood to help Rhoda Polly in, and then handed me the bow oar as was our habit like one long accustomed to such visits. I delayed introductions till we had reached the farther side. Rhoda Polly gave Jeanne her hand with the swift grip of liking. But I saw a glow in Jeanne's eyes as she took the oar away from me and marched with them both over her shoulder to the house.

"Mademoiselle Deventer, mother," she cried, "come to visit us. Monsieur has brought her—so kind of Monsieur!"

And Jeanne vanished round the corner with a kind of swirl of her pretty figure, the oar-blades swooping perilously after her.

"I say," whispered Rhoda Polly, "that girl has never worn stays. Did you see her waist and hips when she turned—a full half circle? None of us, pinched-up wretches that we are, could do that! It was beautiful, the poetry of motion."

I did not say so aloud, but I knew that it was something quite different on Jeanne's part—in fact, a little fling of temper. And with the thought of opening out the matter of Alida on the way home, I began to wish that Rhoda Polly and I had taken another road than that which led to the riverside hostelry of the Sambre-et-Meuse.

Mère Félix was clamorous with welcomes, smiling heartsomely upon the daughter of the powerful manager of her husband's works, and quite willing to accept me as an elderly relative placed in charge of the outing. In which she made mistake, for nothing is more certain that all such expeditions were conducted according to the sole will of Rhoda Polly.

We arranged for lunch to be served under the *tonnelle* overlooking the river, and I stayed in the kitchen along with Mère Félix and the moon-faced maid-of-all-work. It was in my mind that perhaps Rhoda Polly might strike up one of her friendships with Jeanne, or at least do something to explain away the rather strained situation. Nor did I seem to be altogether wrong, for presently I saw the two girls amicably putting a boat to rights after a night's fishing in the flooded river. They were too distant for me to gather anything from their behaviour to one another. But presently it was evident that Rhoda Polly was talking in her wild harum-scarum fashion, for Jeanne threw back her head suddenly with a tinkle of laughter and a flash of brown throat showing pleasantly under a scarlet kerchief. I said in my heart—so vain and foolish was I—that the battle was to the cunning, and I thought no small potatoes of myself at that moment.

I soon found, however, that Jeanne, though she might laugh at Rhoda Polly's freely

expressed yarns, had no intention of forgiving me. If Rhoda Polly was heart-free, that was certainly not my fault.

So when they came back to the house I tried in vain to inveigle Jeanne behind the barns where the fish-ponds lay safe and solitary, so that I might explain at my leisure. But it was "Monsieur is too good, but a poor girl has her work to do. *She* has no time to go off sightseeing of a forenoon even with so charming a cicerone as Monsieur!"

The little vixen! She tossed her head as she said it, and I declare that her small white teeth snapped together like a rat-trap. When I spoke to her after this, she answered me only with the distant civility of a well-trained servitor: "What can I do for Monsieur? If Monsieur will only take the trouble to rest himself in the *salle* while I send Babette to attend to his wants!" (Babette was the moon-faced, rather besmutted scullion of the kitchen and the courtyard.)

"Why, Jeanne," I cried, seeing that Rhoda Polly was at a safe distance learning the receipt for some sauce or dish from the Mère Félix, "Jeanne, why do you treat me like this? Are we not old comrades? Do you remember the day among the reeds after the boat went down and we had to tramp all the way home barefoot? I wrapped your feet in our handkerchiefs, Jeanne, because you had lost your shoes and stockings in the boat."

"I do not know to what Monsieur is good enough to refer. I think that the walk in the sun from Château Schneider must have made Monsieur a little light-headed!"

Of course if I had been wiser or older I would have said nothing more, and left Time to do his own perfect work. But I could not be content. I forgot all about Alida, and it seemed to me at that moment that nothing else mattered so long as Jeanne Félix remained friends with me. I have always been like that, and I cannot say that the business has worked out badly in the long run. No matter what a tangled web I wove, I always managed in the end to retain the good will of my dear lost loves, even when the losing was entirely my fault.

The thought that was most prominent in my own mind at that moment was how pleasant it would be to obey the imperious rule of Alida the Princess on the sunny slopes below St. André, without prejudice to the charming boy-and-girl comradeship I enjoyed with Rhoda Polly on the walks and river promenades of Aramon-les-Ateliers—neither of these to interfere in the least with the sweetness of Jeanne's breath and the touch of her surrendered lips in the bosky thickets along the Durance.

The young male of twenty-one has a heart which can beat for considerably more than one. At least so it was in my time.

It surprised me, and I must admit rather shocked me, when Jeanne of all girls refused to lend herself to any such combination. I might have dotted the twin rivers with my loves and Rhoda Polly would not have cared, but such conduct from Jeanne Félix I could only look upon as highly unsatisfactory. I had never expected it of Jeanne. It would teach me to walk very warily in the matter of Alida. Foolish Jeanne, thus to have killed the pure flower of candour in my bosom!

I made a last appeal to her, which to myself seemed irresistible. There was (I averred) a relationship in the world which might be called real brother-and-sisterhood, a fraternity of the spirit. This existed between Rhoda Polly and myself. We had always been conscious of it. When we played in pinafores in the dust we chose to be together, and left the others to their noisier sports. Afterwards we studied the same subjects at college—she at Selborne, I at St. André. We compared notes afterwards. We talked, but Jeanne must not think that there was more in the business than that. I could, would, must, and did assure her that the whole matter began and ended in a close spiritual brotherhood——

"Spiritual fiddlestick!" burst out Jeanne, turning fiercely upon me. "Have you ever kissed her?"

Now I could lie upon occasion to oblige a lady, but the question was shot out at me so unexpectedly that my lips moved but I spake not.

Jeanne eyed me one instant, with a length, breadth, and depth of contempt which cut to the quick even my self-conceit, at that time a young and exceedingly healthy growth. Then without a word she turned on her heel and went into the house. We saw no more of her that day. And when Rhoda Polly asked after her to say good-bye as we were leaving, the Mère Félix, after taking counsel with a casual stable-boy, informed us that Jeanne had rowed away up the river to visit a friend whose father kept a *pépinière* or nursery of young trees at Cabannes farther up the Durance. Yes, Jeanne was often there. She and Blanche Eymard had been at school together. It was an old friendship. Besides, there was more company and gaiety at Cabannes—what would you, maids are but young once, and with a daughter so "sage" as Jeanne—why, Père Félix and she never disquieted themselves for a moment. She sometimes stayed a week or a fortnight, for she loved the culture of the young trees and the flower seeds. The work at the *pépinière* was like a play to her with so many young people about her!

CHAPTER XXI

THE GOLDEN HEART OF RHODA POLLY

I admit that I was gloomy and disappointed as I turned to walk back with Rhoda Polly—disappointed in the turn things had taken, in the ill success of my cherished diplomacy, and especially disappointed in the desertion of Jeanne, who had carried what ought at least to have been a broken heart, to the consolation of a newer and gayer place where doubtless young men abounded, as full of admiration and eagerness to please as I had been—well, any time these last two years.

It did not strike me at the time that I was only a vain young fool, whose corns had been most deservedly trampled upon, and that here was the lesson which of all others would benefit me the most.

It was therefore in a most humbled and chastened frame of mind that I opened out to Rhoda Polly the vexed and difficult problem of Alida. Perhaps it was well that I was still suffering from the rods with which Jeanne had chastised me. For, had I begun on the way towards the Restaurant Félix, when I was rampant and haughty of crest, I might not have made my points so well.

But for once I forgot my silly self, and devoted all my energies to pleading for Alida. I painted her solitary condition, and the unlikelihood that, if she (Rhoda Polly) refused to help her, she would find any other friend of her rank in Aramon.

"Why, of course I will!" cried Rhoda Polly the golden-hearted; "why did it ever get into your stupid old noddle that I would not? And so will the rest—specially mother, who will be the most useful of us all. She has never had any mother, really, this Alida of yours! Oh, of course, your Linn has done her best, but then, you see, she knew she was a princess, and from early association Madame Keller would be little more than a servant. Oh, I shall understand, never fear. Mother will be as grand a dame as she is, and I—well, I shall be the daughter of the Great Emir of the Aramon Small Arms Factory. I wish she had been coming to stay with us—but no, it is better as it is. The Garden Cottage!—Think of it, what a Princess of the Sleeping Woods she will make. We are too noisy. But why did Hugh never tell us? I should have thought he would simply have raved about such a marvel. But he has been as silent as mumchance!"

"Forgive me. I wanted to tell you myself," I said, still humbly; "it was very good of Hugh, but I really could not let anyone else tell you, and it seemed so hard to get hold of you these days—I mean without your fighting tail."

"The fighting tail have gone off to-day to rustle chiffons," cried Rhoda Polly; "but never mind them! Tell me about this Princess from the East. I never thought I should see one, yet I once saw her father, a patch of white on the high promenade at Amboise, the year that Dad took me with him for company. He was bringing out a new carbine for the Cavalry School at Saumur on the Loire. So it was from there that we went one day to see the great man."

Then I told Rhoda Polly about the brown prince of the Khedival house, his visit and the answer he had carried back.

"Of course she could not," she cried, all on fire in a moment. "It would be like imprisonment for life, only far more dreadful."

Rhoda Polly's eyes, unused to untimeous moisture, were at least vague and misty, but that might only be because she was looking into the blue distance towards the Alps of Mont Ventoux.

"Poor precious waif," she said, "if she is wayward and a little difficult—who can wonder? We shall all try hard to make her happy. We will come and pay court to her in the garden."

I explained that a girl who had been a music mistress to the exigent Sous-Préfectoral dames and other ladies of Autun, might not be so difficult to deal with as she seemed to expect. It was only Keller Bey and Linn who, if spoiling had been possible, had spoilt her ever since she came to them as a little child, the charge committed to them by their master, the battle Emir of the Atlas.

"Oh," cried Rhoda Polly, hardly able to curb her feet to a decent walk, "how mean it will be if they stop Keller Bey's money, and that wretch of an old Emir getting so much from the Government. I wish I did not spend every centime of my allowance without ever knowing where it goes to! But at any rate I mean for the future to share with Alida if she will let me."

I explained how from what Keller had told me Alida would have enough to live upon even if they never saw another sixpence of her father's money. Also I described what my father was doing to the Garden Cottage to fit it for their coming.

"Oh, do let me come and help. Ask your father. I should love to! And I should have far more idea than a man. I could get mother to come too, sometimes, though you know how loath she is to move far out of her own house. Still, she could drive over."

Never was there so short a walk as that between the pier above Mère Felix's and the gate of Château Schneider. Rhoda Polly was so eager that she would have gone right across the river there and then, and climbed the hill to Garden Cottage, if I had not insisted on delivering her to her mother, and generally giving an account of my stewardship.

Before going in, however, I warned her that the secret of Alida the Princess must be kept. It was only for herself. To the rest of the family she must be Mademoiselle Keller, the daughter of Keller Bey and his wife Linn.

The need to keep so great a matter secret seemed to damp the girl's enthusiasm for a moment, but almost instantly she caught me by the hand in her impulsive boyish way.

"I promise," she said, "and you are quite right. It was splendid of you to tell me. I am so grateful for that."

"Of course I told you, Rhoda Polly. Who else could I have told?"

She meditated a little, finger on lip before speaking.

"Do you know it is rather a pity not to tell mother," she said at last. "She does not interfere, but she moderates and eases off the hard places. She has a great deal of influence in a quiet way—more than any-one—and she would never tell a soul. I really think that it would do Alida more good than anything else to have mother on our side from the first. We are all trumpeters like father (except perhaps Hugh, who is not like any of our brood), but it is mother who tells the trumpets when to stop sounding."

I assured Rhoda Polly that she could do as she thought best in the matter. Mrs. Deventer was all she said and more. She possessed, besides, a pleasant quality of motherhood that glinted kindly through her spectacles. Then, of course, Rhoda Polly knew best. All that I wanted to avoid was having the secret which had been entrusted to me being battered about in the daily brawls of the Deventer family—still less did I wish that it should get abroad to set talking the commonplace gossips of the town.

"Ah, *mon ami*," said Rhoda Polly, "you need not fear my mother. She knows the secrets of every one of us, I think—except perhaps Hugh's, who is too young to have any—and yet when we girls come to confide some tremendous fact to each other, we are astonished to find that mother has known it all the time."

CHAPTER XXII

IN THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW

Garden Cottage was occupied on the eleventh of March, 1871. For several days before that, the great discharging lorries lent by Mr. Deventer had toiled up the hill, the four stout horses leaning hard on the collar and their drivers ready to insert the wheel-rest at every turning.

Ever since this time began, Rhoda Polly had almost lived at our house, and she it was who had done the ordering of all the strange Oriental furnishings, partly from her own taste and partly from questioning me as to the arrangement of the different rooms I had seen at Autun.

Mrs. Deventer came across the bridge every day in her little blue Victoria—taking a peep in at us in the morning and hurrying back to tend her flocks, but in the afternoon, stopping over tea till she could drive a rather soiled Rhoda Polly home, as it were a much ruffled chick under a motherly wing. For indeed Rhoda Polly spared neither man nor beast, least of all did she spare herself. A tack-hammering, painting and varnishing, cellar-to-garret Rhoda Polly pervaded the house, swooping upon all and sundry and compelling strict attention to business among the much-promising, little-performing tradesmen of Aramon.

My father had already done his part, for he was a man who could not endure the chill mistral of the Rhône valley. Every room which had a chimney was equipped above with a wind shield, and beneath with steel andirons, beside which the cut faggots lay ready piled. The chambers without chimneys had been fitted with porcelain German stoves, the pipes of which bristled like lightning-rods along the roof ridges, and in the hall a great open fire-place shone with brass and copper, the spoil of an ancient Spanish monastery condemned in 1835 by Mendizabal, prime minister and Jew share-broker. What wonder if Rhoda Polly went home dishevelled and not over clean, but full of excitement and ready to battle for her new fad with the family at Château Schneider. Once there her mother plumped her into a hot bath, and after a smart douche to close the pores, Rhoda Polly came down literally as fresh as paint, to do battle for her new enthusiasms.

Hannah and Liz Deventer came once or twice to see what it was all about, but as they would not help, but only went round accumulating brickbats to pelt Rhoda Polly with later in the day, on the second occasion that capable young woman turned them both out *vi et armis*, though she must have weighed a good third less than Hannah.

The girls went good-humouredly enough, and having found my father talked with him in the Gobelet garden, by the old sundial which bore the arms of a former Marquis de Gallifet, and a date which commemorated the visit of Mesdames de Grignan and de Sevigné during the governorship of the former's husband.

Gordon Cawdor, my father, pleased all women, and I must admit most men—though up till now I had not been able to allow him the full measure of my sympathy or admiration. To do him justice he did not seem in the least conscious of the need of these, so long as I behaved decently and did my duty at school and college.

He was a man wonderfully stoical about the modern lack of filial recognition, no doubt saying to himself, as I came to do later, that the bringing up of sons was a poor business if one looked for direct returns on the capital and labour expended. But he never complained, and must, I think, have been finally and lastingly astonished when the long-barren fields of my filial piety ripened of themselves.

At any rate I began to know him better during these days. I marked his gentle ways, his enormous reading and erudition, never flaunted, never refused, never at fault. He had already finished his part of the work at the Garden Cottage, so he sat either in his study with the tall French window on the hasp ready to a visitor's hand—or, if the sun shone and the mistral was stilled, out on the broad wooden bench by the fish pond, a volume in his hand to read or annotate when alone—but quite ready to drop it into the pocket of his velvet jacket, and turn the gaze of his gentle scholarly eyes upon whomsoever had come forth in need of society or soul refreshment.

I learned a lesson in those days—to know how other people estimated my father. Of course, I had seen Dennis Deventer drinking in the knowledge he felt the lack of, as from a fountain. I knew what Professor Renard and the Bey thought of him. Yet, after all, these were men of Gordon Cawdor's own age and stamp.

But when I saw the fine sweet house-motherliness of Mrs. Deventer sitting at my father's feet and talking confidentially yet with respect, the thing seemed to me strange. I have seen her finish the review and arrangement of a series of china and napery closets, the laying down of fresh papers in chests of drawers, or the ordering of knick-knacks gathered in the Bey's campaigns. Then she would throw a fold of black Spanish lace over her pretty grey hair, always shining and neat—and so, without explanation or apology, hie herself out to find my father.

"A talk with him is my refreshment!" she said once when she came back and laid the folded lace scarf down beside the work she was next to attack. More than once I had passed them speaking low and earnestly, and I am sure she was consulting him about some intimate affairs of which she had spoken to no one else.

Or it was the turn of Rhoda Polly and her procedure was different. She would remove the provision of tin-tacks, French nails, or whatnot from her mouth, her habitual ready receptacle, throw a wisp or two of rebellious ripe-corn hair back from her brow, and demand to be told if there were any very bad smuts on her face! When she presented her handkerchief or the hem of her apron to me I knew from long experience what was expected of me. I was to remove the offending smuts from Rhoda Polly's face with the oldest and most natural of cleansers, exactly as we had done to one another when the dinner bell or the voice of authority called us from some extra grubby tree-climbing or mud-pie making experiment in the days when the world was young.

"Spell ho!" Rhoda Polly would cry; "had enough this one time. I am off to talk to your father. He does me good."

And now when the other Deventer girls, the stately swan-necked Hannah and the Dresden shepherdess of a dainty Liz, being expelled for "shameless slacking" and "getting in everybody's way," took their road with happy expectant faces to the bench by the sundial, I knew in my heart for the first time that I would never so add to the happiness of humanity as that gentle refined scholarly man who was my father.

To my shame I took a cast about the garden, and from the top of a ladder looked down upon the trio in an unworthy and wholly ungentlemanly way. I did not mean to overhear—of course not—but I overheard. My only excuse is that I was in a quandary. I knew that I had somehow been all wrong about my father, and I wanted to find out how I could put matters right. Hannah was seated on the bench beside him, listening and looking down, making diagrams meanwhile in the gravel with the point of her *en-tout-cas*, a sort of long-handled parasol sent from Paris.

Liz had characteristically pulled one of the little stools called "banquettes" from under the sundial, and had seated herself between my father's knees. She had taken her hat off and now leaned her elbow on his knee looking up into his face.

He was telling them about maidens of old times, how the Lesbia of Catullus looked and dressed, how he and she idled the day by the length a-dream in a boat in the bays about Sirmio. He quoted Tennyson's delicious verses to them, and they promised to look them up that night.

"If it were not that Rhoda Polly knows so much, I should begin Latin this very day," said Liz; "but she is such a swell that she can always come down on a fellow. She thinks we know nothing!"

"I know I don't," said Hannah, "except how to walk and dance and behave at table."

"No, that last you don't," retorted Liz Deventer; "you were far the noisiest (mother said so) in our last big family fight!"

"Well, I mean I can do these things when I like, Silly!" said Hannah, unmoved.

The hand of my father descended slowly. It had been raised to mark the rhythm of *Olive-silvery-Sirmio*! It now rested on the curly brown locks of Liz Deventer. He ceased to speak, and then suddenly with a sigh he said, "I envy Dennis. I have a good son—yes, a good son," he repeated with emphasis, "but I should have liked a daughter also. There is a side of me she would have understood."

Instantly the girls had their arms about his neck, and I hastily descended my shameful ladder, leaving behind me a chorus of "We will be your daughters—Rhoda Polly too—mother too—she thinks——"

But I got out of earshot as fast as might be, quite chopfallen and ashamed. I had not been a good son, whatever Gordon Cawdor might say—I knew it. I had held him lightly and withheld what others found their greatest joy in giving him—my confidence. It was no use saying that he never invited it. No more had he invited that of Mrs. Deventer, or of the girls—or, what touched me more nearly, that of Rhoda Polly herself.

At last the great day came, and by the same train which had brought the Bey on his errand of inspection the three new tenants of the Cottage arrived. The Bey looked military and imposing as he stood over the baggage counter. Linn, tall and gaunt in unbroken black, accepted my father's arm smilingly almost at the first sound of his voice. He showed her through the narrow shed-like waiting-rooms to the carriage in readiness outside. Mrs. Deventer had received Alida into her arms as she descended from the carriage, and was now cooing over her, watched hungrily by Rhoda Polly, who wearied for her turn to come.

It struck me that Alida was not looking quite so well as usual. It had cost her more than I thought to disobey her father—more afterwards perhaps than at the time. For among those of her blood, the servitude of woman goes with heredity, and the culture of Europe, though it may render obedience impossible, does not kill the idea of parental authority. "Though he slay me, yet shall I trust in him!"

But when Alida greeted me, I knew in a moment that though the battle had been sore, the victory was won. There would be no looking back.

"What, Angoos, *mon ami*, have I all those friends already? I owe them all to you!"

I took Rhoda Polly's hand, and put it into the gloved fingers of the little Princess.

"Not to me, dear Alida," I said, "but to this girl; she has, as you shall find, a heart of gold."

Alida kept the strong roughened fingers in hers, and looked deep into the eyes of Rhoda Polly as if to read her inmost soul.

"I shall remember that, Angoos," she said; "that is a beautiful thing when it is said in the language of my own country. It sings itself—it makes poetry. Listen!

"'Rhoda Polly of the Golden Heart—Heart of Gold, how true is my maiden!' Wait, I will sing it for you in Arabic——"

But suddenly, no one knew why, the female heart being many stringed and unaccountable, even to me, Rhoda Polly was crying—yes, Rhoda Polly the dry-eyed, and who but Alida was comforting her under the stupid gaze of hangers-on about the station of Aramon!

CHAPTER XXIII

THE MISGIVINGS OF ALIDA

At the house in the garden the new servants stood ready, neat and smiling. My father had written to a Protestant pastor at Grenoble to send him two maids of his religion. Accordingly two sisters had arrived, Claire and Hermance Tessier, reliable pleasant-faced girls with no family ties in Aramon and with the difference of religion to keep them apart from indiscriminate gossipry. The wing of the house where they were to sleep had formed a part of the wall, possibly even it may have been an ancient gateway in the time of the Montmorencies. My father had joined it to the main building by a flying bridge of iron roofed with zinc—which was Dennis Deventer's own private contribution to Garden Cottage. I had warned him of the nocturnal habits of Linn and her husband, and he agreed with me that while for Alida's sake they must be served according to the French fashion, they need not be

deprived of the nightly freedom of their own house which was their greatest luxury.

So at the Cottage door we judged it best to leave them. Rhoda Polly and her mother drove home. My father and I withdrew, I to my den, he to his study. If the new tenants of the Garden Cottage had any changes to make or any fault to find with what had been prepared for them, the alterations could be done quietly and by degrees. Besides, the pale face of Alida haunted me and I thought that a night's rest would be for her the surest medicine.

But the general joyousness of the journey up the hill was our best hope that all would be well. The Bey was gay. Even Linn relaxed when she saw the noble prospect of the blue Rhône and the little white and green house among the laurels, walled in like a fortress. Hand in hand but silent Rhoda Polly sat beside Alida as the coachman drove over the bridge and up the winding road, St. André looming up a crenellated wall of red and gold above them.

This was the beginning of a wonderful week which, lived in the unseen and unsuspected shadow of disaster, now shines the brighter for the contrast with what was to come after. The last week of the theatres and baths of Pompeii was not more memorable, and we who sunned ourselves upon the limestone slopes of Mont St. André thought as little of the future as the many tinted crowd of merry-makers who thronged the beaches between the city gate and the white sands of Torre del Greco.

They came on the 11th of March, and one week after fell the 18th, a date ever memorable in the history of the cities of France.

Yet how much happiness did we manage to put in between the one day and the other.

Next morning, that is on the 12th, I was up early, so early that no one was visible about the Garden Cottage except the two Grenoble maids, who had settled down to their duties as if they had been on the spot for months. They were indeed lucky, for few new *bonnes* come to so clean a house—"shining like a soldier's button," averred Claire.

Linn and her husband had doubtless spent the night in making an exhaustive survey of the dwelling, and Linn especially would be full of discoveries. At present they were retired in their own chamber, dozing doubtless, after their long nocturnal expeditions, and also probably because after the awakening of the maids they felt the house no more their own.

It was a morning when the chill gusting of the mistral wind hurtled and raved about St. André. I had already made friends with the sisters Tessier, of whom Claire was housemaid and Hermance cook. Rhoda Polly had introduced us and that curious and almost affectionate regard which springs up between good servants and friends of the house soon made my visits very agreeable to them.

They asked counsels of me—as for example, how Monsieur liked his coffee, if Madame was more set upon the kitchen or the "lingerie," and how best to serve Mademoiselle, who, as they had been given to understand (probably by Linn), was of chief standing in the house.

I told them that they needed no more than to be good brave girls and all would go well. But I warned them that both Madame and her husband had been accustomed to many things in the wild countries where they had dwelt, which would be looked upon as strange by a burgher who had never set a head outside his own wall.

I prepared them for the Bey's occasional absences, and for Linn's restless wanderings and perpetual rangings of cupboards. They were quite contented, thanked me blithely, and Claire took up the morning breakfast of rolls and *café au lait* with shining success. All that she had to tell when she came down was that Mademoiselle had asked her to rub her feet in order to awaken her.

Whereupon I pointed the not unuseful moral that what I had said applied to Mademoiselle also. She had spent her childhood in Africa and though the best and sweetest lady in the world, might do or ask for things that need not be repeated outside the house. The Tessiers quite saw the necessity.

"They are all tattlers in the south," said Claire, "I have heard it from my friend who had service here. It is different at Nîmes or Grenoble, where the families are mostly Protestant."

They knew somehow that my father had once been a *pasteur* and they had all the Scottish weakness for a "son of the manse."

When at last Linn began to make her presence heard in the upper story, I retreated without being discovered, extremely satisfied with my diplomacy. After all, this transplantation was a hazardous experiment, and all who had taken part in the business must see to it that the little foxes did not spoil the vineyard by any side entrance.

I had scarcely begun my task of writing for the day, when I was called from my desk by a message from Alida. It was a cunningly folded note, sealed with the great seal which had been her father's. The bright splash of red wax occupied quite a third of the back. So, not to tear the paper, I laid it a moment on the hob, and then with the thinnest blade of my knife, I lifted it cleanly away in one piece. After which I unfolded the rustling sheet.

"Come and see me before anyone else."

That was all and indeed quite enough, for with quick beating pulses I hastened to obey. Linn was waiting for me at the first turn of the wooded path, and as we paced along together towards Garden Cottage I could feel the "gleg" inquisitorial eyes of Saunders McKie boring into my back. I wished Linn had sent over one of the Tessiers on this first occasion, but I do not suppose it ever occurred to her to let another do for Alida what she could do herself.

The Bey was within the walled garden, pacing up and down, revolving in his mind something which pleased him but little.

"What is it, Keller Bey?" I asked sharply. "Do you not find yourself comfortable among us?"

"Too comfortable by half," he grunted, "here are many things which must have cost much money, and yet I am told by Alida that they are presents of welcome for which I must not pay—whereupon, of course, Linn agrees with her, and I who was the right hand of Abd-el-Kader and thought myself indebted to no man, am made in my own eyes a veritable pauper!"

"Keller Bey," I said, "you speak in ignorance of our English customs. At a house-warming or the taking possession of a new residence, all your friends are under obligation to bring their contribution to the home. It is our way of wishing you good luck and a happy tenancy. Nothing could be more unfortunate than any offer of payment for such a service."

"Yes—yes—I understand," he broke in testily, "I suppose I have been too long among the black tents. I learn your ways with difficulty. I am sure every one means well, but how am I to do all that thanking? Can I bow backs at my age and say grace for what I would rather have done without?"

"You cannot," I said, laughing at his perturbed face, "for we do not tell the name of the givers lest it should bring ill-luck. But where is Alida?"

Alida, it seemed, was in the pleasant gable parlour which, with so much anxious forethought, we had fitted up for her. She had been arranging her books on the shelves, and was now going from picture to picture and from window to window.

She gave me both hands when she saw me and said immediately, "Angoos, who would have thought that we had among us at Autun such an observant boy! You have reproduced my room there with hardly a change, save the pictures and the pottery. Has your father let them to us along with the house?"

"No," I said, "they are loving gifts from Madame Deventer, and as for the arrangement, Rhoda Polly did that, questioning me as she went, and forcing me to recall exactly whether I would or not."

"I sent for you," said Alida, "to tell me all about this family who have been so kind, so that I may make no mistake. And first, why did only the women come?—where was Monsieur Hugh, who dwelt with us at Autun?"

I explained to her the mystery of a great factory, where were thousands of men all doing different things, and how Hugh, though but a small wheel in such a mechanism, could not leave his post at will without interfering with the work of many others.

I sketched rough, strong, imperious Dennis to her. Rhoda Polly purposely somewhat vague, because I knew that she would soon enough find out about Rhoda Polly for herself. But I made word cameos of Hannah and Liz and concluded with a full-length portrait of Mrs. Deventer, in whom I hoped (though I took care not to say so) Alida would find the mother her youth had lacked.

She listened with lowered eyes and a silent attention as if she were weighing every word.

"Yes," she said, "I shall like them all. I feel sure—or almost."

Then she asked suddenly, "Does Rhoda Polly sing? Can she play?"

"In a way," I answered lamely enough; "she has had the usual lessons before she went to college, but her voice has never been trained."

"Is she very clever?"

"Yes, at driving nails, hanging pictures, laying down carpets, and getting a house ready—I never saw anyone to match her."

"But I mean—she is very learned—will she look down upon me who have to step carefully among abysses of ignorance?"

"Alida," I said earnestly, "she is likely to spoil you far more than is good for you. The others will do so also, but you will find that Rhoda Polly will win your heart more than all of us put together."

"I do not think so," said Alida composedly.

And then, struck by the astonishment in my face, she continued, "I shall not like her if you praise her so much!"

"Do not be foolish, Alida," I said, "you should have heard me praising you to Rhoda Polly

when I got back from Autun. It took me nearly one whole day, and ever since she has been painting, varnishing, and scrubbing, that the nest should be worthy of such a bird of Paradise as I described."

"Oh, I know," pouted Alida, "she is infinitely better than I, more unselfish, and—and—you love her!"

"She is certainly more unselfish," I said, firing up; "you have yet to learn what the word means. Perhaps that partly explains your charm, but all the same you must love Rhoda Polly."

"Because *you* do?"

I was tempted to deny my gods and declare that I did not love Rhoda Polly, when the remembrance of a particular smear on her nose one day of mutual paintwork on opposite sides of a fireplace, and a way she had of throwing her head back to toss the blonde curls out of her eyes, stopped me.

"Of course I love Rhoda Polly, and so will you (and more than I love her) when your eyes are opened!"

And with that I left Alida to digest the fact of her own selfishness. At the time I considered myself a kind of hero for having so spoken. Now I am not so sure. She was what Keller and Linn had made her, and I ought to have remembered the snubs and rebuffs which she must have suffered from Sous-Préfecture dames and other exacting though respectable ladies of Autun.

* * * * *

This week held many other matters and the seeds of more. Rhoda Polly came to take Alida out in her mother's Victoria, and spent a long day in the garden instead, sending back the coachman to be ready to take Mrs. Deventer to the works to drive her husband home to lunch, as was her daily custom.

I do not know what the girls said to one another. I kept out of the way, but when I came into the dining-room with my father a little before noon, I was certain that Alida had been crying and that Rhoda Polly had been dabbing her eyes with hasty inexperienced fingers.

I thought this no ill sign of coming friendship, and indeed it was not an hour before I received a first confidence on the subject from Alida.

"She is all you say and more. She makes me so ashamed of myself!"

"So she does me!" I answered, thinking of my dealings with Jeanne and our walk home from the restaurant of Mère Félix.

Alida held out her hand quickly.

"Does she make you feel that too?—I am glad," she said, and smiled gratefully like a child consoled.

Then came Rhoda Polly's mother, and my father, who had been talking to Rhoda Polly by the sundial, rose and with a word and smile excused himself and went indoors. The interview that followed I should have loved well to watch and hear. But after all I doubt if any great part of the gentle influences which rained from Mrs. Deventer could have been written down. No stenographer could take note of those captivating intonations, the soft subtle pauses of speech, the lingering tender understanding in her motherly eyes, the way she had of laying her hand upon Alida's.

She had been a counsellor to many, and had never forgotten a sore heart even when healed, nor told a tale out of that gracious confessional.

Certain it is that the conquest of Alida was soon made, in so far as Mrs. Deventer could make it. They saw each other every day, and the sight of Rhoda Polly and Alida striking across the big bridge with the wind right in their faces—or of Alida, with Linn, like a gaunt watch-dog, thrusting a combative shoulder into the mistral to fend a way for her charge—became familiar on the windy sidewalks of the great suspension bridge.

All went as we could have wished it, till one day I took the Bey across to go over the works. Dennis Deventer was to afford enough time to conduct us in person. It was no small honour, for visitors were generally either refused altogether, or handed over to Jack Jaikes with instructions that they should see as little as possible.

I was wholly at ease about the meeting of the Bey and Dennis Deventer. Two such fighters, I thought, could not but be delighted with one another.

I was only partly right. They met with mutual respect. Dennis had been in Algeria at a more recent date than the Bey, and could give news of deaths of chiefs, of successions disputed and consequently bloody, and of all the tangled politics of the South Oran.

But once in the hum and turmoil of the works, the power-straps running overhead like lightning flashes, the spinning lathes, the small busy mechanisms installed on tables and set

going by tiny levers, the Bey's attention wandered. Instead of attending to the wonderful fittings and the constant jingle of the finished parts, he seemed to search out each man's face, in a manner to compel their attention. Usually when a visitor goes round with the "chief," the men make it a point of honour to turn away their eyes almost disdainfully. But it was different with the personally conducted trip of Keller Bey. At him the men gazed with sudden evident respect, and we were not half-way through the first room before the whisper of our coming ran far ahead of us through the workshops.

I could see nothing about Keller Bey to explain this sudden interest. He did not make masonic signs with his hands. He hardly spoke a word. He never looked at the men who were devouring him with their eyes. All I could see was that he wore the red tie habitual to him, clasped by a little pin made of two crossed standards drooped upon their *hampes*, one red with rubies and the other formed of black diamonds. It was the only jewellery Keller Bey ever wore and naturally, since I had never seen him without it, it seemed a part of him like his collar-stud or his sleeve-links.

Dennis Deventer, who never missed anything in the works, noted the men's behaviour, but continued his exposition of the secret of preventing the jamming of the mitrailleuses.

"I am a little late with my invention," he said, "I shall have to wait for the next war to make my demonstration complete."

"You may not have to wait so long as you think!" said the Bey quietly. "Had you not a little private war of your own a month ago?"

The time was so ill chosen as to make Keller's reference almost a disaster. There were men within earshot who had driven the troops of the Republic out of Aramon, perhaps even some who had assaulted the house of the Chief Director.

"We had some little trouble like other folks," said Dennis Deventer lightly, "but we have forgotten all about that!"

"Ah!" said the Bey reflectively, as they passed on. In the big gun foundry a huge Hercules of a fellow, naked to the waist, thrust his way through the little crowd about us, seized Keller Bey by the hand, murmured something to us unintelligible. The Bey took no notice beyond nodding briefly to the man. Then turning to Deventer he continued unconcernedly, "About that feeding gear, you were saying——?"

But Dennis Deventer looked at Keller Bey curiously.

"Did you know that man?" he asked earnestly.

"No, I never set eyes on him before," said the Bey carelessly as before; "is there anything against him?"

"Not exactly," replied Deventer, "but he is one of the most dangerous men in the works—almost as strong in body as I am myself, and much listened to by the men. I wish I could say he leads them wisely."

Keller Bey shook his head gravely, but except repeating that he knew nothing whatever about the foundryman, he uttered no word of excuse or commendation. However, Dennis Deventer was in no mind to let him off so easily.

"You are having such a success among the men as I never saw the like of, and would not have believed if I had not seen with my own eyes. Have you been to St. Etienne or Creusot? Many of our fellows come from there. It is possible that they may recognise you."

"I have never been in either place in my life," said Keller Bey simply, and so cut off discussion.

But I could see that a doubt remained and brooded upon the spirit of Dennis Deventer. He brought the visit abruptly and rather disappointingly to a close, by saying that there was a man waiting for him in his office. But as men were always waiting to see Dennis Deventer at any hour of the day, his taking himself off must have been an excuse. I felt vaguely to blame. Indeed, I was wholly at sea, the more so when just outside the great gates of the Small Arms Company's yards Keller was met by half a dozen workmen of a superior sort, who saluted him respectfully and asked for a private interview.

I said I should go and wait for him at the bridge-end, and he kept me waiting for an hour and a half, which I would much rather have spent with Rhoda Polly. Keller Bey was altogether too much of a responsibility in Aramon-les-Ateliers. If he had further visits to pay on this side, he could find his way himself, so far as I was concerned. I would not waste a whole morning only to get myself suspected by Rhoda Polly's father.

I sat down on the parapet and watched the drowsy *douaniers* at the receipt of custom, or the still drowsier fishermen dropping baited lines into a seven-knot current, which banked itself up and then swirled high between the piers.

And lazying thus in the sunshine, I cast my mind over many things, but particularly I thought of Hugh. Had I indeed lost Hugh Deventer? Why was he no longer my faithful confidant and comrade as of old? Had we gone together to the wars, slept under one blanket, only to bring

about this separation? Even to-day I had not seen him. Had he of set purpose hid himself away?

Certainly he was no more the dreamily affectionate companion, a little slow in comprehension but rapid and accurate in execution, upon whose thews and muscles I had been wont to depend. Hugh Deventer was lost to me. More than that, he could hardly any more be said to belong to the family circle at Château Schneider. He had furnished a room for himself down at the works, where he read and slept. His meals were cooked by the wife of the chief night-watchman and at home no one was surprised. For the Deventers were, even before coming of age, in fact as soon as they had left school, a law to themselves. And I think that Dennis was secretly pleased at his boy's setting up for himself.

But I knew that Hugh was not driven by any noble desire for independence. Sitting there in the warm sun which beat upon the bridge parapet, I set aside one possible cause for our estrangement after another.

It was not on account of Jeanne or Rhoda Polly. No jealousy possessed Hugh Deventer because I sat at his father's table far oftener than he did. One reason only could explain all the circumstances. He had been at Autun and had supposed that Alida's idea of coming to the Garden Cottage had originated with me. Evidently he had resented this, and since our return he had kept himself, in all save the most formal fashion, apart from all the rejoicing over the new tenants.

Obviously he must consider himself in love with Alida, which was, of course, wholly natural and within his right. But why vent his humour upon me? I could not make Alida return his love, and certainly sulking in the holes and corners of a factory would do nothing to soften the heart of that imperious little lady. He had indeed become little more than a memory to Alida.

"I don't think Hugh likes me," she said, more than once. "He never comes to see me—not even to tell me how selfish I am!"

CHAPTER XXIV

PEACE BEFORE STORM

The 18th of March dawned clear and bright, the wind still a little chill, but the whole land, as we looked down upon it from our Gobelet watch-tower on the front of St. Andre's hill, tinted white and pink with blossom, almond, peach, pear, plum, and cherry. It was wonderful to see them running up, as it were scrambling over fence and rock scarp, till they broke in a sunshiny spray of hawthorn blossom against the grey walls of the *lycée* of St. André.

Never was there a quieter day nor one that seemed filled with more happy promise. For the first time Linn and Alida had resumed their old understanding. For there is no doubt that Linn had been somewhat jealous of the absorbing commerce between the house of Deventer and the cottage in the laurel bushes beyond the garden of Gobelet.

Keller had gone to Aramon, Linn said. He might be away all night, for he had it in his mind to push as far as Marseilles. I knew of the Bey's absences from Autun, and so thought no more of the matter. Linn, put in good humour by having Alida to herself (for me she did not count), talked freely of the beauties of their installation. The Basse Cour and the poultry especially delighted her, and she had already prepared a ruled book which was to show in parallel columns the cost of feeding as compared with the result in chickens and eggs.

All that day no one crossed over the bridge from Château Schneider and the time was blessed for Linn. She knew very well that it was for just such companionship that Alida had come to Aramon. She had herself supported the necessity for change, even against her husband. But all the same, now when she got her Princess a day to herself she made the most of it, falling back into her old caressing habits and ready to treat Alida as the little girl who long ago had been put in her hands with all a queen's habits of command and the sweet waywardness of a child.

I helped when I could and fetched huge stuffed buffets and cushions, so that Alida could install herself beside my father at the fishpond, and then I left him to make his usual conquest. He was smiling and tranquil as I remember, but with an unwonted eagerness in his eye, which did not by any means come from the anticipation of a morning with Alida. I remembered afterwards that he had had an interview the night before with Keller Bey in which they had talked much Arabic, and early this morning he had dispatched Saunders McKie over the water with a letter to Dennis Deventer. But these things did not fall into place in my mind, at least not till long afterwards.

We had a happy day among the sunflecked glades of Gobelet—that is, Alida, my father and I. When they two were alone, they talked Arabic, but ceased as soon as I joined them.

Conscious of the awkwardness Alida renewed her offer to teach me colloquially if my father

would put me in the way of learning the grammar, while I regretted bitterly having wasted my time at St. André. Finally to change the subject we fell to talking over the Montmorencies and their *Tour Carrée* on the heights of Aramon le Vieux. Here at hand, where the Tessiers slept at the far side of Dennis Deventer's flying bridge of steel, was their gateway tower, still pitted by the balls of Mazarin's troops. For a Montmorency of those days, probably held in leash by his wife, had taken the popular side in the wars of the Fronde.

Down there on that islet in the reign of Louis XII (said my father) a great tournament was held in which the knights of France, light and lissom, overwhelmed the weightier champions of Burgundy.

If we had been more watchful as we talked, we might have seen the smoke die out of the tall chimneys of Aramon-les-Ateliers, the blast furnaces withdraw their crowns of pale flame, and an unnatural quiet settle down upon the busy city.

But our minds were bent wholly on giving pleasure to Alida. She must be taken through this glade, climb this steep path, and see the marvellous spectacle of the Rhône delta with its wide wastes wandered over by fierce cattle, its sinuous waterways blocked by the only beavers remaining in Europe, and far away beyond it the violet-blue bar of the Midland Sea.

We did indeed conduct Alida from admiration to admiration, and she had what I fear Rhoda Polly would have called "the time of her life." It did strike me several times how strange it was that since my father had sent his morning message to Dennis Deventer, we had had no news of the household at Château Schneider.

I sounded Saunders on the subject, but he knew nothing, or at least would tell nothing.

"The letter? Oh, Maister Dennis just read it and put it in his waistcoat pooch. Syne, says he, 'Saunders, will ye drink?' 'No,' says I; for if I did, when I gaed hame I micht smell! So he gied me yin o' thae French sovereigns as easy as puttin' a penny in the plate. Oh, a grand man is Maister Deventer when ye get the richt side o' him, but as they tell me the very deevil and a' when his monkey is up. Do you ken, Maister Aängus, he was just trying me on, by asking me to drink? For if I had ta'en as muckle as a sup frae his hand, I micht hae whistled for the wee French sovereign—whilk is only barely worth saxteen shillings when a' is said and done!"

Nevertheless in the full bliss of ignorance we idled away the day while about us the flowers grew as we looked at them, so keen an edge was on that spring day. Linn ranged her napery cupboards to her most perfect content, not that she could do it better than Mrs. Deventer had done, but simply for the satisfaction of, as it were, expressing her mind and doing it differently.

The shadows passed steadily across the sundial. The underneath inscription became more strongly incised as the sun dipped westward. The rock plants on the little island in the pond fell into shadow and some closed up their petals for the night. And still in the midst of a great silence we moved and smiled and were happy. Aramon le Vieux drowsed beneath us. The good wives at their doors were out gossiping their hardest, but in undertones which must not pass from one group to another. Cats sunned themselves in window sills beyond the reach of the prowling cur, and the majestic river, so soon to be split and worried into a hundred waterways, *étangs* and backwaters, passed noiselessly in front of us in one noble rush, level, calm, and swift.

I think it was about three o'clock in the afternoon when Professor Renard, coming from the post office, where the telegraph had been recently installed, brought tidings.

"There is a revolt in Paris," he said, "the soldiers and the National Guard have expelled the Government. That is the news they have received, but no one knows whether it is false or true."

Nor in the midst of our quiet park with the fruit trees in blossom everywhere could we have any guess at the turmoil, the riding of orderlies, and the hasty ordering of official carriages in Paris.

Indeed, the talk passed to other matter and on the surface, and the tidings seemed to affect us little. So having left Linn still busy with her linen, Alida and I took our way to the look-out summer-house above the aerial swing of the suspension bridge, leaving the elders talking very soberly together.

"Surely there is no danger here?" the girl asked when we had seated ourselves. She spoke not from any fear but that she might contrive means of helping her friends the Deventers if they needed it.

"Not that I know of," I answered, "but the workmen of Aramon are always fiery and hard to handle. We *have* had battles and sieges, yet things were smoothed over and the works went on as before—the men who had been busily shooting each other down talking over details of work and taking orders from one another as if nothing had happened."

"How long ago was that?"

"Only about two months," I explained, "but you need expect nothing of that kind on this side.

The workmen never cross the bridge save when on pleasure bent, or when our July fair-time fills the green yonder with the din of booths, circuses, and penny theatres."

Nevertheless, Alida's face continued to express trouble.

"But Rhoda Polly, her mother, and the others—are they in danger?"

"Not, I think, for the moment. The more serious the news from Paris, the less will the men think of their grievances against the Company and the Company's manager. Last time the siege was bitter and determined on both sides. Many were killed. Yet it was no more than a trade dispute which Mr. Deventer could have settled in half an hour if the men had brought their grievances directly to him, instead of trying to wreck the works for the safety of which he is responsible."

"We must go and see for ourselves," said Alida imperiously. "If there is danger for my friends, I must be there to share it."

"You must not do anything of the kind," I cried, "you do not understand the fierce blindness which comes upon men at such times. I shall go, if necessary, and you shall stay with my father and Linn in the refuge which those who love you have chosen for you."

"Then if I let you go, you will come back and tell me all—remember, do not put me off with lies such as they tell to ordinary women."

I promised, and as we stood looking across the glistening waters I saw for the second time in my life the tricolour flutter down from its staff, and after a pause the shining "Tatter of Scarlet" of the red revolution blow out on the valley wind.

CHAPTER XXV

THE PROCLAMATION

The street lamps had not been lighted when I landed on the left bank of the river, well above any outposts of the new revolt. I pulled my skiff safely under shelter of some bushes. The spot I had chosen was one well known to me, and exceedingly safe. My father often sent me over to bring plants and seeds from Arcadius, the gardener at Les Linottes, whose extensive grounds ran right down to the river's edge. A soft, rather hulking, good-natured man was Arcadius, who went through the world apparently breathing to the full ease of life. His body somewhat resembled a large slug supported on two smaller slugs, which were his legs. He worked in his garden, his pipe continually between his lips. At a first glance the slowness of his movements seemed laughable and ridiculous. But leave him half an hour and then see what he had accomplished. There was no man in Aramon who could get through so much work as Arcadius the Slug. By a kind of instinct he saw exactly where every stroke ought to fall, how much or how little was to be done, and the completed task ran out behind him like the wake from a well-rowed boat.

It was in a little bay behind a promontory filled with the Slug's sapling pines that I landed. I knew the place well, I knew also that Arcadius would almost certainly be in his potting house, putting things to rights after the labours of the day (the middle of March is high season for every gardener in the Midi). There indeed I found him surrounded with repaired hoes and rakes, and at that moment putting a new handle into the small gardener's *bêche* (or mattock) which was hardly ever out of his hands while in the open air.

Arcadius was not a man of politics.

"I have never known politics to improve the weather or keep off frosts!" he said. "I have yet to learn what good they do to a working gardener!"

I asked about the works and the town.

"Oh," he said, "my 'prentice lads stayed with me till six o'clock because I had put the fear of death on them if they tried to run. Yet I could see that they were itching to be off, and as soon as six struck from the Mairie, they dropped their tools and were over the wall. Only my Italians stayed and went soberly to bed. More I do not know. But, though there has been much noise of cheering in the square, there has been no shooting."

I told Arcadius of the skiff fastened up behind his sapling copse. He nodded easily and looked out of doors to examine the weather signs.

"It is not likely to rain, but it will hurt nothing to turn her upside down and stay her with a rope and a pair of stones. She will be ready when you want her. If you are bound on going into Aramon to-night, you may want her with great suddenness."

I left him at the upper gate of his garden opposite to the waste ground where the harmless bull fights of Provence took place.

"Now," he said, "there is a key for you. Put it in your pocket. Cross that bull yard and go

through the passage, at the end of which you will come upon a door. When you open it you will find yourself in the narrow street by the new Lay Schools of the town."

Then my kindly Slug took himself off without waiting for thanks, shaking all over like a jelly, and his lantern making a trickle of clear yellow light on the pathway in front of him. His wife was calling him in to supper, "Arcad-arcad-ar-cad-i-oos!"

I crossed the road hastily. All was empty and desolate, and in a moment more I was fronted by the barricade over which every Sunday the "amateurs" of this innocent bull-baiting leaped back to safety and the applause of their friends.

Almost I had lost my way among piled benches, when a faint light showed through a much barred door. I passed through the money-taker's box with double doors and found myself facing the dark tunnel of which Arcadius had spoken. It looked dismal and uninviting enough, but at least there was no reason to suppose that any revolutionaries would be skulking there. Even if there were, what had I, an old Garibaldian, to fear? The passage had evidently been used for bringing the bull into the arena, and I was glad enough when the massive double portal stopped me, even though it was the bump on my forehead which first acquainted me with its position.

I felt for the keyhole and found that it took all my strength to turn the wards of the ancient lock which in that damp place creaked dismally. The half of the heavy door swung back ponderously. The street without seemed dim and forlorn in front of me, glimmering with a kind of bluish light. I was glad that I had not to step at once into the bright illumination of the Cours or the more restrained golden glow which distinguished the Place de la Mairie. I made what slight toilet I could, carefully wiping my muddy boots on the door-mat of a perfect stranger to whom in days to come I make belated acknowledgments.

I peered out and it was well I did so, for not ten yards from the end of the passage a sentry was posted in the dress of the National Guard of Aramon, blue breeches, blue coat liberally faced with red, and a red *képi*. I could see the light from an unseen lamp shining on the flat of his sword-bayonet, no doubt fresh from the storehouse of Dennis Deventer.

For since the ignominious retreat of the military two months ago, the Government had insisted that a National Guard on the Paris model should be established in Aramon and, for that matter, in all the larger towns of the Midi. Dennis Deventer warned the prefect of the department of Rhône-et-Durance that they were laying up trouble for themselves. He told them that if they armed the workmen of the Arms Factories on the slightest outbreak in Paris, all power in Aramon-les-Ateliers would pass instantly into their hands. The like would also happen in every town of the Midi.

"You of the South are afraid when a mouse squeaks," the Secretary of the Interior had replied (for Dennis and he were closeted together). "We accounted for the Reds easily enough in October and again in January. They have lost both in power and numbers since then. If anything grave does happen, we can always take Cavaignac's way—isolate suburb from suburb and—shoot!"

"Very well," said Dennis, "if you are sure of your regular army that may do for Paris—but at Aramon, at Marseilles, our suburbs are our rich quarters. The men of the revolt live in the city, and to put arms into their hands is to centralise all power there."

But the watchword of the Government for the moment was "trust of the people," and it was not till its generals were being shot down under the bloody apple blossom of the Rue des Rosiers, its army fraternising with the revolutionaries, and the chiefs of the Government clattering with foaming steeds and strained harness on the way to Versailles, that they became aware that Dennis Deventer had been right.

At any rate, there was I, who had not been consulted in the affair, almost within arms' length of a National Guard, my refuge in the doorway liable to be intruded upon at any moment, and all exit blocked. I began to ask myself what I was doing there.

Yet I had no idea of going back. I must know what had happened at Château Schneider. I must see Rhoda Polly. There was no sound except a confused murmur like wind overhead in high trees. No shots were fired, and except the erect sentinel in his blue coat, his red *kêpi* tipped rakishly over one ear, and his shining rifle and sword-bayonet, I heard no sound of civil strife.

I watched him carefully. He was new to his work and fidgeted constantly, now coming a little down the street and then going a little way up, but never a moment losing sight of my alley arch, which seemed to attract him like a sort of black hole into the unknown.

Twice or thrice he fumbled in his pockets, and once he drew out a short pipe which he eyed with longing. But apparently he had had his orders, for he put it back again, changed his piece from one shoulder to another, and resumed his uneasy guard.

I think that it must have been a good hour that I stood there watching the shining of that fellow's broad bayonet. So we might have stood indefinitely had not the pipe in my gentleman's pocket proved in time too much for him. He looked this way and that, ducked suddenly under my archway, bayonet and all, and then proceeded to strike a match. I can affirm in excuse for what followed that I had no time to form plans. The most natural

defence was that which most concerned me. My opponent was armed and strong, I only agile, young, and unarmed. So while the vile governmental match still stank and hissed with its blue flame, I leaped upon him like a cat.

He screamed, dropped his pipe, and made immediately for the street. If he reached it I was a dead man. So I throttled him, pulling back his head till I feared his neck might crack. He fell, and in a twinkling I had tossed aside his gun and revolver, strapped his hands with my waistbelt and thrust a handkerchief into his mouth, fastening it in with another which I found in his own pocket.

Then I dragged him backwards towards the door and after some difficulty opened it. I lifted him as well as I could upon my shoulders so that only his feet trailed. But he must have received some stunning blow about the head, for he never moved, though it was with relief that I felt him breathing when I laid him down. I extended him comfortably on a fodder crib in the bull enclosure, for which luckily my key was also good.

Then I hastily reckoned the chances such as they were. It was clear I could not go about the streets of Aramon as I was, with armed sentinels at every corner. The man's red *képi* gave me an idea. It had fallen off. I picked it up, cleaned it, and was about to replace it, when I suddenly snatched it away again. I lifted the man up and took off his cloak and blue uniform coat. I would be a National Guard for the night, and I felt sure that with my experience of soldiering I could look the part. I bestowed my coat upon him, and gazed with longing at his blue breeches, but gave up that exchange as too long and perilous an undertaking. Dark brown must serve in place of the regulation blue pattern on the principle that at night all cats are grey. But I put on the coat which was considerably too big. I carefully cleaned the skirts of the cloak, and then added to my array the red *képi*.

The door once locked upon my prisoner, I left him to come to himself at his own time and as he would. On my way out I gathered up the arms that were missing. Already I had provided myself with his cartridge belt, his haversack and all accessories. The revolver was safe in its case near the door-mat and the rifle and sword-bayonet were soon polished on one of the tails of the coat. I kept the cloak open a little so that the broad red facings might show.

With a beating heart I peeped out. The street was empty, and it struck me forcibly that the sooner I got away from there the better.

The military organisation of the Revolt might be more complete than I supposed. They might send out Grand Rounds to visit their sentinels, or the guard might be changed—-both of which events would be exceedingly awkward for me, especially as I was wholly without knowledge of the password.

Not more than an instant did I hesitate on the threshold. Then with (I admit) my heart in my mouth, I stepped out and marched directly for the end of the alley.

The broad Place de la République (as it had been named for six months, vice "Imperial" superseded) was filled with a dim but pervading illumination. The resinous smell of many torches filled the air, and as I turned towards the Hôtel de Ville I saw the reason. On the broad platform over the doorway, many men were standing bareheaded, and a little in advance of the others one was holding a document in his hand.

Flags that certainly were not tricolour drooped on either hand of this balcony and cascaded down the front of the building, hiding the first-floor windows and reaching the ground.

I saw many National Guards hurrying from their places, some singly, some in little groups of three and four. I let myself be carried along till I reached the press in front of the ceremony. Discreetly I did not try to penetrate, but kept well on the outskirts, as far from the hundred torches as possible. Mine was not a popular position, for the reek of the tar set people coughing, and most were not slow to move away. But I stood as if on faction, and as such was saluted and passed by a hurrying officer, who, barely saluting, barked at me the single word "Marx," shooting it in my direction like a missile. I saluted in return and he went his way, leaving me in possession of the password for the night. It was no immediate service, for all there were too intent on the ceremony in front of the town hall to look at one National Guard more or less.

When I had accustomed my eyes to the acrid sting of the smoke, I moved nearer in order to hear better, and then for the first time I became aware that the man who was proclaiming the Commune in Aramon was—Keller Bey himself!

The accents of the voice, falling clamorously on my ear, had indeed sounded familiar, but I had rather thought of Père Félix, Pipe-en-Bois, Soult or any other valiants of the former revolutions. What was Keller doing here?

Suppositions crowded dizzily about me. Of course, there had always been an unknown side to Keller Bey, and his hatred of the priests and the bourgeoisie had been things to reckon with.

"Who is the speaker?" I asked of a man beside me, still in the blouse of his daily work, his eyes red with tending furnaces and his hands grimy with coal. He cast one look of contempt on me.

"Where have you come from," he demanded, "that you do not know Keller Chief of the Secret Council of the Internationale?"

"I have been fighting along with Garibaldi," I answered truthfully enough, "I have not been long in the National Guard."

Which in its way was still truer.

"Ah," he answered carelessly, "the Italian! I have heard of him. What sort of a fellow was he?"

I explained enthusiastically, but as usual quite in vain.

"Well," said the man, cursing the smoke and beginning to move off, "he might as well have stopped at home for all the good he did. That's my way of it!"

And I will not conceal from the reader that this summed up pretty fairly the bulk of French opinion upon the great leader.

As may well be imagined I stood far back, shrouded in shadow and smoke till Keller Bey had finished his speech. He told how in Paris the revolt of the proletariat had been completely successful, how the army had gone over to the cause of the people, how the bourgeois Government had fled to Versailles with hardly one to do them honour—how in all the great cities of France the new Commune was being declared and established. At Marseilles Gambetta's young Procureur-Général, the citizen Gaston Cremieux, headed the movement. He read a dispatch that moment received, urging Aramon to send a thousand men to help their brothers in Marseilles, threatened with troops from overseas and exposed to daily attacks from the still untaken forts.

"We shall be glad to aid our brothers in Marseilles if we are let alone here. We desire no fighting. The troops of the tricolour are not within our gates, and though there are some left who think differently from us, we can, I believe, live on excellent terms with them, until our Government is solidified and the Company of Arms is ready to nationalise its works. Till that day we must deal prudently, rule well, allow no attempts on private property, and behave as if we were all in reality as well as in name comrades and brothers."

So far as I could judge, I think Keller Bey carried the audience with him. I did not hear a murmur of dissent. Only, on the other hand, the plaudits could not be called long-continued or well-nourished. The workers of Aramon-les-Ateliers cherished a secret doubt—a doubt which they wished set at rest.

"What of Dennis?" they cried. "Dennis Deventer? Are the works to be closed? Where is the week's wage to come from?"

Keller Bey rose again, brushing aside the Père Félix.

"To-morrow," he said "you shall elect your Commune—twenty citizens of weight and mark to take the place of the present provisional government which has declared Aramon a city of liberty. Choose you good strong men who can deal with the Company and the Company's agent. Have no fear. Our cause is just. Marseilles and the great cities are with us. And to-morrow, doubt it not, France shall be with us also. We have inaugurated the reign of international peace. Let us begin by keeping the peace within our own borders. If we are to govern at all, we must show an example of good government, so that every city, town, and hamlet shall desire to throw in its lot with us. There is to be no wrecking of machinery, which we know must one day belong to the workers. We shall make friends with the foremen of departments, and when we come to restarting the works on the Communist plan we shall pay every man his wage according to his deserts—aye, and to Dennis Deventer his, for a head we must have. A business without a head is like an army without a general."

At this moment I was suddenly gripped solidly from behind, my weapons snatched away from me, and with the butt of the rifle such a blow was delivered on the back of my head that the marvel is I am here writing of it to-day. My gentleman of the bull enclosure had been cleverer than I had anticipated. Most likely he had been shamming dead, and now, having loosened himself, he had leaped the fence, made a detour of the boulevard and appeared from behind me at the moment when I was expecting him as little as he had looked for me in the archway.

That gun-butt was enough for me. I sank swooning on the ground under the low smoke drift from the dim torches and with the words of Keller Bey as to universal peace and concord still in my ears.

CHAPTER XXVI

KELLER BEY, INSURGENT

Among the panelled mirrors and gilt splendours of the Hôtel de Ville of Aramon I opened my

eyes. A doctor had been attending me. My head was tightly bandaged and my left hand was also bound up. From many aches and pains I judged that in my quality of detected spy I had been somewhat severely dealt with, by the crowd, or perhaps my own man had remembered the taste of the gag and had perpetrated some little personal atrocities on his own account, before delivering me up to justice, in order to square the account.

The doctor was talking to Keller Bey. It was broad day, and abundant light, filtering through the plane trees, flooded the great room. It was usually the Salle des Mariages, but for the time being it had been converted into a lounging place for the people of Aramon. I had in fact awakened on election day, and in the new Commune my vote was as good as that of any other man. At one end was a space boarded off in the regular way, into which one elector after another passed with his voting ticket, and having deposited it under the eyes of the four watchful questors, walked immediately out by the opposite door.

Presently Keller Bey passed into an inner room, which, from the gilding upon the door and the allegorical figures above holding swords of justice and ill-adjusted balances, I took to be a court room. It was in fact the mayoral parlour, and the comfortable office coat and even the dressing-gown of the late occupant still hung on the pegs behind the door.

Keller Bey gave an order and I was immediately brought in and laid upon a wide and springy sofa which furnished one whole side of the apartment. I noticed the device of the crossed red and black flags had been removed from his tie, and was now worn upon the lapel of his coat like a decoration.

As soon as the room was clear he came over and sat down beside me. At sight of me his grim face softened almost as it was wont to do when Linn or Alida spoke to him.

"All this may seem very strange to you," he said, with a faint feeling of apology in his voice, "you who have only seen me going about the house like a tame cat. But since I was raised to high place and consideration in the Internationale, the old fighting spirit rose within me. I could not deny the appeal of my brothers to stand by them, and so you find me here, at the head of the Commune of Aramon—at least till the will of the voters is ascertained. The men who are with me are honest fellows, but, so far as I see, quite incapable of leadership. I do not believe that the vote will strip me of any authority or responsibility."

I thought that he was talking straight on without stopping in order to escape the question which he must have seen on my lips.

"And your duty to Linn and Alida?" I demanded abruptly. I could see him flush and pale.

"Personal and private interests must give way at such times," he answered firmly enough, but his tones did not carry conviction, not even, I think, to himself.

"Besides," he added, after a pause, "Linn knew that it would have to come. I dare not refuse a call of duty because of the danger."

"It is lucky for Linn and Alida," I said with the studied cruelty only attained by boys, "that they have friends who put them before all public duties."

"Sir," said Keller Bey, his cheek blanching to a kind of cadaveric rigidity, so great was the intensity of his anger, "I do not allow anyone to call my actions into question."

"Call in your soldiers, Monsieur of the Internationale," I said tauntingly, "you can soon get even with me. There are many walls between here and the cottage in my father's garden. My shooting will not have the *éclat* of the assassination of the Paris generals, but it will come as blithe news for the three left wondering in the garden of Gobelet."

I spoke like a bad, spiteful boy, conscious of a power to wound to the quick and thoroughly enjoying my triumph.

Keller Bey did not answer directly to my railings. He felt instinctively that he could not meet me along these lines.

"How did you come here?" he demanded abruptly, "and why in the coat of a Garde Nationale?"

"Because," I said, looking at him with my bandaged head lifted on my hand, "*I* do not forget old kindnesses. Nor yet new ones—though *my* house had not been set in order and largely furnished by the kindness of the Deventers. I crossed the river in a boat and was going to find them—to help them if I could, if necessary to fight and die with them, if your people should besiege them as they have done before."

Keller Bey threw out his arms suddenly with the gesture of a tortured man who seeks something to grip in his agony.

"I had not thought youth so cruel," he moaned. "Do you not understand that I am here to prevent all that? I stand between the hotheads and Dennis Deventer. His wife and family are as safe here as mine in your father's garden, of which you are so good as repeatedly to remind me!"

I am afraid that my expression expressed unbelief.

"You must pardon me," I said suavely and still provocatively, "but I have been among the chimneys of the Château Schneider when the mitrailleuses were talking. You intend to rule justly and love mercy, but what of the men about you? I have seen them streaming across the open court wrecking and destroying."

"Exactly," said Keller Bey, with suddenly recovered dignity, "but then I was not at the direction of affairs. If any man now disobeys he shall be made to feel the vengeance of the Internationale! We shall sow fear among them as corn is sown on a windy day."

At this moment Keller was summoned outside, and I could hear his voice dominating and allaying a quarrel between functionaries, as I lay back listening and determined to find out what he intended to do with myself as soon as he came back. But one thing and another was referred to him for judgment, and it was the better part of an hour before he came in holding a sheaf of telegrams in his hand. A secretary accompanied him, and I had perforce to put off my demand.

Keller Bey had evidently regained some of the old military readiness which had made him the favourite lieutenant of the great Emir. He dictated telegrams and dispatches to Paris, to St. Etienne, to Narbonne, and especially a long communication to Gaston Cremieux at Marseilles.

There were (he said) certainly men at Aramon and to spare, but for the moment each Commune in revolt must depend upon itself. When the provisional Government of Aramon, of which he was the head, had handed over its powers to a properly elected Commune, then would be the time to speak of sending reinforcements to a greater neighbour. It was true that there were no troops belonging to the expelled Government of Versailles in the city of Aramon itself, but to the north the ancient, highly clerical Avignon offered an excellent centre for collecting an army corps. The Government of the Assembly, exiled to Versailles, had its hands tied by the marvellous success of the Paris revolt. But save that the Commune of Paris was sending a pair of delegates to arrange terms of association, no help need be looked for from that quarter.

At last Keller Bey made an end and dismissed the secretary. Then he sat a while with his head upon his hands in deep thought.

I interrupted his meditation with my question.

"And now, Keller Bey, what do you mean to do with me?"

He did not reply instantly, but continued his meditations in silence. I was compelled to put the question three times, and the third time with some heat, before he raised his head to answer.

"In the meantime I shall keep you by me as a hostage. The voting is not yet over, and, though I do not anticipate any violent change, there is always a possibility that the fiery spirits may urge violent measures. In that case I shall use you for a messenger to our friends at Château Schneider. In any case, you have come to me and here you had better stay. It may be necessary also to communicate with my family and in that matter I could trust only you."

This was a great disappointment to me, who had thought that an hour would see me inside the walls of the Château Schneider, talking with Mrs. Deventer or sneaking off into the conservatory or out upon the roof with Rhoda Polly for one of our long talks about everything in heaven above and on the earth beneath.

But it was very evident that Keller Bey had made up his mind, and, at any rate, I had galled him too bitterly in the beginning of our conversation to admit of my finishing it by asking a favour. I only shrugged my shoulders and said mockingly:

"Perhaps you would like me to lead your thousand men to Marseilles as well?"

"Indeed," he replied unexpectedly, "I am not sure but that it is an excellent idea—you are a friend of Gaston Cremieux. I could send you as civil delegate without awakening any jealousy among the chiefs of battalion. It is a suggestion which will bear thinking over—certainly not to be lost sight of."

* * * * *

I had many and excellent opportunities of watching Keller Bey in his new character of insurrectional leader during the days which followed. As every one anticipated, his name led the list of the new Commune by many thousands majority. The others came meekly behind, even the Père Félix only emerging from the crowd by a head.

What specially gratified Keller Bey was that no member of the noisy gang of wreckers had been chosen.

"What did I tell you?" he cried, patting me on the shoulder; "our Government is to be a model of firmness and sobriety."

And so it was, as far as Keller Bey could make it. But there remained dangerous elements of which he was ignorant, but which were very clear to Dennis Deventer, who had seen the

leaven of evil at work for many years.

On the morrow began the organisation of the services of the new Government. It was a strange installation, and I sat there like a spectator in a good seat at a theatre and watched the play. None of those who were on the stage seemed to have any idea of the ridiculousness of the performance. Only I, outside all wire-pulling, saw the truth. The rest were hypnotised by the wonderful thing which had happened—a Commune at Aramon!

Hour by hour I saw Aramon being cut off from the world. At the first news of the election of a Commune the officials of the post office had disappeared. Piles of letters accumulated on the desks and before the ranged pigeon-holes. Sacks arrived by train so long as these were running, and were heaped in corners. The telegraphic machines were set down where the operators had abandoned them. I amused myself by calling up the different towns in our neighbourhood, but received answers only from Marseilles and Narbonne. The rest had nothing to say to a revolted city like ours. By and by Narbonne was abruptly cut off, probably at Cette or some intervening town favourable to the Government of Versailles.

Half of Keller Bey's time was taken up with such matters as the choice of a new post office staff. Where they came from I cannot imagine, these seekers after office. And their credentials! One highly recommended claimant for the office of receiver of contributions had been expelled by the brutal tyranny of Napoleon from a Tobacco Bureau. He had thereafter languished in prison, not, as he gave Keller to understand, as a political victim, but as a good, solid embezzler of Government money. Yet he was supported by a Commandant of the National Guards, a relative of his own, and but for my chance recognition of him, would doubtless have been appointed.

The post office staff was soon complete—director, assistants, money-order clerks, telegraph clerks, and messengers—postmen for the district town deliveries, postmen for the rural rounds—but after the first solemn sorting of the *débris* left behind by the old staff, not so much as a letter or a newspaper, to pass from hand to hand, even as a curiosity!

The civil services, the mayoral staff, the judges of the tribunal, judges of the commercial court, Procureur of the Republic and so forth gave a little more trouble. Père Félix was appointed President of the Tribunal, and his good nature and popularity promised easy sentences for the malefactors of Aramon. But they gave him for public prosecutor one Raoux, a little wizened wisp of a man, a shoemaker and bold orator of the bars, who in his readiness of denunciation threw Fouquier-Tinville into the shade, and in irreverence and insolence approached Raoul Rigault himself. Raoux was high in the National Guards, which Keller Bey had not yet begun to recognise as the power behind his throne. Consequently he had a real influence and soon aspired to nothing less than a ministry of justice, both making denunciations and by his authority sending the denounced to prison.

The officers of the city gaol were almost the only ones who remained of the civil servants of the Empire. They were mostly Corsicans, and as their chief Calvi said: "They had come to France to keep prisoners safely." He would give a receipt for each on arrival, and exact a similar receipt on his leaving the Château du Monsieur le Duc. But he would take the same pains with the prisoners of the new Government as with those of the old—and so, since, in fact, no Communard wished to become a turnkey, a *garde-chiourme*, Calvi and his staff were left in undisputed possession of the Central Prison and House of correction of the department of Rhône-et-Durance.

Some of the happenings were curious. The prisoners within, sentenced to various terms of reclusion and imprisonment under the Empire, found themselves on their release walking about in a world which knew not Joseph. Some were rearrested as spies, but even the vibrant little cobbler Raoux could not break down the excellence of the alibi which they had ready to hand.

Some alarmed good women by asking news of the Emperor, or loudly expressing disbelief in a *café* when the disasters of the war were hinted at. A ruffianly fellow, excited by his first cup of spirits for some years, offered to fight any man who dared to say that the Germans had entered Paris. So fiercely did he assault the original patriot who had mentioned the fact, that the rest of the party, gathered over their cards and mulled wine in the Café Jacquard, denied one by one that they had ever heard of such a thing. Finally the tyranny of the "nervi" or ticket-of-leave man became so overbearing that it took half a company of National Guards with fixed bayonets to convey him to the "gendarmerie," and from thence, after due committal, to the gloomy prison-house of Monsieur le Duc, from which he had been but three hours released. He had struggled gallantly against bayonet prick and rifle butt. The escort, amateurs at this kind of work, had pitied the few wardens who must handle such a desperado.

But when the first policeman appeared he merely bade the "nervi" lay his thumbs together, and in an instant he was leading the formidable warrior whither he would as submissive and obedient as a child. Calvi was called and came hastily in, donning a uniform coat, and leaving a half-played game of "dames" behind him.

He examined the order of the new Procureur. The stamp was as usual. The signature mattered nothing to Calvi, who looked up at the rioter with a kind of reproach.

"Number 333," he said, with severity, "if you had told us that we were to be honoured with

your custom so soon again, you would have saved us the trouble of whitewashing your cell. Take care not to overturn the materials which have been left, make yourself as comfortable as you can to-night, and you can do the rest of the work to-morrow. Good night, gentlemen of the National Guard!"

He should have said "citizens," and every man knew it; but after all he was a miserable child of the Isle of Despots, and besides, no citizen, however loyal, objects to being called a gentleman once in a way.

Keller gave me work to do occasionally. I drafted proclamations and, after rounding the sentences to make them more sonorous, I carried them to the Communal printing office, which did not differ from other printing offices, save that, in the absence of a master, each printer lounged and smoked about the cases, or took himself off to the nearest grog-shop in the intervals of labour. Often I had to work Keller Bey's name for all it was worth, and threaten a guard and the Bastille of Aramon before I could get anything done.

Sometimes, during my long hours of waiting at the printing office of the Commune, I strolled up to the Aramon station. Only a stray lamp-cleaner sat with his legs dangling from the platform and spat upon the quickly rusting rails, looking over his shoulder occasionally to throw a remark to the single Garde National, who, though on duty, had laid his rifle and cartridge-belt upon a luggage-barrow, sought out a pile of "returned empty" sacks of coarse jute, arranged these to his mind, and finally had laid himself down on them, only rolling over occasionally to refill his pipe or to wheel his couch into a shady place or one more convenient for a friendly gossip. On the whole this was the man I liked best. His "relief," a burly fellow from the Hard Stone Quarries above the town, calmly divested himself of his coat, wrapped his feet in his cloak, drew his coat loosely over him, put his head on his knapsack, and slept his watch out on the green velvet cushions of the first-class waiting-room.

Above, the man really responsible, the station-master of Aramon Junction, was supposed to be busying himself with a report of the reopening of the line between Lyons and Marseilles. This news had been brought to Keller Bey by my friend of the travelling bed on the luggage truck. He considered it hard that Monsieur Weyse never came down to patrol the platform and pass the time of day. He yearned for society, and one of the comfortable arm-chairs in the station-master's room would have appealed to him strongly. It was the unseen official's own fault if a man so naturally companionable as he of the luggage-barrow were driven by neglect to prefer a complaint against him.

The expanse of empty quays and innumerable parallels of iron rails preyed on his spirits. He tired of the man who cleaned lamps and sat upon the stone parapet. He had already heard all his opinions, knew where he was going to place his oaths, and scented his grotesque and improper anecdotes afar off—with a sense of loathing because, in addition to all, the lamp-man spat with a regularity and vigour singularly disgustful to a Frenchman, who does not use his tobacco in the "plug" form.

I was sent to interview the station-master as to the famous report. I found him comfortably ensconced at his fireside, his legs embracing one side and the other of the hearth, a huge pile of the complete works of Victor Hugo, the Brussels edition, on a chair by his side. He was fathoms deep in the third volume of "Les Misérables." I never saw a man more enraptured nor one more enviable. I stood and looked at him, a broad, beefy man with a shrewd Scottish countenance. His uniformed coat and gold-broidered cap were neatly placed on a chair behind him. But the man himself, in a long blouse drawn well above his knees, so that he might feel the comforting of the fire, continued his reading without a pause, stirring the logs occasionally with his toe.

I was sorry to interrupt him, but I was resolved to make a friend, for here was a man with a set of Hugo. I had already been at the Municipal Library, but there, the collection dating entirely from the times of the Empire, it of course contained nothing of Hugo's later than "Hernani."

"Your servant, sir!"

Already at a mere waft of my entrance he had sprung to his feet and laid down his book.

"You take me a little by surprise—ah—from Keller Bey? Are you a Communard, young man?"

I reassured him. Keller Bey's family lived with my father across the water in Languedoc. I had been captured and had given my parole, but I was no partisan. I acted as occasional secretary to Keller Bey, that was all.

He shook his head sorrowfully, for I think the verdancy of my youth appealed to him.

"Do not run with the wolves too long or the wolf-hunters may not stop to ask the difference. There is a fable about that—which I have read somewhere—in Perrault or La Fontaine. Take back your parole and get out of Aramon. All this foolishness will go like that——" (he snapped his finger and thumb in the air), "and I only hope that I shall have time to read Hugo once through before I have again to think of a train every five minutes pouring north and south, east and west, through Aramon Junction!"

I put the question of the report as delicately as possible. I have rarely seen a Frenchman

laugh more boisterously.

"But I have made no report. Why should I? I have received none and written none. The wires are cut in all directions. I have not a telegraphist on the place. There are my files if you want to look. Everything is going by the branch lines on the other side, but even of that I know only what I can see from my bedroom window, the white steam of trains trailing off among the green woods, and sometimes the dull rumble of a heavily laden goods convoy crossing a bridge. Of positive knowledge concerning railway affairs I have none. I sit and read Hugo and wait for the end of things. The old life will come back soon enough. Meanwhile I am earning my salary, and when traffic opens a pretty sum will be owing to me on the books of the company.

"See here," he said, chuckling, "this is my only report. I will write it before your eyes."

He pointed to a folio which lay open with the day and date, but all else blank. He took a pen and wrote:

"As yesterday—no change. Guards—Caspar and Nolli. Both quiet. Messenger from Communal Government to ask about a report I am supposed to be making. Exhibit this."

"There you are—you can copy that if you like. I give you my word of honour that is all the report I ever write, and that is just enough to prove me on the spot, able for duty, and to claim my pay!"

I told Monsieur Weyse that I would not trouble him further. I should explain the foolish rumour to Keller Bey, and in all things he might count upon me. At the same time *if* there happened to be any volume of Hugo he was not using——! Well, he might imagine my gratitude.

He sprang to his feet with a kind of smothered whoop and began to delve among the pile which occupied the chair and slopped over upon the floor.

"Here—here," he explained, "take the first two volumes of "Les Misérables." It is the best of all. I shall read faster than you, for I have nothing else to do, and I keep it up far into the night. Why, my friend, if you come to-morrow, I shall have the third volume ready for you. No, no, don't thank me, but go instead and get your head clear of this noose. This Communist Aramon is going to be no safe place to play unpaid secretary in after a week or two. Those white wreaths of smoke against the Cevennes tell me that. The Company and the Government are working together over there, and when they are ready—it will be good not to be here and in your shoes!"

"But, Monsieur Weyse, you will be here!"

"Ah, that is different! I am a lonely man, and a servant in the way of his duty. Nothing can come amiss to me. Even if either side fortifies the junction buildings—why, I am the station-master acting for the Company. I sit and write my report once a day, and for the rest I read Hugo. Nothing is more simple. But as for you, take an old man's word. You are better anywhere than where you are!"

CHAPTER XXVII

UNDER WHICH KING, BEZONIAN?

The station-master was right. I saw how things were tending and how the revolt was sure to end. Yet I was by nature so curious of the oddities of the business that I put off speaking to Keller Bey. For one thing, I did not want to find myself shut up in the Duke's Castle along with the other martyrs of the new rule. I preferred the open air and risk. Besides, I could each day assure myself of the well-being of Dennis Deventer and his family.

I discovered where Jack Jaikes was usually to be found on guard, and, early in the dusk of the morning, I slipped from my room in order to speak half an hour with him in private. He first abused me like a pickpocket for taking sides with such a dirty pack, and it was with the utmost difficulty that he could be persuaded that there was after all a difference between a Communard and a prisoner on parole. He did not trouble to conceal his opinion of the latter.

"Jump over the wall," he whispered, "see, catch hold of my belt. I tell ye, man, in business we cannot afford to be so fine. I learned that in Glasgow long syne, when a brither-in-law o' mine took my job from me. Now, he was my brither, though not by blood, and in a manner o' speaking I had promised to love, honour, and obey. But instead I just bashed him till he was laid up in bed for six weeks—so I got my job back! Now tell me, where would I have been if I had minded about honour and 'paroles' and them things?"

It was in vain that I pointed out to Jack Jaikes that, after all, it was not he but his sister who had promised to love, honour, and obey the maltreated job-jumper.

"It doesna maitter. It's all the wan thing!" was all that I could get out of Jack Jaikes. "Now

then, catch a haud and I'll hae ye beside me in the crack o' a cow's tail!"

Now, though I had fought duels on the sly at St. André on the most approved principles of French honour, I had done so chiefly because I possessed an excellent method and a supple wrist trained by years of the "Salle." Really I cared nothing about any artificial code of honour. But it was quite a different thing to have passed my word to Keller Bey, and entirely unthinkable to leave him in the lurch by making my escape without telling him.

I began about this time to imagine a vain thing. It seemed that in some way I could save both Keller Bey and the Deventers. I would be on both sides of the fence at once, and play a universal providence. I did not then see that I should end by being outlawed by both sides—as, save for a curious interposition, I should have been.

Jack Jaikes had, however, sufficiently impressed me that I went to Keller Bey and told him that he must trust me completely without any parole. He must give me back my word about escaping. I might (I explained) disappear for a time without leaving him altogether. In reality I did not mean to do anything of the kind, and if it came to any trouble about saving the Deventers, he would find me again at his side. All this I believed perfectly feasible at the time. Indeed, I spoke with such earnestness and spontaneity that he finished by shutting his eyes, even as I was doing, to the difficulties or, rather, impossibilities of the position.

Somehow he clung to my presence among these men to whom he was already no more than a symbol of authority. They did not know the man Keller Bey. I did. And he seemed to wish to keep me near him as a link with a past with which he had broken. In his heart I am sure he regretted the garden and his talks with my father and Professor Renard, while as to Linn and Alida, they did not simply bear thinking about.

Yet he was possessed by that driving fate, ambition, call of duty, what you will—-which sends men forth from comfortable homes to battle for life about the frozen pole, to die miserably, to leave their bones there—though all the while in bright homes the loving hearts of women and the laughter of children are waiting for them.

Keller Bey was fate-driven. This Aramon rising had fallen accidentally in his way. The idealist in the man tempted him to believe that he could make a Socialist Land of Promise out of those factories and arsenals, which had grown up in such a beauty spot of nature, where (it was Keller Bey's word) "merely to be alive between sea, sky, and earth was a daily revelation of religion."

He thought nothing of the small questions of pay and personal interest which really made up the gist of the matter to the workmen. Perhaps also, though quite unwillingly, he had been led astray by Dennis Deventer. Dennis was an idealist also, and he saw the workmen's side of the question of private ownership. He would express these opinions with such dialectic sympathy that it almost seemed to the listener that he would be found one day persuading the owners of the factories to make over their possessions to the workers.

His wife often reproached him with this treachery of words.

"I know, I know, colleen," he would answer contritely, "'tis Irish Dennis hot in my brain that will get talking—then when I *do* things Deventer the Scot sets the count right."

"But, then, how about the people with whom you have talked, and who may be depending on your words?"

"'Tis more the pity of them," he would say quizzically, "but, anyway, I am no worse than these young chicks that you have brought up."

"That is nonsense, Dennis—you are the master and yet you talk like a 'red' as often as not—very likely when you have just sent Jack Jaikes to fix a new gun where it will command a street or a gate by which you may be attacked."

Then Dennis would hold up his hand in token of surrender. It was all gospel truth, due perhaps as much as anything to the family habit of free discussion, when Dennis would take up a losing cause and champion it to the bitter end.

There is, however, room to commiserate Keller Bey, from whom these things were hidden. He reported to the Commune of Aramon at its daily séances, of the favourable dispositions of the representative of the Company. Nay, during the space of a week, it was quite on the cards that the men should return to work on the basis of some half-understood (and wholly misunderstood) word of Dennis's, which Keller Bey and his Social Commission had taken to mean the admission of the men's right to a share in the half-yearly profits.

Fortunately or unfortunately, another phrase at a succeeding interview had revealed that Dennis Deventer had no intention of committing his owners to anything. Nor had he the power. He had merely been willing to cast his own salary and commissions into the common fund gained by all the workers, and leave the total to be divided by the committee according to their idea of equity.

But then, though this was exceedingly generous, Dennis was also a partner and a rich man. The men, except Keller Bey, were indignant at what they counted a cheat—a false offer. Very unjustly, for to Dennis Deventer the rights of labour extended to what a man earned.

Those of property, equally important to him, included the defence of his wife's money invested in the Small Arms Company, and also what he had been able to put aside during the years of his strenuous life.

This is how the great misunderstanding arose, and I do not see that any of the parties to it were free from blame—certainly not Dennis.

But I hasten to tell how the events fell out and what was my part in the adventure.

The same day that I had required my parole back from Keller Bey I marched boldly and in the face of all to the gate of Château Schneider, which was shut and boarded up, strengthened besides by criss-cross work of iron bars, so that the half which was opened creaked and groaned on its hinges when it turned. So careful was the watch that when at last after parley and explanation Jack Jaikes let me in, it was only to find myself commanded by three separate batteries of machine guns from behind which peered the perplexed faces of McAllister's gang. They were simple men and they could not understand this running with the hare and hunting with the hounds. I do not blame them. No one who did not know Keller Bey and the need of standing by him could possibly have understood. Jack Jaikes explained as well as he could, but not being convinced himself of the goodness of my cause, I fear his words only darkened counsel.

It was generally understood by those on guard at Château Schneider that "I would bear watching," and indeed it was not long before the sentinels of the National Guard on the other side of the wall came to exactly the same conclusion, so to please all parties I was blindfolded.

But the welcome I had from the household of Deventer made up for all this enveloping suspicion. Here, at least, I stood clear. I was re-established in my own conceit, in my position a most valuable asset. Was I not a martyr to duty, a prisoner on parole, one castaway among wild and dangerous people, because I had ventured out by night to join the Deventer defence?

Jack Jaikes had evidently done his part well. He had given me the rough side of his tongue, but had permitted the Deventers to understand that in the morning hours he had held converse with a hero and martyr to duty.

Mrs. Deventer came over and graciously kissed me, and I verily believe that I might have kissed all three girls—yes, even Hannah—under the eye maternal, without a reprimand.

Hugh was more comrade-like than he had been for a long time, and linked arms with me in the good old St. André way as we stood by the fire-place. Dennis Deventer came in smiling.

"Now our family is more like itself again. Angus me boy, and how did ye leave my good friend the commander of the forces?"

I told him that Keller Bey was well but much worried by the cares of office. At this he laughed a little mischievously, and burst out in one of his usual phrases:

"St. Patrick's Day and a fine morning to be whittling shillalahs. But Keller Bey has not seen the first green of his wild oat-sowing. Let him wait till his lambs begin to frolic. Then I do not envy him his task. As for me, Jack Jaikes and I are making this place so strong that they might blow it piece by piece about our ears without making us surrender."

Presently I found myself at luncheon at the Deventers' table. Nothing appeared to have changed, except that the young apprentices were no longer to be seen, and indeed there was no external service of any kind. We cut and poured out at the sideboard for ourselves. Mrs. Deventer was the only one waited upon, Rhoda Polly bringing her what she wanted.

The discussion grew as loud as ever, but hushed instantly when a messenger appeared at the door, cap in hand and a little breathless, to report the situation of the various posts, or to request instructions. Sometimes Dennis merely bade the messenger to "Ask Jack Jaikes!" More often he reeled off a detailed and technical explanation which the apprentice understood though I did not. Or again he would dash a few lines on the leaf of a note-book, indicate a design sketchily, and send the lad off again as fast as he could clatter down the stairs.

I could not help being struck with admiration of the Chief's method and science. Keller Bey was a leader of men, but I could not help seeing, apart from his indubitable personal magnetism, how things were bungled for lack of those very qualities of science and method. It went well in Château Schneider. No need for speech or lifted hand. Silence fell like a spell whenever the runner appeared in that ever-open doorway. And while the master of men launched his commands there was not even the ordinary clatter of knives and forks. Everyone seemed to feel the importance of the decision to be given. All were proud of the giver, though the moment before and the moment after they would be refuting his arguments, denying his statements, and generally assaulting his positions in a Donnybrook of sound and fury, without the least apparent reverence for the grey hairs to which he often appealed with mock pathos.

I took care not to see any of the defences of the workshops, or those about the Château. These had been wholly reorganised since the attempts of January, and were now nearing

completion on a far more serious scale.

I had to go back and I should assuredly be questioned. If I did not answer I might doubtless be suspected. Therefore it was arranged that when the time came for me to go Jack Jaikes should blindfold me and lead me out by the main fortified entrance of the works, which was immediately in front of a large post of National Guards.

I was longing to get Rhoda Polly by herself and hear the news from her own lips, but Dennis was so eager for more and more detailed gossip about this one and that other among the members of the Commune, that he detained me a long while. He did not fish for secrets nor ask me to divulge any of Keller's plans. I think he felt himself too strong and sure for that.

He was, moreover, genuinely interested in the men, and wishful to know how they conducted themselves in their new spheres. He was specially amused at my account of the staffing of the Post-Office-Without-Letters, and when he heard the names he instantly baptized it "The Bureau of the Incompetents"—a sobriquet which afterwards got abroad and became a saying, so that many of those who had earned the name left the place to escape from it.

At last Rhoda Polly and I did manage to take refuge up on the roof behind our favourite chimney-stack at a place where the parapet was almost breast high. It was comfortable hiding and quite secluded—the fortifications of the Château roof being long perfected, and indeed only to be used as a watch-tower or as a last line of defence.

Rhoda Polly told me how she had sent three messengers to Alida, of whom only one had been faithful to his trust. She had had to enlist Jack Jaikes in the business, and between them they had called up lads from the town, butchers' boys and such-like, known to the foreman from the Clyde. To each of these she had perforce to commit her letter, taking care that it should contain nothing compromising in case of capture. But only one ever returned with an answer, and he a little bare-footed rascal of a boot-black, from whom nothing had been expected. He had even brought back a letter from Alida, telling her friend that they were well but that for safety's sake Linn and she, with the two Tessier maids, had been taken into the main building of Gobelet, where at least they should be farther from the road and have men to protect them.

Alida went on to say that Linn went about as usual, but evidently grieved for her husband in silence. She herself was occupied in learning Latin from Mr. Cawdor, and already could read in a book called "Cæsar" and in another by an author named Sallust.

I saw the letter as Rhoda Polly turned it over, and noted that not a word of inquiry was wasted upon myself. My name was not once mentioned. The Lady Alida had taken dire offence at my flight, and this was in spite of the fact that Rhoda Polly had mentioned that I was with Keller Bey in the city of Aramon.

CHAPTER XXVIII

STORM GATHERING

On my return I was, as I had expected, put to the question, with lenience by Keller Bey, but with biting irony and something like personal dislike by the Procureur Raoux. Then stood apparent all the man's bitter nature, mordantly distilled from years of poverty and hatred of the well-to-do.

The name of Dennis Deventer set his eyes ablaze, and the idea of his family sitting down to a comfortable meal in spite of their isolation from markets was to him gall and wormwood. He would hardly believe the tale of the National Guards that they had seen me come down the steps of the Château already blindfolded and under escort, and that I had so continued till I was pushed out of the main entrance of the works by Jack Jaikes.

How many guns had I seen? The little man shot out the question at me.

"Only those on the roof," I answered readily, "those which had been used in January. They were hooded and protected from rain by waterproof jackets."

"How did you know that?"

"Because I went up there to take the air after dinner, and I leaned my back against one while I smoked."

"Was it a big gun? Three—four-pounder?"

I could not say exactly, but I should think four. I knew nothing about any defensive works within the square of the factory. I had traversed all that part blindfold.

The fierce little man grunted disbelievingly, but desisted when it was obvious that he could make nothing more of me.

"Let Dennis Deventer take care," he snarled, "he speaks smooth words now. Oh, the great things he will do for the workmen, but not for all his promises does he stop that Jacques Jaikes from fortifying and placing guns. Oh, I know more than you or Keller Bey are aware of. I do not go about with my eyes blindfolded. What is the use of a tower of Saint Crispin if a shoemaker may not climb it and spy out the works of his enemy?"

"That will do, Raoux," said Keller Bey, somewhat impatiently. "I shall send for you again when I need you."

He went out slowly, with a lingering, backward look, full of spite and malice, his words and face distilling hatred like the poison-fangs of a viper. I heard him mutter as he passed:

"You will send for me when you want me—take care I do not come when you want me least!"

It was indeed time to get away—the Commune of Aramon stood on the verge of a volcano which might blow us into the air any day.

Yet, how could I leave Keller Bey to his fate, and, if I did, how could I face Linn and Alida?

* * * * *

The days passed heavily in Aramon, yet with a kind of feverish excitement too—an undercurrent of danger which thrills a swimmer cutting his way through smooth upper waters when he feels the swirl of the undertow. The Commune of Aramon met daily for discussion, and reports of its meetings are still to be found in the little red-covered, tri-weekly sheet, *Le Flambeau du Midi*, of which I possess a set.

They appear to have discussed the most anodyne matters. They gabbled of drainage and water supplies, the suspension of rents and pawnbrokers' pledges for six months. They came to sharp words, almost to blows—"Moderates" and "Mountain," as in the old days of 1793—while outside the companies of the Avengers of Marat, the dark young men of the wolf-like prowl, kept their watch and took their sullen counsel.

Provisions showed no visible stoppage. The country about Aramon was an early one—the great market for *primeurs* being Château Renard, only ten miles away. Thither Père Félix, learned in the arts of restaurant supply, sent a little permanent guard to direct the provisioning of Aramon city.

I think the only man outside Château Schneider who saw what was coming upon the new Government was my Hugolâtre of a station-master up at the junction. I went to see him every day and he never ceased to urge me to clear out of the town lest worse should befall me.

"They are arming," he said one day in early April, "they are coming nearer. Put your eye to that telescope—no, don't alter it—tell me what you see. A signal post on the railway—semaphore you call it! Yes, but did you ever see such a semaphore on a railway? With us the stiff arm drops and all is clear. It rises half-way—'*go slowly!*' It stands at right angles to the post—'*stop—the way is barred!*' But what do you see yonder? The stiff arms are moving this way and that. You who can Morse out a message on the telegraph apparatus, why cannot you read something infinitely more simple? That is on the other side of the river and tells me that the Government engineers are creeping nearer. There is no railway line where the semaphore is. They are signalling to their comrades on this side. The storm is gathering—be very sure. For the present there is no great hurry. Little Dictator Thiers has many irons in the fire. He has no time to read Hugo like me, nor has he time to give much thought to Aramon. But yonder are those who are preparing a path for his feet, and for the feet of his little Breton Moblots when the time comes."

It appeared to me that I ought to look into this myself, but in a way that would not compromise my friend the station-master. So I made my way boldly up into St. Crispin's tower and turned the long spyglass, old as the first Napoleon, upon the semaphore ridge. It was wagging away cheerfully, spelling out messages which I could not understand. I went at once to Keller Bey.

"The Government of Versailles is not so far off as you think," I said, "they are watching you from the other side of the river, and I believe talking across the water to the commanders of troops on this side."

And with that I told him of the semaphore and of what I had seen from the tower of St. Crispin. He sent instantly for someone who could read semaphore messages, and within half an hour a deserter from the engineers quartered at Avignon was brought to him—a small, brown, snippet of a man whom I christened at sight "the runt," but whose real name was Pichon—one of a clan mighty in all the southland of Languedoc.

Keller Bey came with us to witness the trial, and we had not reached the summit when we heard behind us the wheezing, asthmatic breathing of the Procureur Raoux sorely tried by the hasty ascent.

"Why, why, why?" he gasped, poking his head through the door—"who gave you the liberty? Ah, Keller Bey—I beg your pardon. I was not aware of your presence."

"This young man has brought us important information," said Keller Bey. "He has discovered

a semaphore signal newly erected on a spur among the olive trees. The enemy have a post there, and are busily sending messages to corresponding bodies making an advance southward upon this side."

By this time I had the glass into position, and was moving gingerly out of the way to let in the ex-engineer of Avignon, when the little cobbler fairly rushed at the vacant seat, catching a foot on one of the legs of the tripod and, of course, entirely losing the semaphore on the opposite bank of the Rhône.

"I can see nothing—there is nothing to see!" he cried, gesticulating fiercely with fingers like claws, "it is the lies of the English. I know them. They have always lied to us. Dennis Deventer lies. There is no message—no semaphore. There is no regiment nearer than Lyons or Marseilles, and there I warrant Gaston Cremieux, Procureur-Général like myself, is giving them as much as they can think about."

With extreme difficulty Keller persuaded the acrid little man to allow me to try.

"I will send him to the Central Prison if he has been bringing us false news—and of course he has. What a blessing! I have a committal form with me."

I did not shrink from the test, and while Keller Bey maintained the cobbler-magistrate in some degree of quiet on the other side of the platform, the expert deserter quickly got his eye on the signalling apparatus.

"I have it," he cried, his brow glued to the eyepiece and his hand signalling for stillness. "Oh, do be quiet!"

Raoux's dancing feet were shaking the crazy platform.

"The devil is in the fellow's legs," said Keller Bey. "Will you be quiet, Raoux, or shall I drop you over to the glory of your patron saint?"

He held him for a moment asprawl over the edge with a drop of two hundred feet clear upon the packed causeway stones. Something of helplessness in the grip of Keller Bey for a moment took the madness out of Raoux.

He kept fairly still when Keller placed him again on the floor of the platform, and with a pair of huge hands, one on each shoulder, held him in place. Without taking his eyes from the spyglass the engineer searched and found a dirty note-book to which was attached by a string a stump of pencil. Presently he began to spell out a message from one side of the river to the other. I could see his fingers shaking with excitement as he jotted down the letters.

"Why," he exclaimed at the first pause, "it's our fellows from Avignon, and they are not even troubling to code the message—shows what they think of us."

"Tell us what they say," said Keller Bey.

"One moment—they are beginning again," and the pencil stub began to travel.

"*Gun platform can be laid out on spur mountain, 250 feet above present shelter trenches. Will command bridge-head of Aramon—possibly also rebel headquarters.*"

I saw Keller Bey turn pale to the lips. He understood well enough. He had campaigned against those same invisible, tireless French engineers for many desperate African years, and he knew that in the long run they always made out to do the task set for them.

But Raoux the cobbler-procureur was quite unmoved.

"They are playing with levels and angle-machines as they used to do when I was at Avignon. They went out every day clean and came back dirty. The colonel could find nothing better for them to do. To-morrow we shall send half a column of ours and shoot a few. Then the rest will keep further up the river where they belong."

"As you will," said Keller Bey, "but you had better send a battalion at least with provisions for three days."

"Provisions for three days—absurd nonsense!" foamed the little man, for this was touching his tenderest spot, "our citizen soldiers are the National Guard of Aramon, and will not consent to sleep away from their houses, not for all the wig-wagging engineers and railway signalling in France! We are not slaves but freemen. No, no, a day's excursion to brush away these impudent land surveyors with a volley from our patriotic rifles—and then back again before dark with victory on our untarnished banners—that is what you can expect from the lion hearts of our young men. We defend the Commune. We do not make war outside it. And why should we when the chief strength of the enemy remains unassaulted and untaken within our walls?"

Keller Bey called off the ex-engineer. With such a war method as that which was evidently popular in Aramon, it was no use wasting time reading semaphore messages.

The Chief and I returned very mournfully to the Mairie. I could see that his reflections were bitter.

"They do not understand the Commune or what it means—they do not know the spirit of the

Internationale here. They care nothing except for their little municipal quarrels. They cherish wild, vague hopes about the works, and would attack the man upon whose charity they are living. But of the fact that France will one day speak to them with a voice of authority—nay, is now speaking in warning—to that they will pay no heed. At the Commune meeting to-day a whole day was wasted arguing for or against an extra duty on potatoes when brought across the bridge from the Protestant department of the Deux Rives. Protestant potatoes, Catholic and Roman potatoes! What irony, when the dusky signal-men are crawling from hill to hill ever nearer, and any day may bring our doom upon us!"

I let it sink well in, for I could see that Keller Bey was at last conscious of the mistake he had made.

"You must go," he said, "I cannot fairly keep you longer. Go to your friends and advise the good women of them to accept a safe conduct across the river. I have still enough authority for that, if I promise an ultimatum and an assault on the works to follow. It would make me happy to think of these kind folk who welcomed Alida and Linn so warmly, safely lodged under your father's roof as in a city of refuge."

He paused and looked pensively out on the uniformed groups of National Guard lounging and smoking in the white courtyard of Fontveille stone.

"As for me," he said, "there is no room for any going back. The Government would accept no resignation or belated repentance. I have dreamed my dream. I thought (as thought Carl Marx) that these working men were ready for an ideal reform, for government over themselves. I saw other cities joining themselves to us, the good seed sown over the country from department to department, till all should work for all and no man only for himself. Now I see that the nature of man cannot be changed by a theory or a form of government. Go, young man, to your friends. I, Keller Bey, bid you! Be kind to Linn and to Alida, my master's daughter. Perhaps all this has come because I disobeyed him for the first time when he sent the prince of the house of Ali to bring home his daughter. I may be justly punished, yet, nevertheless, the will of Alida is nearer to my heart than that of the Emir Abd-el-Kader in his house at Brousse!"

CHAPTER XXIX

WITHIN THE PALE

It was indeed high time that I went away from the perils of Aramon-les-Ateliers. Indeed, Keller Bey was in greater danger and condemned to greater isolation owing to my stay. At first he had counted it a happiness to talk with me of things outside his unfortunate office as head of the Commune. But even Père Félix and the more dependable of the little band of members of the Government, faithful to their head, showed something like the cold shoulder when Keller withdrew regularly to find me in his parlour as soon as the séance was over.

I waited most of a dark and moonless night for the coming of Jack Jaikes to the corner of the wall. At the first sound of my voice he threw over a rope to help me to scramble up. He himself was astride the top when I got there and we were inside the fortifications within thirty seconds.

And lo! how easy it all was—and what a difference! I seemed a thousand miles away from everyone on the town side, and now only a few rods divided me from the house of friends—from the sudden breaking ires of Dennis Deventer and the quiet smiles of his wife, a mistress within her own domain. Yes, and from Rhoda Polly—though I have left her to the last, I had not forgotten Rhoda Polly.

"Well," said Jack Jaikes, "ye've come at last, as ye had much better have done at the first, biding there among anarchists' trash and breakers of God's beautiful machinery. God knows I am as good a Liberal as ever voted for what Maister Gladstone said was right—yes, me and my faither before me. But before I would mix mysel' up with such a lazy, unclean, unsatisfied, cankered crew—sakes alive, I wad raither turn Tory at yince and lose my self-respect!"

This was a terrible threat for Jack Jaikes, who had brought away from Scotland no particular religion, except (as was common in these years) that unbounded adoration of Mr. Gladstone, which culminated in 1880.

For that night Jack Jaikes made me a shake-down among his own gang, and urged me to get the Chief to let me serve there.

"Man, I could be doing wi' ye fine," he said, "even though ye do not ken one end of a gun from anither till she goes off! But there's a headpiece on ye and they tell me that ye are fair bursting with the mathematics!"

I told him I was better at classics, and he was, I think, more desirous of my company than ever.

"My brither passed for the kirk and was something of a dab at the Greek. You learned yours here in France—will that be the same sort? It will? That's grand. Ye can gie me a bit help, then? I have some o' his auld college buiks in my box. I hae put in heaps o' spadewark at readin' them, but it is a dreary business by yersel'! For ane foot that ye gang forward, ye slip back twa, as the Irishman said aboot the road covered with ice!"

Above my head great steel armatures rose high in the air. The flitting lanterns brought out now the brass knobs of a governor, now the dim glistening bulk of a huge fly-wheel away up near the roof of the shed which Jack Jaikes and his men used as a dormitory. There was one fixed light which shone upon the instrument attached to a little field telegraph. Jack Jaikes had given up his idea of a wholesale electrocution of an attacking force—that is, Dennis Deventer had compelled him to give it up. But he had perfected a kind of burglar alarm applied to a wider area, which completely encircled the works and (separately) protected the Château and its grounds. If anyone interfered with his wires at any point, Jack Jaikes could instantly warn the nearest post to the disturbance, and the men would swarm out like wasps.

The plan had its little inconveniences. Cats in particular loved and were loved upon the great factory wall. But Jack Jaikes devised means, by "stinging them up a bit" electrically, to make them "leave that," as he expressed it.

Rooks also came to perch and left with a whoop of terror, or clung desperately head down with paralysed claws firmly knotted till the men plucked them off and threw them into a corner to recover.

But the first company of the Avengers, tentatively scrambling about the north-west corner to see what sort of watch the English kept, were promptly checked by a dozen bayonets thrust down from above, and having received information, they departed without standing on ceremony.

Let it not be thought that I slept much in the power-house. It was altogether too picturesque and vivid for me. My heart beat with a rousing and incommunicable joy. I was again among my own kind. I had done my best to sympathise with those others over the wall. I had tried to help and understand Keller Bey, but though I might wear the red cardigan, follow Garibaldi, run up the "tatter of scarlet" under Keller Bey's orders, my heart beat with the after-guard. My instincts were "yellow"—the rest was but the rash of the blood which came with youth and would pass like a malady of childhood.

Small wonder I did not sleep. Into that entrancing and mysterious hangar, hooded and cloaked men stole from nowhere in particular. Each gave a kick or a shake in passing to other men, who, silently rising, cloaked themselves, seized arms, adjusted belts, and so wordlessly clanked away into the dark. Then the new-comers would go over to the embers of the fire on the forge in the corner, where the red glow would reveal him as a pleasant-faced English lad, munching ardently his bread and sausage, or heating his coffee on the coals. In the gloom of the dormitory shake-downs men would talk rapidly, muttering in their sleep. If a man snored too vigorously, Jack Jaikes, or a lieutenant of that considerable sub-chief, would turn him over on his side, or, in extreme case, send him to the boiler-room, where the men had room to snore one against the other. These Jack Jaikes, always reminiscent of Glasgow, called the "Partick Social Warblers," in memory of a certain church glee-club soirée, to enter which he had once paid a "silver collection" in the unfulfilled expectation of "tea and a bag."

But that night as I lay I kept awake for the pure joy of knowing myself alive. I loved the breathing of the men about me, the ordered mystery of the comings and goings, the clicking of the telegraphic machine as Jack Jaikes bent over it, even the little circle of golden light which the lamp shed, and the bristly way his moustache had of standing out beyond the wicks of his grimly humorous mouth.

I wondered if he ever slept. Certainly he lay down. He had a blanket with which he covered himself, head and all. It was not much of a blanket, being pierced in the centre so that it could be worn with the head thrust through, poncho-wise, as he stalked about. It was full of burnt holes, showing where he had thrown himself down on cinders, some of which had proved too recent.

About four there came a shrill *tirr-r-r-r* of the small call-bell and every sleeper was instantly on his feet. How Jack Jaikes got to the ticker I do not know, but long before the men had their belts snapped, he was reading off to them the location of the alarm.

"Between posts 48 and 49, Norwell and Omand warned. Ready there, file out!"

The dark figures passed one by one out of the faint copper glow of the forge, stood each a moment against the blue-black mystery of the night framed in the doorway, and were then lost in the obscurity.

I thought of following, but first of all I was afraid of Jack Jaikes, who had made no sign to me, and secondly and chiefly, in a yard and among defences so sown with dangers and (for all I knew) corded with live wires, I might easily do myself much harm, and the general welfare of the cause little good. So, sorely against the grain, I stayed where I was.

Presently the men came laughingly back, their humour quite vanished. Two of the town goats—for Aramon was near enough to the mountains and to Spain to possess many of these—had chosen to contest the narrow way to the factory wall, from a pure point of honour as gentlemen should, for there was no lady in the case. They had died fighting, and a bayonet's point had been requisitioned to dislodge them both. They were now brought in and handed over to the cook for preparation. Both had been hard fighters in their time, and looked as if they would furnish what Caroline in "The Heir at Law" calls "not an inviting meal."

Everybody was now fully waked up, and no one thought any more of sleep. The night was still of the indigo dark peculiar to the South, and outside, I could see the stars sinking one by one. The glow on the forge-hearth was set blazing, tea billies were soon boiling, and there was a fragrant smell of coffee in the air. The clean, appetising hiss of frying bacon struck a joyous note. Someone set a big globe of electric light flaring, when, *whisk-whisk*, a quartette of bullets tore through the shed and knocked it to flinders.

Then in like an avenging genie entered Jack Jaikes.

"If I kenned wha that idiot was that set yon infernal thing blazing, I would knock the amazing friskiness out o' him. Have I not telled ye a score o' times that ye are no to make exhibitions o' yerselves? Exhibitions, did I say, waur nor that, juist blank eediot targets that the Frenchmen haena sense enough to hit!"

He made a silence about him, for all knew that his angers were black and that he would stick at nothing, but, if provoked, strike with what came nearest to his hand.

But the mood passed, the globe and carbons were renewed, and by the end of their early breakfast his good-humour also was quite restored. The men moved easily again without casting furtive eyes to see how the black dog was riding Jack Jaikes. They knew him for an incomparable fighting leader, an engineer without rival in the camp, but there was no doubt that he needed humouring when, as he would have said himself, "his birse was up." It had been remarked, even before he left the Clyde, that he was "far ower handy wi' a spanner," and that might have been the reason why he had tried Bristol and the Tyne before finding his master in Dennis Deventer of the Arms Factory of Aramon.

I broke in upon the Deventers at breakfast—a meal which in defiance of all local custom they took together as they had been used to do far away in Barrow under the Cumberland fells. Or rather it was Jack Jaikes himself who did the breaking. He could not deny himself that.

We heard the noise and clatter as we mounted the stairs.

"A fight," chuckled Jack Jaikes, half to himself, "but two to one on Rhoda Polly, anyway."

But he had his little effect to make. He flung the door open, grounded his rifle with a ringing clash, and announced in a stentorian voice:

"A deserter!"

The clamour ceased instantly. Every face was turned towards the door, Dennis Deventer half rose, his napkin in his hand. I could see the pale, clear-cut features of Rhoda Polly, her red lips parted, peering over her father's shoulder.

Dennis Deventer received me with a friendly push that sent me in the direction of Hugh, who "cleared" like a goal-keeper, and I fell into a chair beside Rhoda Polly.

"Come in, Jack Jaikes—what will you take? Try those kidneys—they are rather good. No, no, your chaps can't want you so soon. You are not hatching them out there, you know!"

These and other cries at last persuaded Jack Jaikes to do what he was yearning to do—sit down and eat a second breakfast with his master's family. His grin was at once triumphant and sardonic, yet he left me to answer for myself. His pleasure was not to talk much at these festivals of his soul. I think he was fearful of what he called "langwage"—such as he used occasionally in the works—escaping his control. At any rate he was a happy listener, and the few words he uttered were always destined to foment a discussion, acerbate a verbal quarrel, so that he could lay mental bets upon his admired Rhoda Polly. When she made a good hit, he felt inclined (as he confessed) to rise up and yell, "like a gallery student on an opera night"—a set of savages whom he had known during the college days of his brother, now a creditable and responsible "placed" minister in Scotland.

When I announced that I had come to stay Rhoda Polly nearly trod my foot off under the table, a vulgar disgrace to our comradeship for which she apologised afterwards.

"I had to do it," she said, "or I should have been blubbering on your shoulder with my arms about your neck! How would you have liked that, Angus my lad?"

I answered, that before company I should have liked it ill enough, but proffered my shoulder for the purpose since we were in private. Rhoda Polly in her turn cried shame upon me. If I could not remember our compact, she would not forget it. She also reminded me of saying of my own accord that she and I had put away childish things. In vain I represented to her that I had just returned from great danger and that if she had been so overwhelmed with joy at breakfast as to make pemmican of my foot, she must have still some remaining for which a suitable expression might be found without looking out the word in the dictionary.

But Rhoda Polly would have none of my suggestions. She was glad she had shown her feelings, however irregularly, but now if I pleased we would resume our good old talks together, at least when the incidents of the siege permitted.

Her father did not allow her to run round the yard or about the posts with the men, as she had been wont to do during the first January difficulties.

"Oh, it isn't that," she said, answering a question in my eyes which was also an accusation; "of course some of them think I'm nice and all that. But it isn't that! I'm not Liz! Only father says that there are snipers on the towers—the cathedral, St. Servan's, St. Marthe's, and St. Crispin's—and he doesn't want any accidents happening to his eldest daughter. But I am sure the boys miss me. I know Jack Jaikes does. He told me so when he came in to arrange mother's sewing machine, which I 'wrongulated' on purpose to hear the news."

Later I retold Dennis Deventer the story of the coming trouble in Aramon and the despair of Keller Bey. He listened without surprise, his deep-set Irish eyes almost hidden under his twitching, bushy brows.

"There's a man that is obleeged to me, Angus me lad. He runs a copper ore boat from Huelva—that's in Spain—to Marseilles. If we could get the owld Keller man down there, I know a boatman in the Joliette who would give him shelter till the steamer lifts her anchor. There is no need for him to be desperate about any such thing. The world is wide and Governments in this country are made of cardboard and bad paste. He will be amnestied in a year or two. Can the man not be reasonable?"

I told him that the difficulty lay there. Keller Bey considered himself bound to those who had helped him to set up the Commune in Aramon. He would make no separate peace for himself.

"Separate fiddlesticks!" shouted Dennis Deventer. "Does he mean such comfortable old soup-bags as Père Félix, or wine-skins like Pipe-en-Bois, or alcohol gutters like the Marshal Soult? Let him set his mind at rest. They are safe. No Government while I live shall harm a hair of their heads. They will never stand behind a barricade—never fire a shot; if they will be careful not to fall downstairs after celebration suppers to the memory of Danton and Marat and the men of '48, they will all die in their beds and have their memories honoured in turn by the suppers of another and redder generation!"

There was truth in what Dennis said. These were not the men who would die fighting when the day of reckoning came. The young sullen wolf's breed of the sidelong glances and the whispered counsels—these were those who would line the last ditches of the defence of Aramon.

But, then, Keller Bey felt that he was responsible also for them. He was their chief and normal leader. He had the secrets of the Internationale and he had made proselytes, even among the young people. Could he leave them and flee? I knew very well Keller Bey's line of argument, and I put it to Dennis. He clapped his knee testily.

"Oh, for a good Scots or Ulster head on a man—even English would do because of the fine, solid underpinning and bodygear the Lord God puts into his southern-built vessels. But when a man gets this megrim of honour in his brain, there is no saying beforehand what he will or will not do—except that it will surely be eediocy."

"It's a pity, too," he added, after thought, "a man that can be talking the Arab or the Turkish with men like your father (God bless him) and old Professor Renard."

I suggested that there was one factor we were overlooking—that it was more than likely that before long the Conservative Commune of Aramon would be displaced and with it would disappear the rule of Keller.

No, I did not think they would kill him. They would probably expel the ex-Dictator and let him go where he would. Then would be the time to secure him, and send him to the captain of the Huelva cargo-boat.

Dennis patted me on the head.

"We cannot be sure of doing much," he said, "but we can always have a try. We shall probably be desperately busy ourselves if the wild rakes take the lead over the wall yonder. They will come at us, not this time in undisciplined rush, but with method and well armed—thanks to the folly of the National Assembly."

Still, Dennis Deventer had a card up his sleeve. "You must wait with us and see the rubber played out."

CHAPTER XXX

DEVILS' TALK

The black day which was coming upon Aramon was not long in dawning. Barrès and Imbert were the leaders of the anarchist party, which had always secretly opposed the Marxian communism of Keller Bey and his adherents.

These were the men of the opposition, dark-browed cub-engineers and piece-workers, not high in their professions—being far too careless and off-hand for regular work, but with a dashing strain in them, and a way of putting the matter which imposed upon the younger men.

Were they hungry? There was food in the shops. Was their miserable fifteen pence a day insufficient? Yonder were the villas of the traders who had sucked and grown rich on the money they had earned, inadequate as it was. Had any man a wrong? The Government had put arms in his hands—let him go and right it!—It may be imagined what was the outcome of this kind of talk. So long as Keller Bey kept his hold there was no night plundering, and several men caught playing at "individual expropriation" were first threatened with the provost marshal and then with a firing party. Instead they were sent to the care of Calvi in the prison of Monsieur le Duc because the heart of Keller was tender.

This gloomy, four-square hulk of a mediæval keep had been built in the thirteenth century by the Duke of Burgundy, to awe the riotous Frankish burghers of Aramon le Vieux, and stands still, machicolated and fossed, much as he left it.

It was difficult now to think of the Aramon with its strong guild of hammer men, its coppersmiths swarming from their clattering toil, its tanners and booth-men pouring out of these same *ruelles* and squares, now grey with mistral or dreamy in the white sunshine. To-day not a cat would jump for a dozen Dukes of Burgundy, but seven hundred years ago Aramon le Vieux had a fierce *élan* of its own and knew how to singe the beard of an oppressor, especially if he were at some considerable distance.

After the building of the great feudal keep on the opposite bank, we hear little more of the turbulent traders, and the likelihood is that they paid their dues and gave no trouble ever afterwards, especially after the Duke constructed a bridge of boats which opened at both sides to allow of traffic.

Now, however, the lofty walls of the fortress of Monsieur le Duc became the rallying place of revolt. Every evening in front of the grand entrance, or upon the *fossé* bridge, Georges Barrès preached the doctrine of plunder and petroleum. There were in Aramon a certain number of "haves"—let those who heard him see to it that there were ten times that number of "takes"! For what were their brethren shut up there (he pointed to the Loches-like cliff of masonry above him, nearly twice the height of Rochester Castle), and answered, "For retaking their own—for redressing the wrongs of the poor!"

"For plain theft—they stole hens!" proclaimed a voice in the crowd.

"Down with the spy—kill the royalist—dismember the traitor!" howled the mob. And to show their honesty they fell upon a good citizen of Aramon, a respectable apothecary, come there almost at random. He had been discreetly silent. It was not he who had made the outcry, but wore he not a black frock-coat and looked he not sleek and well fed? If he were not a spy, what was he doing there? So they threw him in the Rhône. He was fished out half a mile below, where for a long distance the workshop wall skirts the river. Jack Jaikes did the job with grumbling thoroughness and the man of drugs was brought to with a science and celerity unknown in his own pharmacy.

Having thus asserted its power, the crowd turned with self-approval to listen to its favourite orator.

"Here in Aramon we have a Government, and over it presides a Great Shadow which has been sent us from the Internationale. What did ever the Internationale do for us? Did it stop this war? Did it force back the Germans? You tell me that we owe to this shadow the thirty sous a day on which we starve. What of that? It is a bribe to keep us from taking all they possess. Every day in that Château yonder the silver gleams on the white table-cloth, the red wine mantles in the glass, the champagne foams, and—my great God! you can hear them laughing—from the miserable lairs where your children are clamouring for bread, and your wives are weeping because there is none to give them!"

Now the soul of such crowds is most strange. In all that listening assembly there was no single man who did not know that every word was false. There was a special grant for families, and if any worker's children had not enough bread, it was because the patriot himself had spent the money on absinthe! Every worker knew this. Yet tears started to their eyes, and a deep-throated roar of anger went out against the Government which had arranged such a monstrous iniquity.

"Yonder lie the workshops—the place where money is spun—money such as you have no idea of—millions a week—all the fruit of your toil. Do not break the machinery. We will set it spinning money on our own account—but first we must be quit of Dennis Deventer and his foreign gang. Keller Bey will tell you that they are workers like yourselves—citizens, of equal rights before the Internationale. Why then did they collect together yonder, these brave citizens, these honest workers, these noble revolutionaries? Why are they not walking about these streets and taking their turn at mounting guard? I will tell you. Because they are the

guardians of the treasures of the masters—they are keeping locked in Dennis Deventer's safes the millions which have been wrung from you in cruelty and blood and tears!"

Such a roar as went up from that black assembly in which the white caps of women were dotted and the massed blue knots of the National Guard could be seen! It reached the council, drearily debating in the town house, and there was a general desire to adjourn. The air was electric with coming trouble. These duly elected members of the Commune felt themselves caught between two great unknown forces—the Government of Versailles, which was represented by the pushing surveyors of the engineers' corps, the first skirmishers of an army which was certain to come upon them from the north, and this uprising of the idlers and workspoilers of their own kind.

Personally their Socialism was not deep-rooted. They had the national respect for small property-holders, and even if they possessed none themselves, Oncle Jean Marie or Tante Frizade were *propriétaires* in their own right. When these heritages fell in none of their loving nephews and nieces would fight harder for their share than the red-begirt members of the Commune of Aramon.

Only men like Keller Bey and Gaston Cremieux lived in a world beyond such things—and on the other hand were those who, like Barrès and Imbert, had nothing to gain or to lose however fortune's wheel might turn.

Père Félix pushed his way into the dense masses about the entrance of the prison keep. He was sure of himself, but very indignant at those of the Commune who had allowed him to come alone. Of course it was not fitting that Keller Bey should expose his person, but if the twenty of Aramon had marched together in a body, each with his crimson scarf of office girding him, they might have dominated the mob and silenced the hair-brained Barrès. Still, all the more honour to himself, when he should go back to twit them with their fears and tell them the story of his triumph!

"We don't want to hear Père Félix! Down with the traitor! Trample him, spit upon him!"

He could not believe his ears. For then began a din such as he had never heard. The young men on the outskirts had seized the instruments of the band of the National Guard and were now blowing, bellowing, and clanging upon them. He stood beside Barrès, who looked at him contemptuously, tossing the light fall of hair off his brow with a regular movement, as a challenged bull tosses his horns.

"Comrades and citizens, in the name of the Commune of Aramon, elected by you, I address you——"

Brazen horns brayed, tin trays and kettles were beaten, the big drum thundered just underneath. Words issued from the mouth of Père Félix. They must have done so, for his lips were moving, but not even himself heard a word, and the sardonic smile on the face of the Catalan Barrès became a grin.

The old orator, who had swayed all meetings of the plebs in Aramon ever since '48, threw up his hands in hopeless misery.

"They will not hear me," he cried, so that this time the words reached the ear of Barrès. "Why will they not hear me?"

Now Barrès was by this time content with his triumph, and he put his hand to the old man's ear and shouted, "Because your day is past—you are down, you and all your gang. You silenced me at the Riding School meeting three months ago, but then you had Gaston Cremieux to help you. You had better go home. I shall see to it that you do go home, and let not Aramon see your face again. Keep on the farther side of the Durance and no man shall meddle with you. But from this day forth take notice that Aramon means to do without you!"

He beckoned a few determined-looking fellows from the crowd, each armed with a rifle and cartridge-belt. A few instructions, a determined push through the crowd which divided to right and left, shouting hateful words all the time he was passing, and Père Félix found himself thrust ignominiously out of the northern gate of Aramon. His captors had treated him with a certain hasty roughness, but had up till now refrained from insult. Now they tore the red scarf of office from about his body and trampled it in the dust. The rule of the Twenty was over in Aramon.

Slowly and mournfully Père Félix took the way under the beautiful trees of the water road toward the Durance. He did not see where he was going. His foot caught more than once in twisted roots from which the soil had been washed away by the winter floods. Under the willows and among the glimmering poplars shedding blue and gold, he drew nearer the broken pier and the little height of sandy dune from which he could see the blue reek curl upward from the kitchen chimney of the restaurant of the Sambre-et-Meuse.

When he saw it his heart gave a sudden throb, as if he had recognised suddenly the face of a friend unseen and neglected for years.

"This is mine," he muttered, "and what have I been caring for? The popular applause! Mariana told me they would turn upon me and kick me at the last. Then perhaps I would remember that I had a home. They trampled my red sash in the dust. It was they who gave it

to me—it was their own authority vested in me. They ought to have remembered!"

There were tears in the eyes of Père Félix. The tribune of the people could not all at once bring himself to accept a final defeat. But as he looked a different feeling gathered warm about his heart. Yonder was Jeanne bringing back a boat-load of firewood gathered from the flood mark. How tall she was, and how beautiful! He had not noticed these things before. How nobly and regularly she stood in the stern and poled the boat with the current—a splash or two and she was safe within the little backwater. Beyond was Mariana, busy with her fowls, scattering feed for them with the shrill *chook—chook-chookychooks* used on such occasions by the hen-wives of all nations. Père Félix could see the birds running stumblingly with wings outspread to the feast. Mariana turned, glanced across the water, put on her spectacles, and called aloud to Jeanne without any surprise.

"There is your father, Jeanne—go, fetch him home!"

And suddenly, as his daughter leaped lightly out of the boat and kissed him on both cheeks, the colour flushing to her face and her bosom heaving, Père Félix felt himself no more ashamed and outcasted.

"Father," said Jeanne, "I have found such a nest of logs—fine burning wood. You are just in time to cut it into faggots for me. Then I can go and bring away the rest while you are at work."

"Félix, you are just in time for dinner," his wife cried out at sight of him. "There is roast lamb and green peas from Les Cabannes. You old gourmand, I'll wager you knew and came home on purpose!"

No, Père Félix had not known, but he certainly did come on purpose and on purpose he meant to stay.

CHAPTER XXXI

THE BLACK BAND

The first Commune of Aramon had fallen. Its place was taken by a Committee of Public Safety sitting at the Riding School. Of these the chiefs were Georges Barrès, the Catalan, who called himself "of Perpignan"; Chanot, the cadet of a good house, just released from a term of imprisonment (which he described as being for political offences); Auroy, the proprietor of an hotel by no means of the highest class, and Chardon, whose knowledge of the world extended as far as New Caledonia. They were a crew of desperadoes who had been employed chiefly in labourers' work at the factories. They knew no handicraft—at least none sufficiently well to pass the eye of such foremen as worked for Dennis Deventer. And, in addition, they were lazy in working hours, given to obscene conversation and to drinking pure alcohol out of pocket flasks. So it may be well believed that they were not popular with the oversmen at the works, and when they fell under Jack Jaikes' rebuke he was apt to chastise them with whips of scorpions.

At the same time, desperate and careless though they were, and backed by the majority of the unthinking younger men of the National Guard, they had some qualms as to disturbing Keller Bey in his fastness of the Mairie. He had still a number of faithful defenders, and like an old lion of the Atlas he would certainly sell his life dearly.

So Barrès and the Committee of Public Safety laid aside his case for the moment. They had other matters which pressed. Their "rapine and pillage" adherents desired to begin work. On the outskirts were many villas and houses of summer resort which promised loot. Barrès had preached so much, that (though with no great good-will) he was now driven to a little practice. Yet he knew instinctively that in France offences against property are far longer remembered and far more severely dealt with than crimes against persons—shooting and assassination not excluded.

Still, he had to satisfy his followers, and in the bosom of the committee there were already experts—the ex-political prisoner Chanot and the traveller to the coasts of Cayenne were not at their first essay in "personal expropriation."

It was clearly unsafe to cross the river. The town of Aramon le Vieux was a hornets' nest, all Gambetta republicans and royalists. The department, too, had a fine National Guard, mostly Protestants or commanded by Protestants, and the Moblots or Mobiles of the department of Deux Rives were drilling every day. What plundering was to be done must be on this side of the bridge, but there was abundance and to spare for all, if the business were rightly managed.

The first step was to disarm the doubtful companies, and re-enlist only those who were of proper anarchist hue and ready for "expropriation." This was done in the Riding School where the Committee sat all day devising mischief and laying out evil as on a map.

On the night of the 6th of April they were ready. The villas and country houses left vacant by

the officers of the troops formerly quartered in Aramon had remained unoccupied, and, as the soldiers went right off to the seat of war from Aramon Junction, the furniture and personal belongings were equally untouched. The wives and children had been dispatched to the care of parents paternal and maternal in Limousin castles and Norman apple-orchards. Only an ancient caretaker or two remained, hiding in some niche of the ground floor and cautiously venturing out to make a hasty and furtive "market" in the grey of the morning.

For the adepts of "individual redistribution" these served to whet an appetite. By midnight Jack Jaikes called me up on the roof of the Château. All along the river front houses were already flaming. Some, as I looked, climaxed their particular display by the crashing down of roofs and the falling in of floor after floor, followed by bursts of flame many hundreds of feet high, which lit up the dim river and the white houses of Aramon le Vieux. I could see the ancient battlements of the Lycée St. André serrated against a velvet-black sky—nay, I could make out that very forehead of promenade from which we had watched, that day in January, the tricolour give place to the Tatter of Scarlet.

The rabble were giving tongue down there like packs of wolves, and at the sound Jack Jaikes stamped and cursed as men swear only in Clydeside ship-building yards.

"Whist now, Jackie," said the voice of Dennis Deventer at my elbow, "what's the use of using all the Lord's fine big words that are meant to embellish Scripture on the like of them? Is it not tempting Providence to be cursing fools who are sprinting hot-foot to damnation by themselves?"

"Wait—oh, wait," growled Jack Jaikes, jerking his joints till they creaked in a way he had when he was excited; "I shall make them sing to a different tune. Listen to them baying. Chief" (he turned suddenly to Dennis) "could I not just lob over half a dozen shrapnel among these cattle? They seem to be having it all their own way. Let me remind them that there's a God left in the universe."

"You've got your business to attend to, young man. Be good enough to leave your Maker's alone. He can manage His own affairs, Jack Jaikes, and has been doing so for quite a while."

Yet I understood the haste of the senior lieutenant and gangforeman. Apart from the uncompromising temperament of the Strathclyde man, it was difficult even for me to stand idle and listen to the shrieks of demoniac mirth as each new villa was attacked. In the silence of the night we could hear the crash of doors beaten in, the splintering of wood and the jangle of glass. Then came the dull rumble of many feet beating irregularly on wooden floors, the rush upstairs, the windows flung open, their green outer *volets* clattering against the walls, to let in the clear shining of a moon which had been full only the night before.

"What could not a score of us be doing with plenty of ammunition and our Deventer rifles?" I whispered to Jack Jaikes. He hardly looked at me. He was in the mood for anything except disobedience. He merely heaved a protesting sigh in the direction of his Chief, a sigh which was eloquent of all that he could do if he were not controlled by a higher power.

"Will our turn never come?" I asked him, as he stood and gazed, his eyes red and as if injected in the glowing of the burning buildings.

"I fear not to-night," he said, "the beasts will slink back to their lairs to deposit their loot. To-morrow night we may expect something serious for ourselves. But in any case I can't stand here hopping about like a hen on a hot plate. Let us go and see that the posts are all on the look-out."

I did not go out with him, however, instead I remained with Rhoda Polly, whom I had run downstairs to find. She told me the names of the burning houses and to whom they belonged—the Villa Mireille, built recently by a great Paris grocer—Sans Souci, that of a local sausage-maker, and so forth. All these people had long left the district, and, as I said, the smaller houses had been let to the officers of the former Imperial garrison.

Presently Dennis Deventer came and sat down beside us. Said Rhoda Polly, "Father, I never knew that we harboured such wretches among our men. Surely they do not come from the Works?"

"No," said Dennis, settling himself with his back to the chimney pots, "I rather judge we have to thank your friend Gaston Cremieux for most of these. His experience as Gambetta's Procureur made him intimately acquainted with all bad characters in Marseilles. So when he became dictator, a few executions along the Old Port, and the posting up of a warning proclamation set the whole hive of cosmopolitan ill-doers scattering northwards. I think Aramon got the cream of them, and they are now acting after their kind, sure of an immunity which they could not hope for under the rule of Gaston Cremieux."

"But Keller Bey?" said Rhoda Polly, astonishment in her accent, "why should he allow it? He is a soldier. Alida told me of his campaigns in the Atlas."

"Yes, Rhoda Polly," her father answered, "but though they let Keller Bey alone in the Mairie, he has no more power in Aramon. The party of the Reprise Individuelle, that is to say of plump and plain robbery, is in full possession, and I doubt not but that before long we shall have such a siege of Château Schneider as will make us forget the other altogether. Only remember this, Miss Rhoda Polly Deventer, we about the Yard and Works do not wish your

assistance or countenance on any pretext."

"I do not see why," said Rhoda Polly, pouting, "I know I am at least of as much use as Hugh."

"He is a man—my son!"

"Well, if it is *that* you are thinking of," snapped Rhoda Polly, "you can afford better to lose a daughter than a son. You've got three of us, Dennis, don't forget! Take my advice. Risk a daughter, and send Hugh down cellar with the Mater!"

"Not one like you, little spitfire!" Her father spoke more tenderly than I had ever heard him, and before going away he let his hand lie for an instant on the vaporous curls about her brow.

We kept awake most of the night, while the moon sailed overhead and the tall chimney stalks of the factories were made picturesque by the red glow from the entire riverside quarter of Aramon. The shouting and the tumult died down with the incendiary fires. The river, sometime of molten copper, was again grey, unpolished silver under the moon, save where the webbed and delicate shadow of the great suspension bridge slept on the water.

At the dawning of the day mighty sleep passed upon the two of us sitting there, and there Jack Jaikes found us sitting hand in hand, my head on Rhoda Polly's shoulder, shamelessly slumbering under the risen sun.

CHAPTER XXXII

"READY!"

The weather changed brusquely during the day of the 7th April. Till now it had been lovely spring weather—indeed, save for the shorter days, comparable to our finest summers in England.

Then about noon came a thunderstorm—a sudden blackening and indigoing of the south horizon—a constant darting of lightning flashes very far off, this way and that—no thunder, only the inky storm advancing over the sea. Wild fire playing about it and a white froth of spring cloud-tufts tossing along its front.

By two the flashes were raging about us, the thunder continuous and deafening, and the hailstones hopping like crickets on the roof of Château Schneider. Then it rained a great rain, every gargoyle spouting, every gap and pipe gurgling full. The wind bent double the tall poplars and lashed the lithe willows till they fished the stream. At half-past two all was past, for the moment at least. The roofs were giving off a fine, visible steam under bright sunshine. The land reeked with rising moisture, and over the water the wet roofs of Aramon le Vieux and St. André winked like heliographs.

So it continued all day, the thunder passing off to this hand and the other—the mountains of Languedoc or among the dainty fringe of the dentelated Alpines behind Daudet's three windmills—which were not yet his. But it never quite left us alone. The Rhône Valley is the laid track and ready-made road for all thunderstorms. Even those from the west turn into it as from a side lane, glad of the space and the easy right of way.

I rose from my proper bed just in time to see the best of the thunderstorm. Rhoda Polly had been up "ages before," as she asserted. She had lunched with the family and confided to me that there had been less row than usual, for the Chief had not been able to take the meal with them.

She had, therefore, been deprived of the pleasure of crying to their father, "Hey, Dennis, hold hard there!" Or, plaintively, "Now, Dennis, you *know* that is not true!"

So they had solaced themselves by teasing Hannah, who had first threatened assault and battery and then retired in the sulks to her own room, the door of which they had heard locked and double locked. Mrs. Deventer had reproved them for their cruelty to their sister—which was grossly unfair, seeing that she had appeared to enjoy the performance itself, and even contributed a homily on Hannah's love of finery.

Altogether it had been a stupid lunch, and I had done well to keep out of it. Oh, certainly, Rhoda Polly would gladly get me something to eat. Indeed, she did not mind having a pauper's plateful of scraps herself. Lunch proper was such an accidental meal that oftentimes all that reached the mouth was the bare fork!

So on scraps and a glass of ale Rhoda Polly and I lunched together with great amity and content. We spoke of the coming (or at least expected) attack, and Rhoda Polly revealed to me her plans for seeing all she could and yet keeping clear of the eyes of her father. This was undutiful, but certainly not more so than shouting "You, Dennis!" at him down the whole length of an uproarious dinner-table.

Jack Jaikes looked in upon us in a search for the Chief. There was no privacy of any kind in

Château Schneider in those days. You simply went from room to room and from floor to floor till you ran your quarry to earth.

Rhoda Polly and I were sitting with the width of the table between us, our two chins on our palms, the eyes of one never leaving those of the other, drowned in our high debate.

Jack Jaikes gazed at us a moment and then, with a grin which might have meant "Gather ye rosebuds while ye may," if Jack Jaikes had read any poetry, he turned on his heel and went out again without speaking.

"I say," said Rhoda Polly, "he never told about catching us asleep up behind the chimney pots with the sun baking our noses brick-red——"

"Holding hands too, and my head——"

"Glory, I'm glad it wasn't Hugh who caught us—then we should never have heard the last of it. What sillies we must have looked. I say, Angus Cawdor, that Jack Jaikes is a very decent sort. Suppose he had brought the others up! Hanged if I could have kept from telling!"

"Oh, it was not to spare me, don't you deceive yourself. It was for your sake, Rhoda Polly. He would aid and abet you in forging the Governor's name to a cheque for a dressmaker's bill."

Rhoda Polly went to find her mother, after promising to lie down awhile and so be fresher for the night. Dennis Deventer had instituted four-hour watches for the same reason, and everyone not on duty was sent to turn in. But the restless Jack Jaikes refused obedience. He had a thousand things to do. Oh, yes, everything was in readiness, of course. Things always were "last gaiter button" and that sort of rubbish, but to look everything over from one end to the other of all the posts was by no means useless, and to this he, Jack Jaikes, meant to devote himself.

At any rate I slept, and I believe so also did Rhoda Polly. At least there was a period which otherwise could not be accounted for in that young lady's diurnal of her time. Supper was a snatch meal, and I don't think anyone thought much about eating, but Rhoda Polly was down in the kitchen seeing that the men's rations were sent out to the posts. At six I reported for duty to Jack Jaikes who had asked for me particularly. He gave me a powerful pair of night-glasses, presented to him for life-saving, as an inscription upon the instrument itself testified.

"You know the streets of Aramon as well as I do," he said, "you have only got to keep your eyes about you, and report all you see. There is a nice little Morse installed on the top of the gateway, and you will be fairly safe behind the parapet—at least as safe as anywhere."

The little tower he spoke of carried a clock and was placed not directly over the main gate, but to the side above the offices of the time-keepers and accountants.

"I suppose," he added, "Rhoda Polly is coming. If so, don't let her fire, and, of course, don't fire yourself. You are the watch, so keep all dark above. Not a light, not a cigarette. And when Rhoda Polly comes, make her stay behind those sand-bags in the corner. I hiked a few up on purpose for her."

"I know nothing about it," I asserted, "I never thought of it for an instant. If Rhoda Polly comes it will not be because I asked her."

He looked at me with a slight contemptuous grin.

"Do not worry yourself," he said; "if Rhoda Polly wants to come she will come, and neither you will entice her, nor her father forbid her."

And he went his way.

* * * * *

I watched the wide Cours of Aramon, white under the moon, with its plane trees casting inky shadows on the flat stones and trampled earth. A silence had fallen upon the streets that opened on it, and no lights showed from the houses. The anarchists knew the value of darkness as well as we. But for a while the moon continued to block them. The sky filled and as regularly emptied of great white clouds, charioting up from the Mediterranean like angelic harvest-wains.

I did not see anything worth reporting from the top of the clock-tower, nor hear anything except a distant hammering. An intense quiet reigned over the town of Aramon-les-Ateliers. I saw no new conflagrations. The old were extinct, and no yelling mobs poured out towards the well-to-do suburbs. The Extremists of the Commune had withdrawn their sentries and outposts—at least from within sight of the defences of the works.

Jack Jaikes argued that this alone showed that they were plotting mischief.

"These gutter scrapings of a hundred ports and a thousand prisons" was what he called "the new lot" who had supplanted Keller Bey.

I think he secretly rejoiced. For, so long as it was a matter of fighting the elected Commune with Keller Bey at its head, he knew that the Chief had been lukewarm about extreme

measures. He had even negotiated in the early time, which Jack Jaikes called "a burning shame. The best way to negotiate wi' a rattlesnake is to break his back wi' a stick!" He recognised, however, it was no use holding back when the Chief said "March!"

"But noo, lad," he confided to me, "they are coming for what they will get. They are going to harry and burn and kill. There are four women yonder, and Dennis kens as well as me that if they win in on us, it will be death and hell following after. So he will let us turn on the fire-hose from the first, and let off no volleys in the air. That suits Jack Jaikes. This is no Sunday-school treat wi' tugs-o'-war and shying at Aunt Sally for coco-nits! Aye, a-richt, you below—haud a wee, I'm comin'!"

He had hardly remained five minutes with me, but he had put some iron into my blood. We were no longer fighting against theorists like Keller Bey, or broad-beamed, first-class mechanicians like the Père Félix.

And then the women—they would not bear thinking about, and indeed I had not time, for prompt, as if answering to a call, Rhoda Polly plumped down beside me in the sand-bag niche.

"I met Jack Jaikes," she explained. "He said he knew I was coming and had made all snug for me. How did he know? You did not?"

"He must have guessed, Rhoda Polly—perhaps it was something you said."

"Nonsense, he is altogether too previous, that Jack Jaikes, but all the same these sand-bags are comfy, and I can see as from an upper box."

"There is not much to see." I was saying the very words when with a crash a wall on the opposite side of the Cours seemed to crumble in upon itself. There was a jet of flame, a rain of stones, which reached half-way to the defences of the works, and then a gap, dark and vague in the veiled moonlight.

"That was dynamite," said Rhoda Polly, "though the report was not loud. There is, quarrymen say, a silent zone in which the explosion is not heard. We must be just on the verge of that. I wonder if there is more to come."

We waited—I straining my eyes into the darkness and seeing nothing. The moon did not reach down into the gulf which the explosion had created. But I was vaguely conscious of shapes that moved and of a curious crushing noise like that of the steam-roller upon the fresh macadam of a roadway in the making.

But though Jack Jaikes came up to see for himself, none of us could make out anything—till Rhoda Polly, whose eyes were like those of a cat, made a telescope of her hands and after a long look whispered eagerly, "I see something they have got in there. It is like a bear on end—you know—when it is dancing."

"Try again, Rhoda Polly. Try the night-glass!"

"I can do better without it, Jack Jaikes—yes, I see better now—it is like a big boiler for washing clothes or boiling pig's-meat with the mouth tilted towards us. It looks as if it were mounted on a kind of cradle!"

The words were hardly out of her mouth when Jack Jaikes exclaimed, in a voice which might have been heard half across the wide oblong of the Cours, "A mortar—I never thought of that—they have got a mortar. They were clearing a way for using it—at short range too. They can plug us anywhere now."

He sprang towards the Morse telegraph, but he did not reach it. A concussion and a roar shook the tower to its base. I saw the flame shoot out a yard wide from the gap in the defence wall. Our main gate and part of the rampart to the right had been badly smashed, quite enough for a determined storming party to penetrate if the new gun made any more successes.

"They are firing solid shell at us," said Jack Jaikes, frantically manipulating the keys of the telegraph instrument.

"Now I must get a gun to play upon them. It will need something big, for though we can scourge their gun emplacement with mitraille fire, the merit of their plan is that the gunners lie hid in a ditch. Only one man, or two at most, are needed to slip round and drop in the charge and shell."

"I see them," said Rhoda Polly, pointing where we saw only blank darkness. "Give me a rifle, Jack Jaikes. I believe I can pick that man off!"

"You shall have number 27, Rhoda Polly, the best ever made. Oh, if only I had eyes like you!"

Jack Jaikes groaned aloud, and Rhoda Polly settled herself behind the sand-bags. But she glanced up almost instantly.

"He is gone!" she said.

"Then look out!" cried Jack Jaikes.

We both saw the broad stream of fire this time, and the wall on the other side of the gate came rattling down, while a big ball went skipping across the yard of the works, kicking the dust into clouds and bringing up with a dull smack against the wall of the foundry just opposite.

"No harm done this journey, just topped us and brought down a few stones. But this can't last. They will get the range and make hay of us."

He was already making off on his quest.

"Better get down out of that, Rhoda Polly," he called back, as his feet clattered among the fallen bricks and masonry. "Go to the cellar, Rhoda Polly!"

"Go to the cellar yourself, Jack Jaikes—I'm going to watch for the man who does the loading of that gun!"

And Jack Jaikes laughed, well pleased. I felt vaguely humiliated, for I was a far better shot than Rhoda Polly, only I could not see. Furthermore I wished her well out of the clock-tower, for the flash of a rifle from the top of it would almost certainly cause us to be bombarded, and with the lobbing action of the mortar shot the projectile might very well land right on top of us, in which case the sand-bags would prove no protection. All I could do, however, was to stick to the Morse machine and send down the reports that Rhoda Polly threw at me over her shoulder.

As soon as Jack Jaikes had made a tour of the posts, a hail of rifle fire broke from the wall of our defences, directed upon the gap in the wall and the *débris* which sheltered the mortar.

"It's no use! Tell them to stop," called out Rhoda Polly; "they are only making the plaster fall." I transmitted the message, and the firing from our side slackened and ceased.

The smoke of the volleys drifted slowly along the wall, blinding and provoking the watcher. She waved it petulantly away with her hands.

"They will make me miss my chance," she mourned. "The gunners can do what they like behind that. I wish Jack Jaikes had had more sense. What is the use of shooting at sparrows' nests under the eaves when the men are down in a ditch?"

She was quite right, the next shell was a live one, and passed quite near us with a whistling sound. It exploded just under the big iron door, which was blown from its fastenings and fell backward into the yard with a heavy, jangling crash which went to all our hearts like a warning.

The square of the doorway, seen over the edge of the clock-tower, was now quite open. The mortar of the anarchists had done good work, and our carefully-thought-out positions were endangered. I could see Dennis Deventer walking about from post to post, where there was danger of an attack. The wall was not high, especially on the side of the Château, and it would not do to leave these posts denuded of men.

At the moment while I was looking at him, Jack Jaikes with a full gunners' team came galloping across the yard with a four-inch Deventer quick-firing field-gun lurching after them. If once they could get that up to the doorway they might be able to make some efficient reply to the enemy's mortar. But a gun of that size needs some sort of emplacement, and an approach to the doorway must be contrived.

Dennis was on the spot and I could hear him giving his orders in sharp, lapidary phrases. In the interest below me I had not been watching Rhoda Polly, and so the sharp report of her No. 27 startled me. Of course I could discern nothing in the huge black gash torn by the explosion. But Rhoda Polly was triumphant.

"I got him," she whispered; "I saw him coming out and before he could get the shell into the muzzle, I fired. He dropped the shell and fell on top of it. What a pity it did not go off!"

Such a bloodthirsty Rhoda Polly! But the truth was that, when it came to fighting and what she called "taking a hand," Rhoda Polly felt absolutely at one with the defence. She only strove to outdo those who were her comrades, and the matter of sex, never prominent in Rhoda Polly's mind, was altogether in abeyance.

I tapped the keys of the Morse viciously. It was all I was good for.

"Rhoda Polly has shot the gunner—now is your time!"

But still the embankment for the four-inch did not quite please Dennis. He preferred to take his chance and wait. It seemed a long, weariful time. Rhoda Polly peered into the blackness along the tube of No. 27. Rhoda Polly wriggled and settled herself.

"Bang!" said No. 27. "Winged him! But he made off!" said the marksman disgustedly. "He was quarrying under the other fellow for the shell, so they can't have many or he would have brought out a fresh one. I do wish father would hurry up. In a minute or two there will be such a beautiful chance—just before they are going to fire. They will send three or four men this next time so that I can't shoot them all. If our folk are not speedy, down will come this old clock-tower!"

Rhoda Polly was a good prophet, and when next she spoke she had to report that there was a little cloud of men on either side, hiding behind the wall and preparing to load the piece, when their comrades were ready, at any hazard.

The four-inch was now poking a lean snout out of the door which had been smashed open by the mortar, and stretched along, laying her on the centre of the darkness, was Jack Jaikes, cursing the Providence which had not given him eyes like Rhoda Polly's.

"Now," said my mentor hastily, "tell them now is the time. They can't miss if they fire into the brown! Right in the centre of the gap in the line of that white chimney."

The discharge of the big gun beneath us quite made us gasp. It shook Rhoda Polly's aim, and this time No. 27 went off pretty much at random. But what we saw within the gap opposite made up for everything. The shell burst under the mortar or perhaps within it—I could not distinguish which. At any rate, something black and huge rose in the air, poised as if for flight, and then, turning over, fell with a clangorous reverberation into the house behind, smashing down the white chimney and causing the blue-coated National Guards with which it was filled to swarm out. Some took to their heels and were no more heard of in the history of the revolt of Aramon. Others pulled off their coats and fought it through in their shirts.

Dennis Deventer waved his hat, and all except Jack Jaikes yelled. He was busy getting the gun ready for a second discharge. But Dennis stopped him.

"Jackie, my lad," he said, "no more from this good lady the day—get up the mitrailleuses. They had only that one big fellow and you have tumbled him in scrap through the house behind. I don't know how you sighted as you did."

"I did not," said Jack Jaikes grumpily—"only where Rhoda Polly told me."

"Well, never mind—that job's done," said the Chief soothingly; "hurry with the machine guns. They will take ten minutes to get over that little surprise and wash it down with absinthe. Then we shall have to look out. They will come, and if we have not their welcome ready, they will come to stay."

At this point I begged for permission to come down and join Jack Jaikes' gang.

I was no use up there, I said, Rhoda Polly could see all round me. She must call down the news, as there was no time to teach her the Morse.

"Well, come along then," said Dennis, and I did not stop even to say good-bye to Rhoda Polly. At last I was going to have a chance.

When I got to my gang Dennis Deventer was speaking.

"I will give you what help I can by sending men from the north wall and that next the river. I don't expect any assault there. But I cannot weaken the defence along the side of the Château orchard. That is where we are weakest, and where I must go myself. For they are sharp enough to know it. I leave you in charge here, Jack Jaikes. Keep the men steady and don't allow swearing in the ranks!"

CHAPTER XXXIII

"HELL UPSIDE DOWN!"

There was strangely little exultation. Each man felt the tussle was yet to come and nerved himself for it. The big square lay out silent under the moon, splashed with the shadows of the pollarded poplars, the benches upturned, a tree or two uprooted, and beyond all the black gash knocked in the row of white houses. It had a strange look, sinister, threatening, all the more so because it had always been so peaceful and well-ordered—like a man's tranquil life till the day Fate's mortal-shell bursts and there is no more peace for ever and ever.

"Now mind, you fellows," said Jack Jaikes, "fire low and steady. They are ten times our numbers, but we will fight in shelter and we have these beauties!"

He patted the three mitrailleuses in turn. He had taken charge of the middle one himself, and set his friend Allerdyce and young Brown to command those on either side. We stood at attention, each man knowing that the time could not be long.

Far down towards the Château we heard the rush and jar of an attack. A similar noise came from farther up the wall towards the fitting shops.

"Jehoshaphat, they are flanking us!" exclaimed Jack Jaikes. And before anyone could interfere—supposing that any had so dared—Jack Jaikes had stepped outside the wall into the cumbered Cours of Aramon. I took the liberty of following. Away to the right we could see nothing, except the clouds of smoke drifting up or being tossed by the rough sudden swoop of the blast, stooping down out of the moonlit heavens and the night of stars.

Jack Jaikes must have been conscious of my presence, but he did not order me back. He was talking to himself and he wanted a listener. As Bacon says, he wanted a friend with whom to toss his ideas as a haymaker tosses hay.

"Down there by the Château doesn't matter," he said, looking that way long and earnestly, "Dennis Deventer is there—with MacIntyre and the whole Clydebank gang—little to fear there. Listen, young fellow, how the machine guns are barking—*U-r-r-r-rh!* I wish ours were talking too, but that mortar shot rather scared them—though it ought not—easy thing to rush a four-inch gun firing shell at that distance and with their numbers. One hole in the line, and then you are upon her. But—see, young un, there they go butting in at the corner of the wall yonder. We must give them a volley. Fellows, run out the mitrailleuses—my own one first. Easy there over the stones! Now the others!"

Presently with the three machine guns we were standing completely shelterless in the Cours of Aramon with half a dozen darksome streets and alleyways gaping at us truculently. "Turn them to the left," he shouted. "Farther out, Allerdyce! Keep your alignment, you Brown—swearing's forbidden, but think that ye hear Donald Iverach at it!"

The light little guns with the pepperpot snouts were swiftly swung round in the direction of the scaling ladders and the hurrying clouds of men.

Each man, Allerdyce, Brown, and Jack Jaikes himself, had his hand on the handle which was to grind death.

"Lie down, you sweeps!" he called to us. "Flat—not a head up."

We lay down, but I looked sideways between the wheels of the centre machine gun. The long legs of Jack Jaikes almost bestrode me.

"GO!"

And then all hell broke loose. The noise of the jarring explosions melted into one infernal whoop, and seemed to ride the storm which at this moment was mounting to the heavens from the south and shutting out the moon.

The attacking party was mown as with a clean-swept scythe. For an instant three swathes were clearly visible—Jack Jaikes, Brown, and Allerdyce had each made his share of the crop lie down.

There came an explosion of rage and anguish.

"Again!" shouted Jack Jaikes. "Keep down that head," he cried to me, and kicked savagely in my direction as he danced about. I obeyed. No account could be required of men at such moments. He might stamp on my head if he found it in his way.

"Sweep the wall and fire low!" was the next order. "Mind, Donald Iverach and the boys are on top. We must not shoot them, but we *must* help those ladders down. It is a pity we dare not run out the four-inch—only we could never get her back."

Again the rending siren shriek divided the night. We lay on the ground seeing gigantic shapes twisted in seeming agony over guns high above us. Our chins were in the dust and the play of the lightning flashes made the thing somehow demoniacal and unearthly.

"Hell upside down!" as the man next to me pithily said—a parson's son like myself, but from Kent, Pembury in Kent, where young Battersby is still not forgotten.

The mitrailleuses flared red below and the skies flared blue above. The thunder roared continuously and the noise of the machine guns cut it like the thin notes in the treble corner of a piano. Heaven raged against earth, and earth in the person of Jack Jaikes ground out shrill defiance. But that night the bolts from the earthly artillery were the more deadly.

"Cleaned the beggars out!" shouted Jack Jaikes, or at least that is near enough to what he said. "Now then, up you fellows and we will get them back!"

It was easier said than done. For it was one thing to get the little guns down the rubble heaps beneath the battered gateway and quite another to fetch them back. We were compelled to put all our three gun crews into one, and even then we could not have succeeded without the help of the men with ropes pulling from within. I saw Rhoda Polly tugging like one possessed, though why she was not on her tower I do not know.

We had left the other two machine guns unprotected and had to jump back to rescue them. Still there was no enemy in sight and we got Brown's fine No. 1 back into shelter. Remained Allerdyce, and as we rattled down to fetch her up, suddenly the whole of the square in front of us was swept by a storm of bullets. Somehow I found Hugh Deventer beside me.

"You gave us a good easement up at the corner," he said, "I was sure they would get back on you next. Give me a place. I can hoist a gun better than you!"

He was behind the wheel, but even as he set his weight to it Allerdyce—-eternally smiling Scot from Ayrshire, called Soda Bannocks—collapsed over the piece he had commanded and worked. Another man yelled with sudden pain, and I felt a sharp blow on the calf of my leg.

"Clear!" shouted Jack Jaikes, "I will fetch the men. Up with the gun." And he drew Allerdyce off the top of the mitrailleuse as one might gather a wet rag.

The storm passed and as we panted upwards the bullets still tore our ranks. It could not be done. We had not the force. We paused half-way and blocked the wheels with stones so that she would not slip back.

"Great God, what's that?" I turned at the anguish and surprise in the voice of Jack Jaikes, and I saw clear under the rain-washed splendours of the moon Keller Bey walking down the main Cours of Aramon. One hand held aloft a white flag, and on the other side clasping his arm was—Alida!

I dreamed—I was sure I dreamed. That bullet—those fellows knocked over—Allerdyce smiling and abominably limp on the top of his own gun—Jack Jaikes gathering him up—all these things had crazed me, and no wonder. I saw "cats in corners," as I used to do in old college days when I studied too much and too long.

But yet I looked and saw the vision continued. Moreover I heard. Keller Bey was calling out something as he waved the flag. Black cats did not speak. They keep an exact distance away—about four yards and always in the corner of a room or in a stairway—never in the open. What was he saying? One word recurred.

"Trêve!—Trêve!—Trêve!"

"I proclaim a truce in the name of the Internationale!"

Mocking laughter answered him. The Internationale! What did they care for the Internationale? They were out to kill and to take.

Little groups began to gather at the dark alley mouths. I could see the glitter of rifles and bayonets. Present fear was arrested when they saw us withdrawing our guns. Hope sprang into their minds that they might capture the mitrailleuse abandoned halfway up. Their losses stung them to a wild and reckless fury.

I do not know whence the first bullets came—I think from the north end of the Cours Nationale, where some men had been busy removing their dead and wounded. At any rate it was the signal for a general discharge. The streets and alley-ways vomited fire. The crackle of rifle shots sprang from the windows of houses. Somehow we found ourselves outside on the Cours. We had abandoned the gun. Jack Jaikes seemed to be giving some kind of instructions, but I could not make out what he was saying. What I saw was too terrible—Keller Bey on the ground, the white flag of truce stained with blood, and Alida kneeling beside him.

"Take them up!" yelled Jack Jaikes, "run for it!"

Before me strode Hugh Deventer, huge and blond like a Viking. He caught up Alida and would have marched off with her, but that Jack Jaikes barred the way.

"Idiot," he cried, "who can carry a man of Keller's size but you? Give the girl to Cawdor!"

I think at that moment Hugh could have killed him, but he gave me Alida as bidden, and bending he shouldered the dead weight of the wounded man. "Put him higher, then, you fool," he shouted to Jack Jaikes.

"I can't, they are coming at us with the white weapon. Heave him yourself," yelled back Jack Jaikes. I heard no more for Alida, waking suddenly to her position, fought desperately in my arms, escaped, and ran up the broken stones past the abandoned machine gun till I lost sight of her in the dusk of the broken gateway. Hugh Deventer, stumbling after with Keller Bey, cursed me for getting in his road. We did and said a number of things that night which can't well go in a log book, not even now.

I turned and in a moment was with the small band which Jack Jaikes had gathered about the gun. At any cost we must not lose that. There were too many men in Aramon who knew how to make ammunition for any purpose.

Yes, they were coming. They were so near that I had just time to snap in my bayonet and get beside Jack Jaikes. I saw him shake something wet from his hand.

"Are you wounded?" I asked anxiously, for that would have been the crown of our misfortunes.

"No, that's Allerdyce!" he answered, with ghastly brevity, but nevertheless the thing somehow nerved me. We all might be even as Allerdyce, but in the meantime we must stop that ugly black rush—the charge "with the white" as they called a bayonet charge. Behind was the gun—Allerdyce's gun—and beyond that the open defenceless port, the waiting men clewed there by their duty—and the girls!

Lord, how slow they were—these running men!

"Now then, one volley," said Jack Jaikes, "scourge them and then steady for the steel! Remember we are taller men and we have on an average a foot longer reach than they have. You, Gregory, keep behind and blow holes in anybody you can see running."

I cannot remember very clearly this part. How could I? I rather think we did not stand very firm. I seem to remember charging out to meet them—the others too—and Jack Jaikes laying about him in front of everybody with clubbed rifle, grunting like a man who fells bullocks. The lines met with a clash of steel. I remember the click and lunge perfectly. Then suddenly we seemed to be all back to back, and somehow or other the centre of a terrible mixed business, a sort of whirlpool of fighting. Men quite unknown to us had appeared mysteriously from the direction of the Mairie. They were attacking our assailants on the flank. It was warm there under the trees of the promenade for a few minutes. But after a volley or two, as if they had come to seek for Keller Bey, our new allies decided to retire without him. They sucked back firing as they went, and taking with them the red mayoral flag they had carried.

We were left with our own battle to fight. But they had done something. The solidity of the attack had been somewhat fused down. We were not now so closely surrounded.

"Glory, the tucker's out of them!" cried Jack Jaikes, "give them a volley—Henry rifles to the front. Scourge them!"

It was his word—"scourge them." And that to the best of our ability was what we did. The shooting was not very good, or we should have been rid of the enemy much more quickly.

"Stand clear, there!" commanded a voice from above our heads. Rhoda Polly had got a team of men together to lever up Allerdyce's machine gun. She was now bending over it, and those who remained of the dead man's crew bent themselves to the task of getting it in order.

"To right and left, and fire as they run. Now then——!" commanded Rhoda Polly.

"Re-r-r-r-rach-rach-rach!"

The mitrailleuse spat hate and revenge over our heads. The young "second-in-command," trained by Allerdyce, stood calmly to his post and swept the muzzle wherever he saw a cluster of assailants.

"Allerdyce! Allerdyce!" yelled the crew of No. 4. They did not mean him to hear. Allerdyce would never hear anything again—neither the voice of his native Doon, running free over the shallows, nor the raucous voice of his beloved gun, nor even the shouting of his men as they wrote their vengeance for a dead leader across the Cours of Aramon in letters of blood.

This happened almost at the end of the battle, but what I remember best of it all, in all that unknown and unknowable turmoil of death, is the half-wild, half-quixotic, altogether heroic figure of Jack Jaikes, dancing and vapouring under the splendours of the moonlight.

"Come back and fecht!" he yelled. "Come back and fecht for the sowl o' Allerdyce! On'y ten o' ye. I tell ye I'll slay ye for the sake o' Allerdyce! Ye made what's no human o' him. Come back and I will choke ye wi' my bare hands. We were chums, Allerdyce and me, at the Clydebank yaird. God curdle your blood for what ye did to Allerdyce. Come back and fecht, ye hounds o' hell, come back and fecht!"

CHAPTER XXXIV

THE PASSING OF KELLER BEY

We were hard put to it before we got the madman in, and then it was worse than ever. For he, our master, the bravest man that I ever saw or think to see, sat down beside his friend and wept like a child. He did not even look at us when we took up Allerdyce and buried him in a long trench with the others who had fallen—five in all, a heavy loss for us who were so few.

"I never want to see Greenock again!" wailed Jack Jaikes, "we were that pack, Allerdyce and me——"

"Go and fetch your father, Rhoda Polly," said I, "this will never do. It would be no use to telegraph. He would never believe the like of Jack Jaikes."

"May God grant he can come!" said Rhoda Polly, and darted off. I went into the outhouse where Keller Bey lay. Harold Wilson was bending over him, a steel probe in his hand. He stood up as I came in, looking narrowly at the point.

"I think we shall pull him through, but so long as we have that young lady"—he pointed at Alida, who was exhausting herself in a long outburst of Oriental sorrow—"I fear we can do nothing radical."

"Wait till Rhoda Polly comes back," I said, "she will get her friend away."

"I do not think so," he said, "she has been trying for some time."

"Could he be moved?"

"Far?" queried the doctor.

"Well, across the river in a boat, and up the hill to my father's house."

Wilson winced. "That is rather a responsibility," he said dubiously; "still, the man is unconscious and will probably remain so for many hours. It certainly would be a good thing if we could be rid of him and of that young woman—though in ordinary circumstances we should not be in such a hurry to send her off."

He grinned pleasantly, and asked how I proposed to set about the business. I told him it would be easy to get Keller Bey down to the nursery gardens by the waterside. Here I would rout out my friend the patron Arcadius, who would do as much for three or four of his gardeners—Italians all, and not touched with local politics. My boat was there, and the gardener lads would carry the stretcher up the hill. They did harder tasks every day of their lives.

"Well, but you see I can't leave all these—where's your doctor?"

I told him I could bring down the resident from the college hospital.

"Oh, I know him, Vallier, a very decent fellow for an *interne*. He'll do. Well, off with you. I will give you a note for him."

"We must wait till we get this stopped." I pointed to Jack Jaikes. "You can't do anything I suppose?"

He shook his head. "No, it needs moral authority for that. He would care as little for me as for you—less perhaps. But here comes Mr. Deventer!"

"Thank God!" I gasped.

"Jaikes," commanded Dennis Deventer, "bring the guns forward."

Jack Jaikes staggered to his feet and looked irresolutely about him. Was he going to obey? Did he even understand? For a moment it seemed doubtful. But whether his mind grasped the situation or not he answered the voice of Dennis Deventer.

"What guns, sir?"

"Allerdyce's, Brown's, and your own!" said Dennis firmly. "Take command. Forward with them into the breach," and the machine guns moved forward, the remnant of their crews being reinforced by men from other posts.

"Hold yourself ready there, Jack Jaikes," said Dennis, "this is your business. So far you have done well. We had to fight hard all along our wall, but you have beaten us!"

"But you scourged them too?" demanded Jack Jaikes, lowering and truculent.

Dennis drew a sigh of relief. His lieutenant was himself again.

"Yes, Jack Jaikes, we scourged them!"

For answer Jack Jaikes swept his index finger round the half-circle of the Cours of Aramon, dotted with black bodies lying still.

"It's a pity ye can't see them all," he said, "they are lying in heaps up in the corner yonder, where we cut the scaling ladders from beneath them!"

* * * * *

Though our gallant little Dr. Wilson permitted the removal of Keller Bey, the task before me was one to tax me to the utmost. I think I should have given it up and let Keller Bey lie, but for Rhoda Polly. She came out from a long consultation with Alida, and at once took charge of the situation, much as her father might have done.

I don't know in the least what the girls said to one another, or what reason Alida gave Rhoda Polly for her presence in Aramon or for her dislike of me, but whatever these might have been, they must at least have been sufficient.

As I say, Rhoda Polly took hold. She commandeered an improvised carrying stretcher, which had been prepared at the orchard end of the Château policies. She prevailed on her father to lend her a carrying party as far as the river.

The thought of letting any fraction of his few defenders go outside even for such a purpose made Dennis Deventer frown.

"It will not take ten poor minutes," pleaded Rhoda Polly. "I will see that they get safe back. Let me, Dennis!"

It was not often that she called him by his Christian name save in the heat of wordy strife, and perhaps the very unexpectedness of it touched him.

"Have it your own way then, but be quick—don't forget I am risking the whole defence. I do

not see in the least why Wilson could not have attended to him here."

She stepped up and whispered in his ear. He looked first doubtful, then incredulous, and a smile flickered a moment on his face.

"Ah, so!" he exclaimed, "I did not know you were so fanciful, my lady."

But he made no further objection, and we lifted up Keller Bey and put him in the stretcher, where he lay without speech or knowledge. Wilson tried his pulse and listened to his respiration.

"Get him away," he commanded, "the quicker the better!"

Rhoda Polly, Hugh and I helped the men over the wall with him, and held the *brancard* in place till they could get over to our assistance. We did not try to go straight to the landing place through the bull ring, but instead cast a wide circuit about the town, and finally came out upon the little house of gardener Arcadius buried among its trees.

Him I awakened with care, first a hail of pebbles on his window panes, followed the scratching teeth of a garden rake to indicate a friend, and lastly my own voice calling softly his name. He looked sleepily out, for he cared nothing about the town and its ongoings, if the early blossoms were not frosted and his young trees were not eaten by predatory goats.

He made me a sign that he would be down immediately, and he was buckling an equatorial waistbelt even as he opened the door.

He started back at the sight of the *brancard*. "What! A dead man?"

I explained the desperate need of Keller Bey and his daughter—how they must cross the river and how we counted on him to give us porters. For the boat Rhoda Polly and I would be sufficient, but for the carrying of the stretcher up the hill we had need of four stout fellows.

"I have my Italians," he said, "that is, if none of them have decamped; I locked them in, but the lads from the Peninsula are very handy with a crooked nail."

As we went, Arcadius, lurching in front like a huge sea-lion doing tricks, waved a lantern and spoke of the prospects of his garden. The hard winter had done no harm. It had broken the clods and killed the grubs. The war, the Commune, the black terror of Aramon did not exist for Arcadius. Barrès would not come to expropriate his cauliflowers and early potatoes. He asked no questions about Keller Bey and genially cut short any offer of explanation. His business was the soil, the fruit trees, planting and transplanting, and the sale of young vegetables. Beyond these he desired to know nothing.

His four Italians were there, big, good-looking lads from the north, who found gardening more to their taste than making roads or piling up railway embankments. Arcadius addressed them in a kind of *lingua franca* which included much gesticulation and even foot-stamping.

The men appeared to understand, and I put in a few words as to remuneration in their own tongue. For the son of the historian of Italian Art had, of course, been bred to the language. They started and turned upon me eager eyes, and then broke into a torrent of Tuscan which took me instantly to the scented bean-fields and beautiful hills about Siena. Of course they would be proud to carry my friend up the hill. I was the son of the Wise Man of the Many Books. I had been with Garibaldi. Ah, then, that said all. One had a brother who had died following the Little Father. Another had even been told to get out of the way by hasty Menotti. He laughed at the oath which accompanied the command. Of course they were all ready. They could find the boat. It was quite safe. They knew where. They had emptied it once when a squall had overturned it, so that it lay on its side facing the rain.

So with Hugh, Rhoda Polly, one of the Tuscans and myself at the oars we were soon letting ourselves slip away from the shore on which stood Arcadius and his lantern, urging us to bring the lads safe back, because there was a big job with the sweet peas on the morrow.

We went slantingly, not fighting the current too hard, but gliding easily, and avoiding the shallows where we could hear the current roar over the sand and pebbles.

Presently we grounded in the shadow of woods. I knew the place well. The path led almost directly up past Rameau's hut to the little door of the Lycée St. André. We could not have fallen better. We would escape the town altogether, and along a *clairière* or open vista of cleared forest land we could easily gain the garden gate of Gobelet.

Keller Bey lay still, the wound on his head keeping him in a state of unconsciousness, which was very helpful to our project. The bullet had glanced from the bone and was now imbedded in the muscles of the neck.

During the transit Alida clove to Rhoda Polly when she could, and when she could not (because of that young person's surprising activity), she fell back on Hugh Deventer. Not once did she look at me, and if I approached she would slip away to the other side.

The four Italians lifted the stretcher and began the ascent. Morn was just beginning to break, so there was not much time. The Tuscans marched to a kind of grunting chorus, as if they were counting numbers slowly. They arranged their own work and rested when they

had enough. Once the cleared alley-way of the forest was reached the work became easy. Now the march was on the level. We found the garden gate locked on the inside, but Hugh gave me a hoist up, and in a moment I had it open.

My father, ever a light sleeper, was easily awakened, indeed his student's lamp still burned in his room, and he took it up when he went to warn Linn. She came out sternly composed, listened silently to my report of what Dr. Wilson had said, and what still remained to be done. Then she nodded, still without words, and with a decided air she moved towards their bedroom.

At first sight of Linn, Alida had sprung forward and caught her foster-mother in her arms. Linn gently kissed her, but immediately released herself, that she might be able to give all her attention to her husband.

The leave-takings were of the scantiest. The Italians were on fire to be off before the morning broke. I repeated the directions about the *interne* Vallier up at the hospital to my father. Then we struck riverward through the pines, racing the sun. Rhoda Polly arrived far in front, and in a few minutes we were on the water again.

It was not till we landed on the little greensward above the backwater where I hid the boat that we asked one another, "Where is Hugh?"

As we did so the sun rose and lighted up the world and all its problems with the terrible clarity of morn, and by it we saw clearly that Hugh Deventer had stayed behind.

Rhoda Polly and I looked at one another till we could look no longer, and then, in spite of the danger, we burst into a peal of the gayest laughter.

CHAPTER XXXV

A CAPTAIN OF BRIGANDS

The beaten wolves had slunk back to their lairs, but the fierceness of their hate may be guessed from the fact that they would neither bury their dead nor permit us to do it. Thrice was a burying party fired upon, and it was only in the dead of night that Jack Jaikes and Brown succeeded in cleaning the wide square in front of the main gate of the factory.

Dennis Deventer had the iron gate new clamped and strengthened. On the second night it was swung into place by the aid of an improvised crane, which Dennis made, if not like the Creator "out of nothing," yet out of the first things which came handy.

Our messes were now rather smaller. Between the Orchard and the Main Gate attacks we had lost so many that the posts had to be strung out wider to cover the long mileage of wall which had to be guarded.

The elated feeling of the earlier siege had departed. But in its place we were conscious of a kind of proven and almost apathetic courage. We might be called upon by any peril, and we knew now that we could do what should be required of us.

I lived altogether with the gang now, only occasionally (by Jack Jaikes' permission) running in to take a meal with the Deventers and to sun myself in the approval of Rhoda Polly. Of course, I saw her often. She had taken strongly to Allerdyce's gang, and, I think, cherished a hope that Jack Jaikes might one day allow her to command it.

But, fond of Rhoda Polly as he was, Jack Jaikes had no idea of the equality of the sexes when it came to a battery of machine guns. So he gave the captaincy to Penman, a tall, thoughtful fellow of a dusky skin, from the south, a good mechanician and a man dependable on all occasions.

Rhoda Polly sulked a little and confided in me.

I pointed out to her that nothing more delicate than a mitrailleuse had yet been invented. They jammed. They jibbed. They refused to fire when they ought, but let go a shot or two without the least excuse, when they might place those who served them in the greatest danger. What could she, Rhoda Polly, do to remedy these ills? Nothing—whereas Penman had been reared in the factory where they were made, and had long been a foreman "assembler."

"Yes, but," she said, "I could tell him to do all that, and I am sure that I could direct the fighting better. I have been a lot with my father and I have kept my eyes open."

I told her to take her complaints to Jack Jaikes, but she knew better than that. This is how she explained the apparent contempt of the second in command.

"He has seen us sitting sleeping on the roof, hand in hand, when the sunlight was two hours old, and you will see that neither you nor I will ever get farther than we are at present under the consulship of Jack Jaikes. He considers us in the light of a good joke, all because of that

unhappy rencontre!"

I was not ambitious like Rhoda Polly, and my position as confidential lieutenant to Jack Jaikes suited me exactly. I do not mean that he ever consulted me, or asked for my opinion on matters of business. But he liked a listener and he loved to thresh out every question immediately and to put down the contradictor. I must have been an immense comfort to him, for I contradicted regularly, with or without conviction, and as regularly allowed myself to be beaten down. That was what I was there *for*!

Dennis Deventer had placed Jack Jaikes over the whole of the Works, as distinct from the defences of the Château—which, as the less defensible and the more likely to be attacked, he kept in his own hand. He strengthened the wall of the orchard with palisades, and established posts at either end with a machine gun to sweep its length. In spite of all, the Old Orchard remained the weak spot in our defences, and the sight of it with the enemy's posts so near put an idea into my head.

I went directly to Dennis Deventer. He was sitting placidly watching the "assembling" of a new machine gun, the parts of which had been all ready before the stoppage of the Works. He looked on critically, but without needing to put in a word. Penman, Brown, and the rest were far too good engineers to need even a suggestion. All the same they doubtless knew themselves to be under the eye of the master.

"Chief," said I, "we took Keller Bey and Alida across the water for safety, and I saw them into my father's care at Gobelet, where Hugh remains as a guard. Now the real weakness of our position here is the presence in our midst of Mrs. Deventer and your two daughters!"

"Two daughters—I have three!" said he, but I thought somewhat quizzically and as if comprehending very well.

"Oh, I do not include Rhoda Polly," I answered, "she is as good a soldier as any of us, and could be trusted in all circumstances, even if she were rushed——"

"Rushed?" he said sharply. "How that? How trusted?" I spoke and I saw him wince. Then, in a moment, he answered me, "You are quite right—ten times right. And you mean that the others—could not!"

"I am speaking of what I pray God may never happen, but yet—the odds against us are great. If it were as I suggested—with the other three women—that would be your duty!"

He drew in his breath, hissing, between his teeth, like one who feels the first sharp incision of the knife. His hands clenched and something like a groan came from the strong man. I pursued my advantage.

"You might not be there, Mr. Deventer—you might be lying as I saw Allerdyce along the top of your gun. So might I—so might anyone you dared delegate."

"God forgive you—you put water into my veins. How could any man 'delegate' such a thing!"

"No," said I, "I feel as you do, and for that reason I beg of you to let me escort your wife and daughters to the care of my father."

"And suppose," he said, "that our friends the enemy, finding us a hard nut to crack and probably with little kernel when cracked, should take it into their heads to cross the bridge and plunder the houses on the hill of St. André?"

"I think not, sir," I answered steadily. "There are Government troops in Aramon le Vieux. The National Guard there is all against the revolutionists. In the old town the tricolour has never been in the least danger. The whole department would move upon them if they attempted such a thing."

"Well argued, my Cicero," said he, "you are your father's son. But these black-a-vised rogues of ours defy reasoning. They may do the very thing all wisdom shows that they ought not to do. And a visit to Gobelet on the hill is one of these temptations which may prove too much for the gaol birds who shelter themselves under the black flag of anarchy. I do not see that the danger would be much lessened, considering the devil's crew with whom we have to deal. A raid across the water, made by night, would be an exploit worthy of them."

So my proposition was for the time rejected, but I did not despair. For I knew, or thought I knew, that the absence of the women would relieve us who were fighting the lines of the Château and Factory from an almost intolerable fear. In this respect I now think I was wrong. For the idea of the girls and their mother being entrusted to them to defend, made every man behind the defences hate the enemy with a deep steady hatred. Each became in his own eyes charged with the care of Liz or Hannah, of Rhoda Polly or their mother, according to where, or in what relation of life—sweetheart, sister, or mother—their hearts were tenderest.

Outside the situation changed but slowly. The Committee of Public Safety had taken possession of the Mairie after Keller Bey had been abandoned by his colleagues—and when with Alida he had come forth to make a last effort at conciliation. Except the desperate Chanot, none of the leaders of the Revolt-against-the-Revolt had taken any part in the fighting. Barrès, Chardon, even Bonnot had sat and directed operations from the safe shelter

of the Hôtel de Ville.

It was not cowardice, the scoundrels were brave enough, as they showed afterwards—but they had reached what seemed a haven of peace, and the share of the plunder which had been claimed by the "administration" assured them of good restaurant meals and such joyous company as was to be found in Aramon.

Speaking to Chardon, his lieutenant Chanot treated the whole business lightly.

"Why should we not take the best of life we can? It may not be for long," he said, referring to this period. "You people of the Château had taken toll of our numbers. Well, I do not complain. There was the more left for the rest. We had appropriated, and who had a better right to spend? There was no more cant of liberty and individualism among us, and each man being a law and a religion to himself, we stole from one another when we could. That is, if we found a friend's cash-box in a place where a hand might grasp it, we thought how much good it would do him to drink of his own brewing. So we 'individually expropriated' him. That is why Lasalle of St. Gilles was killed by Auroy. Auroy found him mixed up with a roll of bank-notes he had hidden in his mattress. There had been a new election for the Quartier St. Marthe, and as nobody thought of voting, we nominated Eusèbe le Plan who had lost an arm in the fighting and would be a long time in hospital. This made the plums go still farther round."

"The old 'reds'? Oh, they were in the town mostly, hidden in garrets, passing their time like Troppman in reading 'The Picturesque Magazine'" (here he laughed), "and listening for our footsteps and the grounding of our rifle-butts before their doors. They thought we wanted them. What in the devil's name should we want with such feeble, broken, bellowing cattle? They had brought nothing to the office. They had been content with their fifteen pence a day. Not one of them had a sou to rub against another, and their wives hardly knew where the next day's soup was to come from. Oh, yes, I know now, that which had I known then, some blood would have splashed the garden walls—that Dennis Deventer had his own folk among them who distributed money and food. They were his best workmen and it was an agreed thing that when all this had blown over and when we who had turned them out were all shot or beheaded, he should enlist them again, and they would go back in the 'shops' to speak with deference and sobriety as becomes an inferior to his superior!"

* * * * *

I do not mean that there was any regular truce—rather a kind of inaction and exhaustion. The first ardours of the political brigands had been cooled by machine gun practice—Napoleon's old prescription of "the whiff of grapeshot." A good many of this miscellaneous collection of rascals, especially those who had done well in the earlier work of incendiarism among the villas along the riverside, tailed off without crying a warning. They made their way, some to Marseilles, where the troops were just putting down the rule of Gaston Cremieux, some to Narbonne, which was still in the wildest revolt, while others scattered over the country, committing crimes in lonely places, hiding in the forests by day and tramping by night, till for the most part they managed to get themselves out of the country into Germany, Switzerland, or Spain—wherever, indeed, they were least known.

But those who were left behind at Aramon waxed all the more deadly and desperate because of these desertions. If only they had guessed how severe our losses had been, they would have attacked with more vigour than they did, but I think they judged that the "scourging" inflicted upon them by Jack Jaikes had been almost without loss to ourselves. Alas, besides the mound in the Orchard, the double row of graves in the beaten earth of the courtyard told another tale! I do not think anyone ever passed the spot without lifting his hat to Allerdyce and his troop of gallant men, to whom the noble May days and the starry nights of the last days of our siege mattered so little.

CHAPTER XXXVI

LEFT-HANDED MATTHEW

It was about this time that Matteo le Gaucher—Matteo the Left-handed—began to interest himself in our concerns. At first sight nothing was more unlikely than that Matteo could ever make the slightest difference to the fate of any human soul. Yet great and even final events hung upon Matteo le Gaucher. He was an Italian from Arquà, and, as was said by his comrades, a "spiteful toad." He was deformed in body, and of course carried with him the repute of a *jettatore*. The evil eye certainly looked out from under his low brows, but it was with his evil tongue that he could actually do the most mischief.

He had been employed by Arcadius in his garden. He was not a bad workman. "The ground," as he said, "was not too far off for him." He could work when he chose, better than anyone at the task of the day. But he was a born fault-finder, a born idler, insolent and quarrelsome. The four who were his room-mates and who worked with him bore longer with him because of his bodily infirmity and also because of the Evil Eye, which they mocked at but devoutly

believed in. At last he aroused Arcadius, across whose path he had always been loath to come.

Arcadius found a fault. Matteo found a knife. All men knew the light gardening hoe which seldom left the hand of Arcadius. Well, the master's eye was accurate, and Matteo went to the town hospital with a broken wrist and a right hand almost hagged off. Let no one for a moment be sorry for Matteo. In that comprehensive interval he began to plot many things rendered natural by years of vendetta practice.

Directly, he could not hurt Arcadius. He had tried that and Chanot had only laughed at him. No, even to please him, the Committee of Public Safety would not shoot the man who sent them their finest, indeed their only, early fruits. Arcadius had no store of gold hid in his chimney. He had spent it all with Chanot's uncle the notary, buying new land, ever more and more—and some still not paid for—but all regularly being covered instalment and interest. This Chanot knew, because in his days of (oh, so dull) respectability, Chanot had had to make out the receipts. And how he hated the thought of the long days of deskwork.

Matteo mourned over his broken wrist, which hurt the more abominably whenever he hated anyone and could in no wise wreck his hatred. He must think out something else. He retired into his pillows, turned his face to the wall, and for a day and a night thought by what means he could best hurt Arcadius or the friends of the master-gardener.

He had been in the corner of the hangar-dormitory that night when the four Tuscans had been called up to follow the lantern of Arcadius. The Toad, with the venom attributed to him for centuries, had risen quietly and from behind the great arbutus, had seen the boat with Keller Bey lying stark on his stretcher, and the beautiful girl watching over him, push out into the night.

On their return the Tuscans had exhibited their newly earned gold, and all innocently had striven to set his cupidity wild by tales of the wonderful paradise of fertility and riches under the brow of the hill of Mont St. André.

Matteo le Gaucher snarled at them, denying that the coins were good, or, if good, that they had been won (as they asserted) by merely carrying a sick man up a hill.

Not for such service did men give gold Napoleons. They lied, Carlo, Beppo, Lorenzo, and the oaf from San Ghomigniano of the Seven Towers. They all lied, and Matteo, who was certainly in most evil humour that day, tried to knock up the hand in which the Tuscan was jingling them. He of the City of the Seven Towers felled Matteo, who would never have forgiven him, if the bone-splintering blow of the mattock in the hand of Arcadius had not come to fill the hater with the hope of a greater vengeance.

Nevertheless the thought of the rich man who dwelt on the slopes of Mont St. André, with sacks of golden Napoleons on either side of every room, kept haunting him. Matteo could neither eat nor sleep till he had seen. So he took a half-holiday without asking permission (the beginning of his quarrel with the huge Arcadius) and, stealing a skiff from a neighbouring landing, scrambled up the steep face of Mont St. André.

Fortune willed that he should meet the junior *lycéens* out for a walk, two and two, with only a weak *pion* to restrain them. Naturally Matteo was mocked and mobbed. Matteo drew a knife, and grinned like a wild cat, but recognised his error in time, accepted the situation, and with the hate of hell in his heart, began to show the juniors knife tricks—how to let it fall always with the point down, how to send it whizzing like a gleam of light deep into the heart of a tree, which might just as well have been the heart of a man.

At last he got clear of them, smiling and bowing, till the sober-coated little rascals were lost to sight on the high path. Then he brandished his knife in fury, and vowed that if he could he would cut the throat of every wretched imp among them.

But at the sound of voices he subdued his anger, and, humbly asking his way from this passer-by and that other, he at last made his way to Gobelet. He knocked long for admission at the porter's lodge, but the porteress seeing such a calumny on God's handiwork outside, and scenting appeals for charity, eyed him disfavourably through the little cross-barred spy-window and let him knock.

A little farther down the road, he was quite as unsuccessful at the tower port of the Garden Cottage, over which the Tessiers had been wont to sleep.

There was no one in the house at all, yet Matteo le Gaucher quickly running to the top of the bank opposite, imagined he saw faces mocking him at every window.

It chanced that for his sins (whatever they may have been) my father was at that moment coming leisurely down the hill, his hands behind his back. He had been up to call upon his friend Renard before his siesta, and they two had argued over-long as to the purport of the fourteenth chapter of the Koran.

Suddenly full in his path he found Matteo grovelling before him, his hands and knees covered with blood, foam from his lips, and to all appearance in a state of extreme exhaustion. Now my father, Gordon Cawdor, was a man of very simple and direct mind, so far as the actions of those about him went. He believed that what he saw was the reality.

Indeed, so transparent was his honesty that men took fright at it, counting it as the last achievement of duplicity, so that on an average he was as seldom deceived as any other man in the country.

Now he cried out for help, and after one or two shouts Saunders McKie and Hugh Deventer came through the gate and took up the seeming epileptic.

Saunders was wholly sceptical and when ordered by his master to wash the froth from the sufferer's mouth prospected with such good will for soap within that Matteo, had he dared, would gladly have bitten the finger off. He was compelled to swallow what might have served him another time.

"Dowse him wi' a bucket o' water, and let him gang his ways. I like not the look o' the speldron. He is like the Brownie that my Uncle Jock yince saw on the Lang Hill o' Lowden—a fearsome taed it was, juist like this Eytalian."

"Hold your peace, Saunders," commented my father. "You, he, and I are as God made us, and little that matters. What is written of us in the Book, *that* alone shall praise or condemn us!"

"Lord's sake, Maister Cawdor," said Saunders, who always wilted before my father in his moments of spiritual reproof, "I was sayin' and thinkin' no different. The Book and What is Written Therein! That's the rub, an' no to be spoken o' lichtly. And after a' the craitur's a craitur, though I will say——"

"Say nothing, Saunders, till you have given the unfortunate to eat and drink. Then when he is recovered I shall speak with him a moment."

"Weel, Maister Cawdor, let your speech be silver, and no gowden."

"You mean, Saunders?"

"I juist mean that the buckie has a gallow's look aboot him, and if ye are so ill-advised and—aye, I will say it—sae wicked as to gie him gold, we shall a' hae our throats cuttit in our beds yin o' thae nichts!"

Whereupon my father reproved his old servant for narrow-mindedness and evil thinking, but Saunders held his own.

"Narrow-mindedness here and ill-thinkin' there," he said, "blessed are they that think no evil, I ken, and that blessing ye are sure o', Maister Cawdor. But ye pay me a wage to keep watch and ward for ye over all evil-doers, and may I never taste porridge mair if this lad doesna smell the reek o' the deil's peats a mile away."

Saunders prevailed in the matter of the gold, and it was only a five-franc piece that Matteo carried away from the gate of Gobelet. Hugh Deventer and Alida came out to see off the man who had caused such a disturbance in the peace of the quiet villa. Matteo gazed at Alida with the look of a wild beast before whose cage passes a fine-skinned plump gazelle.

He was full to the lips with rage, bitterness, and all uncharitableness. Gobelet he had seen, but owing to the machinations of that enemy of mankind, Saunders, only the great paved kitchen in which the menservants and maidservants passed to and fro, all gazing at him with inquisitive and contemptuous eyes. Ah, if only he could make them smart for that, those full-fed minions whose broken meats had been set down to him, Matteo of Arquà. Not but that these were good, yes, and the wine was excellent. It might be worth while, when he should decide to turn honest, to find some such place, perhaps as porter or lodge-keeper against his old age.

So after ringing the piece of a hundred sous on a stone, Matteo gave himself to meditation as he descended to his boat. The house was rich. There were many servants, and access to the money-bags along the wall would be impossible to him.

But there were others who would think but little of the task. If only he were at Arquà, he knew of as pretty a gang as ever donned masks—honest, too, in their way, men who would not cheat the indicator of good business out of his lawful share.

But here Matteo le Gaucher must think things over. It was vain for him to give away a valuable secret without some guarantee of gain. So Matteo crept back and took to his bed, where he turned the matter over and turned it over, till he began to despair of ever finding a way of bettering his condition without having to work. The touch of the five-franc piece in his pocket, gained by a little dissimulation, had disgusted him with the culture of cauliflower and early potato.

Next morning he scamped his work, fell athwart the bluff bows of Arcadius, and so found himself with a broken bone and a wounded wrist in the hospital of La Grâce at Aramon.

Here he fell in the way of ex-notary's clerk Chanot, whose practice in his uncle's office soon wormed Matteo's whole confidence from him—that is, save on one point which he kept obstinately to himself.

It had long been a question with the Committee of Public Safety where Keller had disappeared to. It was not believed that he had remained long in the Château. A boat had

been seen in mid-stream—the sound of voices heard by watchers on the bridge. He might have been less seriously wounded than they supposed, and at Arles, Aix, or even Marseilles he might be seeking help from old-fashioned revolutionaries like himself.

The Committee of Public Safety had for some time abandoned all pretence of government. The little red newspaper had stopped. The shops were put under weekly contributions in return for permission to open their doors. No maids or wives came any more to the Aramon markets, and though provisions continued to arrive, they were brought in by farmers who came in bands and well armed.

The "government" sat no more in the seats of the mighty, but lounged and swung their legs from the tables, openly and shamelessly discussing the next *coup à faire*, houses to dismantle, or rich men to hold to ransom or doom to death. They smoked and deliberated, an oath at every word.

Men who had worked at the Small Arms Factory were now few, though there were still several who had dug the foundations of the big-gun annex—a professional bully or two from the city, deprived by the war of his hareem and his means of livelihood, one or two well-educated youths, *lycée*-bred even, who had "turned out badly," a few clever apprentice workmen from the town, locksmiths and plumbers chiefly, who appreciated idleness and a share in the profits of their skill in opening locks more than the lash of the patron's tongue and the long day's toil from six to six, year in and year out.

But all were less martial and more cautious now. They did not think any more of attacking the strong, entrenched position behind which Dennis Deventer and Jack Jaikes kept watch and ward, night and day.

They had courage—no man could truthfully say that they lacked that. They had given their proofs. But they knew that the men within the Works were growing stronger. There were rumours that Dennis Deventer had only to hold up his hand and that he would have all the men he wanted within the Château walls.

The men who had fought the troops, cleared the town, and set up the "Tatter of Scarlet," the "Old Reds of the Midi," were no longer with the rabble who used the black flag as an excuse for plunder and massacre.

The original Commune of Aramon (like that of Paris) had always been meticulously careful as to the rights of private property. No Communalist in Paris enriched himself one sou, at a time when the wealth of all the banks and shops lay within the push of a gun-butt or the explosion of a dynamite cartridge.

The men of the Old Commune had come to Dennis, Père Félix at their head, as Nicodemus came to Another long ago, secretly by night. Their chief prayer had been to be allowed, though late, to take part in the defence. Père Félix appealed to Dennis not to discourage these willing hearts. They were all approved Republicans and would fight for their opinion if necessary, but they were no robbers nor murderers—nor would they have any dealings with such.

But Dennis had enough men and desired no more. He had kept his own bounds and let any attack him at their peril. Still, there was much they could do. They could send him word of any new scheme of devilry. A written word wrapped about a stone and tossed over the wall at a convenient corner, where a watch was kept, would be sufficient. Or, if proper notice were given, they could come, as to-night, to the Orchard port. But this only upon matters of serious import which could not be put off.

Moreover, since Père Félix had all the country of Vaucluse open to him, he could collect provisions from Orange to the Durance. For anything fresh and portable good prices would be given. Yes, they could be delivered at the Orchard gate. Three times a week, on such nights as Père Félix would appoint, he would have a guard put there to receive and transport. Jack Jaikes would settle the bills. They all knew Jack Jaikes.

The men looked from one to the other and smiled. Yes, they all knew Monsieur Jack. There was never a man nor a boy in all the Ateliers but knew Monsieur Jack. He had a way with him. He asked for what he wanted, did Monsieur Jack. And he could do more with his bare hands and booted feet when it came to a mêlée (what Jack Jaikes would have called a scrap) than half a dozen ordinary men armed to the teeth. Oh yes, a well-known figure in the Works, Monsieur Jack. In fact, quite a favourite!

And they winked at one another, being quite aware that, without the quiver of an eyelash, Dennis Deventer was winking too.

* * * * *

Matteo lay on his couch in the Hôpital de Grâce nursing his arm. The wound had healed and they were treating the bone by friction now—reducing and suppling it, but causing Matteo a good deal of incidental pain, which the hospital doctors in their careless way took very much as a matter of course. If Matteo had had the long Arquà knife which had been taken away from him, the two *internes* might have been surprised by a sudden revelation of the sentiments of the patient under treatment.

Matteo had privileges, however. The house surgeons only tortured him once a day, and generally about four Chanot came to bring him a screw of tobacco, a little brandy, and the news of the town, adroitly seasoned to suit Matteo's taste in publicity.

"Ah, my good Matteo," he would say, as he came in with that nonchalant ease in his gait and that devilish glitter in his eye which made Matteo at once envy and adore him. "Matteo of the left hand, how goes the other to-day? Have you had dreams of the beautiful lady you saw —or imagined you saw—at the house on the hill?"

"It was no dream, Master," said the Gaucher, "I saw her. She had brown hair, a wilderness of it, and her lips were redder than the grenadine flower."

"The house was a rich one?"

"Wonderfully rich. I did not see much of it myself, being only on the ground floor with the servants, but I have four comrades who saw the bags of golden coins heaped up like corn sacks against the wall, and the master is an old man, very wise and learned, who speaks my speech only with a southern accent. He dips his hands into the gold and draws out the Napoleons, jingling and glittering. They run over his palms, set close together like a cup, and slip through his fingers upon the floor, where they lie, for it is not worth while among so much to pick them up. The sweeper has them for his pains in stooping. It is true Master, as God is in heaven. My comrades saw all this and swore on the bones of the blessed Saint Catherine of Siena, whose servant I am, that they spoke no lie."

Then would Chanot rise and go his way meditating. There might be some truth at the bottom of this fairy tale. It was worth while thinking over. But there were points to study. Should he take the whole gang into his confidence or only a few? That would depend on the number and courage of the servants—their dispositions to fight for their master—and then the girl— that also was a point to be weighed most carefully. Yet Chanot could by no means put off too long, for the hill of St. André was not far away, and the wind of the rich trover might be wafted down on any breeze.

Chanot had no need of temptations to plot or to do evil. These came natural to him. He was better acquainted with the evil he had done than with that which he was going to do. His future was not, if one might say so, on the knees of his gods, but on those of his devils. Anton Chanot had been bred good, but up till now he had never thought, desired, or done aught but evil. Evil, indeed, was his good, and if on occasion he showed himself a little kind, as in the bringing of Matteo's tobacco, it was only that he might obtain the secrets of some man's heart.

But Matteo was an Italian, and an Italian of Arquà. He was full of ruse and as little trustful as a Norman peasant. He saw through Chanot's little luxuries. He weighed the news gossip as in a balance, and even the tobacco he smelt curiously, and found of second quality. One person he meant at all hazards to benefit, and that person was Matteo le Gaucher.

He was a shrewd schemer, and if it had not been for one thing his conclusions would have been sound. He had forgotten that Anton Chanot would just as lief kill him as any other, without thought or remorse, smiling all the while as when he handed him over the daily paper of tobacco in the hospital of Aramon.

CHAPTER XXXVII

LOOT

I now enter on the final struggle, but before doing so I must recapitulate if only to remind myself of where stands the tale and how much yet remains to be told.

It was on the 21st of May and a Sunday. In Paris the lucky Ducatel of the Roads and Bridges was guiding into the city the first division of Vinoy's army under the astonished eyes of Thiers and Mac-Mahon who were looking down from Mont Valerien.

There were in Paris in the Tuileries garden thousands who had come to listen to a concert for the wounded of the Commune. Disarray, and a muddling purblindness, kept the Commune talking and talking in the Hôtel de Ville. But the men there at least were honest as other men, and when they became exiles and prisoners they had brought no spoil away with them. Men there were among them who, in the midst of the wholesale slaughter of the Versailles troops, were ready to shoot hostages as did Rigaut and Ferré, or to burn public buildings when driven out, as the Russians did at Moscow—but no thieves.

But nowhere, save in one or two towns in the Midi, had the inhabitants to taste the rule of cosmopolitan rascaldom. The Chanot gang made hardly any pretext now, even before the people. The band which ruled Aramon still called itself the Committee of Public Safety, and still met daily at the town house. But all the men knew that they might just as well have been named "The Black Band" or the "Gang of Cartouche."

A few belonged to the town and its bordering hamlets—Chanot, Auroy, Grau. But the great

majority were adventurers of all grades and nations, come from far, and eager to secure and carry away as much booty as possible from the turmoil. From amongst these, Chanot, quietly ripening his plans, picked out his attacking force. Each had his price, and Chanot chose those younger men, almost lads, who being still apprentices would be content with less, and at the critical moment would not be so likely to get out of hand.

The Château and the Factories were held as before, but now more strongly, being strengthened by the steady flood-tide of a public opinion which of all things desired peace. Dennis held to his determination to allow none but his English, Scots, Irish, and Americans within the walls. But even this self-denying prohibition strengthened him and brought other men to his side. The Committee of Public Safety arrested one or two who were over free with their tongues in the public debates of the *cafés*. But the prisoners were soon released, the measure being as useless as unpopular. Besides, they had something else to think about, these patriots of the loot-bag and the *pince-monseigneur*.

For all that Chanot made speeches and signed manifestos which were duly posted. A collection of these is under my eyes as I write, and forms one of the most amazing monuments of human impudence it is possible to conceive.

> "The work of Social equalisation continues." (Such was the edict promulgated on this fateful Sunday.) "The ill-gotten gains of the robbers of the proletariat are slowly being added to the sums held in trust for the people. The Quartier St. Jacques began to be visited last week and the results were so excellent that further perquisitions will be made by our admirable expropriation brigade.
>
> "The citizens of Aramon are therefore freed from all taxes of every sort, and the public service of every kind will be carried on with the suborned wealth restored to its proper owners.
>
> "During the strike at Creusot, that great oppressor of the people, Schneider, declared that the stoppage of work was costing him eight hundred thousand francs a day!—We may make ourselves happy that the present strike for which we are responsible is costing at least as much to Deventer and the bloodthirsty Company which he represents. Let him not flatter himself because he has escaped so long. His time is near at hand and his doom terrible and sure.
>
> "A. Chanot,
> "P. Chardon, &c.
> "For the Committee of Public Safety.
>
> "The Mairie, Aramon-les-Ateliers.
> "May 21st, 1871."

But on the Monday the proclamation of Thiers to the Mayors of Communes throughout France, sent on the Sunday night of the entry, reached Aramon. The text may be given, since the effect was so tremendous and, indeed, cataclysmic.

> "*Versailles, 21st May, 7.30, evening.*
>
> "*The gate of St. Cloud has been forced by the fire of our batteries. General Douai precipitated his command into the breach. At this moment he is occupying Paris with his troops. Ladmirault and Clinchant are moving in support.*
>
> "A. Thiers.."

The message was false in detail, though true in the main fact. A full week's hard fighting in the streets of Paris lay between the army of Versailles and the end of the revolt.

But none of those who in the Mairie of Aramon-les-Ateliers bent their heads over the flimsy message doubted for a moment that the day of their own doom was at hand. They began to think of the best means of reaching the most convenient frontier--Italy, Switzerland, or Spain. Some were limited in their choice, owing to previous troubles with the justice of otherwise eligible countries. But all, without exception, knew that the game was up and resolved on flight. Unfortunately the receipts of the Quartier St. Jacques had not come up to expectation, and a general blankness overspread the company till Anton Chanot hinted at a final scheme which would make them rich enough to live years in the safe seclusion of Barcelona or Genoa. He did not tell all he had planned at once. He wished to take only a chosen few into his inner secrets, but he could not make a raid which would involve an armed attack upon the soil of a hostile department without the whole force at this disposal.

Chanot therefore flashed before the eyes of the committee promises of boundless loot to be attained by attacking the rich foundation of St. André on the hill over Aramon le Vieux. The church was an ancient one and the treasury had long been one of the sights of the neighbourhood--gold cups, patens, *ciboires*, boxes of inlaid thirteenth-century work, and the jewelled pastoral staff of the saint himself, ablaze with precious stones--all were there, and of a value which would make them rich men, and render their exile, so long as they chose to remain, agreeable and easy.

They must refrain, Chanot added, from any disturbance or looting in the town itself. If the monks fought, care must be taken of the school, and the safes in the *économe's* office, and the treasure of the golden vessels in the church must alone be touched.

Marseilles was under military law and had been declared in a state of siege. The troops of General Espivent de la Villeboisnet occupied the city and constituted a barrier not to be passed. No rogue's paradise could be found in Marseilles under martial law.

The expedition into the department of Deux Rives, and the attack upon St. André, was therefore their last chance, and it was a great one, of a comfortable exile.

Chanot and Chardon counted their adherents who could be trusted, who numbered about thirty, all proven men--not an old "Red," a theoretic Communard or a National Guard among them. They were chary even of any whose families were connected with the Small Arms Factory, for the business must be gone about with the most perfect secrecy.

Meantime Chanot took Chardon more fully into his confidence.

"We will let these fools thresh away at the walls of the *lycée*. I know a professor there who has a good knowledge of defence. That business will keep them busy all night. Renard is the man's name. He was in the Algerian wars--grand high priest he was, or something like that. But they say that he kilted his petticoats and charged with the regiment. He will be a hard nut to crack if they get out of bed quick enough to man the walls."

"But," suggested Chardon, "our business is to take the place before the man is awake. They will keep no watch."

"Monks and priests are always about at night in a place like St. André. They have midnight Masses, and they take turns to play the spy on the boys and ushers. Besides" (he beckoned Chardon closer to him and spoke in his ear) "we do not want them to finish the business too soon!"

"How so?" cried Chardon, much astonished; "the sooner we get our treasure back the sooner we can divide it and scatter out of Aramon. The game is up."

"Up, indeed--I believe you," said Chanot; "but what are some fragments of gold plate? How will they divide those? There will be a battle royal if it comes to that. Do you want to be there and go running helter-skelter over the fields with that rabble? No, you and I have something better on hand. I know where Keller Bey is, his treasure and his daughter!"

Chardon looked his amazement, but he did not interrupt. Chanot was a kind of god to him, and it had always been his chief pride to be chosen as his confidant.

"No," said the Expropriator-in-Chief, "we will choose two other fellows as determined as ourselves, only more stupid. We will attack the house where Keller Bey lies. I do not know exactly where it is, but I have a guide ready--Matteo le Gaucher, you know him? Well, that does not matter. He has been in hospital but is able for his task now. I have been cooking him with talk and tobacco all through his illness, and I wormed the secret out of him. He was not unwilling. I think he was glad of somebody to confide in, or else he had some vengeance on hand. He is a little twisted atomy and thinks himself at war with all the world."

"Can you trust him?" demanded Chardon.

"Yes, with a pistol at his ear and a hand on his arm. Otherwise I should as soon think of trusting him as a Protestant pastor!"

Chardon grinned delightedly and they began to lay out their plans. They chose the pair who were to share the secret with them.

"We want men of action, not gabblers like Barrès. I have a boat ready at Les Saintes to take us off, we must get fellows who can ride, for if we are pursued we must borrow horses and make straight across the Camargue."

"Leduc is of that country," said Chardon, "he could guide us, and Violet was a rough-rider in the eleventh hussars."

"But are they men to trust?" demanded Chanot, with a sharp suspicion. A man of the country and an ex-cavalryman might account for Chardon and himself in that wild country and no one be any the wiser. Besides, who would trouble themselves about the fate of a couple of fleeing outlaws?

"They are as good as you will get," said Chardon, "and we shall be more than their match in any case. They cannot get the boat without you, and without a boat on the coast of Les Saintes a man is like an eel in a trap. He can get in but he cannot get out."

CHAPTER XXXVIII

THE LAST ADVENTURE OF THE BLACK BAND

The last hours of the Black Band in Aramon were marked by many exploits still remembered in the town. Citizens, even men marked for their former devotion to the cause of the

workmen, were stopped in the streets and relieved of all they had about them, to their very watches and chains.

Shopkeepers were given the alternative of executing an immediate forced loan or having their premises burnt over their heads. Some, running too complacently to the hiding-places of their wealth, found themselves despoiled of all. The two banks were threatened and squeezed alternately. A poll-tax was levied on the population and exacted at the point of the bayonet.

Underground reaction growled and raged in Aramon, and if the Committee of Public Safety had remained a few days more, it is likely that they would have found themselves hunted and shot like mad dogs.

But they had no such intentions. They acted precisely as does a fraudulent bankrupt who lays his hand on every shilling in preparation for an immediate flight. They did not intend ever to set eyes on Aramon again, and they cared nothing for the dissatisfaction caused by their last measures of rapacity.

But the favour accorded to Matteo le Gaucher by the chief of the band at the Mairie had not escaped the notice of his compatriots. The little hunchback one day appeared sunning himself on the bridge wall, with his wrist displaying a gold bangle, which everyone recognised as that which had been worn by Chanot. Instantly the quick Italian suspicions were aroused--and in all Italy none are so silent and shrewd as the men of Tuscany. But though they tried this way and that for a good clue, they were beaten. All they could learn was that Le Gaucher was in the pay of the Bad Men, and that boded no good to their master. So, because they were fond of the big, slow-moving, kindly man, they went back and told him. Arcadius served out a litre of wine apiece to mark his sense of their good-will, but as for any danger from Matteo, he merely shrugged his shoulders.

But Arcadius, as he moved in his garden with his dainty mattock in his hand, and in his pocket his garden-scissors, which were strong enough to cut through a branch the thickness of his own thumb, had a vast deal of time for thinking. And generally Arcadius thought to some purpose.

He was persuaded that neither Chanot nor any other would trouble their heads about him. They would leave him with his flower seeds, his tree plants, and his brussels-sprouts in peace between the great gate of the cemetery and the rush of the river waters to the sea.

But for what, then, would so selfish and insolent a dog as Chanot not only be willing to be openly on good terms with an impossible reptile like Matteo, but actually present him with the gold bangle which he was supposed to wear in memory of an ancient love affair?

Arcadius delved and thought. He pruned and snipped and thought, and finally he finished by coming to a conclusion. A wise man was Arcadius, and like all who cultivate the ground his thoughts were longer and wiser than his speech--though that was wise, too, when the slow sluices were raised and Arcadius, under the influence of friendship or wine, let his talk run free.

The night of the 24th May, when at Paris the whole city seemed to be burning, was one of great quiet in Aramon. The Band at the Mairie seemed to have tired of their house searchings and the town had rest behind the bolted doors and barred windows which garnished every house, yet in spite of which no man felt safe.

With many doubts the burgesses drew on their night-caps, and before climbing into bed, looked out back and front to see if the horizon were lit by the torches of burning houses in the suburbs, and to listen if the gun-butts were not beating some neighbour's door in, trembling all the while lest their time should come next.

But for that night the grocer and the wineseller, the grain merchant and the locksmith might sleep in peace beside their coiffed and bonneted spouses. The Black Band had left the Mairie empty and resonant. A part had passed the river in boats. Others had stolen one by one across the bridge, but instead of continuing down the main street of Aramon le Vieux, had twisted sharply round to the left, passed under the railway embankment, threaded a beautiful but difficult pathway overlooking the river, and so at length, a mile below the town, found the boating-parties waiting for them.

The four of the inner circle, Chanot, Chardon, Leduc, and Violet, with the necessary Matteo, kept together and avoided any conspicuous part in the arrangements.

But Barrès did the talking for everybody. He was most anxious to distinguish himself. He had been taunted with his careful inaction, and now against schoolboys and their professors, mostly men of the peaceful robe, he had suddenly grown very brave indeed.

Chanot had his reasons for thinking otherwise. He was playing a game so quaintly double and triple to-night that he smiled as he thought it over, and admired the intricate subtlety of his own brain as compared with the simple criminal instincts of his coadjutors.

All the way he kept a hand on the collar of Matteo. The hunchback of Arquà did not fill him with confidence. Indeed, he trusted only Chardon, whose innocent admiration he had long proven sincere. Leduc and Violet were better than the rest, but taken because strictly

necessary for the business in hand. After that he, Chanot, would attend to their case. They could not expect to share equally with him. He had discovered Matteo. He had wormed his secret out of him. His was the idea of the masking attack on the Lycée St. André, which would make a noise and occupy the attention of the National Guard of Aramon le Vieux. He had thought of the boat at Les Saintes, and had arranged for it to be in time to meet them there. What had Leduc and Violet to do with these things? Nothing whatever, they were simply privates called from the ranks, and he would see to it that they did not interfere with the perquisites of the Commander-in-Chief.

He had even permitted himself to drop a hint of the proposed attack upon Mont St. André in quarters which would ensure a prompt transmission of the news to Dennis Deventer.

Chanot only waited the proper moment to disassociate himself from the brigands whom he despised for their ignorance and almost (but not quite) pitied for their simplicity.

The scaling party would have lost itself among the trees if it had not been for Chanot. He had been born in the neighbourhood and, if he had chosen, could have led them blindfold. But for his own purposes he allowed them to stumble on, bruising and buffeting themselves against the rocks and trees, losing nerve and temper. Then, just when they were worn out, he found the well-trodden path by the boat-hirer's house, guided them along it, and with encouraging words adjured them to greater silence and caution. In fact, he behaved in every way like the model leader of an expedition. If any had doubted him before, he had repented in dust and ashes when Anton the wise, Anton Chanot, turned over the leadership to Barrès, who, as his manner was, grasped it eagerly, without thanks, and simply as a right too long withheld.

The attack had been timed for midnight, when the ditches of the old fortress were to be crossed, the scaling-ladders which they had carried applied to the walls, and they would find themselves inside.

The treasure was in the chapel, at least the bulk of it. The rest was in the safes of the *économe*, who had his bureaux opposite. That wing, therefore, of the college must be held against all comers, while with chisel and file, jemmy and dynamite the "expropriators" were busy with their task. So little did these men trust each other that one man from each company was nominated to see the enumeration of the plate and to watch the opening of the safes.

One man they trusted, Chanot, and their respect was heightened by his declaration that he desired no part of the spoil for himself. They had followed him faithfully, and if he could reward those who had stood by him when the majority drew back to save their skins, he was content.

A base of simplicity and even sentimentality underlies the brutality of many criminals. One has only to note the songs which are applauded at a penitentiary or reformatory concert. These men believed Chanot, and preferred his self-abnegation to the rhodomontades of Barrès, who repeatedly declared that he, and he alone, would lead them to victory.

The black half-hour of waiting was horribly trying to the nerves. They were quite on the top of things, and though the night was so dark, they could see the walls of St. André cutting the sky and shutting out the stars. The woods through which they had come were now retired farther back--or at least so it seemed. The plateau stretched out behind, mysteriously grey, gradually descending towards Nîmes and St. Gilles, but almost imperceptibly. Indeed, to the eyes of those town birds of prey, it seemed a plain. That was their path of safety. By it they would make good their retreat, laden with a golden spoil.

The signal was to be the striking of the Mairie clock, the golden, illuminated dial of which, almost beneath their feet, testified in the tranquillity which had not ceased to reign in Aramon le Vieux. The old conservative and Protestant town had known how to keep its gates closed, its inhabitants safe (if not very prosperous), and always behind the dial of its Mairie clock was to be seen the equal shining of the mellowest and gentlest light in the world.

During ten minutes the hand of Chanot pushed Matteo steadily before him into the dusky covert of the wood. At the same moment three men at different parts of the attacking line glided away unnoticed. The hands of the clock moved on. Though the figuring of the dial was too distant to be made out, the black lines of the minutes and hour hands could be seen approaching one another.

It was time for Chanot to be elsewhere. He had other work and Matteo must guide him. They slipped in Indian file through the wood, Chanot still with his hand upon the Left Handed man's shoulder. For an instant Matteo seemed to hesitate. He had ascended from the other side and Gobelet was hard to find, but at last he struck the main road between the town and the *lycée* above. It appeared to be perfectly empty, but Chanot whispered angrily in his guide's ear. They must get back into shelter. Here they were exposed to any passers-by--nay, to the first faint-hearted deserter from the attack above.

A thrill passed through Matteo's heart. He gave thanks to his patron saint and promised candles for his altar when he should be rich. Before him was the bombed forehead of the gatehouse of Gobelet. The gate itself was padlocked securely, and the top adorned with spikes, but Chanot made no attempt there. He only skirted the wall till he found a place

which pleased him. Then he ordered Leduc and Violet to make a ladder up which the light Chardon climbed. Then came Matteo and Chanot himself. Lastly the ladder was dissolved into its elements and all found themselves on the inner side of the garden wall of Gobelet.

Matteo now advanced with more certainty. Yes, the house lay there through this gate, along this path. There was the well-shelter he had seen, and above them rose the dark side of the house, where was the kitchen entrance and all the apartments of service.

"BONG--BONG--BONG!" Solemnly, and with an air of detachment from merely worldly affairs, the big hammer gave out the twelve strokes of midnight. Just so had it once called holy nuns to prayer in the Convent of the Visitation, and it tolled just the same to let loose a pack of the worst ruffians on earth upon the chapel of St. André.

Anton Chanot listened carefully. He knew that now the *fossés* would be crossed and the scaling-ladders laid against the walls. But sudden and startling there came down the hill a wild yell, mingled of pain and anger. Rifles ripped and crashed. A light filtered through the tree-tops, which faintly illuminated the covered well-stoop under which the five were hiding.

"What fools!" said Chanot, cursing his late companions. "They have begun firing too soon! And the light? Can they have already set fire to the chapel?"

He did not know that fate and a message from Dennis Deventer had served him well--that is, so far as his immediate purpose was concerned. The missive which Hugh Deventer received at Gobelet contained these words in his father's hand: "St. André to be attacked to-night. Go up and see what you can do. I send you some arms--also Brown with an electric-light plant which you may find useful."

Hugh was compelled to go, and though he hated to leave Gobelet and Alida, he dared not disobey his father. Besides, hidden among its woods and showing no façade to tempt plunderers, he did not believe that my father's house was in any great danger.

In this he was right so far as the Band of the Mairie was concerned, but he had not taken into account the vendetta of Matteo, the ambitions of Chanot, and the plot against the person of Alida.

The noise on the hill-top seemed rather to increase than to diminish, volley responded to volley, and to the yells of the brigands another cry, shriller and more piercing, replied.

Chanot had altered his plans and taken his cue while he stood listening. He had some remarkable qualities and this readiness was one of them. He had intended to break his way into Gobelet before the noise of the assault brought up the swarming town or the National Guard of Aramon le Vieux. But this (he saw now) would not do. Already on the Place Beauvais they were beating to arms. Well, he must make the more haste. So without an alteration of his determined bearing he walked round the house and knocked loudly at the main door.

My father, who as usual was not yet in bed, threw open a first-floor window (for those on the ground floor had been closed and strengthened by the hand of Hugh Deventer). "What can I do for you?" my father inquired courteously.

"Let us in for God's sake, they are killing everyone up at the *lycée*. We have escaped--my friends and I, *pions*, and the others, three honest fellows from the gardens, whom we picked up on our way."

"Wait a moment, gentlemen," my father called out, "and if you will pardon the delay, you shall have all the shelter and succour my house can give you!"

"What a lamb!" murmured Chanot, "he presents us with his fleece. Are all foreigners fools?"

"All English are," snarled Matteo. "In my country we give them to our children to cheat--to prove their teeth upon."

The door opened, and there before them, a lamp in his hand, stood the gentle scholar, Gordon Cawdor, with a smile of welcome on his face. The less instructed four would have leaped upon him immediately, but Chanot held them back. I can see my father standing there before his potential butchers, inviting them to enter with a single large movement of the hand, infinitely noble and touching to me to think of to-day. He precedes them with an apology. They tramp after him, treading on one another's heels in haste to see the sacks of coin reported by Matteo. That worthy has drawn his knife from its sheath. The others have made ready their revolvers. Only Chanot has the education and the strength of will to keep a hold upon himself--which in turn gives him a hold upon his comrades.

A stern gesture bade them put up their arms. They must play out their parts and follow his lead. In the study they found lights, a fire, and tier upon tier of books climbing to the ceiling--a marvellous place, undreamed of by any of them. But where were the bags of coin, the wallets stuffed with bank-notes with which they were to flee across the wilderness of the Camargue?

"Seat yourselves, gentlemen, a welcome to you," said the host. "You are well out of the trouble and safe with me."

And he set before them meat and drink, such as he could find in the cupboards of Saunders McKie.

"I do not disturb my servants for what I can do myself," he added smilingly, "but you are welcome and--here is Madame Keller and her daughter Alida--which means that our dear invalid goes better. Madame, Mademoiselle, let me introduce to you some new friends who have taken refuge with us. The *lycée* has been beset by brigands and these gentlemen have come to claim, what Gobelet has never refused, the right of asylum."

At sight of Alida in her white, gauzy robes, standing in the doorway, a thrill ran through the blood of Chanot. Never had he looked on such beauty. His heart beat thick, and instinctively he glanced sideways at his followers. Matteo sat bent forward, almost crouched as for a spring, his eyes small and glowing red like those of a wild boar before he charges. Chardon was open-mouthed, but watchful of his leader. Leduc and Violet showed their teeth and fingered the hilts of their revolvers.

A kind of revulsion of feeling passed over Chanot, perhaps as much akin to what we in Scotland would call conversion as can be imagined of a trained and thorough-paced French scoundrel.

Under his breath he bade Leduc and his companion to keep their seats, and kept his own hand hard on the shoulder of Matteo.

"We thank you, ladies, for your presence," he said, with his pleasantest manner. "We had not expected so great an honour."

But Alida, glad of new faces and eager for news of Hugh Deventer, whose desertion had left her companionless, asked many questions, to some of which it took all Chanot's readiness to answer. She was, however, called off by Linn, who presently issued from the kitchen with a dish of eggs hastily cooked.

"There is bread on the sideboard, cut it for these gentlemen!" said Linn. And Alida hastened to serve each in turn, with a smile that was an accomplishment in flattery.

Then followed a strange hour. The sound of shouting and continuous firing could be heard from above. On the road outside the hoofs of horses clattered, and more than once Chanot thought that he heard the jingle of harness.

But with my father at the head of the table talking gently and equably, and Alida at the foot with her chin on her clasped hands, the men sat and listened. Chardon answered when he was spoken to, but he kept looking at his chief for guidance. Leduc and Violet drank steadily, though Chanot tried to kick them under the table. Matteo alone could not be still. His breath whistled between his teeth. He leaned over to Chanot and whispered, "Kill, kill--if you do not, I shall!"

But even for him the influence of these peaceful surroundings had its power. The richly carpeted floor, the table with many flowers, the rows on rows of beautifully bound books, were so much powerful necromancy to the Man from Arquà. But it could not last. The wolf must spring, and Chanot watched him with an anxious eye.

"*Kill--kill!*"

The words came like the hiss of a poison snake. They had come to the end of the meal now and were trifling with their wineglasses--that is, Chanot and Chardon did so. Leduc and Violet looked on stupidly, but not yet ready for any movement against their chief. Only Matteo had become intractable. He at least would not be done out of his prize by a handful of fine words. So Chanot should know. Matteo was in the house of the treasure, and he meant to have his fingers among the clinking pieces.

"*Kill, man, kill, or I shall kill!*"

Chanot looked about apprehensively. Surely this time they must have heard. But my father continued his talk upon the early art of Provence and from her end of the table Alida placidly listened, all her thoughts intent on the speaker.

Matteo rose unsteadily and stumbled towards her. She sat back in her chair with a gesture of fear. For the big hairy hands of the Arquàn were groping to seize her.

"Oh, take him away," she cried, turning to Chanot as the leader, perhaps also because of the human qualities she had seen in his eyes--not exactly good, but with the capacity for good.

"I shall take the *donzella*!" cried Matteo, and caught her about the neck. Linn was beside her in a moment, but even her powerful hands could not disengage that hairy clutch. The fierce visage frothing at the lips was close to Alida's face. She moved her head this way and that.

"Save me--save me!" she cried out in an agony of fear.

"*Kill--kill--lay out the others--take your gold--the gold I found for you--the girl for me!*"

All were now on their feet. Chardon was watching his chief. Chanot's face was pale as wood ash, but there was on it a kind of joy--the strength of a new resolve.

"To the door--Leduc, and you, Violet," he ordered, "wait for me outside. I have something which will satisfy you!"

The men moved uncertainly away. Things were turning out strangely. Was Chanot turning traitor? If so--they would see. But the power of the stronger will was upon them, and they were soon in the garden. They came out on a dark, shadowy world, in which all things seemed of the same colour, but scented of flowers and the full bloom of the *tilleul*, the bee-haunted lime tree of the south.

Above them they heard the irregular rattle of musketry, and the din of combat. A fierce light beat upon the tree-tops at intervals. No fire could pierce like that. The gleam was far too steady. It looked like the beam of an electric arc-lamp, but how could the Jesuit professors of St. André have come into possession of such a thing?

Within the house of Gobelet they heard the voice of Matteo uplifted.

"*Kill--kill--you have turned soft, I shall kill you, Chanot. Matteo of Arquà is not to be cheated!*"

Leduc and Violet looked back through the door out of which they had come. The hall was dusk, but a light was burning somewhere out of sight. They could see a couple emerge out of the passage which led to the study--Chanot pushed the Arquàn in front of him. The face of the chief was calm, but of a ghastly pallor--his lips almost disappearing, so firmly were they set. His blue eyes had the dull glitter of lapis lazuli, or rather of malachite--green rather than blue. But they were not good to see. Death looked out of them, and chilled the marrow of Leduc and Violet. Not for the world would they have crossed the will of Chanot at that moment.

They could see Chardon shutting the door of the study from within, and guessed that he was left there on guard, but they could not hear Chanot's courteous last words of excuse for Matteo, "I fear this gentleman is ill. He is from Italy and troubled with fever. He will be better outside. I will conduct him."

"Shut the door and let no one pass," he added to Chardon, in a rapid whisper, "talk as if nothing had happened till I come back!" And the next moment he was pushing his prisoner along the corridor. Leduc and Violet saw them come, and made ready to fall in behind, but they were not prepared for what followed so swiftly.

Matteo le Gaucher suddenly dropped to the floor, pulling his collar out of the grasp of his captor. Then, quick as thought, he drew a long knife from his belt and struck the deadly forward blow at Chanot--the Arquàn blow below the belt for which there is no parry. But Chanot had not for nothing been President of the Athletic and Sportive Association of the Midi. He was in admirable training and his eye forestalled the Gaucher's movement. It was a fine thrust, delivered with the broad-cutting edge upward. No man, even in Arquà, could have saved himself. But Chanot had leaped aside, nimble as a cat. And the next moment the knife was stricken from the Arquàn's hand.

There was a wild, fierce struggle there on the threshold, the movements of the combatants being so quick that Leduc and Violet dared not interfere lest they should harm the wrong man. Biting, kicking, and scratching, Matteo le Gaucher was shoved out across the gravel, over the lawn and into a little *clairière* upon which shone directly the beam of Hugh Deventer's electric installation up on the heights of Mont St. André.

Leduc and Violet had followed marvelling, their eyes starting from their heads, eager to see the end like children at a play. They knew that this was the chief's business and that he must finish it for himself. In the middle of the green cleared space was a rustic bench, and the ground was thickly strewn with pine-cones and needles. Chanot thrust his prisoner's head down till he lay across the back of the seat, and then, without haste and calmly as a man who consults his watch, he drew from his pocket a revolver and fired once behind Matteo's ear. There was no struggle. That had gone before. Chanot was very calm, and as for Matteo he only shuddered and sank in a heap, his body swinging arms down over the rustic bench. The fierce light of the arc-lamp lay on the *clairière* and Matteo's shadow made a strange toad-like patch on the grey-green sward. That was all.

"Now, Leduc, and you, Violet, take up this carrion and carry him near enough to the fighting up yonder to be clear of all connection with this house. There is no treasure here. He deceived us, like the Italian he was. But I shall not deceive you."

He opened his pocket-book and took out small notes for two thousand francs. One thousand he gave to Leduc and the other to Violet.

"I shall meet you in Spain," he said, "and there I shall expect to receive from you an account of this night's mission. I am not to be trifled with as you see. I warn you to be very faithful. Take up the Arquàn, and I will see you safe outside the wall."

He unlocked the gate which opened from the grounds of the Garden Cottage into the road, and stood watching them, as they toiled painfully up the hill, Violet leading with the dead man's legs over his shoulders, and Leduc supporting his head, the long, hairy arms which had wrought so much evil trailing in the dust.

"*Missa est! Amen!!*" said Chanot, who had served Mass in his time, and turning on his heel he strode back towards the house of Gobelet.

CHAPTER XXXIX

THE CONVERSION OF CHANOT

"The gentleman has perfectly recovered," he announced with sympathetic gravity in answer to Alida's questions. "Matteo of Arquà has long been subject to such attacks, but the best medical advice agrees that they have lost force of late, and, in fact, are not likely again to recur. As for Messieurs, the gentlemen who have taken him for an airing, they have business which calls them away before the morning, so they will not be able to return. I make their apologies. They came with us--yes--for safety, but they were not quite of our world, Chardon's and mine--eh, Chardon?"

Chardon mutely acquiesced, and Chanot sat down beside Alida, who, with a gesture of gratitude, gave him her hand.

"He frightened me," she said, smiling gratefully, "that man from Arquà. He has the Evil Eye. Thank you for taking him away. Ugh!--I can feel his hands upon me still."

Chanot kept the little hand with the silver ring upon it in both of his. He bent and kissed it reverently. As he did so the door opened and there stood in the dark passage-way a startling figure. It was Keller Bey, his head wrapped about with bandages like cere cloths, his reddish white beard shaggy and unkempt, his arm bandaged, and his dressing-gown frayed and tarnished. But in his eyes the fire of fever burned like the braise of a Yule log, dull and ominous.

With one lean finger he pointed to Chanot as he sat by the table. He called him by name.

"What do you here, bandit and traitor?" he demanded. "But for you there would have been peace in Aramon, the best of governments, and--you broke it all up. Touch not the hand of the daughter of kings! There is blood upon your own, sower of the wind, assassin, wild ass of the desert!"

Here he leaped into Arabic, understood only by Alida and Gordon Cawdor.

"Go--get hence, hound!" he thundered. "You have done enough evil--would you pursue me even to this quiet place?"

"Hush, father!" said Alida, going hastily to his side; "he has saved my life--perhaps all our lives."

"He is my enemy!"

"He is my friend!"

As Alida said this, she turned and smiled upon Chanot. The young man repressed a groan.

"If I had known," he muttered, "ah, if I had known. But it is too late."

Linn had been watching her time, and now, by a swift intervention, got Keller Bey out of the library and back to his own room. He had in fact missed her presence and wandered out in search. Then, at sight of the arch-enemy of his ideal rule, memory had returned to him.

After the departure of Keller Bey my father left the room to assure himself that all was well in the sick man's chamber, and that Linn wanted for nothing. Chanot and Alida were left practically alone, for Chardon, obedient to his chief's eye, had withdrawn into an alcove where, with a book in his hand, he slept or pretended to sleep.

"My father is wandering in his mind," she said, letting the light of her young eyes dwell upon his. "He had a bullet which grazed the brain----"

"I fired that bullet," said Chanot, with bent head.

"But not in anger--not to do him any hurt?" The voice of Alida was almost pleading now. She wanted to think well of this young man.

"Not more than any other," he answered, after a look at her. "We did not wish--we could not permit--I will not weary you with politics, but I want you to know that I put down Keller Bey. I fired the River Quarter. I was the chief of the plunderers. I deserve death a score of times. I came here to rob and if necessary to kill----"

"No--no!" cried Alida, reaching out her hand a second time. "I saw you with the little Italian. He had a knife. I saw him reaching for it, and that made me feel for mine. You see, I am from Algeria and go armed. He came to kill, if you like. But not you--you are a gentleman!"

"Thank you," said Chanot quickly, but still not taking her hand, "it will help--that which you

have said--when it comes to the pinch. I am--I was a gentleman!"

"A brave one and true," said the girl, and then, something she had heard or read working in her head, she added, "gentle and a gentleman."

The day was coming up over the river, and soon the lamps in the room burned faint and yellow. Chardon, waking, opened the window by which he sat and the fresh air of the May morning fanned out the heated atmosphere. The coolness brought a faint flush to Alida's cheek and her lips grew redder.

Chanot rose to his feet and held out his hand.

"Good-bye, dear lady--I have met you too late. Yet do not think quite unkindly of me, of whom much evil will be spoken."

"Chardon," he said, "I leave you here on guard. I commit these ladies to you--should--should any of our people--you understand."

Chardon stood without bareheaded, watching his leader go. Chanot reached the Garden Cottage in time to find himself face to face with a company of soldiers--red-breeched infantry men they were, of the 131st of the line. These were under the command of a very young officer in a tremendous haste. He held a piece of paper in one hand and with the other he knocked loudly, with the hilt of his recently acquired sword, on the door of the Garden Cottage.

"I have a warrant for the instant arrest of the chief of the Aramon insurrection. I am advised that he lives here. His name is Keller, Charles Keller."

"I am the chief of the Aramon insurrection," said Chanot calmly, "I am Keller!"

The rattle of the *peloton* fire came irregularly from above, among the rocks of St. André. Chanot heard it and knew his fate. No lingering trial for him, no stupid military commanders murmuring sleepily over a foregone verdict.

"There against the wall--we must cross the river--there is no time to lose. Form a firing party." The young officer, in a hurry, fairly jetted out his orders.

"*Mon lieutenant*," said Chanot coolly, "there are ladies within the Château of Gobelet--the house you see yonder through the trees. It belongs to a great English scholar, who is a friend of Monsieur Thiers, and a historian like him. I have no objections to being shot, but you will have the goodness to let me march with you till we turn the corner of the policies. Then we will have a steep cliff and the river below, which will be convenient."

The lieutenant nodded. His men were ordered in that direction, and so it chanced that twenty of the defenders of our Château Schneider witnessed the end of the Black Insurrection of Aramon.

Jack Jaikes and the others of the old machine-gun gang greeted the appearance of Chanot guarded and marching to execution with a yell of triumph.

"Allerdyce--Allerdyce!" they shouted, and turned aside that they might see. I also went with them, not knowing aught of the history of the night. We came out on a plain sward overlooking the river. A path ran along and there was a low wall, with lizards darting everyway in the sun.

The *peloton* formed up with the readiness of practice, and the officer raised his sword. Chanot stepped briskly to the wall, and as he drew up his tall figure and stood facing us with squared shoulders, I think I never saw anyone so transfigured. The sullen wolfishness was all gone. His eyes shone like those of a boy engaged in some innocent frolic. But his mien was grave as befitted the circumstances. He had been smoking a cigarette when the officer accosted him. He threw away the remainder with a smile.

"Have you anything to say?" demanded the officer.

"Only good-bye!"

"Anything to leave?"

"Only life!"

"Then you are ready?"

"I am ready!"

The officer let his sword drop and as from a great distance I seemed to hear his voice commanding "Fire!" The volley rang out, and Chanot, taking a step backwards as if driven by the impact of the bullets, toppled over into the deep and rapid Rhône and was seen no more.

The young officer was methodical. He drew out of his breast a note-book, and into this he entered several lines which, perhaps that we might bear witness, he read aloud.

"May 25th, 1871. Upon the hill called St. André, immediately above the Rhône, I caused to

be executed one Charles Keller, upon his own confession, as being the chief of the revolt in Aramon-les-Ateliers."

"No, no!" cried Jack Jaikes and several others before they thought.

"Eh! what's that?" demanded the infantry lieutenant, wheeling upon us with his note-book and pencil still in his hand. I had just time to whisper one word to Jack Jaikes. That word was "Fool!" To the others I conveyed as well as I could that they were to hold their tongues.

"Who are you, and what do you mean by 'No, no'?"

"I am Dennis Deventer's second-in-command," said Jack Jaikes. "I stood the two sieges in command of the machine guns, which I had made myself, and by saying 'No--no' I meant that there were other chiefs besides this one whom you have sent to his account!"

"No doubt," said the officer drily; "the others are up yonder under the walls. We surrounded them while they were blocked by young Deventer's wire entanglements and dazzled by his electric light. But why have you left your fortifications and why----"

He stopped his questions, for just then Rhoda Polly strolled nonchalantly upon the sward. He stood staring at her. Rhoda Polly held out her hand to the young man.

"I am Dennis Deventer's daughter," she said, English, smiling, and frank, "not his only one, but the only one who counts on days like these."

The lieutenant flushed and bowed. He wished the firing party would stand a little closer about a certain square of the green turf. He need not have troubled, Rhoda Polly's mind was a hundred miles from any idea of minute observation at that moment.

"*Tiens!* The 131st!" she exclaimed. "If you cross the river you must go up and see my father. Your colonel is rather a pet of his!"

At the idea of their fire-eating bristling old colonel being anybody's pet, a smile passed among the rank and file, but the lieutenant being well-mannered remained grave.

"I shall immediately do myself the honour of waiting on your father!"

He marched his men down the hill. Jack Jaikes and his party stepped out on the highway which led to St. André. Only Rhoda Polly and I lingered.

CHAPTER XL

THE LAST OF THE "TATTER OF SCARLET"

Rhoda Polly was on her way to see her friend Alida, and knowing well that parental permission would be refused her in the troublous state of the neighbourhood, she had taken it and followed unobtrusively in the wake of Jack Jaikes and his party.

I had trouble even now to get her away from the scene of the execution. She would have sat down on the very spot, save that I hastened her departure, saying that I must go back and see her father. I had, I said, both news and a message for him.

So we walked through the woods to Gobelet, very quietly and without much talk between us. We reached there to find that Dennis Deventer had just arrived from the Château, that Chardon had disappeared, and that Hugh was in the full flush of his morning's triumph. His father nodded approval. As for Alida she clung to his arm and looked up in his face. I do not think she was conscious of my presence in the room, and even upon Rhoda Polly she only bestowed a left-handed greeting without letting go her hold upon Hugh Deventer. Verily the manners of the East are strange.

I knew very well that she would find her hero one day, but I never supposed he would come to her in my poor Hugh's likeness.

I felt a sudden leap of loneliness in my heart and moved nearer to Rhoda Polly. *She* would never look at me like that. But instead she stood on tiptoe till her lips were near my ear and whispered, "I have always known it would be so--don't they look silly?"

It was a point of view, though at that moment hardly mine, but who was I that I should grudge Hugh Deventer his one hour of triumph? He was telling his story.

"I heard them all about us, and I knew they were getting ready for the rush. There were about forty of us, professors, *pions*, and seniors, to whom rifles could be served. I tell you I had a time finding out who could shoot even a bit. I had to try each with a dummy gun to see how he handled it. They lied so--yes, even the professors!

"But your old Renard was a brick. He spotted the sportsmen as if by magic and remembered the boys whose fathers had shootings. He helped a lot, I can tell you--and tucked up his black gown and hopped about on his thin legs (which were black too) as lively as a cricket.

"Brown was attending to the electric lamp and barbed-wire obstacles while I was doing the drill sergeant, and by ten we had the business in pretty fair shape. I set the posts as you told me, sir, or as near as possible. For, of course, having been a pupil, the old place was like my bedroom to me, and I knew just where they would try to rush us."

His father nodded, and the smile which accompanied the nod encouraged the hero to continue. Not that this was necessary, for at his elbow Alida was behaving most foolishly.

("*You* never looked at me like that, Rhoda Polly," I whispered, "the night when we blew them back from the Big Gate, when Jack Jaikes and I fought in the open."

"Hadn't time," retorted Rhoda Polly, "besides, I was in that business as well as you. Did you think that I had been left behind in the Château cellar?")

"Just when twelve struck," Hugh proceeded, "they dashed into the ditch with a yell--just at the places you said, father, when I showed you the plan I had made. But the wire and stakes brought them all up standing. My black regiment fired all round the wall. I don't believe they hit many, but the crackle of the rifle fire was a very disconcerting circumstance, and at any rate Brown and I 'scourged' them well with your repeaters, sir. Brown had switched on his big search-light and everything was as bright as glory.

"'How many were there?' That I could not say, sir. They looked a lot when they clumped together, which was not often. But the line was thin-sown when they spread out to take cover. The professors swore to a hundred, but I could not really make it more than fifty.

"They let fly at us, but we were all behind the big stone wall. The bullets whizzed over us, and spotted the walls, but that was all. Then they drew off to hold a council.

"Once they nearly got us. They had dynamite or some infernal stuff, and they blew up the outer main gate. But then, as you know, that did not much matter, for the really strong one is twenty yards farther on, and those who ran in found themselves up Blind Alley. I tell you, sir, Brown and I sacrificed them before they got out. But they kept it up, firing at us till dawn without ever making a hit. They saw the uselessness of this at last, and were just hopping off over the plateau on the road to Spain, when the red breeches put in an appearance, and nabbed the lot--that is very nearly all, for some got away by the woods.

"'After that?'--Well, sir. I shall tell you the rest to-night. I came down here to see how Mr. Cawdor was getting on."

Hugh Deventer had so clearly the floor that I did not attempt to interfere. Nor did I grudge him his glory. Had we not, Jack Jaikes, Rhoda Polly, and I, seen a greater thing--the fight over Allerdyce's gun before the main entrance?

"Come out on the terrace, Rhoda Polly," I said, for I really had had enough of Hugh's strutting and Alida's languorous glances. We passed through the tall window out upon the lawn, and went slowly to the crescent sweep of the promenade, which made so beautiful a look-out station over the river.

The morning smoke was rising over Aramon-les-Ateliers. Within the factory some of the tall chimneys were already sending forth long trails of vapour. Dennis Deventer's gangs were preparing for a return to normal conditions.

The secret negotiations had been going on some time. The men were wearying to get back. The tyranny of the Black Band was wholly dissipated, and honest folks breathed freely. The women were more anxious than the men. For if the city should be occupied by troops--if military tribunals were set up, where would their husbands be so safe as in the factory? Dennis Deventer had the long arm. Dennis Deventer could protect his own.

I looked at Rhoda Polly, and she smiled.

"I suppose there is really nothing to say," I said, answering her glance. "This is not proper love-making, but we simply can't do without one another, can we, Rhoda Polly? So it has just got to be."

"I suppose so," said Rhoda Polly, looking far out across the flat lands to the blue line of the Mediterranean. "But what are you going to do all day--and I? We are busy people, Angus Cawdor, and in idleness we should soon quarrel!"

She swung her legs engagingly, awaiting my answer.

"Well," I said, "I will let you into a secret. My father's next book, 'A History of the Third Republic,' is to have both our names on the title-page. Also I am to translate all his books into French. You have got to help."

"I shall love it," cried Rhoda Polly, "but what else am I to do?"

"You will have this house of Gobelet to be sole mistress of, and, besides, you and your mother must superintend the housekeeping of Linn and Keller Bey in the Garden Cottage!"

"But, Angus, have you thought of Jeanne?"

"What Jeanne?"

"Jeanne Félix, sir!"

I was so stunned I could not answer, so great was my astonishment. Rhoda Polly had not been so blind as I had supposed--or was it possible that Jeanne herself----? No, I thanked Heaven that at least need not be thought of.

Rhoda Polly laughed a ringing, joyous laugh, and gave my arm a little playful clutch.

"Silly," she said, "I will put you out of any remorse you may feel for any of your misdeeds. Jeanne is to be married to young Emile Bert, the fruit-grower of Les Cabannes. She is at last going to reward his constancy--as I am yours!"

She looked at me with gay, ironic eyes. The vixen!

I did not answer. It was indeed a difficult corner to turn with plain lying, but most happily at that moment we saw a strange and memorable thing.

Across the river, from the fort which dominated the town, and also from the high tower of the Mairie, we saw the red flag of revolt flutter down, and simultaneously, like a burst of sunlight, the tricolour was broken out at each mast-head, gay and hopeful in that entrancing Provençal air.

Instinctively Rhoda Polly's hand sought mine. We both stood silent and bareheaded as in the presence of the dead, for both of us knew that we had looked our last upon the "Tatter of Scarlet."

THE END

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