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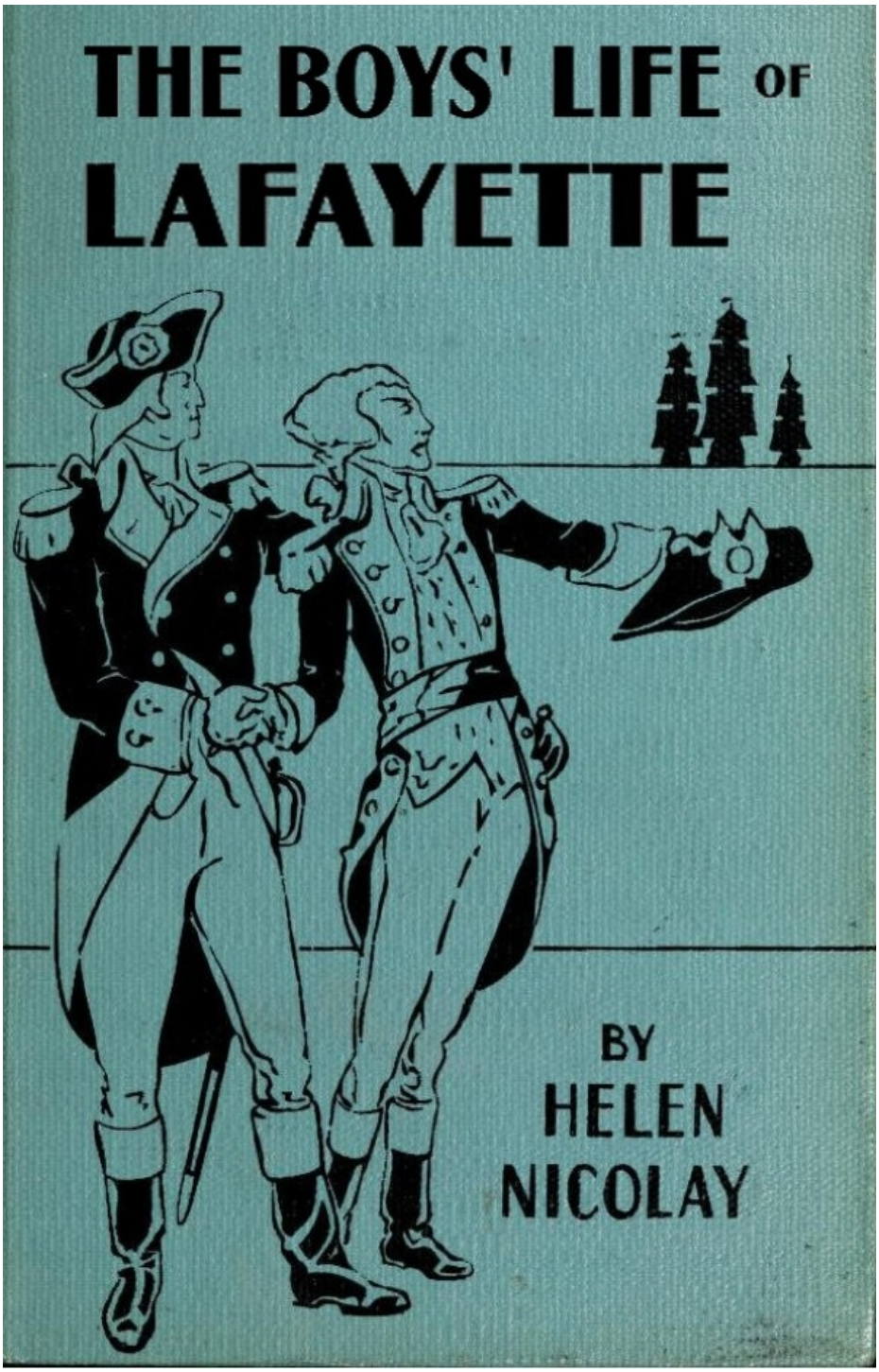

THE BOYS' LIFE OF LAFAYETTE

MARQUIS DE LAFAYETTE From an engraving by Jones

The Boys' Life of LAFAYETTE

by

Helen Nicolay

Illustrated

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PREFACE

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This is no work of fiction. It is sober history; yet if the bare facts it tells were set forth without the connecting links, its preface might be made to look like the plot of a dime novel.

It is the story of a poor boy who inherited great wealth; who ran away from home to fight for liberty and glory; who became a major-general before he was twenty years old; who knew every nook and corner of the palace at Versailles, yet was the blood-brother of American Indians; who tried vainly to save the lives of his king and queen; who was in favor of law, yet remained a rebel to the end of his days; who suffered an unjust imprisonment which has well been called "a night five years long"; who was twice practically Dictator of France; and who, in his old age, was called upon to make a great decision.

But it is no work of fiction. It is only the biography of a French gentleman named Lafayette.

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THE BOYS' LIFE OF LAFAYETTE

I
WARRIORS AND WILD BEASTS

"The Lafayettes die young, but die fighting," was a saying in that part of France where they had

been people of consequence for seven hundred years before the most famous of them came into the world. The family name was Motier, but, after the custom of the time, they were better known by the name of their estate, La Fayette, in Auvergne, a region which had been called the French Siberia. Although situated in central southern France, fully three hundred and fifty miles from Paris, it is a high wind-swept country of plains and cone-shaped hills, among whose rugged summits storms break to send destruction rushing down into the valleys. Unexpected, fertile, sheltered spots are to be found among these same hills, but on the whole it is not a gentle nor a smiling land.

The history of France during the Middle Ages bears not a little resemblance to this region of Auvergne, so full of sharp contrasts, often of disaster. Through all the turbulent centuries the [Pg 2] men of the house of Lafayette bore their part, fighting gallantly for prince and king. Family tradition abounded in stories telling how they had taken part in every war since old Pons Motier de Lafayette, the Crusader, fought at Acre, in Palestine, in 1250. Jean fell at Poictiers in 1356. There was a Claude—exception to the rule that they died young—who took part in sixty-five sieges and no end of pitched battles. Though most of them fought on land, there was an occasional sailor to relieve the monotony; notably a vice-admiral of the reign of Francis First, who held joint command with Andrea Doria when that soldier of fortune went to the relief of Marseilles, and who sank or burned four Spanish galleons in the naval battle at the mouth of the Var.

But the Lafayette who occupied most space in family tradition and written history was Gilbert, who was head of the family about the time Columbus discovered America. It was he who took for motto upon his coat of arms the words, "*Cur non?*" "Why not?" and by energetic deeds satisfactorily answered his own question. "Seneschal of the Bourbonnaise," "Lieutenant-General," "Governor of Dauphigny," and "Marshal of France" were a few of the titles and honors he gathered in the course of a long life, for he was another exception to the family rule. He was eighty-two before he passed away, ready to fight to the last. Although it is not true that he slew the English Duke of Clarence with his own hands at the battle of Baugé, it is true that he fought [Pg 3] under the banner of Joan of Arc at Orléans, and that he had many adventures on many fields. When there was no foreign enemy to battle against, he worked hard to subdue the bandits who infested France and made travel on the highroads more exciting than agreeable to timid souls in the reign of Charles VII.

In time the Motiers de Lafayette divided into two branches, the elder keeping the estate and name and most of the glory; the younger, known as the Motiers of Champetières, enjoying only local renown. The women of the family also made a place for themselves in history. One, who had beauty, had also courage and wit to oppose the great Cardinal Richelieu himself. Another, less known in politics than in literature, though she tried her hand at both, became famous as a novelist. It was her grand-daughter who inherited part of the property at a time when there were no more men of the elder branch to carry on the name. In order that it might not die out, she arranged to have the estates pass back to the younger branch, which in time inherited the title also.

The Lafayettes went on fighting and losing their lives early in battle. Thus it happened that a baby born to a young widow in the grim old manor-house of Chavaniac on the 6th of September, 1757, was the last male representative of his race, a marquis from the hour of his birth. His father had been made Chevalier of the Order of Saint-Louis and Colonel of Grenadiers at the early age of twenty-two, and fell before he was twenty-five, leading his men in an obscure [Pg 4] engagement of the Seven Years' War. This was about a month before his son was born. His family believed that the gallant colonel's life was sacrificed by the recklessness of his commanding officer.

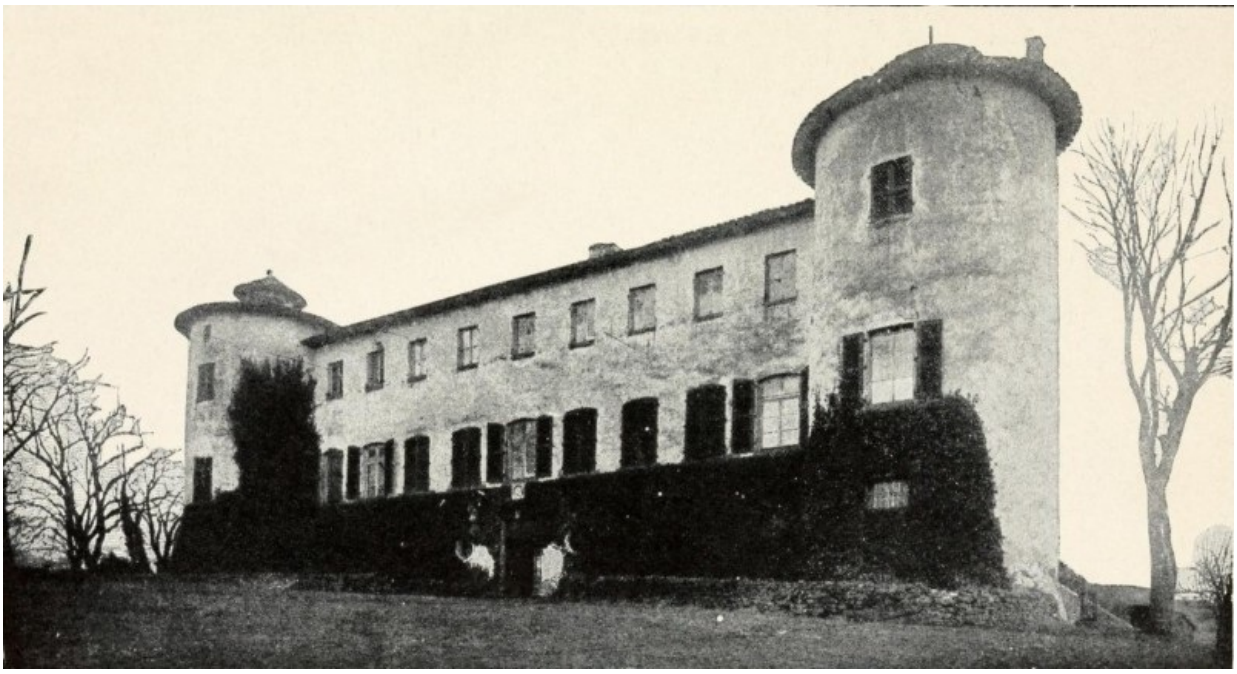
According to the old parish register, still preserved, "The very high and puissant gentleman, Monseigneur Marie-Joseph-Paul-Yves-Roch-Gilbert Dumotier de Lafayette, the lawful son of the very high and very puissant Monseigneur Michel-Louis-Christophe-Roch-Gilbert Dumotier, Marquis de Lafayette, Baron de Wissac, Seigneur de Saint-Romain and other places, and of the very high and very puissant lady, Madame Marie Louise Julie de la Rivière," was baptized in the little parish church of Chavaniac twenty-four hours after his birth. Besides this terrifying name and the title, all the traditions and responsibilities of both branches of the family descended upon his infant shoulders. Being such a scrap of a baby, however, he was mercifully ignorant of responsibilities and ancient names. The one given him in baptism was shortened for daily use to Gilbert, the name of the old Marshal of France; but a time came when it was convenient to have a number, rightfully his, from which to choose. For his signature "La Fayette" covered the whole ground.

His only near relatives were his young mother, his grandmother (a stately lady of strong character), and two aunts, sisters of his dead father, who came to live at Chavaniac. It was by this little group of aristocratic Frenchwomen that the champion of liberty was brought up during [Pg 5] those early years when character is formed. That he did not become hopelessly spoiled speaks well for his disposition and their self-control. He was not a strong baby, and they must have spent many anxious hours bending over him as he lay asleep, however much they concealed their interest at other times for fear of doing him moral harm.

Until he was eleven they all lived together in the gloomy old château where he was born. This has been described as "great and rather heavy." It had been fortified in the fourteenth century. Two round towers with steep, pointed roofs flanked it on the right and left. Across its front high French windows let in light to the upper floors. From them there was a far-reaching view over plain and river, and steep hills dotted with clumps of trees. But loopholes on each side of an

inhospitable narrow doorway told of a time when its situation had been more prized for defense than for mere beauty of scenery. It had a dungeon and other grim conveniences of life in the Middle Ages, which must have stamped themselves deep on the mind of an impressionable child. The castles of Wissac and Saint-Romain, of which the boy was also lord, could be seen higher up among the hills. There were glimpses, too, of peasant homes, but these were neither neat nor prosperous. Bad laws, and abuse of law that had been going on for centuries, had brought France to a point where a few people were growing inordinately rich at the expense of all the rest. The king suffered from this as well as the peasants. The country was overrun by an army of tax- [Pg 6] collectors, one for every one hundred and thirty souls in France, each of them bent on giving up as little as possible of the money he collected. To curry favor with the great nobles, who were more powerful than the king himself, their property was not taxed so heavily as it should have been, while poorer people, especially the peasants, were robbed to make up the difference. "The people of our country live in misery; they have neither furniture nor beds; during part of the year the most of them have no nourishment except bread made of oats and barley, and even this they must snatch from their own mouths and those of their children in order to pay the taxes." That was written about this very region of Auvergne a few years before Lafayette was born. In self-defense the peasants made their homes look even more wretched than they really were. On occasion, when convinced that the stranger knocking at their door was no spy, they could bring a wheaten loaf and a bottle of wine from their secret store and do the honors most hospitably.

The La Fayettes were not rich, though they were the great people of their neighborhood. Only one Frenchman in a hundred belonged to the nobility, but that one received more consideration than all the other ninety-nine combined. When the boy marquis rode out with his mother, or that stately lady his grandmother, the peasants in the little village which had grown up around the walls of Chavaniac, clinging to it for protection, bowed down as though the child were a sovereign. Some of them knelt in the dust as the coach passed by. Truly it was strange soil for the [Pg 7] growth of democratic ideas. It was well for the boy's soul that in spite of lands and honor the household was of necessity a frugal one. The wide acres were unproductive. Men who had fought so often and so well for their princes had found little leisure to gather wealth for their children. Besides, it was thought out of the question for a nobleman to engage in gainful pursuits. The wealth such men enjoyed came through favor at court; and in this household of women there was no longer any one able to render the kind of service likely to be noticed and rewarded by a king.



THE MANOR-HOUSE OF CHAVANIAC
Birthplace of Lafayette

So the lad grew from babyhood in an atmosphere of much ceremony and very little luxury. On the whole, his was a happy childhood, though by no means gay. He loved the women who cherished him so devotedly. In his *Memoirs*, written late in life, he calls them "tender and venerated relatives." They looked forward to the day when in his turn he should become a soldier, dreading it, as women will, but accepting it, as such women do, in the spirit of *noblesse oblige*, believing it the one possible calling for a young man of his station. To prepare him for it he was trained in manly exercises, by means of which he outgrew the delicacy of his earliest years and became tall and strong for his age. He was trained also in horsemanship, to which he took kindly, for he loved all spirited animals. In books, to which he did not object, though he was never wholly a scholar, he followed such studies as could be taught him by the kindly Abbé Feyon, his tutor. [Pg 8]

On his rides, when he met the ragged, threadbare people who lived among the hills, they saluted him and looked upon him almost with a sense of ownership. Was he not one of their Lafayettes who had been fighting and dying gallantly for hundreds of years? As for him, his friendly, boyish eyes looked a little deeper through their rags into their sterling peasant hearts than either he or

they realized. In the old manor-house his day-dreams were all of "riding over the world in search of reputation," he tells us; a reputation to be won by doing gallant deeds. "You ask me," we read in his *Memoirs*, "at what time I felt the earliest longings for glory and liberty. I cannot recall anything earlier than my enthusiasm for tales of heroism. At the age of eight my heart beat fast at thought of a hyena which had done some damage and made even more noise in the neighborhood. The hope of meeting that beast animated all my excursions." Had the encounter taken place, it might have been thrilling in the extreme. It might even have deprived history of a bright page; for it was nothing less than hunger which drove such beasts out of the woods in winter to make raids upon lonely farms—even to terrify villagers at the very gates of Chavaniac.

II
EDUCATING A MARQUIS

[Pg 9]

The first period of Gilbert's life came to an end when he was eleven years old. His mother was by no means ignorant of the ways of the world and she had powerful relatives at court. She realized how much they could do to advance her boy's career by speaking an occasional word in his behalf; and also how much truth there is in the old saying "Out of sight, out of mind." They might easily forget all about her and her boy if they remained hidden in the provinces. So they went up to Paris together, and she had herself presented at court and took up her residence in the French capital, while Gilbert became a student at the Collège Du Plessis, a favorite school for sons of French noblemen. His mother's uncle, the Comte de la Rivière, entered his name upon the army lists as member of a regiment of Black Mousquetaires, to secure him the benefit of early promotion. He was enrolled, too, among the pages of Marie Leszczynska, the Polish wife of King Louis XV, but his duties, as page and soldier, were merely nominal. He does not say a word about being page in his *Memoirs*. Of the regiment he merely says that it served to get him excused from classes when there was to be a parade.

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He remained three years at Du Plessis. He found studying according to rule decidedly irksome, and very different from the solitary lessons at Chavaniac, where the few rules in force had been made for his benefit, if not for his convenience. He tells us that he was "distracted from study only by the desire to study without restraint," and that such success as he gained was "inspired by a desire for glory and troubled by the desire for liberty." Sometimes the latter triumphed. It amused him, when he was old, to recall how, being ordered to write an essay on "the perfect steed," he sacrificed a good mark and the praise of his teachers to the pleasure of describing a spirited horse that threw his rider at the very sight of a whip.

The Collège Du Plessis must have been almost like a monastery. Each boy had a stuffy little cell into which he was locked at night. No member of a student's family might cross the threshold, and the many careful rules for health and diet were quite the opposite of those now practised. This period of Lafayette's school-days was a time when men's ideas on a variety of subjects were undergoing vast change. The old notion that learning was something to be jealously guarded and made as difficult and disagreeable as possible died hard. It is true that the good Fénelon, who believed in teaching children to read from books printed in French instead of in Latin, and who thought it could do them no harm if the books were "well bound and gilded on the edge," had gone to his reward half a century before; but he had been writing about the education of girls! When Lafayette was only five years old one Jean Jacques Rousseau had published a fantastic story called *Émile*, which was nothing in the world but a treatise on education in disguise. In this he objected to the doctrine of original sin, holding that children were not born bad; and he reasoned that they did not learn better nor more quickly for having knowledge beaten into them with rods. But this man Rousseau was looked upon as an infidel and a dangerous character. Probably at Du Plessis the discipline and course of study belonged to the old order of things, though there were concessions in the way of teaching the young gentlemen manners and poetry and polite letter-writing, which they would need later in their fashionable life at court. History as taught them was hopelessly tangled up in heraldry, being all about the coats of arms and the quarrels of nobles in France and neighboring countries. When something about justice and liberty and the rights of the people did creep into the history lesson the tall young student from Auvergne fell upon it with avidity. Perhaps it was because of such bits scattered through the pages of Roman authors that he learned considerable Latin, and learned it well enough to remember it forty years later, when he found it useful to piece out his ignorance of German in talking with his Austrian jailers.

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In spite of queer notions about hygiene, like those which bade him shut out fresh air from his room at night and avoid the risk of eating fresh fruit, he grew in body as well as in mind during the years at Du Plessis, and he had almost reached his man's height of five feet eleven inches, when one day in 1770 a messenger came to the college, bringing the news that his mother had just died. A very few days later her death was followed by that of her father, who was wealthy and had made the boy his heir. Thus, almost within a week, he found himself infinitely poorer than he had ever been before, yet very rich, deprived of those dearest to him and in possession of a large fortune.

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People began to take a sudden lively interest in him. The son of a young widow studying in the Collège Du Plessis was of consequence only to himself and his mother. But the young Marquis de

Lafayette, of such old and excellent family, such good disposition, such a record in his studies, such a very large income—above all, a generous young man with no near relatives to give meddling advice about how he should spend his money, became fair prey for all the fortune-hunters prowling around the corrupt court of old Louis XV.

These were many. The king was bored as well as old. His days were filled with a succession of tiresome ceremonies. A crowd of bowing courtiers was admitted to his bedroom before he got up in the morning. Crowds attended him at every turn, even assisting in his toilet at night. Frederick the Great had said, "If I were king of France, the first thing I would do would be to appoint another king to hold court in my place"! But indolent old Louis had not the energy even to break [Pg 13] down customs which had come to him from the days of kings long dead. "He cared for nothing in this life except to hunt, and feared nothing in the life to come except hell." When not hunting, his one desire was to be let alone to pursue whatever evil fancy entered his brain.

The people at court had two desires—to flatter the king and to get money. The first was the surest means to the second. Everybody, good and bad, seemed in need of money, for the few rich nobles had set a style of living which not even the king could afford to follow. It was all part of the same tangle, the result of accidents and crimes and carelessness extending through many reigns, which had brought about ever-increasing visits of the tax-collectors and reduced the peasants to starvation. One after another important concessions had been given away as a mark of royal favor, or else had been sold outright. A clever man in the reign of Louis XIV had remarked that whenever his Majesty created an office the Lord supplied a fool to buy it. In the reign of his grandson, Louis XV, things were even worse. A high-sounding official title, carrying with it a merely nominal duty and some privilege that might be turned into coin, was the elegant way of overcoming financial difficulty. Even the wax candles burned in the sconces at Versailles were sold for the benefit of the official who had charge of their lighting. He saw to it that plenty of candles were lighted, and that none of them burned too long before going to swell his income. What the great nobles did lesser ones imitated; and so on, down a long line. No wonder that [Pg 14] young Lafayette, having inherited his fortune, became suddenly interesting.

Of course, not everybody was corrupt, even at court. There were people who could not possibly be classed as fortune-hunters. Even to these the fact that the young heir was tall and silent and awkward, not especially popular at school, and not likely to shine in a society whose standards were those of dancing-school manners and lively wit, did not weigh for a moment against the solid attraction of his wealth. To fathers and mothers of marriageable daughters both his moral and material qualifications appealed. He was barely fourteen years old when proposals of marriage began to be made in the careful French way, which assumes that matrimony is an affair to be arranged between guardians, instead of being left to the haphazard whim of young people. An early letter of Lafayette's written about this time was partly upon this subject. It might have been penned by a world-wise man of thirty. The Comte de la Rivière appears to have been the person to whom these proposals were first addressed. He, and possibly the Abbé Feyon, discussed them with Lafayette in a business-like way; and the young man, not being in love, either with a maid or with the idea of matrimony, listened without enthusiasm, suggesting that better matches might be found among the beauties of Auvergne. New duties and surroundings engrossed him. He had left Du Plessis for the Military Academy at Versailles, where there was more army and less cloister in his training; where he spent part of his money upon fine horses and lent them generously to friends; and where, for amusement in his hours of leisure, he could [Pg 15] watch the pageant of court life unrolling at the very gates of the academy. Matrimony could wait.

Among those more interested in providing a wife for him than he was in finding one for himself was the lively Duc d'Ayen, a rich and important nobleman, the father of five daughters. The eldest of these was fully a year younger than Lafayette, while the others descended toward babyhood like a flight of steps. Even in that day of youthful marriages it seemed early to begin picking out husbands for them. But there were five, and the duke felt he could not begin better than by securing this long-limbed boy for a son-in-law. He suggested either his eldest daughter, Louise, or the second child, Adrienne, then barely twelve, as a future Marquise de Lafayette. He did not care which was chosen, but of course it must be one of the older girls, since the bridegroom would have to wait too long for the others to grow up. The match was entirely suitable, and was taken under favorable consideration by the bridegroom's family; but when it occurred to the duke to mention the matter to his wife, he found opposition where it was least expected. Madame d'Ayen absolutely refused her consent. These two were quite apt to hold different views. The husband liked the luxury of the court and chuckled over its shams. His wife, on the contrary, was of a most serious turn of mind and had very little sense of humor. The frivolities of court life really shocked her. She looked upon riches as a burden, and fulfilled the social duties of her position only under protest as part of that burden. The one real joy of her life [Pg 16] lay in educating her daughters. She studied the needs of their differing natures. She talked with them much more freely than was then the custom, and did all in her power to make of them women who could live nobly at court and die bravely when and wherever their time came.

She had no fault to find with young Lafayette. Her opposition was a matter of theory and just a little selfish, for her married life had not been happy enough to make her anxious to see her girls become wives of even the best young men. As for this Motier lad, she thought him particularly open to temptation because of his youth and loneliness and great wealth. He had lacked the benefit of a father's training. So, for that matter, had her own children. Their father was almost always away from home.

The duke's airy manner hid a persistent spirit, and, in spite of his worldliness, he esteemed the good character of the boy. The discussion lasted almost a year and developed into the most

serious quarrel of their married life. No wonder, under the circumstances, that the duke did not, as his daughter expressed it, "like his home." The little girls knew something was wrong, and shared their mother's unhappiness without guessing the cause. The duke's acquaintances, on the other hand, to whom the cause was no secret, looked upon the contest of wills as a comedy staged for their benefit. One of them said in his hearing that no woman of Madame d'Ayen's strength of character, who had gone so far in refusal, would ever consent to the marriage. At this [Pg 17] the duke warmly rushed to the defense of his wife and answered that a woman of her character, once convinced that she was wrong, would give in completely and utterly.

That was exactly what happened. After months of critical observation she found herself liking Lafayette better and better. The duke assured her that the marriage need not take place for two years, and that meantime the young man should continue his studies. She gave her consent and took the motherless boy from that moment into her heart; while the little girls, sensitive to the home atmosphere, felt the joy of reconciliation without even yet knowing how nearly it concerned them.

It was decided among the elders that Adrienne, the second daughter, was to become Madame Lafayette, because the young Vicomte de Noailles, a cousin to whom Louise had been partial from babyhood, had made formal proposals for her hand. This cousin was a friend and schoolfellow of Lafayette's, and during the next few months the youths were given the opportunity of meeting their future wives apparently by chance while out walking, and even under the roof of the duke; but for a year nothing was said to the girls about marriage. Their mother did not wish to have their minds distracted from their lessons or from that important event in the lives of Catholic maidens, their first communion.

Two months before her marriage actually took place Louise was told that she was to be the bride of Noailles; and at the time of that wedding Adrienne was informed of the fate in store for her. She found nothing whatever to question in this. It seemed altogether delightful, and far simpler [Pg 18] than deciding about the state of her own soul. The truth was that her heart had already begun to feel that love for Gilbert de Motier which was to grow and become the controlling factor of her life. Girl-like, her head was just a little turned by the momentous news of her engagement. Her mother tried to allay her excitement, but she also took care to let Adrienne know how much she liked the young man and to repeat to her all the good things she had found out about him. And to her joy, Adrienne found that Lafayette felt for the elder lady "that filial affection" which also grew as the years went on.

How he felt about marriage as the day approached we do not know; neither do we know the details of the wedding which must have been celebrated with some splendor on the 11th of April, 1774. The bride was not yet fifteen, the groom was sixteen. He was given leave of absence from his regiment, and the newly wedded pair took up their residence in the wonderful Paris home of Adrienne's family, the Hotel de Noailles. Although not far from the Tuileries, in the very heart of the city, it possessed a garden so large that a small hunt could be carried on in it, with dogs and all. John Adams is authority for this. He visited the Lafayettes there some time later, and found it unbelievably vast and splendid.

III
A NEW KING

[Pg 19]

Less than a month after their marriage these young people were dressed in black, as was all the rest of fashionable Paris. The gay spring season had been brought to a premature and agitated end by the news that the king lay dead of smallpox, the loathsome disease he most dreaded.

Smallpox was distressingly common in those days before vaccination had been discovered; but courageous people protected themselves against it even then by deliberately contracting the disease from a mild case and allowing it to run its course under the best possible conditions. It was found to be much less deadly in this way, though the patients often became very ill, and it required real courage to submit to it.

The old king had never been at all brave. He feared discomfort in this life almost as much as he dreaded hell in the next; so he had fled the disease instead of courting it, and in time it came to have special terrors for him. He had been riding through the April woods with a hunting party and had come upon a sad little funeral procession—a very humble one. Always curious, he [Pg 20] stopped the bearers and asked who they were carrying to the grave. "A young girl, your Majesty." The king's watery old eyes gleamed. "Of what did she die?" "Smallpox, Sire." In terrified anger the monarch bade them begone and bury the corpse deep; then he dismissed the hunt and returned to the palace. Two days later he was stricken. The disease ran its course with amazing virulence, as though taking revenge for his misspent life. Some of the courtiers fled from Versailles. Others, to whom the king's displeasure seemed a worse menace than smallpox, remained. His favorites tried to keep the truth from the public. Daily bulletins announced that he was getting better. When it was learned that he might die the people crowded the church of Ste.-Geneviève, the patron saint of Paris, kissing the reliquary and raising sobs and prayers for his recovery. When he died, on the 10th of May, his body was hastily covered with quicklime and conveyed, by a little handful of attendants who remained faithful, to St.-Denis, where the kings of

France lie buried. It was done without ceremony in the dead of night. Forty days later his bones were laid in the tomb of his ancestors with all possible funeral pomp. There was decorous official mourning for the customary length of time; but the old king had never been an inspiring figure and most of his subjects were secretly glad he was out of the way.

During July and August of that year Lafayette was "in service" with the Black Mousquetaires. In September, when his period of active duty was over and he could do as he chose, he had himself [Pg 21] exposed to smallpox, and he and his wife and mother-in-law shut themselves up in a house at Chaillon, hired for the occasion, where during his illness and convalescence Madame d'Ayen devoted herself to her new son night and day.

Even while the rafters of Ste.-Geneviève were echoing to sobs and prayers for the old king's recovery, people whispered under their breath what they really thought of him; and by the time Lafayette and his wife could take their places in the world again Louis XV had been systematically forgotten. His grandson, the new king, was a well-meaning young man, only three years older than Lafayette. One of the king's intimates said that the chief trouble with Louis XVI was that he lacked self-confidence. Marie Antoinette, his queen, was fond of pleasure, and for four long years, ever since their marriage, they had been obliged to fill the difficult position of heirs apparent, hampered by all the restraints of royalty while enjoying precious few of its privileges. Like every one else, they were anxious to get the period of mourning well over and to see the real beginning of their reign, which promised to be long and prosperous. Nobody realized that the time had come when the sins and abuses of previous reigns must be paid for, and that the country was on the verge of one of the greatest revolutions of history.

To outward appearance it was a time of hope. Population was increasing rapidly; inventions and new discoveries were being made every day. "More truths concerning the external world were [Pg 22] discovered in France during the latter half of the eighteenth century than during all preceding periods together," says Buckle. Even in the lifetime of the old king it had been impossible to stem the tide of progress: what more natural than to believe these blessings would continue, now that his evil influence was removed?

Not only had discoveries been made; they had been brought within the reach of more people than ever before. About the time Lafayette was born the first volume of a great book called the *Encyclopedia* had made its appearance in the French language, modeled after one already produced in England. Priests had denounced it; laws had been made ordering severe penalties for its use. But it was too valuable to be given up and volume after volume continued to appear. Voltaire wrote an audacious imaginary account of the way it was used in the palace. The king's favorite did not know how to mix her rouge; the king's ministers wanted to learn about gunpowder. The forbidden book was sent for. A procession of lackeys staggered into the room, bending under the weight of twenty huge volumes, and everybody found the information desired. The bit of audacity hid a great truth. The *Encyclopedia* had brought knowledge to the people and all were anxious to profit by it.

"The people," however, were not considered by nobles who lived in palaces. Indeed, they were only beginning to consider themselves—beginning dimly to comprehend that their day was dawning. Two decades would have to pass before they were fully awake, but the scene was [Pg 23] already being set for their great drama. Paris, the largest city in France, had increased in size one-third during the past twenty-five years. The old theory had been that too large a town was a public menace, both to health and to government. Nine times already in its history the limits of Paris had been fixed and had been outgrown. It now held between seven hundred thousand and eight hundred thousand souls. When viewed from the tower of Notre Dame it spread out ten or twelve miles in circumference, round as an orange, and cut into two nearly equal parts by the river Seine.

"One is a stranger to one's neighbor in this vast place," a man wrote soon after this. "Sometimes one learns of his death only by receiving the invitation to his funeral." "Two celebrated men may live in this city twenty-five years and never meet." "So many chimneys send forth warmth and smoke that the north wind is tempered in passing over the town." Streets were so narrow and houses so high that dwellers on the lower floors "lived in obscurity"; while elsewhere there were palaces like the great house belonging to the De Noailles family with its garden large enough to stage a small hunt. Such gardens were carefully walled away from the public. These walled-in gardens and the high, evil-smelling houses in which people lived "three hundred years behind the times," crowded together and hungry from birth to death, were equally prophetic of the awakening to come; for the improvements celebrated by this writer in describing old Paris were [Pg 24] either of a kind to let light in upon the people or to make conditions more intolerable for them.

Advertising signs no longer creaked from iron gibbets, threatening to tumble and crush the passers-by. Spurs as big as cartwheels and the huge gloves and giant boots which formerly proclaimed the business carried on under them had been banished or were now screwed securely to the walls, which gave the streets a clean-shaven appearance. The candle lanterns that used to splutter and drip and go out, leaving Paris in darkness, were replaced, on nights when the moon was off duty, by lamps burning "tripe-oil" and fitted with reflectors. By means of this brilliant improvement fashionable quarters were almost safe after nightfall, whereas in former years there had been danger of attack and robbery, even within pistol-shot of the grand home where Lafayette went to live after his marriage. In addition to the lights glowing steadily under their reflectors—one light to every seventy or one hundred inhabitants—there were many professional lantern-bearers whose business in life was escorting wayfarers to and from their homes. Paris after nightfall was atwinkle, for "to live by candle-light is a sign of opulence."

There was a fire department, newly installed, ready to come on call, and, strange to say, "it cost absolutely nothing to be rescued." That, however, was the only cheap thing in Paris. "The poorer one is the more it costs to live!" was a cry that rose then, as now, in all its bitterness. With money anything could be bought. Voltaire declared that a Roman general on the day of his triumph [Pg 25] never approached the luxury to be found here. Wares came to the city from the ends of the earth, and Parisians invented new wares of their own. Somebody had contrived umbrellas like those used in the Orient, except that these folded up when not in use. Somebody else had invented the business of renting them at a charge of two liards to gallants crossing the Pont Neuf who wished to shield their complexions. There were little stations at each end of the bridge where the money could be paid or the umbrella given up. Even seasons of the year set no limit to extravagance in Paris. "A bouquet of violets in the dead of winter costs two louis (about nine dollars), and some women wear them!"

Water was delivered daily to the tall houses, from carts, by a force of twenty thousand men, who carried it as high as the seventh floor for a trifle more than it cost to cross the Pont Neuf under the shade of an umbrella. Drivers sent their water-carts skidding over the slime, for the narrow, cobble-paved streets were black with slippery mud. Coaches and other vehicles swung around corners and dashed along at incredible speed, while pedestrians fled in every direction. There were no sidewalks and no zones of safety. The confusion was so great that dignified travel by sedan-chair had become well-nigh impossible. King Louis XV once said, "If I were chief of police I would forbid coaches"; but, being only King Louis, he had done nothing. Pedestrians were often run down; then there would be even greater confusion for a few moments, but only the shortest [Pg 26] possible halt to traffic. "When on the pavements of Paris it is easy to see that the people do not make the laws," said one who had suffered.

These people who suffered in Paris at every turn were now beginning to find a cyclopedia of their own in another invention of comparatively recent date—the cafés, warmed and lighted, where even men who had not sous enough to satisfy their hunger might cheat their stomachs with a thimbleful of sour wine or a morsel of food, and sit for hours listening and pondering the talk of others who came and went. There was much talk, and in one part of Paris or another it touched upon every known subject. Each café had its specialty; politics in one, philosophy in another, science in a third. Men of the same cast of mind gravitated toward the same spot. Cafés had already become schools. Soon they were to become political clubs. It was a wonderful way to spread new ideas.

Some of the cafés were very humble, some very expensive, but none were strictly fashionable. To be seen dining in such a place indicated that a man had no invitations to dinner, so the eighteen or twenty thousand fops who, curled and perfumed, went from house to house cared little for cafés. They ate like grasshoppers, through the welcome of one host on Monday and another on Tuesday, and so down the week, "knowing neither the price of meat nor of bread, and consuming not one-quarter of that which was set before them," while thousands went hungry—which is the reason that after a time the men in the cafés rose and took a terrible revenge. Paris was by no [Pg 27] means all France, but whatever Paris did and felt the other towns were doing also; and slowly but surely the passions animating them would make their way to the loneliest peasant hut on the remotest edge of the kingdom.

Thus, while the nobles in their gardens still dreamed pleasantly of the power that was passing from them, the people were slowly rousing from torpor to resentment. It is well to linger over these conditions in order to understand fully all that Lafayette's acts meant in the society in which he moved. He was not one of the twenty thousand fops, but he belonged to the fortunate class to whom every door seemed open during the early years of the new reign. His military duties were agreeable and light, he had plenty of money, a charming wife, powerful family connections, and he was admitted to the inmost circle at court. If he had longings to experiment with the democratic theories set forth by radical authors like Rousseau, even that was not forbidden him. Their writings had attracted much attention and had already brought about increased liberality of manners. While the court at Versailles and the city of Paris were very distinct, Paris being only a huge town near at hand, the distance between them was but fourteen miles, and it was quite possible for young men like Lafayette to go visiting, so to speak, in circles not their own. Lafayette's friend, the Comte de Ségur, has left a picture of life as the young men of their circle knew it.

"Devoting all our time to society, *fêtes*, and pleasure, ... we enjoyed at one and the same time all [Pg 28] the advantages we had inherited from our ancient institutions, and all the liberty permitted by new fashions. The one ministered to our vanity, the other to our love of pleasure. In our castles, among our peasants, our guards, and our bailiffs, we still exercised some vestiges of our ancient feudal power. At court and in the city we enjoyed all the distinctions of birth. In camp our illustrious names alone were enough to raise us to superior command, while at the same time we were at perfect liberty to mix unhindered and without ostentation with all our co-citizens and thus to taste the pleasures of plebeian equality. The short years of our springtime of life rolled by in a series of illusions—a kind of well-being which could have been ours, I think, at no other age of the world."

[Pg 29]

IV
AN UNRULY COURTIER

During the winter after Adrienne's marriage the Duchesse d'Ayen took her two daughters regularly to the balls given each week by the queen, and after the balls invited the friends of her sons-in-law to supper, in a pathetically conscientious effort to make the home of the De Noailles a more agreeable place for the husbands of her children than it had been for her own. Adrienne inherited much of her mother's seriousness, but she was young enough to enjoy dancing, and, feeling that duty as well as inclination smiled upon this life, she was very happy. In December of that year her first child was born, a daughter who was named Henriette.

Lafayette tells us in his *Memoirs* that he did not feel thoroughly at ease in the gay society Marie Antoinette drew about her. Nor did the queen altogether approve of him, because of his silence and an awkwardness which did not measure up to the standards of deportment she had set for this circle of intimate friends. "I was silent," he says, "because I did not hear anything which seemed worth repeating; and I certainly had no thoughts of my own worthy of being put into words." Some of his friends, who knew him better than the queen, realized that there was plenty [Pg 30] of fire in him, in spite of his cold manner and slow speech. De Ségur was one of these, for at some period of his youth Lafayette, smitten with sudden and mistaken jealousy, had spent nearly an entire night trying to persuade De Ségur to fight a duel with him about a beauty for whom De Ségur did not care at all.

Adrienne's family, wishing to do their best by him, tried to secure a place for him in the household of the prince who afterward became Louis XVIII. Lafayette did not want to hurt their feelings; neither did he fancy himself in the rôle they had chosen for him, where he believed he would be forced to govern his actions by another man's opinions. He kept his own counsel,but, "in order to save his independence," managed to have the prince overhear a remark which he made with the deliberate purpose of angering him. The office was of course given to some one else, and another bit of ill will went to swell the breezes blowing over the terraces at Versailles.

There were bitter court factions. Friends of Louis XV had not relished seeing power slip out of their hands. The queen was an Austrian who never fully understood nor sympathized with the French. Neither her critics nor her partizans ever allowed themselves to forget her foreign birth. King Louis, not having confidence in himself, chose for his premier M. de Maurepas, who was over eighty, and should therefore have been a mine of wisdom and experience. Unfortunately, he was the wrong man; he was not universally respected, and his white hairs crowned a pate that [Pg 31] was not proof against the frivolities of society. The younger men were displeased. It was not customary to give young men positions of importance, but they were sure they could do quite as well as he. They had their café club also, a place called the Wooden Sword, where they discussed the most extravagant theories of new philosophy, reviled old customs, calling them "Gothic," their favorite term of reproach, and concocted schemes to amuse themselves and tease their elders. Having nothing serious to occupy them, they turned their attention to setting new fashions. A series of pageants and dances gave them excellent opportunity. The admiration they felt for themselves and one another in the romantic dress of the time of Henri IV made them resolve to adopt it and force it upon others for daily wear. That the capes and plumes and love-knots which became their slender figures so well made older and stouter men look ridiculous was perhaps part of their malicious intent.

Age made common cause against them, and the youngsters went too far when they held a mock session of Parliament, one of those grave assemblages which had taken place in far-off days in France, but had been almost forgotten since. There was an increasing demand that the custom be revived, which was not relished by M. de Maurepas and his kind. When the old premier learned that a prince of the blood had played the role of President in this travesty, while Lafayette had been attorney-general and other sprigs of high family figured as counsel, barristers, and [Pg 32] advocates, it was evident that a storm was brewing. De Ségur went straight to the king and told him the story in a way that made him laugh. This saved the participants from serious consequences, but it was agreed that such trifling must stop; and most of them were packed off to join their regiments.

Lafayette's regiment was stationed at Metz, and he took his way there feeling much as he had felt when he wrote his school-boy essay on the "perfect steed." It was the most fortunate journey of his life, for at the end of it he met his great opportunity. The Duke of Gloucester, brother of the King of England, was traveling abroad. He came to Metz, and the military commander of the place, Comte de Broglie, gave a dinner in his honor to which he invited the chief officers of the garrison. It was not the only time that a dinner played an important part in Lafayette's career. Neither Lafayette's age nor his military rank quite entitled him to such an invitation; but the count had a kindly spot in his heart for young men. Besides, Adrienne Lafayette was a kinswoman of his, and he remembered that the father of this tall, silent lad had served under him in the Seven Years' War.

The guest of honor was not the kind of loyal subject and brother who could speak no ill of his sovereign. In fact, he and King George were not on good terms. He had his own views about the troubles in America, and thought the king quite wrong in his attitude toward the Colonists. He had lately received letters, and at this dinner discussed them with the utmost frankness, [Pg 33] explaining the point of view of the "insurgents" and expressing his belief that they would give England serious trouble. Possibly Lafayette had never heard of George Washington until that moment. Certainly he had never considered the continent of North America except as a vague and distant part of the earth's surface with which he could have no personal concern. Yet twice already the names of his family and of America had been linked. The old marshal who took *Cur non?* for his motto had lived when the voyage of Columbus had set the world ringing; and Gilbert

de Motier, Lafayette's own father, had lost his life in the Seven Years' War, by which England won from France practically all the land she held in the New World.

Slight and remote as these connections were, who can say that they did not unconsciously influence a spirit inclined toward liberty? The conversation of the Duke of Gloucester seemed to bring America from a great distance to within actual reach of Lafayette's hand. He hung upon every word. The prince may not have been altogether prudent in his remarks. It was an after-dinner conversation and in that day the English drank hard. Even so, the duke's indiscretions made the talk more interesting and, to Lafayette, more convincing. Every word spoken strengthened the belief that these American Colonists were brave men, well within their rights, fighting for a principle which would make the world better and happier. He realized with a thrill that men three thousand miles away were not content with mere words, but were risking their [Pg 34] lives at that very moment for the theories which philosophers had been preaching for a thousand years; the same theories that orators in six hundred Paris cafés had lately begun to declaim.

Afterward he got permission to ask some of the questions with which his brain teemed; but long before the candles of that feast had burned down in their sockets his great resolution was made to "go to America and offer his services to a people struggling to be free." From that time on he could think of little else; but, as so often happens with quick and generous resolutions, the more he thought about it the more difficult it seemed to carry out. He had exulted at first that he was his own master with a fortune to dispose of as he chose. Then he remembered his wife and her family. He knew he could count upon her loyalty; but he was equally certain that he would meet determined opposition from the Duc d'Ayen and all his powerful connection, who had done their worldly best to make him a member of a prince's household.

And disapproval of "the family" in France was not to be lightly regarded. No serious step could be undertaken by young people without their elders feeling it their solemn duty to give advice. Very likely the king and his ministers would also have something to say. "However," he wrote in his *Memoirs*, "I had confidence in myself, and dared adopt as device for my coat of arms the words *Cur non?* that they might serve me on occasion for encouragement, or by way of answer."

He knew almost nothing about America, and, as soon as military duties permitted, asked leave to [Pg 35] go to Paris to make further inquiries, opening his heart very frankly to the Comte de Broglie. It happened that the count had vivid dreams of his own about America—dreams which centered on nothing less than the hope that with proper hints and encouragement the rebellious colonies might call him (the Comte de Broglie, of wide military experience) to take supreme command of their armies and lead them to victory, instead of trusting them to the doubtful guidance of local talent in the person of this obscure Col. George Washington. But De Broglie was not minded to confide such things to the red-haired stripling who looked at him so pleadingly. He conscientiously tried to dissuade him. "My boy," he said, "I saw your uncle die in the Italian wars. I witnessed your father's death.... I will not be accessory to the ruin of the only remaining branch of your family." But finding arguments made no impression, he gave him the coveted permission and also an introduction to a middle-aged Bavarian officer known as the Baron de Kalb. This man had made a voyage to America in the secret employment of the French government some years before, and he was even now acting as De Broglie's agent.

Arrived in Paris, Lafayette found the town full of enthusiasm for the insurgents, or the Bostonians, as they were called. Already English whist had been abandoned for another game of cards known as *le Boston*, and soon the authorities might feel it necessary to forbid the wearing of a certain style of head-dress called "*aux insurgents*" and to prohibit talk about American rebels [Pg 36] in the cafés. Secretly the ministers of Louis wished the audacious rebels well, being convinced that whatever vexed England served to advance the interests of France, but officially they were strictly neutral. When Lord Stormont, the British ambassador, complained that agents of the American government were shipping supplies from French ports, they made a great show of activity, asked American vessels to leave, and forbade trade in contraband articles; but they obligingly shut their eyes to the presence of Silas Deane, the American envoy, in Paris. Diplomatically speaking, he did not exist, since Louis had not yet received him; but everybody knew that people of distinction in all walks of life went secretly to his lodgings.

Lafayette knew not one word of English. Silas Deane knew little, if any, French, and it was De Kalb who acted as interpreter when the young nobleman went to call upon him. Liberty, like misery, brings about strange companionships. Three men more unlike could scarcely have been found. Although known as "Baron," Johann Kalb was a man of mystery who had in truth begun life as a butler and had won his place in the army through sheer merit. He was middle-aged, handsome, and grave. Silas Deane, the lawyer-merchant from Connecticut, was not only imperfectly equipped with French, his manners were so unpolished as to appear little short of repulsive. Lafayette's usual quiet was shaken by his new enthusiasm. His bearing, which seemed awkward at Versailles, was more graceful than the Yankee envoy thought quite moral, or than the [Pg 37] grave soldier of fortune had been able to achieve. And he was ridiculously young. Even he realized that. "In presenting my nineteen-year-old face to Mr. Deane," says the *Memoirs*, "I dwelt more on my zeal than on my experience; but I did make him comprehend that my departure would cause some little excitement and might influence others to take a similar step." He could make the family opposition count for something on his side!

Whatever Silas Deane may have lacked in manner, his wits were not slow. He instantly saw the advantage of gaining such a convert to his cause. The two signed an agreement which was a rather remarkable document. On his part Silas Deane promised Lafayette the rank of major-general in the Continental Army. But hardened as Deane was to making lavish promises in the name of the Continental Congress, he knew that a major-general only nineteen years of age, who

had never heard the sound of a hostile gun, would be received with question rather than with joy in America, so he added a few words explaining that Lafayette's "high birth, his connections, the great dignities held by his family at the court, his disinterestedness, and, above all, his zeal for the freedom of our Colonies have alone been able to induce me to make this promise." One would think Lafayette had been haggling, whereas quite the reverse appears to have been the truth.

Lafayette wrote: "To the above conditions I agree; and promise to start when and how Mr. Deane [Pg 38] shall judge it proper, to serve the said states with all possible zeal, with no allowance for private salary, reserving to myself only the right to return to France whenever my family or the king shall recall me," and signed his name. After which he left the house of the American commissioner feeling that nothing short of all the king's horses and all the king's men could turn him from his purpose.

V
LEADING A DOUBLE LIFE

[Pg 39]

Lafayette found his brother-in-law De Noailles and De Ségur in Paris, and, certain of being thoroughly understood by these two friends, confided his plan to them. As he expected, both expressed a wish to accompany him. The wish may not have been entirely unselfish. Many young officers in the French army were chafing at the inaction which ten years of peace had forced upon them, and this chance to distinguish themselves in war may have appealed to them at first even more strongly than the justice of the American cause. It certainly added to the appeal of justice in Lafayette's own case; but meetings with Silas Deane and his associates, Arthur Lee and Mr. Carmichael, above all, with Benjamin Franklin, who came to Paris about this time, soon altered interest to a warmer and less selfish feeling.

These Americans, with their unfashionable clothes, their straightforward speech, and their simple bearing, with plenty of pride in it, presented the greatest possible contrast to the curled and powdered flatterers surrounding Louis XVI. To meet them was like being met by a breath of fresh, wholesome air. The young men who came under their influence fancied that Franklin might [Pg 40] almost be a friend of Plato himself. "What added to our esteem, our confidence, and our admiration," wrote De Ségur, "were the good faith and simplicity with which the envoys, disdaining all diplomacy, told us of the frequent and oft-repeated reverses sustained by their militia, inexperienced as yet in the art of war." Merely as a sporting proposition it was a fine thing that they and their army were doing.

De Ségur and De Noailles quietly entered into an agreement with the Americans, as Lafayette had done. So did others; and it became impossible to keep their plans secret. When the families of our three friends learned of their quixotic plan it was clear they would never consent. De Noailles played a bold card by applying directly to the War Office for permission to serve as a French officer in the American army, hoping in this way to match family opposition with official sanction, but the War Office refused. After that there was nothing to do but to submit, since they were not men of independent means like Lafayette, though both were older than he and held higher military rank. They were dependent upon allowances made them by their respective families, who thus had a very effective way of expressing disapproval. All they could do was to assure Lafayette of their sympathy and keep his secret, for they knew that the opposition which blocked them would only make him the more determined. The better to carry out his plan, however, he also pretended to listen to reason and to give up all thoughts of crossing the Atlantic.

De Kalb, meanwhile, almost succeeded in leaving France. But the French government decided [Pg 41] that it would be a breach of neutrality to allow its officers to fight against England, and he was obliged to turn back. Knowing more about the secret hopes and plans of the Comte de Broglie than Lafayette knew, he proposed that they go together to consult him, and they spent several days at the count's country home. How much Lafayette learned about his host's American dreams is uncertain, nor does it make much difference in Lafayette's own story. The two elder men were quite willing to use his enthusiasm to further their own ends; but he had great need of their help. It was agreed that the voyage to America must on no account be given up, and that the best way would be for Lafayette to purchase and fit out a ship. This, however, was easier said than done. One cannot buy a ship as casually as a new pair of gloves.

Not only was his family genuinely opposed and his government officially opposed to his going; England had spies in Paris. It was jestingly said that all the world passed at least once a day over the Pont Neuf, and men were supposed to be on watch there, to ascertain who had and who had not left the city. England, moreover, had agents at every seaport in northern France. But Bordeaux in the south seemed very far away in days of stage-coach travel, and consequently was not so well guarded. As luck would have it, the Comte de Broglie's secretary had a brother who knew all about ships and merchants in Bordeaux. He found a vessel which would do, though she [Pg 42] was not very good. Her name could not be improved upon, for she was called *La Victoire*. Perhaps, like her new owner, she was able to choose one to fit the occasion. She was to cost 112,000 francs, one-quarter down, and the rest within fifteen months of the date of delivery, which was fixed for the middle of March, 1777.

Weeks before this time arrived very bad news had come from America. The report ran that Washington had lost practically everything. He had been defeated in the battles of Long Island and White Plains; New York was burned, and he and his troops, reduced now to a ragged mob of two or, at most, three thousand men, were in full retreat across New Jersey, pursued by thirty thousand British. It was well known that England was the most powerful military nation of Europe and that, not content with her own forces, she was hiring regiments of Hessians to send overseas. Clearly the triumph of such numbers must come speedily. All society, from Marie Antoinette down, admired the sturdy, independent Franklin, with his baggy coat and his homely wit. Portraits of him in his coonskin cap were to be seen in every home. He was a wizard who had done things with lightning no other mortal had done before, but even he could not bring success to a hopeless cause.

FRANKLIN AT THE FRENCH COURT
All society, from Marie Antoinette down, admired the sturdy, independent Franklin, who was always a welcome guest at court

The prospect must have appeared black indeed to the envoys themselves. Honorable men that they were, they felt in duty bound to explain the changed conditions to Lafayette, and not to allow him to ruin his whole future because of a promise enthusiastically given. They sent him a [Pg 43] message asking him to come and see them. He knew he was watched and dared not meet Franklin openly, but he went at once to Silas Deane and listened to all he had to tell him. When he finished the young Frenchman thanked him for his very frank statement of a bad situation and then made a very frank statement in return. "Heretofore," he said, "I have been able to show you only my willingness to aid you in your struggle. The time has now come when that willingness can be put to effective use, for I am going to buy a ship and take your officers out in it. Let us not give up our hope yet; it is precisely in the time of danger that I wish to share whatever fortune may have in store for you." After that it would have required superhuman unselfishness on the part of the Americans to dissuade him.

How transactions which covered three months of time, two-thirds of the length of France, and involved so many individuals remained undiscovered is a mystery unless we assume that the opposition of the government was more feigned than real. Officials appear to have closed their eyes most obligingly whenever possible.

To divert suspicion from himself, Lafayette occupied several weeks in a visit to England which had been arranged long before. Franklin and Deane were most anxious to have him carry out this plan to visit the French ambassador in London. So Lafayette crossed the Channel and spent three weeks in the smoky city, where he received many social courtesies. He appears to have enjoyed this season of gaiety much better than similar occasions at home. The necessity for hiding his [Pg 44] plans gave zest to meetings and conversations that would otherwise have been commonplace enough, while the necessity for remaining true to his ideals of conduct—of continuing to be a guest and not a spy in an enemy country—exercised his conscience as well as his wit. It became a humorous adventure to dance at Lord Germain's in the same set with Lord Rawdon, just back from New York, and to encounter between acts at the opera General Clinton, against whom he was soon to fight at Monmouth. When presented to his Majesty George III he replied to that monarch's gracious hope that he intended to make a long stay in London, with an answer at once guarded and misleading. The king inquired what errand called him away, and Lafayette answered, with an inward chuckle, that if his Majesty knew he would not wish him to remain! Although taking good care not to betray his plans, he made no secret of his interest in the

Colonists or his belief in the justice of their cause; and he avoided visiting seaport towns where expeditions were being fitted out against them, and declined all invitations likely to put him in a position to obtain information to which, under the circumstances, he felt he had no right.

Before leaving London he wrote a long letter to his father-in-law, to be delivered only when he was safely on his way to Bordeaux. Then he crossed to France, but instead of going to his own home took refuge with De Kalb at Chaillot, a suburb of Paris. Here he remained three days, [Pg 45] making final preparations. On one of these days he appeared very early before the sleepy, astonished eyes of his friend De Ségur, sent away the servant, closed the door of the bedroom with great care, and hurled the bombshell of his news: "I am going to America. Nobody knows it, but I am too fond of you to leave without telling you my secret." Then he gave him the outline of his plan, including the port from which he was to sail and the names of the dozen French officers who were to accompany him. "Lucky dog! I wish I were going with you!" was the substance of De Ségur's answer, but it had not the usual ring of sincerity. De Ségur was about to marry a young aunt of Adrienne Lafayette's and his wedding-day was drawing very near.

Lafayette managed to impart his secret to De Noailles also, but he left Paris without a farewell to Adrienne. The one hard thing in this hurried departure was that he did not dare to see or even to write directly to her. She was not well; and, besides the risk of arrest involved in visiting her, the interview could only be unnerving and distressing on both sides. The letter he wrote from London to her father appears to have been the nearest to a direct message, and that, it must be confessed, contained no mention of her name and no word exclusively for her. It was her mother, the upright Madame d'Ayen, who broke the news of his departure, tempering the seeming cruelty of his conduct with words of praise for his pluck and for the motive which prompted him to act as he did. Madame d'Ayen was the only one of the immediate family who had a good word for the [Pg 46] runaway. The young wife clung to her, appalled at the anger of her father. The duke was furious, and once more the worthy pair came to the verge of quarrel over this well-meaning young man. The count could see only madcap folly in exchanging an assured position at the French court for the doubtful honor of helping a lot of English farmers rebel against their king. For a few days the town buzzed with excitement. Lafayette's acquaintances were frankly astonished that the cold and indifferent young marquis had roused himself to such action, and thought it exceedingly "chic" that he should "go over to be hanged with the poor rebels." They were indignant at the bitterness of the duke's denunciation. One lady with a sharp tongue said that if he treated Lafayette so, he did not deserve to find husbands for the rest of his daughters.

The runaway was safely out of Paris, but by no means out of danger. The Duc d'Ayen, who honestly felt that he was bringing disgrace upon the family, bestirred himself to prevent his sailing, and had a *lettre de cachet* sent after him. A *lettre de cachet* was an official document whose use and abuse during the last hundred years had done much to bring France to its present state of suppressed political excitement. It was an order for arrest—a perfectly suitable and necessary document when properly used. But men who had power, and also had private ends to gain, had been able to secure such papers by the hundreds with spaces left blank wherein they [Pg 47] could write whatever names they chose. It was a safe and deadly and underhand way of satisfying grudges. In Lafayette's case its use was quite lawful, because he was captain in a French regiment, leaving the country in disobedience to the wish of his sovereign, to fight against a nation with whom France was on friendly terms. Technically he was little better than a deserter. When such conduct was brought to official notice, only one course was possible. The *lettre de cachet* was sent, a general order was issued forbidding French officers to take service in the American colonies, and directing that if any of them, "especially the Marquis de Lafayette," reached the French West Indies on such an errand he should forthwith return to France. Word was also sent to French seaports to keep a close watch upon vessels and to prevent the shipment of war materials to North America. Lafayette's friends became alarmed at all this activity and feared that it might have serious consequences not only for him, but for themselves. Officials began to receive letters from them calculated to shift the blame from their own shoulders, as well as to shield the young man. The French ambassador to England, whose guest he had been in London, was particularly disturbed, but felt somewhat comforted when he learned that a high official in the French army had asked King George for permission to fight as a volunteer under General Howe. This in a manner offset Lafayette's act, and England could not accuse France of partiality if her officers were to be found engaged on both sides.

VI
A SEA-TURN

[Pg 48]

Lafayette, meanwhile, was traveling southward with De Kalb. The government does not appear to have interested itself in De Kalb, who had a two years' furlough, obtained probably through the influence of the Comte de Broglie. At the end of three days they reached Bordeaux. Here they learned about the commotion Lafayette's departure had caused and that the king's order for his arrest was on the way. That it did not travel as speedily as the rumor seems to prove that Lafayette's friends were using all possible official delay to give him ample warning. He made good use of the time and succeeded in getting *La Victoire* out of Bordeaux to the Spanish harbor of Los Pasajes in the Bay of Biscay, just across the French frontier.

It was in leaving Bordeaux that Lafayette found a use for his many names. Each passenger leaving a French port was required to carry with him a paper stating his name, the place of his birth, his age, and general appearance. The one made out by a port official not over-particular in spelling described him as "Sr. Gilbert du Mottie, Chevalier de Chaviallac—age twenty years, tall, and blond." This was all true except that his age was made a little stronger and the color of his [Pg 49] hair a little weaker than facts warranted. His age was nineteen years and six months and his hair was almost red. He was the Chevalier de Chavaniac, though it is doubtful if one acquaintance in a hundred had ever heard the title.

When he stepped ashore at Los Pasajes he was confronted by two officers who had followed from Bordeaux by land with the *lettre de cachet*. Letters from his family and from government officials also awaited him: "terrible letters," he called them. Those from his family upbraided him bitterly; the Ministry accused him of being false to his oath of allegiance. The *lettre de cachet* peremptorily ordered him to Marseilles to await further instructions. He knew that this meant to await the arrival of his father-in-law, who was about to make a long journey into Italy and would insist upon Lafayette accompanying him, that he might keep an eye upon his movements.

He was now in Spain, quite beyond the reach of French law, but he could not bring himself to actual disobedience while there was the remotest chance of having these commands modified; so he went back with the messengers to Bordeaux, and from there sent letters by courier to Paris, asking permission to return and present his case in person. De Kalb remained with the ship at Los Pasajes, impatient and not a little vexed. He foresaw a long delay, if indeed the expedition ever started. *La Victoire* could not sail without its owner, or at least without the owner's consent. De Kalb thought Lafayette had acted very foolishly; he should either have given up entirely or [Pg 50] gone ahead regardless of the summons, Also he felt that the young man had not been quite frank; that in talking with him he had underestimated the family opposition. "Had he told me in Paris all that he has admitted since," De Kalb wrote to his wife, "I would have remonstrated most earnestly against the whole scheme. As it is, the affair will cost him some money." Then, having freed his mind of his accumulated impatience, he added, "But if it be said that he has done a foolish thing, it may be answered that he acted from the most honorable motives and that he can hold up his head before all high-minded men."

In Bordeaux Lafayette had presented himself before the commandant and made declaration that he alone would be answerable for the consequences of his acts; then he had set himself, with all the patience he could muster, to wait the return of his messenger. To his formal request he received no reply. From private letters he learned that he had only the Duc d'Ayen to thank for the *lettre de cachet*. Officials had been heard to say that they would have taken no notice of his departure had it not been for the duke's complaint. This convinced him that there was nothing to be gained by waiting; so he wrote to M. de Maurepas that he interpreted his silence to be consent, "and with this pleasantry," as he says in the *Memoirs*, disappeared from Bordeaux. He informed the commandant that he was going to Marseilles in obedience to orders, and sent the same message to De Kalb, adding the significant hint, however, that he had not given up hope, [Pg 51] and the request that De Kalb look after his interests. He, indeed, set out by post-chaise on the road to Marseilles in company with the Vicomte de Mauroy, a young officer who like himself held one of Silas Deane's commissions. They left that road, however, at the first convenient opportunity and turned their horses directly toward Spain. They also made slight changes in their traveling arrangements, after which De Mauroy sat in the chaise alone, while Lafayette, dressed like a postilion, rode one of the horses. The commandant, having his own suspicions, sent some officers riding after them.

At a little town near the frontier, called Saint-Jean-de-Luz, it was necessary to change horses. The masquerading post-boy threw himself down to rest in the stable while the gentleman in the chaise attended to the essential business. It was here that an inquisitive daughter of the innkeeper, who evidently knew a good deal about postilions, recognized in the youth stretched upon the straw the young gentleman she had seen riding in state in the other direction only a few days before. Her eyes and mouth opened in wonder, but a sign from Lafayette checked the exclamation upon her lips, and when the officers rode up a very demure but very positive young woman set them on the wrong trail.

On the 17th of April Lafayette rejoined De Kalb at Los Pasajes, and on Sunday, April 20, 1777, *La Victoire* set sail for America. In addition to the captain and crew, De Kalb, the owner of the vessel, and De Mauroy, she had on board about a dozen officers of various grades, all of whom [Pg 52] were anxious to serve in the Continental Army. The French government took no further measures to interfere. Grave matters of state nearer home claimed its attention; and, since signs of coming war with England grew plainer every day, it may have been well content to see this band of officers already enlisted against her. M. de Vergennes, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, was quoted as saying that the young man had run away again, and he would take good care this time not to mention the matter to the king.

After six months of effort Lafayette was at last under way. The ship's papers had been made out for the West Indies; but inconvenient orders might be awaiting him there, so he ordered the captain to sail directly for the mainland. The captain demurred, explaining that an English cruiser could take them prisoners and confiscate their cargo if their course and their papers did not agree. As owner of the vessel Lafayette repeated his orders; he even threatened to depose the captain and put the second officer in command. But the captain's unwillingness appeared so extraordinary that he was moved to investigate farther, and found that the thrifty man had smuggled merchandise aboard to the value of $8,000 which he hoped to sell at a profit. Lafayette felt that it was not a time to be over-particular. He promised to make good whatever loss the

captain might sustain, whereupon nervousness about English cruisers left him and he steered as directed.

It proved a long voyage. *La Victoire* was at sea fifty-five dreary days, and Lafayette speedily fell a [Pg 53] victim to the rollers of the Atlantic; but he wrote to his wife he "had the consolation vouchsafed to the wicked of suffering in company with many others." When he recovered he began to study English, in which he made considerable progress. He also studied military science as something about which it might be convenient for a major-general to know; and he wrote interminable pages to Adrienne, full of love, of ennui, and of whimsical arguments to prove that he had done the wisest thing, not only for his career, but for his health and safety, in offering his sword to the Continental Army.

"I have been ever since my last letter to you in the most dismal of countries," he wrote after he had been out a month. "The sea is so wearisome, and I believe we have the same doleful influence upon each other, it and I." "One day follows another, and, what is worse, they are all alike. Nothing but sky and nothing but water; and to-morrow it will be just the same." "I ought to have landed before this, but the winds have cruelly opposed me. I shall not see Charleston for eight or ten days longer. Once I am there, I have every hope of getting news from France. I shall learn then so many interesting details, not only of what I am going to find before me, but above all of what I left behind me with such regret. Provided I find that you are well, and that you still love me, and that a certain number of our friends are in the same condition, I shall accept philosophically whatever else may be." "How did you take my second departure? Did you love me [Pg 54] the less? Have you forgiven me? Have you thought that in any event we should have been separated, I in Italy dragging along a life with no chance to distinguish myself and surrounded by people most hostile to my projects and my views?" "Consider the difference.... As the defender of that liberty which I adore, free myself beyond all others, coming as a friend to offer my services to this most interesting republic, I bring ... no selfish interests to serve. If I am striving for my own glory I am at the same time laboring for its welfare. I trust that for my sake you will become a good American; it is a sentiment made for virtuous hearts." "Do not allow yourself to feel anxiety because I am running great danger in the occupation that is before me. The post of major-general has always been a warrant of long life—so different from the service I should have had in France as colonel, for instance. With my present rank I shall only have to attend councils of war. Ask any of the French generals, of which there are so many because, having attained that rank, they run no further risk.... In order to show that I am not trying to deceive you I will admit that we are in danger at this moment, because we are likely at any time to be attacked by an English vessel, and we are not strong enough to defend ourselves. But as soon as I land I shall be in perfect safety. You see that I tell you everything in order that you may feel at ease and not allow yourself to be anxious without cause.... But now let us talk of more important things," and he goes on to write about their baby daughter, Henrietta, and about the new baby, the [Pg 55] announcement of whose birth he expected to receive very soon after landing. "Do not lose a moment in sending me the joyful news," he commands. "Mr. Deane and my friend Carmichael will aid you in this, and I am sure they would neglect no opportunity to make me happy as quickly as possible.... Adieu. Night coming on obliges me to stop, for I have lately forbidden the use of lights aboard the ship. See how careful I am!" He could afford to dwell on perils of the voyage, since these would be safely over before the missive could start on its way back to France. The danger was by no means imaginary. One of the letters written at the time Lafayette's departure was the talk of Paris, by a man who knew whereof he spoke, had said, "His age may justify his escapade, but I am truly sorry, not only for the interest you and the Duc d'Ayen have in the matter, but because I am afraid he may fall in with some English man-of-war, and, not being distinguished from the mass of adventurers who come into their hands, may be treated with a harshness not unknown to that nation."

La Victoire was a clumsy boat armed with only "two old cannon and a few muskets" and stood small chance if attacked. Lafayette was perfectly aware of this, and had no intention of being taken alive. He entered into an agreement with one of the company, a brave Dutchman named Bedaulx, to blow up the vessel as a last resort, the pleasant alternative in any case being hanging. So, with a sailor pledged to ignite a few powder-kegs and the captain steering the ship [Pg 56] by constraint rather than by desire, the long voyage was not devoid of thrills. These increased as they neared land. At forty leagues from shore *La Victoire* was overhauled by a little vessel. "The captain grew pale," Lafayette tells us; but the crew was loyal and the officers were numerous and they put up a show of defense. She proved to be an American and so much the faster boat that she was soon out of sight, though *La Victoire* tried hard to keep up with her. Scarcely was she gone when the lookout sighted two English frigates. With these they played a game of hide-and-seek until they were saved by a providential gale which blew the enemy out of his course long enough to enable *La Victoire* to run into shelter near Georgetown, South Carolina.

VII
AN AMERICAN PILGRIMAGE

[Pg 57]

The bit of land to which that unneutral north wind had wafted the travelers was an island about fifteen miles from Georgetown, South Carolina. Nobody on *La Victoire* knew the coast, so it was prudently decided to reconnoiter in a small boat. Lafayette, with De Kalb and two or three other

officers and a few sailors, started off about two o'clock on the afternoon of June 13th, in the ship's yawl, and rowed until sunset without encountering a soul. After the sun went down they continued to row on and on, still in complete solitude, until about ten o'clock, when they came upon some negroes dredging for oysters.

Thus the first human beings that Lafayette encountered in the land of the free were slaves; and it was not the least picturesque coincidence of his picturesque career that these ignorant creatures rendered him a service, instead of his helping them. Also it is rather amusing that this knight errant of noble lineage, who had come so far to fight for freedom, should have made his entry into America in the dead of night, in an evil-smelling oyster-boat, instead of with pomp and [Pg 58] ceremony from the ship his wealth had provided.

Neither Frenchmen nor slaves could understand the speech of the others except in a vague way. The Frenchmen thought the slaves said there was a pilot somewhere on the island. They seemed to be offering to take them to the house of their master, an American officer; and as the tide had fallen and it was impossible to proceed farther in the yawl, they transferred themselves to the oyster-boat and gave themselves up to these mysterious guides. For two hours the blacks ferried them through the darkness. About midnight they saw a light, and soon were put ashore to make their way toward it. It was evident that their approach caused excitement. Dogs began to bark and the inmates of the large house from which the light shone appeared to be making preparations for a siege. A sharp challenge rang out, which indicated that they were mistaken for marauders from some British ship. De Kalb replied in his most polite English, explaining that they were French officers come to offer their swords to the Continental Army. Then, with the swiftness of a transformation in a fairy play, they found themselves in a glow of light, the center of warm interest, and being welcomed with true Southern hospitality. No wonder that ever after Lafayette had the kindest possible feelings for African slaves.

Mid-June in Carolina is very beautiful; and it must have seemed a wonderful world upon which he opened his eyes next morning. Outside his window was the green freshness of early summer; inside the immaculate luxury of a gentleman's bedchamber—both doubly delightful after seven [Pg 59] cramped weeks at sea. That the smiling blacks who came to minister to his wants were bondmen, absolutely at the mercy of their masters, and that the filmy gauze curtains enveloping his bed had been put there to prevent his being eaten alive by those "gnats which cover you with large blisters," about which he afterward wrote Adrienne, were drawbacks and inconsistencies he hardly realized in that first blissful awakening. He was always more inclined to enthusiasm than to faultfinding, and nothing that ever happened to him in America effaced the joy of his first impression.

His host proved to be Major Benjamin Huger, of French Huguenot descent, so he had fallen among people of his own nation. Had Major Huger been one of his own relatives he could not have been kinder or his family more sympathetic; and it was a sympathy that lasted long, for in the group around the French officers was a little lad of five who took small part in the proceedings at the moment, but lost his heart to the tall Frenchman then and there, and made a quixotic journey in Lafayette's behalf after he was grown.

The water was too shallow to permit *La Victoire* to enter the harbor at Georgetown, so a pilot was sent to take her to Charleston while Lafayette and his companions went by land. The reports he received about vigilant English cruisers made him send his captain orders to land officers and crew and burn the ship if occasion arose and he had time; but another unneutral wind brought *La* [Pg 60] *Victoire* into Charleston Harbor in broad daylight without encountering friend or foe.

Major Huger furnished Lafayette and De Kalb with horses for the ninety miles and more of bad roads that lay between his plantation and Charleston. The others, for whom no mounts could be found, made the distance on foot, arriving ragged and worn. But as soon as the city knew why they had come, its inhabitants vied with one another in showering attentions upon them. One of his companions wrote that the marquis had been received with all the honors due to a marshal of France. Lafayette, who sent a letter to his wife by every ship he found ready to sail, was eloquent in praise of Charleston and its citizens. It reminded him of England, he said, but it was neater, and manners were simpler. "The richest man and the poorest are upon the same social level," he wrote, "and although there are some great fortunes in this country, I defy any one to discover the least difference in the bearing of one man to another." He thought the women beautiful, and Charlestonians the most agreeable people he had ever met. He felt as much at ease with them as though he had known them for twenty years; and he described a grand dinner at which the governor and American generals had been present, which lasted five hours. "We drank many healths and spoke very bad English, which language I am beginning to use a little. To-morrow I shall take the gentlemen who accompany me to call upon the governor, and then I shall make preparations to leave."

He hoped to provide funds for the journey to Philadelphia by selling certain goods he had brought [Pg 61] on *La Victoire*. It would have been easy to do this had not his trustful nature and ignorance of business played him a sorry turn. He found that his unwilling friend, the captain, held a note which he had signed in a hurry of departure without realizing what it contained. It provided that the vessel and cargo must be taken back to Bordeaux and sold there. This was most embarrassing, because, in spite of his large possessions in France, he was a stranger in America and had no other way of providing for the immediate wants of himself and his companions. It proved even more embarrassing than at first seemed likely, for the ship never reached Bordeaux. She was wrecked on the Charleston bar at the very outset of her homeward voyage.

In his enthusiasm Lafayette had written Adrienne, "What delights me most is that all citizens are

brothers." Here unexpectedly was a chance to put the brotherly quality to the test. He carried his dilemma to his new-found friends. They were polite and sympathetic, but ready money was scarce, they told him, and even before *La Victoire* came to her inglorious end he experienced "considerable difficulty" in arranging a loan. Whatever temporary jolt this gave his theories, his natural optimism triumphed both in securing money to equip his expedition and in preserving intact his good will toward the American people.

By the 25th of June everything was ready and his company set out, traveling in three different parties, in order not to overcrowd the inns of that sparsely settled region. The gentlemen who [Pg 62] had been entertained by Major Huger traveled together. One of them, the Chevalier du Buisson, wrote an account of the journey which explains the order in which they set forth. "The aide-de-camp of the marquis undertook to be our guide, although he had no possible idea of the country.... The procession was headed by one of the marquis's people in huzzar uniform. The marquis's carriage was a sort of uncovered sofa on four springs, with a fore-carriage. At the side of his carriage he had one of his servants on horseback who acted as his squire. The Baron de Kalb was in the same carriage. The two colonels, Lafayette's counselors, followed in a second carriage with two wheels. The third was for the aides-de-camp, the fourth for the luggage, and the rear was brought up by a negro on horseback."

According to Lafayette's reckoning, they traveled nearly nine hundred miles through the two Carolinas, Virginia, and the states of Maryland and Delaware. But only a small part of the progress was made in such elegance. Roads were rough and the weather was very hot, which was bad for men and horses alike. Some of the company fell ill; some of the horses went lame; some of the luggage was stolen; some of it had to be left behind. Extra horses had to be bought, and this used up most of the money. On the 17th of July Lafayette wrote to Adrienne from Petersburg: "I am at present about eight days' journey from Philadelphia in the beautiful land of Virginia.... You have learned of the beginning of my journey and how brilliantly I set out in a [Pg 63] carriage.... At present we are all on horseback, after having broken up the wagons in my usual praiseworthy fashion; and I expect to write you in a few days that we have arrived on foot." He admitted that there had been some fatigue, but as for himself he had scarcely noticed it, so interested had he been in the great new country with its vast forests and large rivers; "everything, indeed, to give nature an appearance of youth and of majesty." "The farther north I proceed the better I like this country and its people."

There was no regularity about sending mail across the Atlantic, and as yet he had not heard from home. Doubtless the hope of finding letters spurred on his desire to reach Philadelphia. From Annapolis he and De Kalb alone were able to proceed without a halt, leaving the rest of the party behind for needed repose. They reached Philadelphia on July 27th. Even with this final burst of speed they had consumed a whole month in a journey that can now be made in less than twenty-four hours.

VIII
AN ASTONISHING RECEPTION

[Pg 64]

All Lafayette's company had been looking forward to their reception by Congress as full recompense for sufferings by the way. Knowing that they had come to offer help, and having already experienced the hospitality of Charleston, they dreamed of a similar welcome increased and made more effective by official authority. They hastened to present their letters of introduction and their credentials; and it was a great blow to find that they were met, not with enthusiasm, but with coldness. Lafayette said their reception was "more like a dismissal." We are indebted to the Chevalier du Buisson for an account of this unexpected rebuff. "After having brushed ourselves up a little we went to see the President of Congress, to whom we presented our letters of recommendation and also our contracts. He sent us to Mr. Moose [Morris?], a member of Congress, who made an appointment to meet us on the following day at the door of Congress, and in the mean time our papers were to be read and examined." Next day they were very punctual, but were made to wait a long time before "Mr. Moose" appeared with a Mr. Lovell and told them all communication must be made through him. Still standing in the street, Mr. [Pg 65] Lovell talked with them and finally walked away and left them, "after having treated us in excellent French, like a set of adventurers.... This was our first reception by Congress, and it would have been impossible for any one to be more stupefied than we were. Would it have been possible for M. de Lafayette, M. de Kalb, and M. de Mauroy with ten officers recommended as we had been, and secretly approved, if not openly avowed by the government of France, to expect such a reception as this?"

One can imagine the varying degrees of resentment and disgust with which they watched Mr. Lovell disappear. If *La Victoire* had been there, ready provisioned for a voyage, very likely not one of them would have remained an hour longer in America. But *La Victoire* was not at hand and Lafayette's sunny optimism was on the spot to serve them well. "We determined," says Du Buisson, "to wait and to discover the cause of this affront, if possible, before making any complaint."

They discovered that they had come at the worst possible time. A number of foreign adventurers had hurried from the West Indies and Europe and offered their services at the beginning of the

war. Being desperately in need of trained officers, Congress had given some of them commissions, though their demands for rank and privilege were beyond all reason. This, coupled with their bad behavior after entering the army, had incensed officers of American birth, who threatened to resign if any more Europeans were taken into the army with rank superior to their [Pg 66] own. The protest had reached almost the proportions of a strike. At that very moment a French artillery officer named De Coudray was giving Congress no end of trouble, and indeed continued to do so until, "by a happy accident," as Franklin cynically put it, he was drowned in the Schuylkill River a few weeks later.

There was nothing to prove that Lafayette and his friends differed from the rest. Like them they were foreigners with high-sounding titles in front of their names and requests for major-generalships tripping speedily after their offers of help. As for Silas Deane's contracts—Deane had commissioned some of the very worst of these men. Congress had reached the point where it proposed to end the trouble by refusing to honor any more of his agreements. Mr. Lovell told Lafayette and his companions smartly that French officers had a great fancy for entering the American army uninvited, that America no longer needed them, having plenty of experienced men of her own now; and walked away, leaving them standing there in the street.

Lafayette, not being like the others, determined to make Congress aware of the fact. He wrote a letter to that august body, stating why and how he had come to America, and adding: "After the sacrifices that I have made in this cause I have the right to ask two favors at your hands. The one is to serve without pay, and the other that I be allowed to serve first as a volunteer." Congress immediately sat up and took notice of the young man, the more readily because of two letters [Pg 67] which arrived from Paris showing that he was of importance in his own country. The first was signed by Silas Deane and by Benjamin Franklin, and read:

"The Marquis de Lafayette, a young nobleman of great family connection here and great wealth, is gone to America on a ship of his own, accompanied by some officers of distinction, in order to serve in our armies. He is exceedingly beloved, and everybody's good wishes attend him. We cannot but hope he may meet with such a reception as will make the country and his expedition agreeable to him. Those who censure it as imprudent in him do, nevertheless, applaud his spirit; and we are satisfied that the civilities and respect that may be shown him will be serviceable to our affairs here, as pleasing not only to his powerful relations, and to the court, but to the whole French nation. He leaves a beautiful young wife ... and for her sake particularly we hope that his bravery and ardent desire to distinguish himself will be a little restrained by the general's prudence, so as not to permit his being hazarded much, but on some important occasion." The other was a communication from the French government requesting the Congress of the United States not to give employment to the Marquis de Lafayette. But Congress took the hint contained in Franklin's letter and regarded this for just what it was—a bit of official routine.

Mr. Lovell hastened to call upon Lafayette in company with another gentleman who had better manners, and made an attempt at apology. This interview led to a more private talk in which he [Pg 68] was offered a commission of major-general without pay and without promise of a command, to date from that time, and to have no connection whatever with Silas Deane's former promises. To this Lafayette agreed.

Some of his friends did not fare so well, but even these felt that he did everything in his power to further their interests. "If he had had his way," says Du Buisson, "De Kalb would have been a major-general, and we should all have had places." The situation was particularly trying to De Kalb, who was so much older and had seen so much actual military service. On board *La Victoire* he had been only Lafayette's guest, though the guest of honor and, next to the owner, the most important person aboard. Under such conditions, good manners forced him to play a subordinate part; and if it be true that he and De Broglie were using Lafayette's generosity to further their own ends, that was another reason for circumspect behavior. But after landing it must have been galling to see this young captain of twenty made a major-general "on demand," while his thirty-four years of experience were completely ignored. On the day after Lafayette's appointment De Kalb wrote Congress a letter in his turn, complaining bitterly and asking either that he be made a major-general, "with the seniority I have a right to expect," or that he and the other officers who had come with Lafayette be refunded the money they had spent on the journey. He said he was very glad Congress had granted Lafayette's wishes. "He is a worthy young man, and no one will outdo him in enthusiasm in your cause of liberty and independence. My wish will always be that [Pg 69] his success as a major-general will equal his zeal and your expectation." But De Kalb plainly had his doubts; and he did not hesitate to "confess, sir, that this distinction between him and myself is painful and very displeasing to me. We came on the same errand, with the same promises, and as military men and for military purposes. I flatter myself that if there was to be any preference, it would be due to me." He hinted that he might sue Mr. Deane for damages, and he added: "I do not think that either my name, my services, or my person are proper objects to be trifled with or laughed at. I cannot tell you, sir, how deeply I feel the injury done to me, or how ridiculous it seems to me to make people leave their homes, families, and affairs, to cross the sea under a thousand different dangers, to be received and to be looked at with contempt by those from whom you were to expect but warm welcome."

Congress could have answered with perfect justice that it had not "made" these gentlemen travel one foot toward America or brave a single danger. But on the basis of Deane's contract it was clearly in the wrong and it had no wish to insult France, though it could not afford to anger the American generals. It therefore decided to thank the French officers for their zeal in coming to America and to pay their expenses home again. Most of them did return, some by way of Boston, others from Southern ports. De Kalb meant to accompany the latter group, but a fever detained

him for several weeks in Philadelphia; and just as he was leaving a messenger brought him word that he had been made major-general through the influence of several members of Congress who had made his personal acquaintance and were more impressed by the man himself than by his petulant letter. At first he was inclined to refuse, fearing the other French officers might feel he had deserted them, but on reflection he accepted, and, as every one knows, rendered great service to the United States. [Pg 70]

Lafayette wrote Congress a letter of thanks in English—an excellent letter, considering the short time he had been using the language, but neither in wording nor in spelling exactly as a native would have written it. In this letter he expressed the hope that he might be allowed to "serve near the person of General Washington till such time as he may think proper to intrust me with a division of the army."

General Washington's previous experience with the French had been unfortunate. He had met them as enemies in the neighborhood of Fort Duquesne before Lafayette was born. They had taken part in the defeat of General Braddock, and during the present war their actions had not been of a kind to endear them to him. Probably even after reading Franklin's letter he did not look forward with the least pleasure to meeting this young sprig of the French nobility. Still, Washington was a just man and the first to admit that every man has the right to be judged on his own merits.

It was at a dinner, one of the lucky dinners in Lafayette's career, that the two met for the first time. The company was a large one, made up of the most distinguished men in Philadelphia; but from the moment Washington entered the room Lafayette was sure he was the greatest in the company. "The majesty of his countenance and his figure made it impossible not to recognize him," while his manners seemed to Lafayette as affable and kindly as they were dignified. Washington on his part observed the slim young Frenchman throughout the evening, and was also favorably impressed. Before the party broke up he drew him aside for a short conversation and invited him to become a member of his military family, saying with a smile that he could not offer the luxuries of a court or even the conveniences to which Lafayette had been accustomed, but that he was now an American soldier and would of course accommodate himself to the privations of a republican camp. [Pg 71]

Pleased and elated as a boy, Lafayette accepted, sent his horses and luggage to camp, and took up his residence at Washington's headquarters. "Thus simply," he wrote in his *Memoirs*, "came about the union of two friends whose attachment and confidence were cemented by the greatest of interests." In truth this sudden flowering of friendship between the middle-aged Washington, who appeared so cool, though in fact he had an ardent nature, and the enthusiastic Frenchman twenty-five years his junior, is one of the pleasantest glimpses we have into the kindly human heart of each. It took neither of them one instant to recognize the worth of the other, and the mutual regard thus established lasted as long as life itself.

IX
PROVING HIMSELF A SOLDIER

[Pg 72]

The American army as Lafayette first saw it must have seemed a strange body of men to eyes accustomed to holiday parades in Paris. The memory of it remained with him years afterward when he wrote that it consisted of "about eleven thousand men, rather poorly armed, and much worse clad." There was a great variety in the clothing, some unmistakable nakedness, and the best garments were only loose hunting-shirts of gray linen, of a cut with which he had already become familiar in Carolina. The soldiers were drawn up in two lines, the smaller ones in front, "but with this exception there was no distinction made as to size." It was while reviewing these troops that Washington said, "it is somewhat embarrassing to us to show ourselves to an officer who has just come from the army of France," to which Lafayette made the answer that won the hearts of all, "I am here to learn, not to teach." He speedily learned that in spite of their appearance and their way of marching and maneuvering, which seemed to him childishly simple, they were "fine soldiers led by zealous officers," in whom "bravery took the place of science."

Judging by what they had accomplished, they were indeed wonders. It was now August, 1777. Lexington had been fought in April, 1775, and in that space of more than two years England had been unable to make real headway against the insurrection which General Gage had at first thought could be thoroughly crushed by four British regiments. That mistake had soon become apparent. Large reinforcements had been sent from England with new generals. At present there were two British armies in the field. Time and again the ragged Continentals had been beaten, yet in a bewildering fashion they continued to grow in importance in the eyes of the world. [Pg 73]

The first part of the struggle had all taken place in the neighborhood of Boston; hence the name "Bostonians" by which the Americans had been applauded in Paris. But after General Howe was held for a whole winter in Boston in a state of siege he sailed away for Halifax in March, 1776, with all his troops and all the Tories who refused to stay without him. This was nothing less than an admission that he was unable to cope with the Americans. He sent word to England that it would require at least 50,000 men to do it—10,000 in New England, 20,000 in the Middle States, 10,000 in the South, and 10,000 to beat General Washington, who had developed such an

uncanny power of losing battles, yet gaining prestige.

The War Office in London refused to believe General Howe. It reasoned that New England was, after all, only a small section of country which could be dealt with later; so it let it severely alone [Pg 74] and concentrated attention upon New York with a view to getting command of the Hudson River. The Hudson would afford a direct route up to the Canadian border, and Canada was already British territory. It ought not to be difficult to gain control of one Atlantic seaport and one river. That accomplished, the rebellion would be cut in two as neatly as though severed with a knife, and it would be easy enough to dispose of New England and of the South in turn.

So General Howe was ordered back to carry out this plan. He appeared off Staten Island with twenty-five thousand men on the day after the Declaration of Independence was signed. In the thirteen months that elapsed between his coming and the day Lafayette first reviewed the American army General Washington had been able to keep Howe and all his forces at bay. He had marched and retreated and maneuvered. He had lost battles and men. Lost New York, as had been reported in Paris; had indeed lost most of his army, as the American commissioners admitted to Lafayette; yet in some mysterious way he continued to fight. By brilliant strategy he had gained enough victory to rekindle hope after hope seemed dead; and never, even when the outlook was darkest, had the British been able to get full control of the Hudson River.

The British government, annoyed by Howe's delay, sent over another army under General Burgoyne in the spring of 1777, with orders to go down from Canada and end the matter. When last heard from, this army had taken Ticonderoga and was pursuing General Schuyler through [Pg 75] eastern New York. General Howe, meanwhile, appeared to have dropped off the map. He was no longer in force near New York, nor had Washington any definite news of his whereabouts. This was the situation when Lafayette became a member of Washington's military family; a major-general without pay, experience, or a command.

He took his commission seriously enough to cause his general some misgiving; for, after all, Washington knew nothing about his ability, only that he liked him personally. Lafayette frankly admitted his youth and inexperience, but always accompanied such admissions with a hint that he was ready to assume command as soon as the general saw fit to intrust him with it. On the 19th of August Washington wrote to Benjamin Harrison, a member of Congress, telling him his perplexity and asking him to find out how matters really stood. If Lafayette's commission had been merely honorary, as Washington supposed, the young man ought to be made fully aware of his mistake; if not, Washington would like to know what was expected of him. The answer returned was that Washington must use his own judgment; and for a time matters drifted. Lafayette meanwhile took gallant advantage of every small opportunity that came his way, both for assuming responsibility and for doing a kindness. He proved himself ready to bear a little more than his full share of hardship, and, by constant cheerfulness and willingness to accept whatever duty was assigned him, came to be regarded as by far the best foreigner in the army— [Pg 76] though of course hopelessly and forever a foreigner. In his letters home he often touched upon the discontent of other men of European birth "who complain, detest, and are detested in turn. They do not understand why I alone am liked.... For my part I cannot understand why they are so heartily detested.... I am happy in being loved by everybody, foreign and American. I like them all, hope to merit their esteem, and we are well content with each other."

It was on the 21st of August, two days after Washington's letter to Mr. Harrison, that Lafayette was called to attend the first council of war—that duty about which he had playfully written to his wife. The question was what to do next, for General Howe and his army had not been seen or heard of for weeks. That meant that he was planning some surprise; but from which direction would it come?

The truth was that General Howe had allowed himself to be lured away from the Hudson by his ambition to capture Philadelphia, knowing what a blow it would be to the Americans to lose their chief town where Congress was sitting. As soon as this was accomplished he meant to return to his former duty. To the American officers gathered around the map on the council table his whereabouts was a great mystery, for they thought ample time had elapsed for him to appear in Chesapeake Bay if Philadelphia was indeed his objective. Presumably he meant to attack some other place, and Charleston seemed to be the only other place of sufficient importance to merit [Pg 77] his attention. As it was manifestly impossible to get Washington's army that far south in time to be of assistance, it was determined to leave Charleston to its fate and to move nearer to New York to guard the Hudson. With Burgoyne descending from the north and Howe in hiding, it was quite possible that the river might soon be menaced from two directions. The battle of Bennington, a severe check for Burgoyne, had in fact occurred three days before, but it is probable they had not yet heard of it.

The day after the council, ships carrying Howe's army were sighted in Chesapeake Bay, which proved without doubt that Philadelphia was his goal. Washington faced his men about, and, in order to cheer Philadelphians and give his soldiers a realization of what they were defending, marched the army through the city "down Front Street to Chestnut, and up Chestnut to Elm," riding, himself, at the head of his troops, a very handsome figure on his white horse, Lafayette conspicuous among the staff-officers, and the privates wearing sprigs of green in their hats as they marched to a lively air. They were joined as they went along by Pennsylvania militia and by other volunteers who hastened forward, American fashion, at prospect of a battle. Thus Washington's force was increased to about fifteen thousand by the time he neared the enemy. Most of these new arrivals were, however, worse off for clothing and arms—and discipline—than the original army, so his force by no means matched either in numbers or equipment the eighteen thousand British soldiers, thoroughly supplied according to the best standards of the day, which [Pg 78]

were disembarked by Cornwallis "at the Head of Elk," the inlet of Chesapeake Bay nearest to the city.

There were several preliminary skirmishes, during which Lafayette learned that Washington could be as personally reckless as the youngest lieutenant. On the day the British landed he exposed himself in a reconnaissance and was forced to remain through a night of storm, with Lafayette and Gen. Nathanael Greene, in a farm-house very near the enemy lines.

The main battle for the defense of Philadelphia occurred on the 11th of September, on the banks of a little stream called the Brandywine, about twenty-five miles from the city. Washington intrenched his force upon the hilly ground of its east bank, but, owing to woods which made it hard to observe the enemy, to the ease with which the stream could be forded, and to the superior numbers of the British, this position was turned and his army forced back toward Chester. It was Lafayette's first battle, and the zeal with which he threw himself into the unequal contest, the quickness of his perceptions, and the courage he showed in following up his instinct of the thing to do with the act of doing it, won the admiration of all who saw him. After that day the army forgot he was a foreigner and looked upon him as one of themselves. "Never," he says, "was adoption more complete."

During the hottest of the fight he had leaped from his horse down among the men, striving by voice and example to rally them to make a stand against Cornwallis's fast-approaching column. [Pg 79] Lord Sterling and General Sullivan had come to his aid and the three had held their ground until the British were only twenty yards away, when they took refuge in a wood. Lafayette's left leg had been struck by a musket-ball, but he was unconscious of this until another officer called attention to the blood running from his boot. With the help of his French aide-de-camp, Major de Gimat, who had come with him on *La Victoire*, he remounted his horse, but remained with the troops and was borne along in the general retreat toward Chester, which became very like a rout as night approached; men and guns hurrying on in ever-increasing confusion. Near Chester there was a bridge, and here, though Lafayette was weak from loss of blood, he placed guards and, halting the fugitives as they came up, managed to bring something like order into the chaos. It was only after Washington and other generals reached the spot that he consented to have his wound properly dressed. Washington's midnight report to Congress mentioned the gallantry of the young Frenchman.

Lafayette's injury was not at all dangerous, but it was quite serious enough to keep him in bed for a month or more. He was taken to Philadelphia, and Washington sent his most skilful surgeon to attend him, with orders to care for him as he would for his own son. Later, when Howe's continued approach made it certain the city must pass into British hands, he was sent by water to Bristol on the Delaware River, and from that point Mr. Henry Laurens, the new President of [Pg 80] Congress, on the way to join his fleeing fellow-members, who were to resume their sessions at York, gave him a lift in his traveling-carriage as far as Bethlehem, where the Moravians nursed him back to health.

De Kalb and other military friends took a real, if humorously expressed, interest in his "little wound," and on his part he declared that he valued it at more than five hundred guineas. He had hastened to write his wife all about it, not too seriously, "for fear that General Howe, who sends his royal master rather exaggerated details of his exploits in America, may report that I am not only wounded, but dead. It would cost him no more." Reports of Lafayette's death were indeed circulated in France, but Madame d'Ayen managed to keep them from her daughter. Lafayette assured his wife that his injury was "only a flesh wound, touching neither bone nor nerves. The surgeons are astonished at the rapidity with which it heals, and fall into ecstasies every time it is dressed, pretending it is the loveliest thing in the world. For myself, I find it very dirty, very much of a bore, and quite painful enough; but in truth, if a man wanted a wound merely for diversion's sake he could not do better than come and examine mine, with a view to copying it. There, dear heart, is the true history of this thing that I give myself airs about and pompously call 'my wound' in order to appear interesting."

X
LETTERS

[Pg 81]

Lafayette had plenty of time for thought as he lay in his neat room, waited upon by the wife of the chief farmer of the Bethlehem Society and her daughter, Lissel. Much of the time was spent in wondering about Adrienne, of whom as yet he had received news only once. As this was brought him by Count Pulaski, who left Paris before the birth of the expected child, Lafayette did not know whether his new baby was a boy or a girl, whether it had been born alive or dead, or how his wife had come through the ordeal. He could only send her long letters at every opportunity, well knowing "that King George might receive some of them instead." In these he sent messages to many French friends, not forgetting his old tutor, the Abbé Feyon, but he did not enlarge upon all phases of his American Life. "At present I am in the solitude of Bethlehem, about which the Abbé Raynal has so much to say," he told her. "This community is really touching and very interesting. We will talk about it after I return, when I mean to bore every one I love, you, consequently, most of all, with stories of my travels." He did not think it wise to refer in letters to [Pg 82] one amusing phase of the situation in which he found himself at Bethlehem—the visits paid him

by influential members of the Moravian brotherhood, who took a deep interest in his spiritual welfare and tried their best to convert him from a warrior into a pacifist.

It was while listening, or appearing to listen, politely to their sermons upon peace that his mind darted over the earth, here and there, even to far-distant Asia, planning warlike expeditions for the aid of his American friends. When his peaceful hosts departed he wrote letters embodying these plans. As he says in his *Memoirs*, he could "do nothing except write letters." One, which he addressed to the French governor of Martinique, proposed an attack on the British West Indies, to be carried out under the American flag. He had also the temerity to write to M. de Maurepas, proposing a descent upon the British in India. The boldness of the idea, and the impudence of Lafayette in suggesting it while he was still under the ban of the French government, caused the old man to chuckle. "Once that boy got an idea in his head there was no stopping him," he said. "Some day he would strip Versailles of its furniture for the sake of his Americans," and thereafter he showed a marked partiality for "that boy."

Matters had gone badly for the Americans since the battle of the Brandywine. General Howe occupied Philadelphia on September 26th; on October 4th Washington lost the battle of Germantown. Since then the army had been moving from camp to camp, seeking a spot not too [Pg 83] exposed, yet from which it could give General Howe all possible annoyance. Clearly this was no time to be lying in tidy, sunlit rooms listening to sermons on non-resistance. Before he was able to bear the weight of his military boot Lafayette rejoined the army. An entry in the diary of the Bethlehem Congregation, dated October 16, 1777, reads: "The French Marquis, whom we have found to be a very intelligent and pleasant young man, came to bid us adieu, and requested to be shown through the Sisters' House, which we were pleased to grant. He was accompanied by his adjutant, and expressed his admiration of the institution. While recovering from his wound he spent much of his time in reading." Under date of October 18th is another entry, "The French Marquis and General Woodford left for the army to-day."

On the day between Lafayette's visit of farewell and his actual departure Gen. John Burgoyne, who had set out confidently from Canada to open the Hudson River, ended by surrendering his entire army. He had thought he was pursuing ragged Continental soldiers when in truth they were luring him through the autumn woods to his ruin. He awoke to find his communications cut and his army compelled to fight a battle or starve. It gallantly fought two battles near Saratoga, one on September 19th, the other on October 7th; but both went against him and ten days later he gave up his sword and nearly six thousand British soldiers to "mere" Americans.

Up to that time a puzzled world had been unable to understand how the American cause [Pg 84] continued to gain. The capture of a whole British army, however, was something tangible that Europe could fully comprehend, and respect for the Revolution measurably increased. The victory had even greater effect in Europe than in America, though at home there was much rejoicing and a marked gain in the value of those "promises to pay" which Congress issued as a means of getting money for current expenses.

But Burgoyne's surrender threatened to have very serious effects upon the personal fortunes of General Washington, and in lesser degree upon those of Lafayette. People began contrasting the results of the summer's campaign. Washington, in command of the main army, had lost Philadelphia, while farther north General Gates, with fewer men, had not only captured Burgoyne, but cleared the whole region of enemy troops. There were those who did not hesitate to say that Washington ought to be deposed and Gates put in his place.

In reality Gates had almost nothing to do with the surrender of Burgoyne. The strategy which led up to the battles of Saratoga was the work of General Schuyler, who was forced out of command by intrigue and superseded by Gates just before the crowning triumph. The battles themselves had not been fought under the personal orders of the new commander, but under Benedict Arnold and Gen. Daniel Morgan, with the help of the Polish General Kosciuszko in planning defenses. It was pure luck, therefore, which brought Gates the fame; but, being a man of more [Pg 85] ambition than good judgment, with an excellent opinion of himself, he was the last person in the world to discourage praise of his ability.

Discontent against Washington was fanned by born intriguers like the Irish General Conway and by the more despicable Gen. Charles Lee, a traitor at heart. Lafayette became involved quite innocently, in the plot against him, known to history as the Conway Cabal. Two things, good in themselves, were responsible for it. One was his optimistic belief in human nature; the other, his increasing military renown. The latter was the result of a very small engagement in which he took a very large part shortly after rejoining the army. The main camp was then about fifteen miles from Philadelphia, but General Greene had taken his division over into New Jersey, where he was endeavoring to make life uncomfortable for General Howe. Lafayette obtained permission to join him as a volunteer, and on the 25th of November went out with about three hundred men to reconnoiter a position held by the British at Gloucester, opposite Philadelphia. He could clearly see them carrying across the river the provisions they had gathered in a raid in New Jersey, and they might easily have killed or captured him had they been on the lookout. Some of his men advanced to within two miles and a half of Gloucester, where they came upon a post of three hundred and fifty Hessians with field-pieces. What followed is told briefly in his own words. "As my little reconnoitering party was all in fine spirits, I supported them. We pushed the Hessians [Pg 86] more than half a mile from the place where their main body was, and we made them run very fast." The vigor, of his attack made Cornwallis believe General Greene's entire division was upon him, and he hurried to the relief of his Hessians. This was more than Lafayette bargained for, and he drew off in the gathering darkness with the loss of only one man killed and five wounded, carrying with him fourteen Hessian prisoners, while twice that number, including an officer,

remained on the field.

General Greene had described Lafayette to his wife as "one of the sweetest-tempered young gentlemen." Now his soldierly qualities impressed him. "The marquis is determined to be in the way of danger," was the comment he appended to his own account of the affair; and he ordered Lafayette to make his report directly to Washington, which the young man did in the boyishly jubilant epistle written in quaint French English which told how the Hessians "ran very fast." The letter fairly bubbled with pride over the behavior of his militia and his rifle corps; and, not content with expressing this to his Commander-in-chief, he lined them up next morning and made them a little speech, telling them exactly how he felt about it. An Englishman or an American could scarcely have done it with grace, but it was manifestly spontaneous on his part—one of those little acts which so endeared Lafayette to his American friends both in and out of the army.

Washington sent on the news to Congress with the intimation that his young friend had now [Pg 87] proved his ability and might be trusted with the command he so longed for. "He possesses uncommon military talents," Washington wrote, "is of a quick and sound judgment, persevering and enterprising without rashness, and, besides these, he is of conciliating temper and perfectly sober—which are qualities that rarely combine in the same person." At that moment of bickering in the army and of popular criticism of himself they must have seemed exceptionally rare to Washington. Congress expressed its willingness, and we learn from a long letter written by Lafayette to his father-in-law and carried across the ocean by no less a personage than John Adams, when he went to replace Silas Deane at Paris, that Washington offered him the choice of several different divisions.

He chose one made up entirely of Virginians, though it was weak "even in proportion to the weakness of the entire army," and very sadly in need of clothing. "I am given hope of cloth out of which I must make coats and recruits out of which I must make soldiers in almost the same space of time. Alas! the one is harder than the other, even for men more skilled than I," he wrote, just before the army went into its melancholy winter quarters at Valley Forge. "We shall be in huts there all winter," Lafayette explained. "It is there that the American army will try to clothe itself, because it is naked with an entire nakedness; to form itself, because it is in need of instruction; and to recruit its numbers, because it is very weak. But the thirteen states are going to exert [Pg 88] themselves and send us men," he added, cheerfully. "I hope my division will be one of the strongest, and I shall do all in my power to make it one of the best."

He was striving to make the most of his opportunity. "I read, I study, I examine, I listen, I reflect, and upon the result of all this I endeavor to form my opinion and to put into it as much common sense as I can. I am cautious about talking too much, lest I should say some foolish thing; and still more cautious in my actions lest I should do some foolish thing; for I do not want to disappoint the confidence the Americans have so kindly placed in me."

There was not much to do after the army went into winter quarters; and France seemed very far away. "What is the use of writing news in a letter destined to travel for years and to reach you finally in tatters?" he wrote Adrienne on November 6th. "You may receive this letter, dear heart, in the course of five or six years, for I write by a crooked chance, of which I have no great opinion. See the route it will take. An officer of the army carries it to Fort Pitt, three hundred miles toward the back of the continent. There it will embark on the Ohio and float through a region inhabited by savages. When it reaches New Orleans a little boat will transport it to the Spanish Isles, from which a vessel of that nation will take it (Lord knows when!) when it returns to Europe. But it will still be far from you, and only after having passed through all the grimy hands of Spanish postal officials will it be allowed to cross the Pyrenees. It may be unsealed and [Pg 89] resealed five or six times before reaching you. So it will be proof that I neglect not a single chance, even the remotest, to send you news of me and to repeat how much I love you.... It is cruel to think ... that my true happiness is two hundred leagues distant, across an immense ocean infested by scoundrelly English vessels. They make me very unhappy, those villainous ships. Only one letter from you, one single letter, dear heart, has reached me as yet. The others are lost, captured, lying at the bottom of the sea, to all appearances. I can only blame our enemies for this horrible privation; for you surely would not neglect to write me from every port and by every packet sent out by Doctor Franklin and Mr. Deane."

On his part, he neglected not a single opportunity. On one occasion he even sent her a letter by the hand of an English officer, a Mr. Fitzpatrick, with whom he had begun a friendship during his visit to London. This gentleman had come to Philadelphia with General Howe, and Lafayette learned in some way that he was about to return to England. "I could not resist the desire to embrace him before his departure. We arranged a rendezvous in this town (Germantown). It is the first time that we have met without arms in our hands, and it pleases us both much better than the enemy airs we have heretofore given ourselves ... there is no news of interest. Besides, it would not do for Mr. Fitzpatrick to transport political news written by a hand at present engaged [Pg 90] against his army."

It was this friendly enemy, Mr. Fitzpatrick, who lifted his voice in the British House of Commons in Lafayette's behalf, when the latter was a prisoner in Germany.

[Pg 91]

XI
A FOOL'S ERRAND

The more Lafayette studied Washington the more he was confirmed in his first swift impression. "Our general is a man really created for this Revolution, which could not succeed without him," he wrote the Duc d'Ayen. "I see him more intimately than any one else in the world, and I see him worthy the adoration of his country.... His name will be revered in future ages by all lovers of liberty and humanity."

Such admiration seemed unlikely ground upon which to work for Washington's undoing, but this was what his enemies attempted. Part of their plan was to win away Washington's trusted friends, and Lafayette's good will would be particularly valuable, because he was looked upon in a way as representing France. The winter proved unusually severe, and when the sufferings of the soldiers at Valley Forge began to be noised abroad criticism of Washington increased. It was pointed out that Burgoyne's captured army was being fed at American expense, that General Clinton's forces were comfortably housed in New York, while General Howe and his officers were enjoying a brilliant social season at Philadelphia; but at Valley Forge there was only misery. [Pg 92] General Conway was there himself, working up his plot.

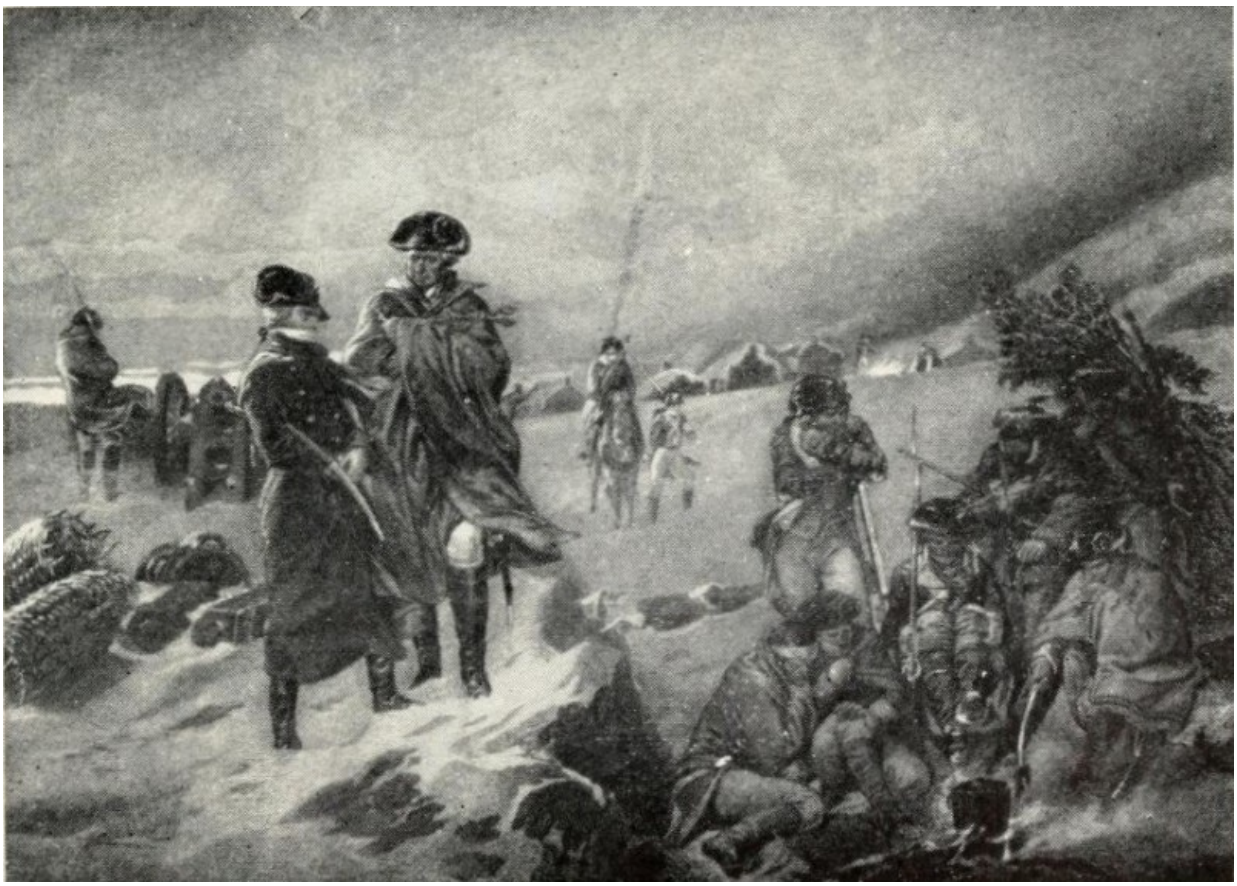
Lafayette was so kindly disposed that it was hard for him to believe others evil-minded. Also he was frankly ambitious. Thomas Jefferson once said of him that he had "a canine appetite" for fame. Conway played skilfully on both these traits, professing great friendship for Lafayette and throwing out hints of glory to be gained in service under General Gates, to whom he knew Lafayette had written a polite note of congratulation after Saratoga. Lafayette appears to have taken it all at its face value until an incriminating letter from Conway to Gates fell into hands for which it was never intended. Then Lafayette went directly to Washington, meaning to unburden his heart, but the general was engaged and could not see him. He returned to his quarters and wrote him a long letter, breathing solicitude in every line. Washington answered with his usual calm dignity, but in a way to show that the young man's devotion was balm to his spirit.

Conway had played upon Lafayette's homesickness also. Family news came to him very slowly. It was not until Christmas was being celebrated at Valley Forge with such sorry festivities as the camp could afford that he learned of the birth of his little daughter, Anastasie, which had occurred in the previous July. All the camp rejoiced with him, but the news increased his desire to be with his wife and children, if only for a short time. If he had really contemplated a journey [Pg 93] across the sea, however, he gave up the idea at once, believing that loyalty to his friend now made it his duty to "stand by."

"The bearer of this letter will describe to you the attractive surroundings of the place I have chosen to stay in rather than to enjoy the happiness of being with you," he wrote Adrienne. "After you know in detail all the circumstances of my present position ... you will approve of my course. I almost dare to say you will applaud me.... Besides the reason that I have given you, I have still another which I should not mention to everybody, because it might appear that I was assuming an air of ridiculous importance. My presence is more necessary to the American cause at this moment than you may imagine. Many foreigners who have failed to obtain commissions, or whose ambitious schemes after having obtained them could not be countenanced, have entered into powerful conspiracies; they have used every artifice to turn me against this Revolution and against him who is its leader; and they have taken every opportunity to spread the report that I am about to leave the continent. The British have openly declared this to be so. I cannot with good conscience play into the hands of these people. If I were to go, many Frenchmen who are useful here would follow my example."

So he stayed at Valley Forge, which was indeed a place of icy torment. The men suffered horribly for lack of coats and caps and shoes. Their feet froze until they were black. Sometimes they had to be amputated. There was not enough food. Even colonels rarely had more than two meals a [Pg 94] day, often only one, while the rank and file frequently went for several days without a distribution of rations. Enlistments ceased, and desertion was very easy with a wide-open country back of the camp and Howe's sleek, well-fed army only two marches away down the Lancaster Pike. It was small wonder that Washington's numbers dwindled until he could count only five or six thousand. Lafayette called the endurance of the wretched little army that held on "a miracle which every day served to renew." It was a miracle explained by the character of the Commander-in-chief, and of the remarkable group of officers he had gathered around him. As for Lafayette, he strove to live as frugally and be as self-denying as any of them. More than forty years later some of his American friends had proof of how well he succeeded; for an old soldier came up and reminded him how one snowy night at Valley Forge he had taken a gun from a shivering sentry and stood guard himself while he sent the man to his own quarters for a pair of stockings and his only blanket; and when these things were brought how he had cut the blanket in two and given him half. Though there was cruel suffering in that winter camp, there was much of such high-spirited gallantry to meet it; and there were also pleasant hours, for several of the officers had been joined by their wives, who did everything in their power to make the dull days brighter.

WASHINGTON AND THE COMMITTEE OF CONGRESS AT VALLEY FORGE



VALLEY FORGE—WASHINGTON AND LAFAYETTE

Washington's enemies, not yet having exhausted their wiles, hit upon a clever plan to remove Lafayette from his side. They succeeded in getting Congress to appoint a new War Board with General Gates at its head. This body exercised authority, though Washington remained Commander-in-chief. Without consulting him, the board decided, or pretended to decide, to send a winter expedition into Canada, with Lafayette at its head and Conway second in command. Conway had offered his resignation at the time his letter was discovered, but it had not been accepted. To emphasize the slight put upon Washington, Lafayette's new commission was

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inclosed in a letter to the Commander-in-chief, with the request that he hand it to the younger man. This Washington did with admirable self-control, saying, as he gave Lafayette the paper, "I would rather they had selected you for this than any other man."

It is not often that such important duty falls to a soldier of twenty-one. Naturally enough, he was elated, and this duty was particularly tempting because it offered him, a Frenchman, the chance to go into a French province to reconquer a region which had been taken from his own people by Britain in the Seven Years' War. But he also was capable of exercising self-control, and he answered that he could accept it only on the understanding that he remained subordinate to Washington, as an officer of his army detailed for special duty, with the privilege of making reports directly to him and of sending duplicates to Congress. A committee of Congress happened to be visiting Valley Forge that day, and he went impetuously before them and declared that he [Pg 96] would rather serve as a mere aide under Washington than accept any separate command the War Board could give him. His conditions being agreed to, he departed happily enough for York, Pennsylvania, where Congress was still holding its sittings, in order to receive his instructions.

There, in General Gates's own house, at another dinner memorable in his personal history, he got his first intimation of the kind of campaign the War Board wished him to carry on. Toast after toast was drunk—to the success of the northern expedition—to Lafayette and his brilliant prospects—and on through a long list, to which he listened in growing amazement, for he missed the most important of them all. "Gentlemen!" he cried, finally, springing to his feet, "I propose the health of General Washington!" and the others drank it in silence.

He refused to have Conway for his second in command, and asked that De Kalb be detailed to accompany him instead. He proved so intractable, in short, that even before he set out for Albany, where he was to assume command, the conspirators saw it was useless to continue the farce; but they allowed him to depart on his cold journey as the easiest way of letting the matter end. The four hundred miles occupied two weeks by sleigh and horseback, a most discouraging sample of what he must expect farther north. "Lake Champlain is too cold for producing the least bit of laurel," he wrote Washington. "I go very slowly, sometimes drenched by rain, sometimes covered by snow, and not entertaining many handsome thoughts about the projected incursion [Pg 97] into Canada."

At Albany he found creature comforts, a bed, for one thing, with a supply of quilts and blankets that made it entirely possible to sleep without lying down in his clothes, which was a luxury he had scarcely enjoyed since leaving Bethlehem; but of preparations for invading Canada he found not one. The plans and orders that looked so well on paper, and which he had been assured were well under way, had not been heard of in Albany, or else had not been executed, for the best of reasons; because they could not be. General Conway was there ahead of him to represent the War Board, and told him curtly that the expedition was not to be thought of. Astounded, the young general refused to believe him until interviews with General Schuyler and others experienced in northern campaigning convinced him that this at least was not treachery, but cold, hard fact.

The discovery was a great blow to Lafayette's pride. Members of Congress had urged him to write about the expedition to his friends in France. He was frankly afraid that he would be laughed at "unless Congress offers the means of mending this ugly business by some glorious operation." But he was in no mood to ask favors of Congress. "For you, dear General," he wrote Washington, "I know very well that you will do everything to procure me the one thing I am ambitious of—glory. I think your Excellency will approve of my staying on here until further orders."

March found him still at Albany, awaiting the orders which the War Board was in no haste to [Pg 98] send, having already accomplished its purpose. He tried to retrieve something out of the hopeless situation, but with fewer men than he had been promised, and these clamoring for pay long overdue, he had little success. "Everybody is after me for monney," he wrote General Gates, "and monney will be spoken of by me till I will be enabled to pay our poor soldiers. Not only justice and humanity, but even prudence obliges us to satisfy them soon." As he had already done, and would do again, he drew upon his private credit to meet the most pressing public needs; but he could work against the enemy only in an indirect way by sending supplies to Fort Schuyler, where they were sorely needed.

One interesting experience, unusual for a French nobleman, came to him during this tedious waiting. The Indians on the frontier became restless, and General Schuyler called a council of many tribes to meet "at Johnson Town" in the Mohawk Valley. He invited Lafayette to attend, hoping by his presence to reawaken the Indians' old partiality for the French. Five hundred men, women, and children attended this council, and very picturesque they must have looked with their tents and their trappings against the snowy winter landscape. The warriors were as gorgeous as macaws in their feathered war-bonnets, nose-jewels, and brilliant paint, but Lafayette noted that they talked politics with the skill of veterans, as the pipe passed from hand to hand.

He appears to have exercised his usual personal charm for Americans upon these original [Pg 99] children of the soil as he had already exercised it upon the whites who came to supplant them. But he says of it only that they "showed an equal regard for his words and his necklaces." Before the council was over he was adopted into one of the tribes, and returned to Albany the richer by another name to add to his long collection—"Kayewla," which had belonged to a respected chief of a bygone day. The new Kayewla was so well liked that a band of Iroquois followed him south and became part of his military division.

On his return to Albany an unexpected duty awaited him. A new form of oath of office, forever forswearing allegiance to George III and acknowledging the sovereignty and independence of the United States, had come, with the order that all must subscribe to it. So, to use the picturesque phrase of the Middle Ages, it was "between" his French hands that the officers of the northern military department swore fealty to the new United States of America.

As spring advanced the influence of Gates and Conway waned and Washington regained his old place in public esteem. Conway himself left the country. Lafayette and De Kalb were ordered back to the main army; and in doing this Congress took pains to express by resolution its belief that the young general was in no way to blame for the failure of the winter expedition to Canada. When he reached Washington's headquarters in April he found Valley Forge much less melancholy than when he left it; a change due not only to the more cheerful season of the year, [Pg 100] but to wonders in the way of improved discipline that General von Steuben had brought about in a few short weeks. This officer of much experience had been trained under Frederick the Great, and, having served as his aide, was equipped in fullest measure with the knowledge and skill in military routine that Washington's volunteers so lacked. When he took up his duties he found a confusion almost unbelievable to one of his orderly military mind. Military terms meant nothing. A regiment might contain only thirty men, or it might be larger than another officer's brigade. It might be formed of three platoons or of twenty-one. There was one company that consisted of only a single corporal. Each colonel drilled his men after a system of his own; and the arms in the hands of these go-as-you-please soldiers "were in a horrible condition—covered with rust, half of them without bayonets," while there were many from which not a single shot could be fired. Yet this was the main army of the revolutionists who had set out to oppose England! Fortunately Baron von Steuben was no mere drillmaster. He had the invaluable gift of inspiring confidence and imparting knowledge. Between March, when he began his "intensive" training, and the opening of the summer campaign, he made of that band of lean and tattered patriots a real army, though it still lacked much of having a holiday appearance. The men's coats gave no indication of their rank, or indeed that they were in the army at all. They were of many colors, including red, and it was not impossible to see an officer mounting guard at grand parade clad "in a sort of [Pg 101] dressing-gown made of an old blanket or woolen bedcover." But the man inside the coat was competent for his job.

It was a compatriot of Lafayette's, the French Minister of War, St.-Germain, who had persuaded General Steuben to go to America; so to France is due part of our gratitude for the services of this efficient German. Perhaps, going back farther, the real person we should thank is General Burgoyne, since it was his surrender which undoubtedly quickened the interest of the French in the efficiency of our ragamuffin army. French official machinery, which had been strangely clogged before, began to revolve when news of Burgoyne's surrender reached Paris early in December, 1777. The king, who had not found it convenient to receive the American commissioners up to that time, sent them word that he had been friendly all along; and as soon as diplomatic formality permitted, a treaty of amity and commerce was signed between France and America. That meant that France was now formally an ally, and that the United States might count upon her influence and even upon her military help. It was a great point gained, but Franklin refused to allow his old eyes to be dazzled by mere glitter when he "and all the Americans in Paris" were received by the king and queen at Versailles in honor of the event. He was less impressed by the splendor of the palace than by the fact that it would be the better for a thorough cleaning. After the royal audience was over he and the other commissioners hastened to pay a visit of ceremony to young Madame Lafayette in order to testify to the part her husband [Pg 102] had played in bringing about this happy occurrence.

When news of the signing of this treaty reached America about the 1st of May, 1778, Lafayette embraced his grave general in the exuberance of his joy, and even kissed him in French fashion. There was an official celebration in camp on the 7th of May, with much burning of gunpowder, reviewing of troops, "suitable" discoursing by chaplains, and many hearty cheers. Washington's orders prescribed in great detail just when and how each part of the celebration was to be carried out, and this is probably the only time in history that an American army *en masse* was ordered to cry, "Long live the king of France!"

Lafayette, with a white sash across his breast, commanded the left; but it was a heavy heart that he carried under his badge that gala-day. Letters which came to him immediately after news of the treaty had brought sad tidings. He learned of the death of a favorite nephew, loved by him like a son, and also that his oldest child, the little Henriette, to whom he had been sending messages in every letter, had died in the previous October. "My heart is full of my own grief, and of yours which I was not with you to share," he wrote Adrienne. "The distance from Europe to America never seemed so immense to me as it does now.... The news came to me immediately after that of the treaty, and while bowed down with grief I had to receive congratulations and take part in the public rejoicing." Had the letters come through without delay they would have [Pg 103] arrived at the beginning of winter, at the moment when General Conway was fanning the flame of his homesickness. The desire to comfort his wife might have turned the scale and sent Lafayette across the sea instead of to Albany. Now, though he longed to go to her, he felt bound to remain for the campaign which was about to open.

XII

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FARCE AND TREACHERY

Much as the French treaty had done for the Americans, it had by no means ended the war. There were as many British soldiers as ever on American soil, and General Howe at Philadelphia and General Clinton at New York could be trusted to make excellent use of them. Signs of British activity were already apparent. A large number of transports had sailed from Philadelphia, but whether they had gone to bring reinforcements or whether it meant that Philadelphia was being abandoned and that the Hudson was again to be the main point of attack Washington did not know. Lafayette was ordered to take some of the best troops at Valley Forge and find out.

He left camp on the 18th of May with about twenty-two hundred men, among them six hundred Pennsylvania militia and half a hundred Iroquois Indians. Crossing the Schuylkill, he established himself on high ground between that river and the Delaware, twelve miles from the city, at a hamlet called Barren Hill, whose chief ornament was a church with a graveyard. It was an excellent spot for purposes of observation; for roads ran in various directions, while the abrupt [Pg 105] fall of the land toward the Schuylkill protected his right, and there were substantial stone buildings in a wood in front which could be used as forts in case of need. He guarded against surprise on his left, the direction from which any considerable body of British was likely to approach, by placing there his large detachment of Pennsylvania militia. He planted his five cannon in good positions, sent out his Indian scouts, who wormed themselves several miles nearer the city, had interviews with promising individuals who were to act as spies, and was well pleased with himself.

The British were also exceedingly well pleased when their spies brought in full information of Lafayette's position and numbers. They saw that he had separated himself from the American army and virtually placed himself in their hands; and short of Washington himself there was no officer they would so enjoy capturing. His prominence at home and his popularity in America made him a shining mark; moreover, he had fooled them in London before coming to America. It would be a great satisfaction to take him prisoner gently, without hurting him, treat him with mock courtesy, and send him back to England, a laughing-stock.

They had force enough to make his capture practically certain, and set out in great glee, so sure of the result that before leaving town Generals Howe and Clinton, both of whom were in Philadelphia, sent out invitations to a reception for the following day "to meet the Marquis de Lafayette." Although it was looked upon as something of a lark, the expedition was deemed [Pg 106] sufficiently important for General Clinton to lead it in person, while General Howe accompanied him, and the admiral, General Howe's sailor brother, went along as a volunteer. Taking four men to Lafayette's one, and marching by night, they approached Barren Hill in a way to cut off the fords across the Schuylkill and also to intercept any assistance which might be sent from Valley Forge.

Unconscious that he was in danger, Lafayette was talking, early on the morning of May 20th, with a young woman who was going into the city as a spy, when word was brought him that dragoons in red coats had been seen on the Whitemarsh road. This did not disturb him, for he knew that among the coats of many colors worn by his Pennsylvania militia some were red; but he sent out to verify the information, merely as a matter of routine. Soon the truth was learned—and exaggerated—and his men set up a cry that they were surrounded by the British.

Fortunately Lafayette had a head which grew steadier in a crisis. Sending his aides flying in all directions, he found that while the way to Valley Forge was indeed cut off, one ford still remained open, though the British were rapidly advancing upon it. He quickly placed a small number of his men near the church, where the stone wall of the graveyard would serve as breastworks, stationed a few more near the woods as if they were heads of columns just appearing, and ordered all the rest to drop quietly down the steep side of the hill until they were out of sight, and [Pg 107] then hurry to the ford. The attention of the enemy was held long enough by the decoy troops to enable the others to reach the ford or swim across, their heads dotting the water "like the corks of a floating seine," and Lafayette, who had stayed behind, brought the last of his men to safety just as two columns of the British, marching up two sides of Barren Hill, met each other, face to face, at the top. Lafayette, on the opposite bank of the river, prepared for defense, but the British were too disgusted to follow.

The real encounter of the serio-comic affair took place between the most gaudily dressed bands of fighters in the whole Revolution, Lafayette's Iroquois in their war regalia and Clinton's advance-guard of Hessian cavalry. As the latter advanced, the Indians rose from their hiding-places uttering their piercing war-whoops. The horses of the troopers were terrified by the brilliant, shrieking creatures, and bolted. But terror was not all upon one side. The Indians had never seen men like these Hessians, with their huge bearskin shakos and fierce dyed mustaches. They in their turn were seized with panic and rushed away, fleeing incontinently from "bad medicine."

Absurd as the affair proved, with little harm done to anything except the feelings of the British, its consequences might easily have been serious, both to the Revolution and to Lafayette. The loss of two thousand of his best men would have dangerously crippled Washington's little army; while the capture of Lafayette, on the very first occasion he was intrusted with a command of any [Pg 108] size, must almost of necessity have ended his military usefulness forever. As it was, Barren Hill demonstrated that he was quick and resourceful in time of danger; and these were very valuable qualities in a war like the American Revolution, which was won largely through the skill of its

generals in losing battles. To realize the truth of this and how well it was carried out, we have only to recall Washington's masterly work in the winter campaign in New Jersey, when he maneuvered and marched and gave way until the right moment came to stand; how General Schuyler lured Burgoyne to disaster; and how, in a later campaign in the South, General Greene was said to have "reduced the art of losing battles to a science." Years afterward, in talking with Napoleon, Lafayette called our Revolution "the grandest of contests, won by the skirmishes of sentinels and outposts." About a month after this affair at Barren Hill the English evacuated Philadelphia and moved slowly northward with a force of seventeen thousand men and a baggage-train nearly twelve miles long. The length of this train indicated that it was moving-day for the British army, which wanted to be nearer the Hudson, but certain other indications pointed to the opening of an active campaign in New Jersey. A majority of the American officers, including Gen. Charles Lee, who was second in command, argued against an attack because both in numbers and organization the British force was superior to their own. General Lee went so far as to say that, instead of trying to interfere with General Clinton's retreat, it ought to be aided in [Pg 109] every possible way, "even with a bridge of gold." Subsequent developments proved that it was not fear of a British victory, but sympathy with British plans, which prompted this view. Several other officers, however, Washington himself, Gen. Anthony Wayne, who was always ready to fight, General Greene, General Cadwallader, and Lafayette, were in favor of following and attacking at the earliest opportunity. It was this course that Washington chose, in spite of the majority of votes against it. It seemed to him that the difficulty Clinton must experience in maneuvering his army over the roads of that region, and the fact that almost half of his force would need to be employed in guarding the unwieldy baggage-train, justified the expectation of success. His plan was to throw out a strong detachment ahead of the main army to harass the British flanks and rear and to follow this up so closely that the main army would be ready to go to its support in case Clinton turned to fight.

The command of the advanced detachment was the post of honor, and to this Lee was entitled because of his rank. He refused it and Washington offered it to Lafayette, who accepted joyously. He had already begun his march when Lee reconsidered and sent Washington word that he desired the command, after all, appealing at the same time to Lafayette with the words, "I place my fortune and my honor in your hands; you are too generous to destroy both the one and the other." Lee was one of the few men Lafayette did not like, though he had no suspicion of his [Pg 110] loyalty. He thought him ugly in face and in spirit, full of avarice and ambition. But Lee was his superior officer, and Lafayette was a soldier as well as a gentleman. He relinquished the command at once and offered to serve under Lee as a volunteer.

It would have been better had he found it in his heart and in the military regulations to refuse, for on that sultry unhappy 28th of June when the two armies met and the battle of Monmouth Court House was fought, General Lee's indecision and confusion of orders, to give his conduct no harsher name, turned the advance of the Americans, who were in the best of spirits and eager to fight, into what their generals admitted was "a disgraceful rout." Officer after officer came to Lee beseeching him to let them carry out their original instructions and not to give orders to fall back; but he did everything to hinder success, answering stubbornly, "I know my business."

At Lafayette's first intimation that things were going wrong, he sent a message to Washington, who was with the main army, some miles in the rear. Whether he learned the news first from this messenger or from a very scared fifer running down the road, Washington could not believe his eyes or his ears. Hurrying forward, he found Lee in the midst of the retreating troops and a brief but terrible scene took place between them; Washington in a white heat of anger, though outwardly calm, Lee stammering and stuttering and finally bursting out with the statement that [Pg 111] the whole movement had been made contrary to his advice. Washington's short and scorching answer ended Lee's military career. Then, turning away from him as though from a creature unworthy of further notice, the Commander-in-chief took up the serious task at hand. The soldiers responded to his presence instantly. With those on the field he and Lafayette were able to make a stand until reserves came up and a drawn battle was fought which lasted until nightfall. The conditions had been unusually trying, for the heat was so oppressive that men died of that alone, without receiving a wound. Both armies camped upon the field, Washington meaning to renew the contest next morning; but during the night the enemy retired to continue the march toward New York.

THE BATTLE OF MONMOUTH, JUNE 28, 1778

Lee was tried by court martial and suspended from any command in the armies of the United States for the period of one year. Afterward Congress dismissed him altogether. The judgment of history is that he deserved severer punishment and that his sympathies were undoubtedly with the British. He was of English birth, and from the beginning of his service in the American army he tried to thwart Washington. Lafayette was convinced that, though his name does not appear prominently in the doings of the Conway cabal, it was he and not General Gates who would have profited by the success of that plot.

Since the British were able to continue their march as planned, they claimed Monmouth as a victory. Washington also continued northward and, crossing the Hudson, established himself near [Pg 112] White Plains, which brought the British and American forces once more into the relative positions they had occupied two years earlier, after the battle of Long Island.

Monmouth proved to be the last engagement of consequence fought that year, and the last large battle of the Revolution to be fought in the Northern states. Very soon after this the British gave up their attempt to cut the rebellion in two by opening the Hudson, and substituted for it the plan of capturing the Southern states one by one, beginning with Georgia and working northward. They continued to keep a large force near New York, however, and that necessitated having an American army close by. These two forces were not idle; some of the most dramatic incidents of the whole war occurred here, though the main contest raged elsewhere, and in a larger sense, these armies were only marking time.

XIII
A LIAISON OFFICER

[Pg 113]

Lafayette's influence and duties took on a new character about the middle of July, 1778, when a fleet of twenty-six French frigates and ships of the line arrived, commanded by Admiral d'Estaing.

These ships had sailed in such secrecy that even their captains did not know whither they were bound until they had been at sea some days. Then, while a solemn Mass was being sung aboard the flagship, the signal was hoisted to break the seals upon their orders. When the full meaning of these orders dawned upon the sailors and the thousand soldiers who accompanied the expedition shouts of joy and cries of *"Vive le Roi!"* spread from ship to ship. But it was an expedition fated to ill luck. Storms and contrary winds delayed them five weeks in the Mediterranean, and seven more in crossing the Atlantic. Food and water were almost gone when they reached Delaware Bay, where the disappointing news awaited their commander that the British, fearing his blockade, had withdrawn to New York, taking the available food-supplies of the neighborhood with them. That was the explanation of Clinton's long wagon-train. He left little [Pg 114] behind for hungry sailors.

D'Estaing landed Silas Deane, and the first minister sent from France to the United States, who had come over with; him sent messages announcing his arrival to Congress and to Washington, and proceeded up the coast. For eleven days he remained outside the bar at Sandy Hook in a

position bad for his ships and worse for his temper; for inside the bar he could see many masts flying the British flag. But pilots were hard to find, most of them being in the service of his enemies; and without pilots he could not enter. When at last they were obtained it was only to tell him that the largest of his vessels drew too much water to enter without removing part of their guns, and this he could not afford to do with English ships lying inside. D'Estaing would not believe it until he himself had made soundings. "It is terrible to be within sight of your object and yet unable to attain it," he wrote. To add to his unhappiness he heard that an English fleet under Admiral Byron had sailed for American waters, and he knew that its arrival would raise the number of British ships and guns to a figure far exceeding his own. He put to sea again, his destination this time being Newport, where the British had a few ships and about six thousand men. Washington had suggested a combined attack here in case it was found impossible to accomplish anything at New York.

Admiral d'Estaing came from Auvergne, as did Lafayette. Indeed, their families were related by marriage, and to his first official communication Lafayette had added, at Washington's request, a [Pg 115] long postscript giving personal and family details that the British could not possibly know, doing this to prove to the admiral that the proposed plans were genuine and not an invention of the enemy. The correspondence thus begun had continued with pleasure on both sides, and, after the fleet reached Newport, Lafayette spent a happy day on the flagship as the admiral's honored guest, though he was technically still a deserter, subject to arrest and deportation.

The American part of the combined attack on Newport was to be made by a detachment of Washington's army co-operating with state troops and militia raised by General Sullivan, near by. The command of the Continentals was offered to Lafayette, who wrote to D'Estaing in boyish glee: "Never have I realized the charm of my profession, M. le Comte, as I do now that I am to be allowed to practise it in company with Frenchmen. I have never wished so much for the ability that I have not, or for the experience that I shall obtain in the next twenty years if God spares my life and allows us to have war. No doubt it is amusing to you to see me presented as a general officer; I confess that I am forced myself to smile sometimes at the idea, even in this country where people do not smile so readily as we do at home."

Although scurvy had broken out with considerable violence on his ships, the French admiral held himself ready to carry out his part of a speedy attack. It was General Sullivan who had to ask a delay because so few of the militia responded to his summons. While expressing polite [Pg 116] disappointment that so large a part of the American army was "still at home," D'Estaing tried to emphasize the need of haste. He believed in striking sudden, unexpected blows; and he had ever in mind the approach of that fleet of Admiral Byron's. Nine precious days passed, which the British commander at Newport utilized in preparing for defense and in sending messengers to New York.

Meanwhile Lafayette returned to camp and started with his detachment for Newport. On the march he received a letter from Washington which must have caused him keen disappointment, since it took away half his authority. General Greene was a native of Rhode Island, with special knowledge of the region where the fighting was to take place, and because of this it had been decided at the last moment to combine the Continental troops with the militia and to give General Greene joint command with Lafayette. The young man's answer was a model of cheerful acquiescence. "Dear General: I have received your Excellency's favor by General Greene, and have been much pleased with the arrival of a gentleman who, not only on account of his merit and the justness of his views, but also by his knowledge of the country and his popularity in this state, may be very serviceable to the expedition. I willingly part with half of my detachment, though I had a great dependence upon them, as you find it convenient for the good of the service. Anything, my dear General, you will order, or even wish, shall always be infinitely agreeable to [Pg 117] me; and I will always feel happy in doing anything which may please you or forward the public good. I am of the same opinion as your Excellency that dividing our Continental troops among the militia will have a better effect than if we were to keep them together in one wing." Only a single sentence, near the end, in which he referred to himself as being with the expedition as "a man of war of the third class" betrayed his regret. Washington appears to have been much pleased and relieved by this reply, for he realized that he was drawing heavily upon Lafayette's store of patience.

As it turned out, neither Greene nor Lafayette had authority enough to quarrel over or any glory in the enterprise, for on the 10th of August, at the moment when the combined attack was about to begin, the relief expedition of Admiral Howe's ships loomed suddenly out of the fog. The French vessels had been placed only with a view to an attack upon land, and most of the sailors had been disembarked to take part in it. D'Estaing had to get them hurriedly back again and to prepare for a sea-fight. Before this was over a wind-storm of great fury arose. It separated the combatants, but left D'Estaing so crippled that he was obliged to put into Boston for repairs.

Some of these events were of a character no human foresight could prevent. All of them held possibilities of misunderstanding, and these misunderstandings were increased tenfold by differences in nationality, in temper, and in language. Some of the French thought General [Pg 118] Sullivan deliberately and jealously tried to block success. He reproached the French admiral for going to Boston after the storm instead of returning to his aid. Lafayette's very eagerness subjected him to criticism, yet he was the one man involved who understood the temperament of both the French and the Americans. The burden of explaining, of soothing, of trying to arrange the thousand prickly details of the situation fell upon him. Twice he rode to Boston and back for conferences with D'Estaing, making the journey of seventy miles once by night in six and a half hours—unexampled speed for those days. Such work now would be called the work of a liaison

officer. He had need of all his tact, and even his sweet temper grew acid under the strain. He was strongly moved to fight a duel with General Sullivan; and both Washington and Congress had to intervene before the French admiral was completely assured of America's belief in his "zeal and attachment," and before Lafayette could be thoroughly appeased.

Fond as he was of America, Lafayette was a Frenchman first of all. He had assured D'Estaing that he would rather fight as a common soldier under the French flag than as a general officer anywhere else. The coming of the French fleet had been to all intents a declaration of war by his country against England; and when the autumn was far enough advanced to make it certain there would be no more military activity in America before the next spring, he asked permission to return to France and offer his sword to his king.

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Washington, who had more sympathy with the impulses of youth than we are apt to give him credit for, saw that after the trying experiences of the past few weeks a leave of absence would be the best thing for Lafayette and also for his American friends. The young man's nerves were completely on edge. He had not only wanted to fight General Sullivan and controlled the desire; he had actually sent a challenge, against the advice of Washington and Admiral d'Estaing, to the Earl of Carlisle, an Englishman in America on official business, because of some words the latter had used which Lafayette regarded as an insult to the French. Besides these grievances, his imagination was working overtime on a grand new scheme for the conquest of Canada which Washington could no more indorse than he could approve the desire to shed blood in private quarrels. The young man's friendship was too valuable to make it politic continually to thwart him. Undoubtedly this was a case where absence would make the heart grow fonder. Very possibly also the wise general foresaw how much good Lafayette might do in Paris as an advocate of American interests during the next few months.

Lafayette did not wish to sever his relations with the Continental army. All he asked was a leave of absence, and this Congress readily granted in a set of complimentary resolutions, adding for good measure a letter "To our great, faithful, and beloved friend and ally, Louis the Sixteenth, King of France and Navarre," telling what a very wise and gallant and patient and excellent young man he was. But it was weeks after this permission was given before Lafayette left [Pg 120] America. Congress arranged, as a compliment, that he should sail from Boston on the frigate *Alliance*, one of the best of the nation's war-vessels. Lafayette made his visits of ceremony, wrote his notes of farewell, and set out from Philadelphia in a cold rain one day late in October. Ordinarily he would not have minded such a storm. He had endured the life at Valley Forge and discomforts of the winter trip to Canada with apparent ease; but to a year of such campaigning had been added several months of work and worry in connection with the French fleet. The two together had told upon his strength, and the storm added the finishing touch. He became really ill, but, suffering with fever, rode on, unwilling to delay his journey for mere weather, and unwilling, too, to fail in courtesy to the inhabitants of the many towns on his way who wished to do him honor. He fortified himself for the receptions and functions they had planned by frequent draughts of tea and spirits, which made his condition worse instead of better. By the time he reached Fishkill, New York, he was unable to proceed farther. His fever raged for three weeks, and the news spread that he would not recover. The concern manifested showed what a firm hold he had made for himself in American affection. Civilians spoke of him lovingly and sorrowfully as "the Marquis," while in the army, where he was known as "the soldier's friend," grief was even more sincere. Washington sent Surgeon-General Cochran, who had cared for him in Bethlehem, to take charge of the case, and rode himself almost daily the eight miles from headquarters to [Pg 121] make inquiries, never entering the sick-room, and often turning away with tears in his eyes at the report given him. Lafayette, racked with fever and headache, was sure he would never live to reach France again. The idea of leaving the world at the early age of twenty-one did not trouble him; he felt that he would gladly compromise on three more months of life, provided he could see his family and be assured of the happy outcome of the American war.

After the fever left him and he slowly regained his strength he spent a few happy days as Washington's guest before proceeding on his journey to Boston. The elder man's farewell was "very tender, very sad," and Lafayette rode away in company with the good Doctor Cochran, who had orders to watch him like a hawk until he was safely on the ship. After this parting the young man was more than ever convinced that Washington was a great man and his own very warm personal friend. He wondered how anybody could accuse him of being cold and unsympathetic.

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XIV
NEAR-MUTINY AND NEAR-IMPRISONMENT

When he reached Boston the crew of the *Alliance* had not been fully made up. The authorities offered to impress enough men to complete it, but Lafayette objected on principle to that way of obtaining sailors. They were finally secured by enlistment, but many of them were questionable characters, either English deserters or English prisoners of war. With such a crew the *Alliance* put to sea on the 11th of January, 1779, upon a voyage short for that time of year, but as tumultuous as it was brief. Excitement and discomfort began with a tempest off the Banks of Newfoundland which the frigate weathered with difficulty. Lafayette, who was always a poor sailor, longed for calm, even if it had to be found at the bottom of the sea; but that was only the

beginning, the real excitement occurring about two hundred leagues off the French coast.

Lafayette's own account explains that "by a rather immoral proclamation his Britannic Majesty encouraged revolt among crews," offering them the money value of ships captured and brought into English ports as "rebel" vessels—"a result which could only be obtained by the massacre of [Pg 123] officers and those who objected." A plot of this nature was entered into by the English deserters and prisoners among the sailors on the *Alliance*. A cry of "A sail!" was to bring officers and passengers hurrying upon deck and shots from four cannon, carefully trained and loaded beforehand, were to blow them to bits. The time was fixed for four o'clock in the morning, but, fortunately, it was postponed until the same time in the afternoon, and in the interval the plot was disclosed to an American sailor who was mistaken by the conspirators for an Irishman on account of the fine brogue he had acquired through much sailing "in those latitudes." They offered him command of the frigate. He pretended to accept, but was able to warn the captain and Lafayette only one short hour before the time fixed for the deed. That was quite enough, however. The officers and passengers appeared upon deck ahead of time, sword in hand, and gathering the loyal sailors about them, called up the rest one by one. Thirty-three were put in irons. Evidence pointed to an even greater number of guilty men, but it was taken for granted that the rest might be relied upon, though only the Americans and French were really trusted. A week later the *Alliance* sailed happily into Brest floating the new American flag.

The last word Lafayette had received from his family was already eight months old. He hurried toward Paris, but the news of his arrival traveled faster, and he found the city on tiptoe to see him. "On my arrival," says the *Memoirs*, "I had the honor to be consulted by all the Ministers and, [Pg 124] what was much better, embraced by all the ladies. The embraces ceased next day, but I enjoyed for a longer time the confidence of the Cabinet and favor at Versailles, and also celebrity in Paris." His father-in-law, who had been so very bitter at his departure, received him amiably, a friendliness which touched Lafayette. "I was well spoken of in all circles, even after the favor of the queen had secured for me command of the regiment of the King's Dragoons." This was no other than the old De Noailles Cavalry in which he had served as a boy.

Merely as a matter of form, however, he had to submit to a week's imprisonment because he had left the country against the wishes of the king. Instead of being shut in the Bastille, his prison was the beautiful home of his father-in-law, where Adrienne and the baby awaited him; and during that week its rooms were filled with distinguished visitors, come ostensibly to see the Duc d'Ayen. But even this delightful travesty of imprisonment did not begin until the prodigal had gone to Versailles for his first interview with the king's chief advisers. After a few days he wrote to Louis XVI, "acknowledging my happy fault." The king summoned him to his presence to receive "a gentle reprimand" which ended in smiles and compliments, and he was restored to liberty with the hint that it would be well for a time to avoid crowded places where the common people of Paris, who so dearly loved a hero, "might consecrate his disobedience."

For the next few months he led a busy life, a favorite in society, an unofficial adviser of the [Pg 125] government, called here and there to give first-hand testimony about men and motives in far-off America, making up lost months in as many short minutes with Adrienne, winning the heart of his new little daughter, assuming command of his "crack" regiment, so different in appearance from the ragged ranks he had commanded under Washington; and last, but by no means least in his own estimation, laying plans to accomplish by one bold stroke two military purposes dear to his heart—discomfiting the English and securing money for the American cause.

He had seen such great results undertaken and accomplished in America with the slenderest means that the recklessness with which Europeans spent money for mere show seemed to him almost wicked. He used to tell himself that the cost of a single fête would equip an army in the United States. M. de Maurepas had once said that he was capable of stripping Versailles for the sake of his beloved Americans. It was much more in accordance with his will to seize the supplies for America from England herself. He planned a descent upon the English coast by two or three frigates under John Paul Jones and a land force of fifteen hundred men commanded by himself, to sail under the American flag, fall upon rich towns like Bristol and Liverpool, and levy tribute.

Lafayette's brain worked in two distinct ways. His tropic imagination stopped at nothing, and completely ran away with his common sense when once it got going, as, for instance, while he lay recovering from his wound at Bethlehem. Very different from this was the clever, quick wit with [Pg 126] which he could take advantage of momentary chances in battle, as he had demonstrated when he and his little force dropped between the jaws of the trap closing upon them at Barren Hill. Fortunately in moments of danger it was usually his wit, not his imagination, that acted, and he took excellent care of the men under him; but when he had nothing in the way of hard facts to pin his mind to earth, and gave free rein to his desires, he was not practical. In this season of wild planning he not only invented the scheme for a bucaneering expedition in company with John Paul Jones; he mapped out an uprising in Ireland, but decided that the time was not yet ripe for that.

While his plan for a descent upon the English coast came to nothing, it may be said to have led to much, for it interested the Ministry, and was abandoned only in favor of a more ambitious scheme of attacking England with the help of Spain. That, too, passed after it was found that England was on the alert; but it had given Lafayette his opportunity to talk about America in and out of season, and to urge the necessity for helping the United States win independence as a means of crippling England, if not for her own sake. As the most popular social lion of the moment his words carried far, and as the most earnest advocate of America in France he was indeed what he called himself, the link that bound the two countries together. The outcome was that after the collapse of the project for an expedition against England nobody could see a better [Pg 127]

way of troubling his Britannic Majesty than by following Lafayette's advice; whereupon he redoubled his efforts and arguments.

Indeed, he exceeded the wishes of the Americans themselves. He wanted to send ships and soldiers as well as money and supplies, but with the fiasco of the attack upon Newport fresh in their minds Congress and our country were chary of asking for more help of that kind. He assured M. de Vergennes that it was characteristic of Americans to believe that in three months they would no longer need help of any kind. He wrote to Washington that he was insisting upon money with such stress that the Director of Finances looked upon him as a fiend; but he argued also in France that the Americans would be glad enough to see a French army by the time it got there.

A plan drawn up by him at the request of M. de Vergennes has been called the starting-point of the events that led to the surrender of Cornwallis, because without French help that event could not have occurred. In this view of the case, the work he did in Paris and at Versailles was his greatest contribution to the cause of American independence. Another general might easily have done all that he did in the way of winning battles on American soil, but no other man in France had his enthusiasm and his knowledge, or the persistence to fill men's ears and minds and hearts with thoughts of America as he did.

After it had been decided to send over another military force it was natural for him to hope that [Pg 128] he might be given command of it, though nobody knew better than he that his rank did not entitle him to the honor since he was only a colonel in France, even if he did hold the commission of a major-general in the United States. Having become by this time really intimate with M. de Vergennes, he gave another proof of the sweet reasonableness of his disposition by frankly presenting the whole matter in writing to him. He worked out in detail two "suppositions," the first assuming that he was to be given command of the expedition, the second that he was not, stating in each case what he thought ought to be done. Quite frankly he announced his preference for the first supposition, but quite simply and unmistakably he made it plain that he would work just as earnestly for the success of the undertaking in one case as in the other.

It was the second of these plans that the Ministry preferred and adopted practically as he prepared it. After this had been decided he found himself, early one spring day in 1780, standing before Louis XVI, in his American uniform, taking his leave. He was to go ahead of the expedition and announce its coming; to work up a welcome for it, if he found lingering traces of distrust; and to resume command of his American division and do all he could to secure effective co-operation; in short, to take up his work of liaison officer again on a scale greater than before.

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XV
HELP—AND DISAPPOINTMENT

When Lafayette sailed westward this time he owned two valued possessions, partly French, partly American, which had not been his when he landed at Brest. One was a sword, the gift Congress directed Franklin to have made by the best workmen in Paris and presented to him in recognition of his services. It was a wonderful sword, with his motto "*Cur non?*" and no end of compliments worked into the decorations of its gold-mounted hilt and scabbard. The other possession was a brand-new baby. "Our next one absolutely must be a boy!" Lafayette had written Adrienne when assuring her of his joy over the birth of Anastasie; and obligingly the next one came a boy, born on Christmas Eve, 1779. He had been immediately christened, as was the custom, but he was given a name that no man of the house of Motier had borne in all the seven hundred years of the family's consequential existence. Even the young mother's tongue may have tripped a bit as she whispered "George Washington" to the baby cuddled against her breast. But no other name was possible for that child, and the day came, before he was grown, when it served as a talisman to [Pg 130] carry him out of danger.

Sailing westward on the *Hermione*, the father of this Franco-American baby reached Boston late in April after an uneventful voyage, to receive the heartiest welcome the staid old town could give him. The docks were black with people and the streets lined with hurrahing crowds as he rode to the governor's house where he was to be a guest.

Until the *Hermione* came to anchor he did not know where Washington was to be found, but he had a letter ready written to despatch at once, begging him, if he chanced to be north of Philadelphia, to await his arrival, since he brought news of importance. It took a week for this message to reach Washington's headquarters at Morristown, and three days later Lafayette was there himself, greeting and being greeted by his chief with a heartiness which showed their genuine delight at being together again. Having been absent for more than a year, he had much to learn about the progress of the war; and what he learned was not reassuring. He knew in a general way how things had gone, but the details showed how weak the American forces really were.

Most of the fighting had been in the South. Savannah had been taken before Lafayette sailed for France. The British had followed up this success by sending a large force to Georgia; Southern Tories had been roused, and civil war had spread throughout the entire region. At present the British were advancing upon Charleston. In the North the two armies still played their waiting [Pg 131]

game, the British actually in New York, and Washington in a position from which he could guard the Hudson, help Philadelphia in case of need, and occasionally do something to harass the enemy. Frequently the harassing was done by the other side, however. During the summer of 1779 the British had ravaged the Connecticut Valley. Washington refused to be tempted away from the Hudson, and the brightest spot in the annals of that year had been the capture of Stony Point while the British were thus engaged. Lafayette's acquaintance, "Mad Anthony" Wayne, had taken it in a most brilliant assault.

But that was only one episode and the history of the year could be summed up in eight words—discouragement, an empty treasury, unpaid troops, dwindling numbers. Washington's own army was reduced to about six thousand men, with half of these scarcely fit for duty. They were only partly clothed, and had been only partly fed for a long time. Their commander said of them, sadly, but with pride, that during their terms of service they had subsisted upon "every kind of horse-food except hay." Lafayette expected to find the army weak, but this was a state of exhaustion of which he had not dreamed. It was very hard to have to report such things to Paris; in truth, for some time after his return he avoided reporting details as much as possible.

His coming, with the news that ships and men and money were on the way, must have seemed little less than a happy miracle. But would the help come in time? To make it effective the country must renew its enthusiasm and meet assistance half-way. Washington frankly told a committee of Congress that unless this could be done the coming of the French would be a disaster instead of a benefit. In other words, the country was so weak that the next effort was almost sure to be the last one. If it failed, it would be too exhausted to rally again. [Pg 132]

Lafayette left headquarters and went to Philadelphia to exert whatever personal influence he possessed upon Congress; but under the law Congress could raise neither men nor money. All it could do was to recommend such action to the thirteen different states. Their thirteen different legislatures had to deliberate and act, all of which took time when time was most urgent.

In France the proposed military expedition had roused much enthusiasm. Young men flocked to enlist, as eager to fight for liberty in America as our boys of 1918 were eager to reach France on a similar errand. Every available spot on the transports was crowded. The commanding general regretfully left behind his two favorite war-horses because he knew that twenty men could go in the space they would occupy. Even after the ships had left the harbor recruits came to him on the cutter that brought the last despatches, begging to be taken aboard, but had to be sent back because there was literally not room for another man.

Yet the numbers that came to America were, after all, disappointingly small: far less than originally planned. That was because the English managed to blockade all except the first division in the harbor of Brest. This first division sailed on the 2d of May with Admiral Ternay in command of the ships, and the gallant, cool-headed Rochambeau, who was already fighting at the time Lafayette was born, in command of the soldiers. He had five thousand effective men crowded into the transports that left Brest with their convoy on a sunny day, the many white sails filling to a breeze described as *"joli frais."* But in spite of this auspicious beginning it was a tedious crossing, longer in point of time than the first voyage of Columbus. The weary soldiers soon came to call their transports "sabots" (wooden shoes), and indeed some of them were scarcely larger. As our coast was neared they crawled along at three knots an hour, with drums beating every fifteen minutes to keep the ships in touch and prevent their drifting away from each other in the heavy, persistent fog. [Pg 133]

Washington had hoped that before the arrival of the French he could gather sufficient force to justify him in attacking New York with their help, for he was convinced that one success here would end the war. His army was indeed "augmented more than one-half," as Lafayette wrote his wife, but before the ships made their slow way across the Atlantic the British had captured Charleston, and Clinton, who assisted Cornwallis in that undertaking, had returned to New York with a force that raised his strength there to twelve thousand regulars, in addition to Admiral Arbuthnot's fleet and several thousand militia and refugees. Not all the earnestness of Washington, the efforts of Congress, nor the enthusiasm of Lafayette had been able to raise men enough to attack under these circumstances; and the signals displayed on Point Judith and "the island of Block House" to guide the French directed them to go to Newport as a convenient place from which the attack might yet be made if events favored the allies. [Pg 134]

Lafayette went to Newport to meet Rochambeau and plan co-operation. By the time he reached there the situation was still worse, for an English fleet which left home about the time Rochambeau sailed from France had appeared, giving the British superior force alike on sea and land.

Admiral Ternay, who was not aggressive by nature, saw a repetition of D'Estaing's failure looming ahead of him, and sent word to France that the American cause was doomed. Rochambeau, being a better soldier, did what he could; landed his men, freeing them from the confinement of the "sabots;" and, upon a rumor that the British were advancing to attack, helped several thousand militia prepare for defense. The rumor had a foundation of truth. An expedition actually left New York, but was no sooner started than Washington began threatening the city, whereupon Clinton recalled his men, for there was no doubt that New York was the more important place.

Having no knowledge of the country, and being thus hurried at the moment of landing, from the rôle of aggressor which he had expected to play to one of defense, the situation seemed very serious to the French general. Even after the recall of Clinton's expedition he felt it most unwise to lose touch with his ships, and he had small patience with Lafayette, who seemed inclined to [Pg 135]

talk about "advances." Rochambeau was sure that his duty lay in waiting for the second division of the French force, keeping strict discipline, meanwhile, in a model camp, and paying liberally for supplies. This he did so well that not an apple disappeared from the orchards in which the French tents were pitched, not a cornstalk was bent in the fields near by, and, as Lafayette assured Washington, the pigs and chickens of patriots wandered at will through the French camp "without being deranged." The French and Americans fraternized enthusiastically. "You would have been amused the other day," Lafayette reported to his chief, "had you seen two hundred and fifty of our recruits, who came to Connecticut without provisions and without tents, mixing so well with the French troops that each Frenchman, officer or soldier, took an American with him and amicably gave him a share of his bed and supper."

The French soldiers were anxious to get out of Newport and at the throats of the enemy, but Rochambeau was firm in his determination. He desired a personal interview with Washington and felt a little hurt, perhaps, that a youngster like Lafayette, who might easily have been his own son, was made the means of communication. There was some doubt whether Washington could enter into agreements with a representative of a foreign power until explicit authority had been [Pg 136] given him by Congress. It was one of those absurd technical questions of no real importance that may cause a deal of trouble, and it was better not to have it raised. Lafayette continued, therefore, to be occupied in Newport with parleys and conferences and incidentally with meeting old friends. His brother-in-law, De Noailles, was one of the officers who had come out with the expedition.

Cross-purposes were bound to arise, and there were moments when Lafayette's optimism got decidedly upon the nerves of Rochambeau. The two came to the verge of quarrel, but both were too sensible to allow themselves to be pushed over the edge. The breach was soon healed by a letter of Rochambeau's in which he referred to himself as an old father and his "dear Marquis" as an affectionate son. In Lafayette's private account of this episode to his wife he wrote that "a slight excess of frankness got me into a little controversy with those generals. Seeing that I was not persuading them and that the public interest demanded we be good friends, I admitted at random that I had been mistaken and was to blame, and asked pardon in proper terms, which had such a magical effect that we are now better friends than ever." Lafayette's friends called him determined; his critics said that he was vain. Historians aver that he was never convinced by argument.

August brought the unwelcome news that there was to be no second division of the French army that year. This was the more disappointing because in addition to all else it meant the continued [Pg 137] lack of arms and ammunition and of clothing for fifteen thousand American soldiers that Lafayette had caused to be manufactured in France, but which had been left behind to come with this second division. He confided to his cousin that the army was reduced to "a frugality, a poverty, and a nudity which will, I hope, be remembered in the next world, and counted, to our credit in purgatory." To his wife he wrote that the ladies of Philadelphia had started a subscription to aid the soldiers, and that he had put down her name for one hundred guineas; that he was very well; that the life of an American soldier was infinitely frugal; that "the fare of the general officers of the rebel army is very different from that of the French at Newport."

The intelligence that no more French troops could be expected called manifestly for new plans of campaign, and a conference between the respective chiefs was finally arranged, which took place at Hartford with considerable ceremony on the 20th of September. Washington had with him General Knox and General Lafayette. The French general and admiral were accompanied by as many subordinate officers as could find plausible excuse to go along, for all were curious to meet the famous General Washington.

At this conference the whole situation was discussed in detail, but no way of winning the war without outside help was discovered. Rochambeau sent his son, who had come to America with him, back to France with a formal account of the proceedings; while Washington and Lafayette [Pg 138] also sent letters to France by the son of that Mr. Laurens who had offered Lafayette the hospitality of his traveling-carriage after the battle of the Brandywine.

One chance of help still remained, even if the Ministry should consider it impossible to despatch aid directly from France. The Comte de Guichen, who commanded a fleet then in the West Indies, might be persuaded to sail to the relief of the Americans if the letters could be made sufficiently persuasive. Washington wrote directly to him as well as to France, sending this letter through the French minister to the United States, in order that everything might be diplomatically correct and aboveboard.

XVI
BLACK TREACHERY

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Washington returned from his conference with the French commanders by way of West Point to show Lafayette some improvements recently made in the works. Several little accidents delayed the journey and brought them to the house of the commander at a critical moment. We have Lafayette's account, part of it written the very next day to the French minister to the United States, part of it later to his wife.

"When I left you yesterday, M. le Chevalier, to come here to take breakfast with General Arnold, we were very far from thinking of the event which I am about to announce to you. You will shudder at the danger we have run. You will be astonished at the miraculous chain of accidents and circumstances by which we were saved.... West Point was sold, and it was sold by Arnold! That same man who had covered himself with glory by rendering valuable services to his country had lately formed a horrid compact with the enemy. And but for the chance which brought us here at a certain time, but for the chance which by a combination of accidents caused the [Pg 140] adjutant-general of the English army to fall into the hands of some countrymen beyond the line of our own posts, West Point and the North River would probably be in possession of our enemies.

"When we left Fishkill we were preceded by one of my aides-de-camp and General Knox's aide, who found General and Mrs. Arnold at table and sat down to breakfast with them. During that time two letters were brought to General Arnold giving him information of the capture of the spy. He ordered a horse to be saddled, went to his wife's room and told her he was lost, and directed one of his aides-de-camp to say to General Washington that he had gone to West Point and should return in an hour."

Arnold had been gone only thirty minutes when Washington and Lafayette rode up.

"We crossed the river and went to look at the works. Judge of our astonishment when, upon our return, we were informed that the captured spy was Major André, the adjutant-general of the English army, and that among the papers found upon him was a copy of a very important council of war, a statement of the strength of the garrison and of the works, and certain observations upon the methods of attack and defense, all in General Arnold's handwriting.... A search was made for Arnold, but he had escaped in a boat on board the sloop-of-war *Vulture*, and as nobody suspected his flight, no sentry could have thought of arresting him.... The first care of General Washington was to return to West Point the troops whom Arnold had dispersed under various [Pg 141] pretexts. We remained here to insure the safety of a fort which the English would value less if they knew it better....

"I cannot describe to you, M. le Chevalier, to what degree I am astounded by this piece of news.... That Arnold, a man who, although not so highly esteemed as has been supposed in Europe, had nevertheless given proof of talent, of patriotism, and especially of the most brilliant courage, should at once destroy his very existence and should sell his country to the tyrants whom he had fought against with glory, is an event, M. le Chevalier, which confounds and distresses me, and, if I must confess it, humiliates me to a degree that I cannot express. I would give anything in the world if Arnold had not shared our labors with us, and if this man whom it still pains me to call a scoundrel had not shed his blood for the American cause. My knowledge of his personal courage led me to expect that he would decide to blow his brains out. This was my first hope. At all events, it is probable that he will do so when he reaches New York, whither the English sloop proceeded immediately upon receiving Arnold on board....

> "I am not writing to M. le Comte de Rochambeau or to M. le Chevalier de Ternay. I beg you to communicate to them this incredible story.... What will the officers of the French army say when they see a general abandon and basely sell his country after having defended it so well? You can bear witness, M. le Chevalier, that this is the first atrocity that has been heard of in our army. But if, on the one hand, they hear of the infamy of [Pg 142] Arnold, they are bound to admire the disinterestedness of a few countrymen who happened to meet Mr. André with a passport from General Arnold, and on the mere suspicion of his being a friend of England made him a prisoner, refusing at the same time his horse, his watch, and four hundred guineas which he offered them if they would allow him to continue upon his way....
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> "I shall conclude my long letter, M. le Chevalier, by referring to a subject which must touch every human heart. The unhappy Mrs. Arnold did not know a word of this conspiracy. Her husband told her before going away that he was flying, never to come back, and he left her lying unconscious. When she came to herself she fell into frightful convulsions and completely lost her reason. We did everything we could to quiet her, but she looked upon us as the murderers of her husband.... The horror with which her husband's conduct has inspired her, and a thousand other feelings, make her the most unhappy of women.
>
> "P.S.—She has recovered her reason this morning, and, as you know I am upon very good terms with her, she sent for me to go up to her chamber. General Washington and every one else sympathize warmly with this estimable woman whose face and whose youthfulness make her so interesting. She is going to Philadelphia, and I implore you, when you return, to use your influence in her favor.... Your influence and your opinion, emphatically expressed, may prevent her from being visited with a vengeance which she [Pg 143] does not deserve. General Washington will protect her also. As for myself, you know that I have always been fond of her, and at this moment she interests me intensely. We are certain that she knew nothing of the plot."

This letter expressed the hope that André would be hanged according to military law, because, being a man of high rank and influence, his fate would serve as a warning to spies of lesser degree. Lafayette was one of the court martial that tried and sentenced him; and we have no proof that he hesitated for an instant in the performance of his stem duty or that he ever regretted it. Yet from a letter to Madame Lafayette, written after André's death, we know that Lafayette felt his charm, as did every one else who knew the unfortunate young Englishman. "He was an interesting young man," Lafayette wrote. "He conducted himself in a manner so frank, so noble, and so delicate that I cannot help feeling for him infinite sorrow."

Arnold, as everybody knows, did not blow out his brains, but, becoming literally a turncoat, donned the red of the British uniform, and took his unwelcome place among the gentlemen officers of King George. In the following spring he was doing work of destruction in Virginia; but he was not trusted by his new companions, and two British colonels supposed to be under his orders were secretly charged with the duty of keeping an eye on him. It was in Virginia that his path and Lafayette's crossed once more.

Lafayette meantime had been a prey to restlessness. Nothing happened in the North more [Pg 144] interesting than camp routine and the exchange of official visits. During the summer he had been given command of a special corps of light infantry culled from all branches of the service, a body of men in which he took infinite pride. "Its position is always that of advance-guard," he wrote Adrienne. "It is independent of the main army, and it is far too fine for our present pacific situation." He lavished training and affection upon it and pampered it by sending to France for luxuries like sabers and banners and plumes. While less needed than coats and shoes, such things were easier to transport. But even in the matter of clothing this favored corps was better off than the rest of the army. A French officer who visited Lafayette's camp thought the uniforms of both men and officers smart. Each soldier wore a sort of helmet made of hard leather, with a crest of horsehair.

Before the army went into winter quarters many Frenchmen came to "the camp of the marquis" twenty miles from New York, making the pilgrimage not so much from love of him or to sample the punch which, according to the custom of the time, he kept "stationary on the table" for the benefit of his guests, as out of curiosity to see Washington's headquarters, which were not far away. Most of them were impressed by the good horses owned by American generals and astonished at the simplicity of their other equipment. Some "who had made war as colonels long before Lafayette left school" were the least bit jealous of his youth and influence. Several had [Pg 145] entered into an agreement not to accept service under him; but all were flattered that a Frenchman held such high place in public esteem. One of them asserted with complacency that "private letters from him have frequently produced more effect upon some states than the strongest exhortations of Congress."

When the army went into winter quarters again he had even more time upon his hands. He wrote many letters. One went almost every month to his powerful friend at court, Vergennes, urging speedy aid. The military needs of the country were never absent from his thoughts, even while he was taking his French friends, including De Noailles, on a personally conducted tour of near-by battle-fields and cities. He did not trust himself far from headquarters, for fear that his chief might need him or that he might miss some opportunity. When Colonel Laurens received his instructions before starting for Paris he took care to be on hand, to give expert advice on court customs and prejudices. He was a young man who well knew his influence upon two continents, and was so eager to use it that a man of less winning personality in similar circumstances might have got himself heartily disliked.

His eagerness to do something was heightened by his belief that Europe misunderstood, and thought Americans either unready or unwilling to fight. His vivid imagination got to work again and juggled with facts and figures until he became convinced that a surprise attack upon New York could do no possible harm and might capture the city. He detailed this plan to Washington, [Pg 146] who saw the weakness of his reasoning and rejected it in a kind letter signed "sincerely and affectionately yours," reminding Lafayette that "we must consult our means rather than our wishes" and that "to endeavor to recover our reputation we should take care not to injure it the more."

After this gentle snub he was torn between a desire to join General Greene in the South for the winter campaign and his wish to be near New York when a blow was struck there. With a curiosity that would have been unpardonable in a less intimate friend, he sought to find out his chief's plans on this score. Washington's answer was non-committal, but he pointed out that "your going to the Southern army, if you expect a command in this, will answer no valuable purpose"; and after this second gentle snub Lafayette gave up the idea of joining Greene. Then in February he was sent with a detachment of twelve hundred men to Virginia, where Arnold was destroying valuable supplies. His orders bade him travel fast, "not to suffer the detachment to be delayed for want of either provisions, forage, or wagons," and after he got to Virginia "to do no act whatever with Arnold that directly or by implication will screen him from the punishment due to his treason and desertion; which, if he should fall into your hands, you will execute in the most summary way." While in Virginia he was to co-operate with General von Steuben, who was in command of militia there; and if it should prove impossible to dislodge Arnold, Lafayette was to [Pg 147] bring his men back to rejoin the main army.

He had his force at the Head of Elk, that inlet at the head of Chesapeake Bay which the English had already used, three days ahead of schedule time. His campaign lasted about a month, but came to nothing, because he did not have the co-operation of ships, and in that tangle of land and water control of Chesapeake Bay was as necessary to success as ammunition or fodder. The French had been asked to help, and twice sent ships from Newport to Chesapeake Bay, but in neither case were they useful to him. He did the best he could from day to day without them, and even pushed down the bay in a small boat far ahead of his men, hoping to establish connections; but the ships he saw were British instead of French. Then he took his men back again to the Head of Elk.

That his failure was not due to lack of persistence letters written by him to Gov. Thomas Jefferson, asking for transportation, for provisions, for boats, for wagons, for horses, and, if horses were not available, even for oxen to draw his guns, amply testify. That he had his usual

resourcefulness at instant command was displayed at Annapolis on the northward journey when he found two small armed British vessels blocking his progress. He improvised a temporary navy of his own, armed two merchant sloops with cannon, manned them with volunteers, and drove the British away long enough to permit the rest of his force to go on.

Neither was his usual friendliness lacking. He snatched time to visit Mount Vernon and to call upon Washington's mother at Fredericksburg, but he made up for the time lost in these indulgences by riding at night to overtake his command. [Pg 148]

XVII
PREPARING FOR THE LAST ACT

[Pg 149]

The British were beginning to be hard pressed in the South. The struggle had been long and disappointing, and burning and looting and the horrors of civil war had spread over a large area. Two Continental armies had been lost in rapid succession, and there had been months when one disaster seemed to follow upon another; but gradually the British were being driven away from their ships and bases of supply on the coast. The heat of summer had brought much sickness to their camps, and General Greene, next to Washington the most skilful of the Revolutionary generals, had perfected his "science of losing battles" to the point where his opponents might claim almost every engagement as a victory and yet the advantage remained with the Americans. Recently the British had lost a large part of their light troops. In March, 1781, Cornwallis decided to leave General Rawdon, with whom Lafayette had danced in London, to face Greene, while he himself went to Virginia, joined Benedict Arnold and General Phillips there, and returned with them to finish the conquest of the South. Washington learned of the plan and knew that if it succeeded General Greene might be crushed between two British forces. Arnold and Phillips must be kept busy in Virginia. Steuben was already on the ground; Anthony Wayne was ordered to hurry his Pennsylvanians to the rescue; and Lafayette, being near the point of danger, was turned back. He found new orders when he reached Head of Elk. [Pg 150]

The scene was being set in Virginia, not in New York, for the last act of the Revolutionary War; but neither he nor his men realized this, and if Lafayette was disappointed, the men were almost in a state of panic. They began deserting in large numbers. "They like better a hundred lashes than a journey to the southward," their commander wrote. "As long as they had an expedition in view they were very well satisfied; but the idea of remaining in the Southern states appears to them intolerable, and they are amazingly averse to the people and climate." Most of them were New England born. He hastened to put many rivers between them and the land of their desire; and also tried an appeal to their pride. In an order of the day he stated that his force had been chosen to fight an enemy superior in numbers and to encounter many dangers. No man need desert, for their commander would not compel one of them to accompany him against his will. Whoever chose to do so might apply for a pass and be sent back to rejoin his former regiment. They were part of his beloved light infantry of the previous year, with all this implied of friendship and interest on both sides, and this appeal worked like a charm. Desertion went suddenly and completely out of fashion; nobody asked for a pass, and one poor fellow who was in danger of being sent back because he was lame hired a cart to be saved from this disgrace. [Pg 151]

Lafayette's men had once been better dressed than the average; but their present ragged clothing was entirely unsuited to the work ahead of them, being fit only for winter wear in the North. As usual, money and new garments were equally lacking, and as usual this general of twenty-three came to the rescue. When he reached Baltimore he let the merchants know that according to French law he was to come into full control of all his property on reaching the age of twenty-five, and he promised to pay two years hence for everything he ordered, if the government did not pay them earlier. On the strength of this he borrowed two thousand guineas with which to buy overalls, hats, and shoes; and he smiled upon the ladies of Baltimore, who gave a ball in his honor, told them confidentially of his plight, and so stirred their patriotism and sympathy that they set to work with their own fair hands and made up the linen he bought for shirts.

Phillips and Arnold had joined forces near Norfolk, and, since the British were in control of Chesapeake Bay, could go where they chose. Lafayette believed they would soon move up the James River toward Norfolk to destroy supplies the Americans had collected. He resolved to get to Richmond before them, though he had twice the distance to travel. With this in view he set out from Baltimore on the 19th of April, moving with such haste that his artillery and even the tents for his men were left to follow at a slower pace. On the day before he left Baltimore the British, under General Phillips, who outranked Arnold, began the very march he had foreseen. Steuben's Virginia militia put up the best defense it could, but, being inferior in numbers and training, could only retire inch by inch, moving supplies to places of greater safety as it went. But it retired hopefully, knowing Lafayette to be on the way. [Pg 152]

Continuing to advance, partly by land and partly by water, the British reached Petersburg, only twenty-three miles from Richmond. They passed Petersburg and pressed on. On April 30th they reached Manchester on the south bank of the James, directly opposite Richmond. There, to General Phillips's amazement, he beheld more than the town he had come to take; drawn up on the hills above the river was Lafayette's force, which had arrived the night before. He had only

about nine hundred Continentals in addition to his militia, and the British numbered twenty-three hundred, but Phillips did not choose to attack. He contented himself with swearing eloquently and giving orders to retire. Lafayette had the satisfaction of learning, through an officer who visited the British camp under flag of truce, that his enemy had been completely surprised. But the young Frenchman felt it necessary to explain to Washington just how he had been able to do it. "The leaving of my artillery appears a strange whim, but had I waited for it Richmond was [Pg 153] lost.... It was not without trouble I have made this rapid march."

Lafayette was to be under General Greene and expected to find orders from him waiting at Richmond. Not finding them, he decided he could best serve the cause by keeping General Phillips uneasy, and followed him down the James; but, being too weak to attack except with great advantage of position, he prudently kept the river between them. The military journal kept by Colonel Simcoe, one of the British officers charged with the unpleasant duty of watching Arnold, admits that this was "good policy," though he longed to take advantage of what he called his French adversary's "gasconading disposition and military ignorance" and make some counter-move which his own superior officers failed to approve.

This retreat of the British down the James, followed by Lafayette, was the beginning of that strange contra-dance which the two armies maintained for nine weeks. Sketched upon a map of Virginia, the route they took resembles nothing except the aimless markings of a little child. The zigzag lines extend as far west as the mountains at Charlottesville, as far south as Portsmouth, as far north as Fredericksburg and Culpeper, and end at Yorktown.

Cornwallis had not approved of General Clinton's conduct of the war, believing the British commander-in-chief frittered away his opportunity. Cornwallis said he was "quite tired of marching about the country in search of adventure." The experiences he was to have in Virginia [Pg 154] must have greatly added to that weariness.

He sent word to Phillips to join him at Petersburg. General Phillips turned his forces in that direction, but it proved to be his last order. He was already ill and soon lapsed into unconsciousness and died. His death placed Arnold again in command until Cornwallis should arrive. It was during this interval that Arnold took occasion to write Lafayette about prisoners of war. Mindful of his instructions to have nothing to do with Arnold except to punish him, Lafayette refused to receive the letter, saying to the messenger who brought it that he would gladly read a communication from any other British officer. Arnold had a keen interest in the treatment of prisoners—for very personal reasons. A story was current to the effect that one of Lafayette's command who was taken prisoner was questioned by Arnold himself and asked what the Americans would do to him in case he was captured. "Cut off the leg which was wounded in your country's service, and hang the rest of you!" was the prompt reply. The renegade general was not popular in either army. Soon after Cornwallis's arrival he was ordered elsewhere, and his name fades out of history.

Lafayette counted the hours until Wayne should join him, but Cornwallis reached Virginia first, with troops enough to make Lafayette's situation decidedly grave. All the Americans could do was to follow the plan Steuben had adopted before Lafayette's arrival; retreat slowly, removing stores to places of safety whenever possible. General Greene gave Lafayette permission to act [Pg 155] independently, but, while this enabled him to make quick decisions, it increased his load of responsibility and did not in the least augment his strength.

In the North he had longed for more to do; here it was different. He wrote Alexander Hamilton, "For the present, my dear friend, my complaint is quite of the opposite nature," and he went on with a half-humorous account of his duties, his situation, and the relative strength of the two armies. The British, he thought, had between four thousand and five thousand men. "We have nine hundred Continentals. Their infantry is near five to one, their cavalry ten to one. Our militia is not numerous, some without arms, and are not used to war." Wayne's men were necessary even to allow the Americans to be beaten "with some decency." "But," he added, "if the Pennsylvanians come, Lord Cornwallis shall pay something for his victory!" The Virginia militia showed symptoms of deserting as harvest-time approached and the call of home duties grew strong. Then there was the danger of contagious disease. "By the utmost care to avoid infected ground, we have hitherto got rid of the smallpox," Lafayette wrote in another letter. "I wish the harvest-time might be as easily got over."

Cornwallis was fully aware of his superior numbers and had a simple plan. "I shall now proceed to dislodge Lafayette from Richmond, and with my light troops to destroy magazines or stores in the neighborhood.... From thence I propose to move to the neck at Williamsburg, which is [Pg 156] represented as healthy ... and keep myself unengaged from operations which might interfere with your plan for the campaign until I have the satisfaction of hearing from you," he wrote Clinton. He was very sure that the "aspiring boy," as he contemptuously called Lafayette, could not escape him. But the "boy" had no intention of being beaten—"indecently"—if he could hold out until Wayne arrived. He knew that one false move would be his ruin and there was no wild planning. "Independence has rendered me more cautious, as I know my warmth," he told Hamilton. He knew how to travel swiftly, and sometimes it was necessary to move as swiftly as possible. Even so the British advance might come up just as the last of his little force disappeared. If Cornwallis tried a short cut to head him off, he changed his direction; and more of those apparently aimless lines were traced upon the map.

On the 10th of June Wayne joined him about thirty-five miles west of Fredericksburg. His force was smaller than Lafayette had hoped for, "less than a thousand men in all"; but from that time the Continental troops no longer fled. Indeed, Cornwallis no longer pursued them, but veered off,

sending General Tarleton's famous cavalry on a raid toward Charlottesville, where it made prisoners of several members of the Virginia legislature and almost succeeded in capturing Gov. Thomas Jefferson. Another portion of his force turned its attention upon Steuben where he was guarding supplies. But gradually pursuit became retreat and the general direction of the zigzag [Pg 157] was back toward the sea. The chances were still uncertain enough to make the game exciting. There was one moment when Lafayette's flank was in imminent danger; his men, however, marched by night along a forgotten wood road and reached safety. Six hundred mounted men who came to join him from neighboring counties were warmly welcomed, for he sorely needed horses. At one time, to get his men forward more speedily for an attack—attacks were increasingly frequent—each horse was made to carry double. After he and General Steuben joined forces on the 19th of June the English and Americans each had about four thousand men, though in the American camp there were only fifteen hundred regulars and fifty dragoons.

Weapons for cavalry were even scarcer than horses. Swords could not be bought in the state; but Lafayette was so intent upon mounted troops that he planned to provide some of them with spears, "which," he argued, "in the hands of a gentleman must be a formidable weapon." Thus reverting to type, as biologists say, this descendant of the Crusaders drove his enemy before him with Crusaders' weapons down the peninsula between the York and the James rivers.

[Pg 158]

XVIII
YORKTOWN

One of General Wayne's officers, Captain Davis of the First Pennsylvania, whose military skill, let us hope, exceeded his knowledge of spelling, kept a diary full of enthusiasm and superfluous capital letters. By this we learn that the Fourth of July, 1781, was a wet morning which cleared off in time for a "Feu-de-joy" in honor of the day. The Americans had by this time forced the British down the peninsula as far as Williamsburg, and were themselves camped about fifteen miles from that town. While the "Feu-de-joy" went up in smoke the British were busy; for Cornwallis had received letters which decided him to abandon Williamsburg, send a large part of his men north to reinforce Clinton, and consolidate the rest with the British garrison at Portsmouth, near Norfolk.

The battle of Green Springs, the most serious encounter of Lafayette's Virginia campaign, took place on the 6th of July, near Jamestown, when the British, in carrying out this plan, crossed to the south side of the river James. Cornwallis was sure that Lafayette would attack, and arranged an ambush, meaning to lure him with the belief that all except the British rear-guard had passed [Pg 159] to the other bank. The ruse only half succeeded, for Lafayette observed that the British clung tenaciously to their position and replaced the officers American riflemen picked off one after the other. Riding out on a point of land, he saw the British soldiers waiting under protection of their guns and spurred back to warn General Wayne, but by that time the battle had opened. Wayne's men suffered most, being nearly surrounded. In a tight place Wayne always preferred "among a choice of difficulties, to advance and charge"; and this was exactly what he did, straight into the British lines. The unexpectedness of it brought success; and in the momentary confusion he fell back to a place of safety. Afterward he had a word to say about Lafayette's personal conduct. Reporting that no officers were killed, though most of them had horses shot or wounded under them, he added: "I will not condole with the Marquis for the loss of two of his, as he was frequently requested to keep at a greater distance. His native bravery rendered him deaf to the admonition."

The British retained the battle-field and the Americans most of the glory, as was the case in so many fights of the Revolution. British military writers have contended that Lafayette was in mortal danger and that Cornwallis could have annihilated his whole force if he had attacked that night. What Cornwallis did was to cross the river next morning and proceed toward Portsmouth. The affair at Green Springs added materially to Lafayette's reputation. Indeed, with the exception [Pg 160] of burning a few American stores, increasing Lafayette's military reputation was about all the British accomplished in this campaign. An American officer with a taste for figures gleefully estimated that Cornwallis's "tour in Virginia" cost King George, one way and another, more than would have been needed to take all the British aristocracy on a trip around the world.

Cornwallis got his soldiers safely upon their transports, but it was written in the stars that they were not to leave Virginia of their own free will. Orders came from Clinton telling him not to send them north, and giving him to understand that his recent acts were not approved. Clinton directed him to establish himself in a healthy spot on the peninsula between the York and James rivers and to gain control of a seaport to which British ships could come. He suggested Old Point Comfort, but Cornwallis's engineers decided that Yorktown, with the neck of land opposite called Gloucester, was the only place that would serve. Here Cornwallis brought his army on the 1st of August and began building defenses.

Following the battle of Green Springs, Lafayette occupied Williamsburg and gave his men the rest they needed after their many weeks of marching. He sent out detachments on various errands, but this was a season of comparative quiet. Soon he began to long for excitement, and wrote to Washington that he did not know about anything that was happening in the world outside of Virginia, that he was homesick for headquarters, and that if he could not be there to [Pg 161]

help in the defense of New York, at least he would like to know what was going on. The answer only whetted his curiosity. Washington bade him await a confidential letter explaining his plans.

The military situation as Washington saw it was exceedingly interesting. Colonel Laurens's mission to the French court had turned out badly. Perhaps he had not taken sufficiently to heart Lafayette's advice; but young Rochambeau had not fared much better. In May it had been learned that there was never to be any second division of the French army; a blow that was softened by the assurance that considerable money was actually on the way and that a French fleet, which had sailed for the West Indies under command of Comte de Grasse, might visit the coast of the United States for a short time.

It was the approach of this French fleet which caused Clinton uneasiness in New York and made Cornwallis embark part of his troops for the North. Washington took good care to let Clinton rest in the belief that New York was to be attacked, but it became increasingly evident to him that the greatest blow he could strike would be to capture Cornwallis's army. He arranged with Admiral de Grasse to sail to Chesapeake Bay instead of to New York, sent word to Lafayette to be on the lookout for the French fleet, moved Rochambeau's soldiers from Newport to the Hudson, left a sufficient number of them there and started south with all the rest of the army, moving with the greatest possible speed. Those of us who have read about this merely as long past history do not [Pg 162] realize the risks involved in planning such far-reaching combinations in days before cables and telegraph lines.

"To blockade Rhode Island, fool Clinton, shut him up in New York, and keep Cornwallis in Virginia," says a French writer, "it was necessary to send from the port of Brest and later from the Antilles to Chesapeake Bay a flotilla destined to take from the English all hope of retreat and embarkation at the exact instant that Washington, Rochambeau, and Lafayette should come and force the English in their last intrenchments. This grand project which decided the outcome of the war could be conceived only by men of superior talent." Lafayette's friend, De Ségur, said that "it required all the audacity of Admiral Comte de Grasse and the skill of Washington, sustained by the bravery of Lafayette, the wisdom of Rochambeau, the heroic intrepidity of our sailors and our troops, as well as the valor of the American militia."

Fortunately the geography of the Atlantic coast helped Washington keep his secret even after he was well started. If De Grasse came to New York, Washington's logical goal was Staten Island, and the route of the Continental army would be the same in either case for a long distance. After Philadelphia had been left behind and Washington's plan became evident, it was too late for Clinton to stop him.

Thus the net tightened about Cornwallis. French ships in the bay effectually cut off hope of reinforcement or escape by sea. Lafayette stationed Wayne where he could interpose if the [Pg 163] British attempted to go by land toward the Carolinas. He sent his faithful friend, De Gimat, down the bay to meet the French admiral and give him information, and disposed his own forces to cover the landing of any soldiers De Grasse might bring him.

It must have been a fine sight when twenty-eight large ships of the line and four French frigates sailed up the James River on the 2d of September and landed three thousand soldiers, "all very tall men" in uniforms of white turned up with blue. Lafayette's Americans, drawn up not far from the battleground of Green Springs, donned their ragged best in their honor. "Our men had orders to wash and put on clean clothes," a diary informs us.

With this addition to his force Lafayette approached Yorktown. General Saint-Simon, the commander of the three thousand very tall men, was much older than Lafayette, besides being a marshal of France, but he gallantly signified his willingness to serve under his junior; and officers and privates alike accepted cheerfully the scanty American fare, which was all Lafayette could get for his enlarged military family. He found difficulty in collecting even this and wrote Washington that his duties as quartermaster had brought on violent headache and fever, but that the indisposition would vanish with three hours' needed sleep.

In spite of their politeness it was evident that the visitors were anxious to be through with their task and away. Admiral de Grasse had a rendezvous for a certain date in the West Indies and insisted from the first that his stay in American waters must be short. The French were scarcely [Pg 164] inclined to await the arrival of Washington; yet with all Washington's haste he had only reached Chester, Pennsylvania, on the way to Head of Elk when he heard of De Grasse's arrival. Those who were with him when the news came were more impressed by the way he received it than by the news itself. His reserve and dignity fell from him like a garment, and his face beamed like that of a delighted child as he stood on the river-bank waving his hat in the air and shouting the glad tidings to Rochambeau.

When Washington reached Williamsburg on the 13th of September he found both Lafayette and General Wayne the worse for wear. Wayne, with characteristic impetuosity, had tried to pass one of Lafayette's sentries after dark and was nursing a slight wound in consequence. Lafayette's quartermaster headache had developed into an attack of ague; but that did not prevent his being present at the ceremonies which marked the official meeting of the allied commanders. There were all possible salutes and official visits, and, in addition, at a grand supper a band played a kind of music seldom heard in America in those days—the overture to a French opera "signifying the happiness of a family when blessed with the presence of their father."

Washington's arrival of course put an end to Lafayette's independent command. With the Commander-in-chief present he became again what he had been the previous summer, merely the commander of a division of light infantry, and as such took part in the siege of Yorktown, [Pg 165]

which progressed unfalteringly. The night of October 14th witnessed its most dramatic incident, the taking of two redoubts, one by French troops, the other by Americans under Lafayette. Among his officers were Gimat, John Laurens, and Alexander Hamilton. Six shells in rapid succession gave the signal to advance, and his four hundred men obeyed under fire without returning a shot, so rapidly that the place was taken at the point of the bayonet in a very few minutes. Lafayette's first care was to send an aide with his compliments and a message to Baron Viomenil, the French commander, whose troops were still attacking; the message being that the Americans had gained their redoubt and would gladly come to his assistance if he desired it. This was a bit of vainglory, for Viomenil had nettled Lafayette by doubting if his Americans could succeed. On the night of October 15th the British attempted a sortie which failed. After an equally unsuccessful attempt to escape by water, Cornwallis felt that there was no more hope, for his works were crumbling and, in addition to his loss in killed and wounded, many of his men were sick. He wrote a short note to Washington asking for an armistice to arrange terms of surrender.

The time of surrender was fixed for two o'clock on the afternoon of October 19, 1781. Lafayette had suggested that Cornwallis's bands be required to play a British or a German air when the soldiers marched to lay down their arms. This was in courteous retaliation for the treatment our own troops had received at British hands at the surrender of Charleston, when they had been [Pg 166] forbidden to play such music. It was to the tune of "The World Turned Upside Down" that they chose to march with colors cased, between the long lines of French and Americans drawn up on the Hampton Road, to a field where a squadron of French had spread out to form a huge circle. The French on one side of the road under their flag with the golden fleur-de-lis were resplendent in uniforms of white turned up with blue. The Americans were less imposing. In the militia regiments toward the end of their line scarcely a uniform was to be seen, but at their head Washington and his officers, superbly mounted, stood opposite Rochambeau and the other French generals. Eye-witnesses thought that the British showed disdain of the ragged American soldiers and a marked preference for the French, but acts of discourtesy were few, and the higher officers conducted themselves as befitted gentlemen. Cornwallis did not appear to give up his sword, but sent General O'Hara to represent him, and it was received on Washington's part by General Lincoln, who had given up his sword to the British at Charleston.

As each British regiment reached the field where the French waited it laid down its arms at the command of its colonel and marched back to Yorktown, prisoners of war. The cheeks of one colonel were wet with tears as he gave the order, and a corporal was heard to whisper to his musket as he laid it down, "May you never get so good a master!" Care was taken not to add to the humiliation of the vanquished by admitting sightseers, and all agree that there was no [Pg 167] cheering or exulting. "Universal silence was observed," says General "Lighthorse Harry" Lee, who was there. "The utmost decency prevailed, exhibiting in demeanor an awful sense of the vicissitudes of human life, mingled with commiseration for the unhappy." There was more than commiseration; there was real friendliness. Rochambeau, learning that Cornwallis was without money, lent him all he needed. Dinners were given at which British officers were the guests of honor; and we have Lafayette's word for it that "every sort of politeness" was shown.

Washington's aide, Colonel Tilghman, rode at top speed to Philadelphia with news of the surrender, reaching there after midnight on the 24th. He met a watchman as he entered the city, and bade him show him the way to the house of the president of Congress. The watchman, of course, learned the great news, and while Tilghman roused the high official, the watchman, who was a patriot, though he had a strong German accent, continued his rounds, calling, happily:

"Basht dree o'glock, und Corn-wal-lis isht da-a-ken!"

[Pg 168]

XIX
"THE WINE OF HONOR"

About the time that Colonel Tilghman rode into Philadelphia a large British fleet appeared just outside of Chesapeake Bay, thirty-one ships one day and twenty-five more the next; but they were too late. As a French officer remarked, "The chicken was already eaten," and two days later the last sail had disappeared. The surrender of Cornwallis cost England the war, but nobody could be quite sure of it at that time. Washington hoped the French admiral would still help him by taking American troops south, either to reinforce General Greene near Charleston or for operations against Wilmington, North Carolina. Two days after the fall of Yorktown, when Washington made a visit of thanks to De Grasse upon his flagship, Lafayette accompanied his chief; and after Washington took leave Lafayette stayed for further consultation, it being Washington's plan to give Lafayette command of this expedition against Wilmington in case it should be decided upon. The young general came ashore in high spirits, sure that two thousand American soldiers could sail for North Carolina within the next ten days. Reflection, however, showed the admiral many [Pg 169] obstacles, chief of them being that he had positive orders to meet a Spanish admiral in the West Indies on a certain day, now very near. Taking troops to Wilmington might delay him only a few hours, but on the other hand contrary winds might lengthen the time to two weeks, in which case he would have to sail off to the rendezvous, carrying the whole American expedition with him. After thinking it over, he politely but firmly refused. Reinforcements for General Greene were

sent by land under command of another officer, the expedition to Wilmington was given up, and Lafayette rode away to Philadelphia to ask leave of Congress to spend the following winter in Paris. This was readily granted in resolutions which cannily combined anticipation of future favors with thanks for the service he had already rendered.

Once more he sailed from Boston on the *Alliance*. This time the voyage was short and lacked the exciting features of his previous trip on her. Wishing to surprise his wife, he landed at Lorient and posted to Paris with such haste that he arrived quite unexpectedly on the 21st of January, to find an empty house, Adrienne being at the moment at the Hotel de Ville, attending festivities in honor of the unfortunate little Dauphin. When the news of her husband's return finally reached her on the breath of the crowd she was separated from her home by streets in such happy turmoil that she could not hope to reach the Hotel de Noailles for hours. Marie Antoinette hastened this journey's end in a lovers' meeting in right queenly fashion by holding up a royal [Pg 170] procession and sending Madame Lafayette home in her own carriage. Accounts written at the time tell how the husband heard his wife's voice and flew to the door, how she fell into his arms half fainting with emotion, and how he carried her inside and the great doors closed while the crowd in the street applauded. What happened after that we do not know, except that he found other members of his family strangely altered. "My daughter and your George have grown so much that I find myself older than I thought," the father wrote Washington.

Paris set about celebrating his return with enthusiasm. A private letter which made much of the queen's graciousness to Madame Lafayette remarked as of lesser moment that a numerous and joyous band of "*poissards,*" which we may translate "the rabble," brought branches of laurel to the Hôtel de Noailles. A prima donna offered him the same tribute at the opera, but in view of later happenings this homage of the common people was quite as significant. In vaudeville they sang topical songs about him; pretty ladies frankly showed him their favor; the ancient order of Masons, of which he was a member, gave him the welcome reserved for heroes; and he was wined and dined to an extent that only a man blessed with his strong digestion could have withstood. One of these dinners was given by the dissolute old Maréchal de Richelieu, nephew of the famous cardinal, and to this were bidden "all the *maréchals* of France," who drank Washington's health with fervor and bade the guest of honor convey to him "their homage." [Pg 171]

It had been more than a century since France won a victory over England comparable to this capture of Cornwallis, and national pride and exultation were plainly apparent in the honors bestowed upon the returned soldier. "Your name is held in veneration," Vergennes assured him. "It required a great deal of skill to maintain yourself as you did, for so long a time, in spite of the disparity of your forces, before Lord Cornwallis, whose military talents are well known." And the new Minister of War, M. de Ségur, father of Lafayette's boyhood friend, informed him that as "a particular and flattering favor" the king had been pleased to make him a marshal of France, his commission dating from the 18th of October. This rank corresponded to that of major-general in the American army, and Lafayette was to assume it at the end of the American war. There were officers in the army who did not approve of this honor. They could not see that Lafayette had done anything to warrant making a French colonel into a major-general overnight and over the heads of officers of higher rank. They were quite sure they would have done as well had the opportunity come their way. Kings do not often reward subjects for services rendered a foreign nation; and the part that strikes us as odd is that Lafayette had been fighting against monarchy, the very form of government his own king represented. But Lafayette's life abounded in such contradictions.

His popularity was no nine days' affair. Franklin found it of very practical use. "He gains daily in [Pg 172] public esteem and affection, and promises to be a great man in his own country," the American wrote, after Lafayette had been back for some weeks, adding, "he has been truly useful to me in my efforts to obtain increased assistance." Before the young hero arrived Franklin had found it difficult to arrange a new American loan, but with such enthusiasm sweeping Paris it was almost easy. The town went quite wild. John Ledyard, the American explorer, who was there at the time, wrote: "I took a walk to Paris this morning and saw the Marquis de Lafayette. He is a good man, this same marquis. I esteem him: I even love him, and so do we all, except some who worship." Then he added, "If I find in my travels a mountain as much elevated above other mountains as he is above ordinary men, I will name it Lafayette."

Envoys to discuss peace had already reached Paris, but it was not at all certain that England would give up the contest without one more campaign. To be on the safe side it was planned to send a combined fleet of French and Spanish ships convoying twenty-four thousand soldiers to the West Indies to attack the English island of Jamaica. Ships and men were to be under command of Admiral d'Estaing, who wished Lafayette to go with him as chief-of-staff. After the work was done in the West Indies D'Estaing would sail northward and detach six thousand troops to aid a revolution in Canada, a project Lafayette had never wholly abandoned. The expedition was to sail from Cadiz, and Lafayette was already in Spain with part of the French force when he [Pg 173] learned that the preliminary treaty of peace had been signed at Versailles on January 20, 1782. He longed to carry the news to America himself, but was told that he could do much in Spain to secure advantageous trade agreements between that country and the United States. So he contented himself with borrowing a vessel from the fleet that was now without a destination, and sending two letters by it. One, very dignified in tone, was addressed to Congress. The other, to Washington, was joyously personal. "If you were a mere man like Cæsar or the King of Prussia," he wrote, "I would almost regret, on your account, to see the end of the tragedy in which you have played so grand a role. But I rejoice with you, my dear General, in this peace which fulfils all my desires.... What sentiments of pride and joy I feel in thinking of the circumstances which led

to my joining the American cause!... I foresee that my grandchildren will be envied when they celebrate and honor your name. To have had one of their ancestors among your soldiers, to know that he had the good fortune to be the friend of your heart, will be the eternal honor that shall glorify them; and I will bequeath to the eldest among them, so long as my posterity shall endure, the favor you have been pleased to bestow upon my son George."

The ship on which these letters were sent was called, appropriately, *La Triomphe*; and, as he hoped, it did actually carry the news of peace to America, reaching port ahead of all others.

[Pg 174] For himself, he remained in Spain, doing what he could for America. The things he witnessed there made him a better republican than ever. He wrote to his aunt that the grandees of the court looked rather small, "especially when I saw them upon their knees." Absolute power, exercised either by monarchs or subjects, was becoming more and more distasteful to him. The injustice of negro slavery, for example, wrung his heart. In the very letter to Washington announcing peace he wrote: "Now that you are to taste a little repose, permit me to propose to you a plan that may become vastly useful to the black portion of the human race. Let us unite in buying a little property where we can try to enfranchise the negroes and employ them merely as farm laborers." He did buy a plantation called Belle Gabrielle in Cayenne, French Guiana, and lavished money and thought upon it. It was an experiment in which his wife heartily joined, sending out teachers for the black tenantry and making their souls and morals her special care. The French Revolution put an end to this, as it did to so many enterprises; and it seems a bitter jest of fortune that when Lafayette's property was seized these poor creatures were sold back again into slavery—in the name of Freedom and Equality.

In March, 1783, Lafayette took his wife to Chavaniac, possibly for the first time. One of the two aunts who made the old manor-house their home had just died, leaving the other desolate. While Adrienne won the affections of the lonely old lady, her husband set about improving the condition
[Pg 175] of the peasants on the estate. Bad harvests had brought about great scarcity of food. His manager proudly showed his granaries full of wheat, remarking, "Monsieur le Marquis, now is the time to sell." The answer, "No, this is the time to give away," left the worthy steward breathless. Whether Lafayette's philanthropies would win the approval of social workers to-day we do not know. The list of enterprises sounds well. During the next few years he built roads, brought an expert from England to demonstrate new methods in agriculture, imported tools and superior breeds of animals, established a weekly market and an annual fair, started the weaving industry and a school to teach it, and established a resident physician to look after the health of his tenants. He was popular with them. On his arrival he was met in the town of Rion by a procession headed by musicians and the town officials, who ceremoniously presented "the wine of honor" and were followed by local judges in red robes who "made him compliments," while the people cried, "Vive Lafayette!" and danced and embraced, "almost without knowing one another." A few weeks later the tenants from a neighboring manor came bringing him a draught of wine from their town, and expressing the wish that they might come under his rule. This he was able to gratify a few years later, when he bought the estate.

In May, 1783, Lafayette realized the long-cherished dream of having a home of his own. The Hôtel de Noailles was very grand and very beautiful, and while he was away fighting it was by far
[Pg 176] the best place for Adrienne and the children; but it belonged to her people, not to him. From camps he had written her about this home they were some day to have together; and now that he had returned to France to stay they bought a house in the rue de Bourbon and set up their domestic altar there. They had three children; for a daughter had been born to them in the previous September. Like George, she was as American as her father could make her. "I have taken the liberty of naming her Virginia," he wrote General Washington. Benjamin Franklin, to whom he also announced the new arrival, hoped he would have children enough to name one after each state of the Union.

In May, also, something happened which must have pleased Lafayette deeply. He was given the Cross of Saint-Louis, the military decoration his father had worn; and the man who received him into the order was his father-in-law, the Duc d'Ayen, who had so bitterly opposed his going to America.

With large estates in the country, a new house in town, a list of acquaintances which included everybody worth knowing in Paris and more notables in foreign countries than even he could write to or receive letters from, and a keen interest in the politics, philanthropy, and commerce of two hemispheres, he might have passed for a busy man. Yet he found time for an entirely new enthusiasm. A German doctor named Mesmer had made what he believed to be important discoveries in a new force and a new mode of healing, called animal magnetism. Lafayette
enrolled himself as a pupil. "I know as much as ever a sorcerer knew!" he wrote enthusiastically [Pg 177] to Washington. On paying his initiation fee of a hundred golden louis he had signed a paper promising not to reveal these secrets to any prince, community, government, or individual without Mesmer's written consent, but the disciple was eager to impart his knowledge to his great friend and hoped to gain permission. Louis XVI was satirical. "What will Washington think when he learns that you have become first apothecary boy to Mesmer?" he asked.

Lafayette was planning a visit to America and sent a message to Mrs. Washington that he hoped "soon to thank her for a dish of tea at Mount Vernon." "Yes, my dear General, before the month of June is over you will see a vessel coming up the Potomac, and out of that vessel will your friend jump, with a panting heart and all the feelings of perfect happiness." He did indeed make the visit during the summer of 1784, though a few weeks later than June. Whether they had time during his ten days at Mount Vernon to talk about Mesmer history does not state. The hours must have been short for all the things clamoring to be said. Then Lafayette made a tour that carried

him to Portsmouth, New Hampshire, as far west as Fort Schuyler, for another treaty-making powwow with his red brothers the Indians, and south to Yorktown. Everywhere bells pealed and balls and dinners were given. Before he turned his face toward France he had a few more quiet days at Mount Vernon with Washington, who accompanied him on his homeward way as far as Annapolis. At parting the elder man gave him a tender letter for Adrienne, and on the way back [Pg 178] to Mount Vernon wrote the words of farewell which proved prophetic: "I have often asked myself, since our carriages separated, whether that was the last sight I ever should have of you; and though I wished to say No, my fears answered Yes."

Washington lived fourteen years longer; but in the mean time the storm of the French Revolution broke and everything that had seemed enduring in Lafayette's life was wrecked. Until that storm burst letters and invitations and presents flashed across the see as freely as though propelled by Mesmer's magic fluid. Mrs. Washington sent succulent Virginia hams to figure at dinners given by the Lafayettes in Paris. A picture of the household in the rue de Bourbon has come down to us written by a young officer to his mother:

"I seemed to be in America rather than in Paris. Numbers of English and Americans were present, for he speaks English as he does French. He has an American Indian in native costume for a footman. This savage calls him only 'father.' Everything is simple in his home. Marmontel and the Abbé Morrolet were dinner guests. Even the little girls spoke English as well as French, though they are very small. They played in English, and laughed with the Americans. This would have made charming subjects for English engravings."

Lafayette on his part sent many things to that house on the banks of the Potomac. He sent his friends, and a letter from him was an infallible open sesame. He sent his own accounts of [Pg 179] journeys and interviews. He sent animals and plants that he thought would interest Washington, the farmer. Asses, for example, which were hard to get in America, and rare varieties of seeds. In time he sent the key of the Bastille. But that, as romancers say, is "another story," and opens another chapter in Lafayette's life.

XX
THE PASSING OF OLD FRANCE

[Pg 180]

Lafayette took his business of being a soldier seriously, and in the summer of 1785 made another journey, this time in the interest of his military education. Frederick II, King of Prussia, was still living. Lafayette obtained permission to attend the maneuvers of his army, counting himself fortunate to receive lessons in strategy from this greatest warrior of his time. He was not surprised to find the old monarch bent and rheumatic, with fingers twisted with gout, and head pulled over on one side until it almost rested on his shoulder; or to see that his blue uniform with red facings was dirty and sprinkled with snuff. But he was astonished to discover that the eyes in Frederick's emaciated old face were strangely beautiful and lighted up his countenance at times with an expression of the utmost sweetness. It was not often that they transformed him thus from an untidy old man to an angel of benevolence. Usually they were keen, sometimes mockingly malicious.

It was certainly not without malice that he seated the young French general at his table between two other guests, Lord Cornwallis and the Duke of York; and in the course of long dinners [Pg 181] amused himself by asking Lafayette questions about Washington and the American campaigns. Lafayette answered with his customary ardor, singing praises of his general and even venturing to praise republicanism in a manner that irritated the old monarch.

"Monsieur!" Frederick interrupted him in such a flight. "I once knew a young man who visited countries where liberty and equality reigned. After he got home he took it into his head to establish them in his own country. Do you know what happened?"

"No, Sire."

"He was hanged!" the old man replied, with a sardonic grin. It was plain he liked Lafayette or he would not have troubled to give him the warning.

Lafayette continued his journey to Prague and Vienna and Dresden, where he saw other soldiers put through their drill. Then he returned to Potsdam for the final grand maneuvers under the personal direction of Frederick, but a sudden acute attack of gout racked his kingly old bones, and the exercises which, in his clockwork military system, could no more be postponed than the movements of the planets, were carried out by the heir apparent, to Lafayette's great disappointment. He wrote Washington that the prince was "a good officer, an honest fellow, a man of sense," but that he would never have the talent of his two uncles. As for the Prussian army, it was a wonderful machine, but "if the resources of France, the vivacity of her soldiers, the intelligence of her officers, the national ambition and moral delicacy were applied to a system [Pg 182] worked out with equal skill, we would as far excel the Prussians as our army is now inferior to theirs—which is saying a great deal!"

Vive la France! Vivent moral distinctions! He may not have realized it, but Lafayette was all his life more interested in justice than in war.

Almost from the hour of his last return from America the injustice with which French Protestants

were treated filled him with indignation. Though not openly persecuted, they were entirely at the mercy of official caprice. Legally their marriages were not valid; they could not make wills; their rights as citizens were attacked on every side. To use Lafayette's expression, they were "stricken with civil death." He became their champion.

Everybody knew that very radical theories had been applauded in France for many years, even by the men who condemned them officially. Dislike of liberal actions, however, was still strong, as Lafayette found when he attempted to help these people. His interest in them was treated as an amiable weakness which might be overlooked in view of his many good qualities, but should on no account be encouraged. "It is a work which requires time and is not without some inconvenience to me, because nobody is willing to give me one word of writing or to uphold me in any way. I must run my chance," he wrote Washington. He did, however, get permission from one of the king's ministers to go to Languedoc, where Protestants were numerous, in order to study [Pg 183] their condition and know just what it was he advocated. Evidence that he gathered thus at first hand he used officially two years later before the Assembly of Notables. So his championship of the French Protestants marks the beginning of this new chapter in Lafayette's life, his entrance into French politics.

Outwardly the condition of the country remained much as it had been; but discontent had made rapid progress during the years of Lafayette's stay in America. An answer attributed to the old Maréchal de Richelieu sums up the change. The old reprobate had been ill and Louis XVI, with good intentions, but clumsy cruelty, congratulated him on his recovery. "For," said the king, "you are not young. You have seen three ages." "Rather," growled the duke, "three reigns!" "Well, what do you think of them?" "Sire, under Louis XIV nobody dared say a word; under Louis XV they spoke in whispers; under your Majesty they speak loudly."

This education in discontent had proceeded under three teachers: extravagance, hunger, and the success of America's war of independence. Louis really desired to see his people happy and prosperous. He had made an attempt at reforms, early in his reign, but, having neither a strong will nor a strong mind, it speedily lapsed. Even under his own eyes at Versailles many abuses continued, merely because they had become part of the cumbersome court etiquette which Frederick II had condemned back in the days of Louis's grandfather. Many other abuses had [Pg 184] increased without even the pretense of reforming them. There was increased personal extravagance among the well-to-do; increased extortion elsewhere. Tax-collectors were still going about shutting their eyes to the wealth of men who had influence and judging the peasants as coldly as they would judge cattle. In one district they were fat; they must pay a heavier tax. Chicken feathers were blowing about on the ground? That meant the people had poultry to eat; the screw could be given another vigorous turn. Among all classes there seemed to be less and less money to spend. With the exception of a few bankers and merchants, everybody from the king down felt poor. The peasants felt hungry. The poor in cities actually were very hungry; almost all the nobles were deeply in debt. In short, the forces for good and ill which had already honeycombed the kingdom when Lafayette was a boy had continued their work, gnawing upward and downward and through the social fabric until only a very thin and brittle shell remained. And, as the Maréchal de Richelieu pointedly reminded his weak king, people were no longer afraid to talk aloud about these things.

The success of the Revolution in America had done much to remove the ban of silence. Loans made by France had added to the scarcity of money; and it was these loans which had brought America success. The people across the ocean had wiped the slate clean and begun afresh. Why not follow their example? In the winter of 1782, when Paris was suffering from the Russian influenza, a lady with a clever tongue and the eye of a prophet had said, "We are threatened with [Pg 185] another malady which will come from America—the *Independenza!*" Thoughtful people were beginning to believe that a change was only a matter of time; but that it would come slowly and stretch over many years.

Meanwhile the months passed and the glittering outer shell of the old order of things continued to glitter. Lafayette divided his time between Paris, the court, and Chavaniac. He made at least one journey in the brilliant retinue of the king. He dined and gave dinners. He did everything in his power to increase commerce with the United States. He took part in every public movement for reform, and instituted small private ones of his own. One of these was to ask the king to revoke a pension of seven hundred and eighty livres that had been granted him when he was a mere baby, and to divide it between a retired old infantry officer and a worthy widow of Auvergne. Incidentally people seemed to like him in spite of his republicanism. It was no secret to any one that he had come home from America a thorough believer in popular government.

His fame was by no means confined to France and the lands lying to the west of it. Catherine II of Russia became curious to see this much-talked-of person and invited him to St. Petersburg. Learning that she was soon to start for the Crimea, he asked leave to pay his respects to her there; but that was a journey he never made. Before he could set out Louis XVI called a meeting of the Assembly of Notables, to take place on February 22, 1787. This was in no true sense a [Pg 186] parliament; only a body of one hundred and forty-four men who held no offices at court, selected arbitrarily by the king to discuss such subjects as he chose to set before it. The subject was to be taxation, how to raise money for government expenses, a burning question with every one.

Deliberative assemblies were no new thing in France. Several times in long-past history a king had called together representative men of the nobles, the clergy, and even of the common people, to consider questions of state and help bring about needed reforms. Such gatherings were known as States General. But they had belonged to a time before the kings were quite sure of their power, and it was one hundred and seventy years since the last one had been called. Little by

little, in the mean time, even the provincial parliaments, of which there were several in different parts of France, had been sapped of strength and vitality. There was a tendency now to revive them. Lafayette had stopped in Rennes on his way home from Brest after his last trip across the Atlantic, to attend such a gathering in Brittany, where he owned estates, his mother having been a Breton. Favoring representative government as he did, he was anxious to see such assemblages meet frequently at regular intervals.

The call for the Assembly of Notables had come about in an unexpected way. Some years before, the Minister of Finance, Necker, had printed a sort of treasurer's report showing how public funds had been spent. This was a great novelty, such questions having been shrouded in deepest [Pg 187] mystery. Everybody who could read read Necker's report. It was seen on the dressing-tables of ladies and sticking out of the pockets of priests. Necker had meant it to pave the way for reforms, because he believed in cutting down expenses instead of imposing more taxes. It roused such a storm of discussion and criticism that he was driven from the Cabinet; after which his successor, M. Calonne, "a veritable Cagliostro of finance," managed to juggle for four years with facts and figures before the inevitable day of reckoning came. This left the country much worse off than it had been when he took office; so badly off, in fact, that the king called together the Assembly of Notables.

By an odd coincidence it held its first meeting at Versailles on a date forever linked in American minds with ideas of popular liberty—the 22d of February. For practical work, it was divided into seven sections or committees, each one of which was presided over by a royal prince. If the intention had been to check liberal tendencies among its members, the effort was vain. The spirit of independence was in it, and it refused to solve the king's financial riddles for him.

From the beginning Lafayette took an active and much more radical part than some of his friends wished. He worked in behalf of the French Protestants. He wanted to reform criminal law; to give France a jury system such as England had; and he advocated putting a stop to the abuses of *lettres de cachet*. He was very plain-spoken in favor of cutting down expenses, particularly in the [Pg 188] king's own military establishment, in pensions granted to members of the royal family, and in the matter of keeping up the palaces and pleasure-places that former monarchs had loved, but which Louis XVI never visited. He believed in taxing lands and property belonging to the clergy, which had not as yet been taxed at all. He wanted the nobility to pay their full share, too, and he thought a treasurer's report should be published every year. Indeed, he wanted reports printed about all departments of government except that of Foreign Affairs.

This was worse than amiable weakness, it was rank republicanism; the more dangerous because, as one of the ministers said, "all his logic is in action." The queen, who had never more than half liked him, began to distrust him. Calonne, who was about to leave the treasury in such a muddle, declared that he ought to be shut up in the Bastille; and a remark that Lafayette was overheard to make one day when the education of the dauphin was under discussion did not add to his popularity with the court party. "I think," he said, "that the prince will do well to begin his study of French history with the year 1787."

One day he had the hardihood to raise his voice and say, "I appeal to the king to convene a national assembly." There was a hush of astonishment and of something very like fear. "What!" cried a younger brother of the king, the Comte d'Artois, who presided over the section of which Lafayette was a member. "You demand the convocation of the States General?" "Yes, Sire." "You [Pg 189] wish to go on record? To have me say to the king that M. de Lafayette has made a motion to convene the States General?" "Yes, Monseigneur—and better than that!" by which Lafayette meant he hoped such an assembly might be made more truly representative than ever before.

That Lafayette realized the personal consequences of his plain speaking there is no doubt. He wrote to Washington, "The king and his family, as well as the notables who surround him, with the exception of a few friends, do not pardon the liberties I have taken or the success I have gained with other classes of society." If he cherished any illusions, they were dispelled a few months later when he received a request from the king to give up his commission as major-general.

As for his appeal for a meeting of the States General, nobody possessed the hardihood to sign it with him, and it had no immediate consequences. Before the Assembly of Notables adjourned it advised the king to authorize legislative assemblies in the provinces, which he did, Lafayette being one of the five men named by the monarch to represent the nobility in his province of Auvergne. At the sessions of this provincial assembly he further displeased the members of his own class, but the common people crowded about and applauded him wherever he went. "He was the first hero they had seen, and they were never tired of looking at him," a local chronicler states, with disarming frankness.

The situation grew worse instead of better. The country's debt increased daily. The Assembly of [Pg 190] Notables held another session; but it was only to arrange details for the meeting of the States General which the king had at last been forced to call. It was to meet in May, 1789, and was to be made up, as the other had been, of nobles, clergy, and more humble folk, called the bourgeoisie, or the Third Estate. But there was one immense difference. Instead of being appointed by the king, these were to be real representatives, nobles elected by the nobles, clergy by the clergy, and the common people expressing their own choice. In addition, people of all classes were invited to draw up *cahiers*—that is, statements in writing showing the kind of reforms they desired.

The nobles and clergy held small meetings and elected delegates from among their own number. The Third Estate elected men of the upper middle class, or nobles of liberal views. Lafayette

found considerable opposition among the nobles of Auvergne, but the common people begged him to represent them, promising to give him their unanimous vote if he would do so. He preferred, however, to make the fight in his own order and was successful, taking his seat, when the States General convened, as a representative of the nobility of Auvergne.

XXI
THE TRICOLOR

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When the representatives of the people of France, to the number of more than twelve hundred, came together in a great hall in the palace at Versailles on the 5th of May, 1789, the king opened the session, with the queen and royal princes beside him on a throne gorgeous with purple and gold. Immediately in front of him sat his ministers, and in other parts of the hall were the three orders in separate groups. The nobles were brilliant in ruffles and plumes. The Third Estate was sober enough in dress, but there were six hundred of them; twice as many in proportion as had ever been allowed in a similar gathering. Most of them were lawyers; only forty belonged to the farming class. In the group of clergy some wore the flaming scarlet robes of cardinals, some the plain cassocks of village priests; and events proved that these last were brothers in spirit with the six hundred. The galleries were crowded with ladies and courtiers and envoys from distant lands. Even roofs of neighboring houses were covered with spectators bent on seeing all they could.

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The queen looked anxious. She had no fondness for reforms; but of the two upon the throne she had the stronger character and was therefore the better king. She was brave, quick to decide, and daring to execute. Unfortunately she was also narrow-minded and had little sympathy with the common people. Louis had already proved himself a complete failure as a ruler. He was a good husband, a lover of hunting, and a passable locksmith. It was a bit of tragic irony that his hobby should have been the making of little, smoothly turning locks. After his one attempt at reform he had not even tried to govern, but spent his days in meaningless detail, while the country drifted toward ruin.

Necker, who was once more in charge of the treasury, meant to keep the States General very busy with the duty for which they had been convened, that of providing money. But if the Notables had been refractory, this assembly was downright rebellious. A quarrel developed at the very outset about the manner of voting. In previous States General the three orders had held their meetings separately, and in final decisions each order had cast only one vote. The nobles and clergy could be counted on to vote the same way, which gave them a safe majority of two to one. Expecting the rule to hold this time, very little objection had been raised to the proposal that the Third Estate elect six hundred representatives instead of three hundred. The people liked it and it meant nothing at all. Now that the six hundred had been elected, however, they contended that the three orders must sit in one assembly and that each man's vote be counted separately, which made all the difference in the world. A few liberals among the nobles and more than a few of the clergy in simple cassocks appeared to agree with them. The quarrel continued for six weeks, and meanwhile neither party was able to do any work.

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At the end of that time the number favoring the new way of voting had increased. These declared themselves to be the National Assembly of France and that they meant to begin the work of "national regeneration" at once, whether the others joined them or not. Reforms were to be along lines indicated in the *cahiers*, or written statements of grievances, that voters had been urged to draw up at the time of the election. Tens of thousands of these had been received, some written in the polished phrases of courtiers, some in the earnest, ill-chosen words of peasants. All expressed loyalty to the king; and almost all demanded a constitution to define the rights of people and king alike. Among other things they asked that *lettres de cachet* be abolished; that the people be allowed liberty of speech; that the States General meet at regular intervals; and that each of the three orders pay its just share of the taxes.

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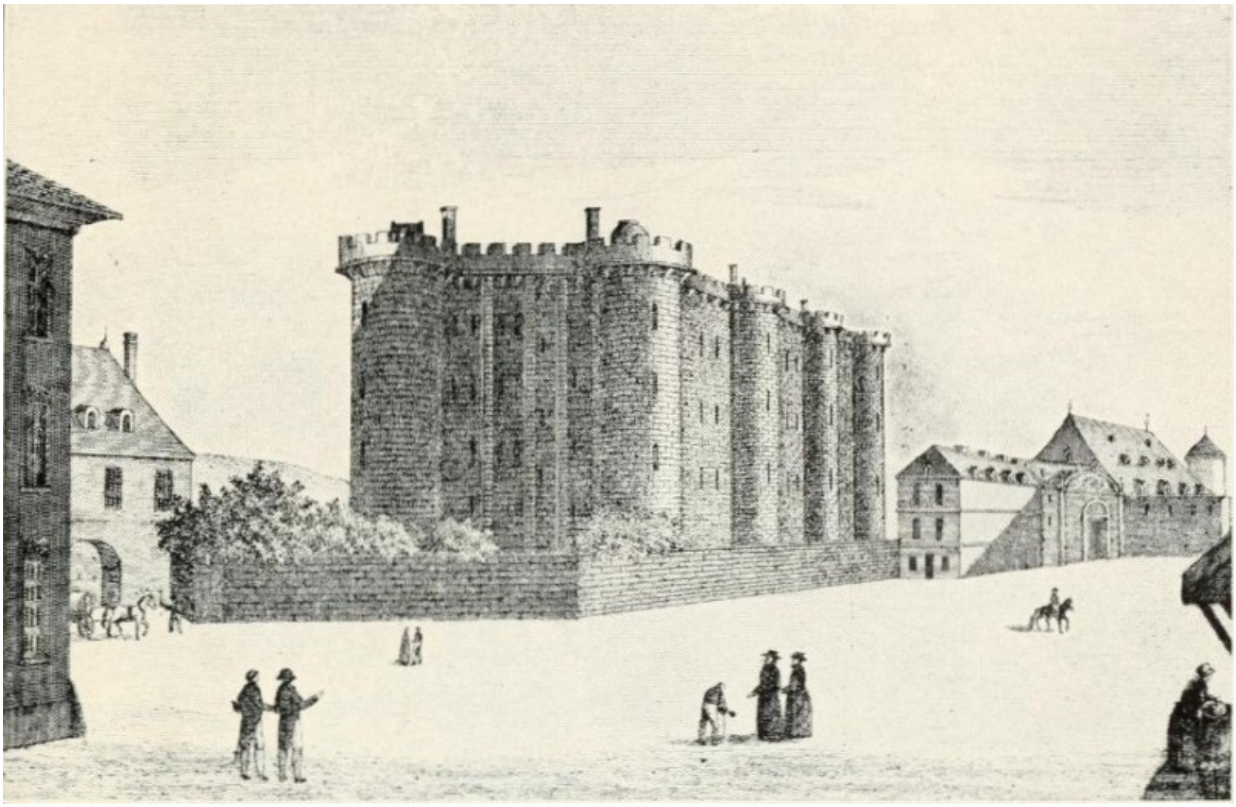
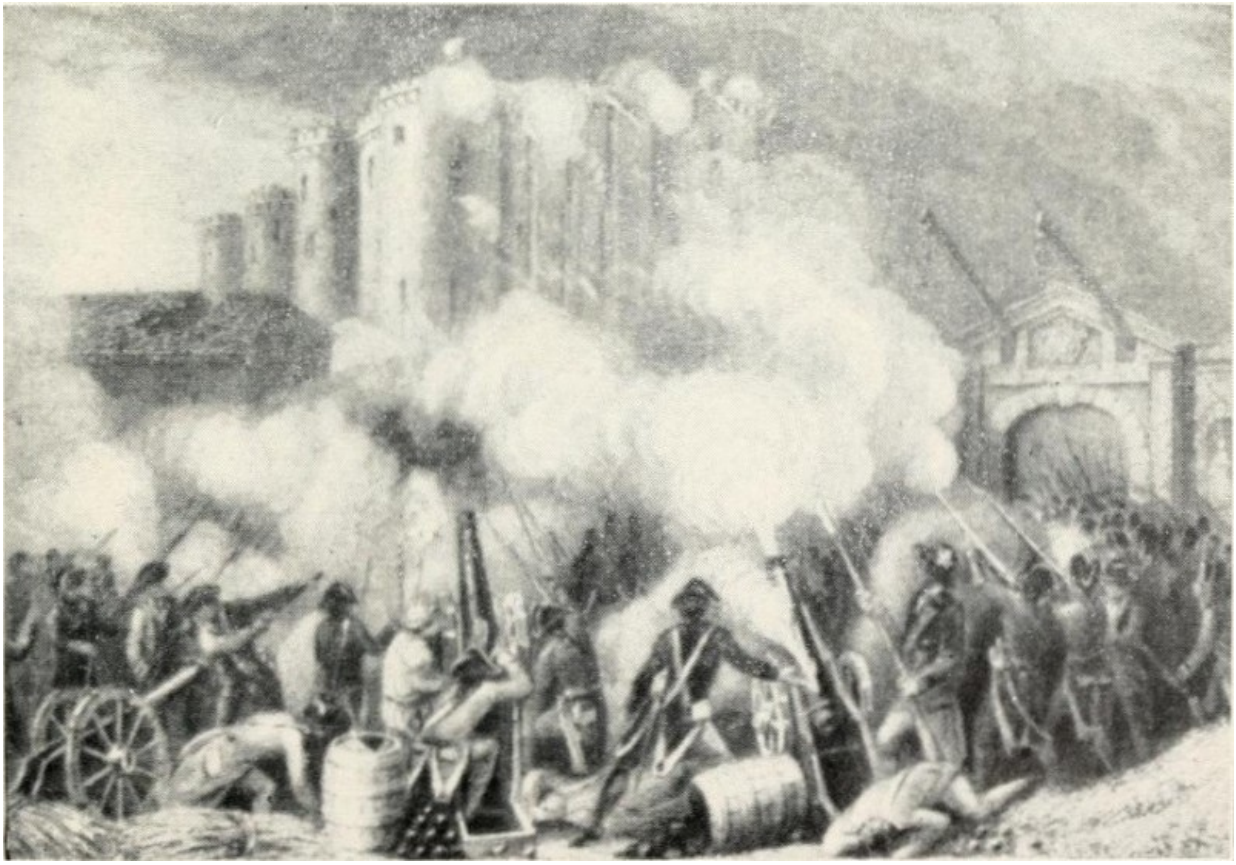
Soon after the liberals declared their intention of going to work they found the great hall at Versailles closed and were told curtly that it was being prepared for a royal session. They retired to a near-by tennis-court, lifted the senior representative from Paris, an astronomer named Bailly, to a table, elected him president of their National Assembly, and took an oath not to disband until they had given France a constitution. A few days later the king summoned all the members of the States General to the great hall, scolded them for their recent acts in a speech written by somebody else, commanded that each order meet in future by itself, and left the hall to the sound of trumpets and martial music. The clergy and the nobles obediently withdrew. The Third Estate and a few liberals from the other orders remained. The king's master of ceremonies, a very important personage indeed, came forward and repeated the king's order. Soldiers could be seen behind him. There was a moment's silence; then Mirabeau, a homely, brilliant nobleman from the south of France, who had been rejected by his own order, but elected by the Third Estate, advanced impetuously toward the master of ceremonies, crying, in a loud voice, "Go tell your master that we are here by the will of the people, and that we shall not leave except at the point of the bayonet." Next he turned to the Assembly and made a motion to the effect that persons laying hands upon any member of the Assembly would be considered "infamous and traitors to the nation—guilty of capital crime." The master of ceremonies withdrew and reported the scene to the king. Louis, weak as water, said: "They wish to remain? Let them." And they did remain, to

his undoing.



THE BASTILLE
From a contemporary print



SIEGE OF THE BASTILLE

Lafayette was in an embarrassing position. He sympathized with the Third Estate, yet he had been elected to represent the nobles, and his commission bound him to vote according to their wishes. He considered resigning in order to appeal again to the voters of Auvergne; but before he [Pg 195] came to a decision the king asked the nobles and clergy to give up their evidently futile opposition. Lafayette took his place with the others in the National Assembly, but refrained for a time from voting. The king and his ministers seemed to have no settled policy. One day they tried to please the Third Estate; on another it was learned that batteries were being placed where they

could fire upon the Assembly and that regiments were being concentrated upon Paris. It was upon a motion of Mirabeau's for the removal of these threatening soldiers that Lafayette broke his silence and began to take part again in the proceedings of the Assembly.

On the 11th of July, about a fortnight after the nobles and clergy had resumed their seats, he presented to the Assembly his Declaration of Rights, modeled upon the American Declaration of Independence, to be placed at the head of the French Constitution. Two days later he was elected vice-president of the Assembly "with acclamations." Toward evening of the 14th the Vicomte de Noailles came from Paris with the startling news that people had been fighting in the streets for hours; that they had gained possession of the Bastille, the gray old prison which stood in their eyes for all that was hateful in the old regime; that its commander and several of its defenders had been murdered; and that their heads were being carried aloft on pikes among the crowds.

On the 15th the king came with his brothers to the Assembly and made a conciliatory speech, [Pg 196] after which Lafayette hurried away to Paris at the head of a delegation charged with the task of quieting the city. They were met at the Tuileries gate and escorted to the Hôtel de Ville, where the City Council of Paris, a parliament in miniature, held its meetings. Lafayette congratulated the city on the liberty it had won, delivered the king's message, and turned to go. As he was leaving the room somebody cried out saying that here was the man Paris wanted to command its National Guard, and that Bailly, who accompanied him, ought to be mayor. It was one of those sudden ideas that seem to spread like wildfire. Lafayette stopped, drew his sword, and, acting upon that first impulse which he was so apt to follow, swore then and there to defend the liberty of Paris with his life if need be. He sent a message to the National Assembly asking permission to assume the new office, and on the 25th took, with Bailly, a more formal oath. The force of militia which he organized and developed became the famous National Guard of Paris; while this governing body at the Hotel de Ville which had so informally elected him, enlarged and changing from time to time as the Revolution swept on, became the famous, and infamous, "Commune." Lafayette himself, not many days after he assumed the new office, ordered the destruction of the old Bastille. One of its keys he sent to Washington at Mount Vernon. Another was made into a sword and presented by his admirers to the man whose orders had reduced the old prison to a heap of stones.

The court party was aghast. The Comte d'Artois and two of his friends shook the dust of their [Pg 197] native land from their feet and left France, the first of that long army of *émigrés* whose flight still further sapped the waning power of the king. Louis was of one mind one day, another the next. Against the entreaties and tears of the queen he accepted an invitation to visit Paris and was received, as Lafayette had been, with cheers. He made a speech, ratifying and accepting all the changes that had taken place; and to celebrate this apparent reconciliation between the monarch and his subjects Lafayette added the white of the flag of the king to red and blue, the colors of the city of Paris, making the Tricolor. Up to that time the badge of revolution had been green, because Camille Desmoulins, one of its early orators, had given his followers chestnut leaves to pin upon their caps. But the livery of the Comte d'Artois, now so hated, was green, and the people threw away their green cockades and enthusiastically donned the red, white, and blue, echoing Lafayette's prediction that it would soon make the round of Europe.

The passions which had moved the city of Paris spread outward through the provinces as waves spread when a stone is cast into a pool. One town after another set up a municipal government and established national guards of its own. Peasants in country districts began assaulting tax-collectors, hanging millers on the charge that they were raising the price of bread, and burning and looting châteaux in their hunt for old records of debts and judgments against the common [Pg 198] people. July closed in a veil of smoke ascending from such fires in all parts of the realm.

All day long on the 4th of August the Assembly listened to reports of these events, a dismaying recital that went on and on until darkness fell and the candles were brought in. About eight o'clock, when the session seemed nearing its end, De Noailles mounted the platform and began to speak. He said that there was good reason for these fires and the hate they disclosed. The châteaux were symbols of that kind of unjust feudal government which was no longer to be tolerated. He moved that the Assembly abolish feudalism. His motion was seconded by the Duc d'Aiguillon, the greatest feudal noble in France, with the one exception of the king. The words of these two aristocrats kindled another sort of fire—an emotional fire like that of a great religious revival. Noble after noble seemed impelled to mount the platform and renounce his special privileges. Priests and prelates followed their example. So did representatives of towns and provinces. The hours of the day had passed in increasing gloom; the night went by in this crescendo of generosity. By morning thirty or more decrees had been passed and feudalism was dead, so far as law could kill it.

The awakening from this orgy of feeling was like the awakening from any other form of emotional excess. With it came the knowledge that neither the world nor human nature can be changed overnight. When the news went abroad there were many who interpreted as license what had [Pg 199] been given them for liberty. Forests were cut down. Game-preserves were invaded and animals slaughtered. Artisans found themselves out of work and hungrier than ever because of the economy now necessarily practised by the nobility. Such mighty reforms required time and the readjustment of almost every detail of daily life. Even before experience made this manifest the delegates began to realize that towns and bishoprics and provinces might refuse to ratify the impulsive acts of their representatives; and some of the nobles who had spoken for themselves alone did not feel as unselfish in the cold light of day as they had believed themselves to be while the candles glowed during that strange night session. The final result was to bring out differences of opinion more sharply and to widen the gulf between conservatives who clung to

everything which belonged to the past and liberals whose desire was to give the people all that had been gained and even more.

XXII
THE SANS-CULOTTES

[Pg 200]

Lafayette's position as commander of the National Guard of Paris was one of great importance. "He rendered the Revolution possible by giving it an army," says a writer of his own nation, who does not hesitate to criticize him, but who also assures us that from July, 1789, to July, 1790, he was perhaps the most popular man in France. Being a born optimist, he was sure that right would soon prevail. If he had too great belief in his own leadership it is not surprising, since every previous undertaking of his life had succeeded; and he certainly had more experience in revolution than any of his countrymen—an experience gained in America under the direct influence of Washington. He had gone to America a boy afire with enthusiasm for liberty. He returned to France a man, popular and successful, with his belief in himself and his principles greatly strengthened. He was impulsive and generous, he had a good mind, but he was not a deep thinker, and from the very nature of his mind it was impossible for him to foresee the full difficulty of applying in France the principles that had been so successful in America. In France [Pg 201] politics were much more complicated than in a new country where there were fewer abuses to correct. France was old and abuses had been multiplying for a thousand years. To borrow the surgeon's phrase, the wound made by revolution in America was a clean wound that healed quickly, "by the first intention." In France the wound was far more serious and horribly infected. It healed in time, but only after a desperate illness.

It is interesting that three of Lafayette's most influential American friends, Washington, Jefferson, and Gouverneur Morris, had misgivings from the first about the situation in France, fearing that a revolution could not take place there without grave disorders and that Lafayette could not personally ride such a storm. Morris, who was then in Paris, urged caution upon him and advised him to keep the power in the hands of the nobility. When Lafayette asked him to read and criticize his draft of The Declaration of Rights before it was presented to the Assembly, Morris suggested several changes to make it more moderate; "for," said this American, "revolutions are not won by sonorous phrases."

Although keen for reform and liking to dress it in sonorous phrases, Lafayette had no wish to be rid of the king. He did not expect to have a president in France or the exact kind of government that had been adopted in the United States. "Lafayette was neither republican nor royalist, but always held that view half-way between the two which theorists call a constitutional monarchy," says a French writer. "In all his speeches from 1787 to 1792 he rarely used the word 'liberty' [Pg 202] without coupling it with some word expressing law and order."

Events proved that he was too thoroughly a believer in order to please either side. One party accused him of favoring the aristocrats, the other of sacrificing everything for the applause of the mob. What he tried to do was to stand firm in the rush of events, which was at first so exhilarating and later changed to such an appalling sweep of the furies. If he had been less scrupulous and more selfish he might have played a greater role in the Revolution—have risen to grander heights or failed more abjectly—but for a time he would have really guided the stormy course of events. As it was, events overtook him, carried him with them, then tossed him aside and passed him by. Yet even so he managed for three years to dominate that tiger mob of Paris "more by persuasion than by force." This proves that he was no weakling. Jefferson called him "the Atlas of the Revolution."

There was opposition to him from the first. Mirabeau and Lafayette could never work wholeheartedly together, which was a pity, for with Mirabeau's eloquence to carry the National Assembly and Lafayette's popularity with the National Guard they could have done much. The cafés, those people's institutes of his young days, speedily developed into political clubs of varying shades of opinion, most of which grew more radical hourly. Marie Antoinette continued to be resentful and bitter and did all in her power to thwart reform and to influence the king. In addition to parties openly for and against the new order of things there were individuals, both in [Pg 203] high and low places, who strove to spread disorder by underhand means and to use it for selfish ends. One was the powerful Duc d'Orléans, cousin of the king, very rich and very unprincipled, whose secret desire was to supplant Louis upon the throne. He used his fortune to spread discontent through the Paris mob during the long cold winter, when half the inhabitants of the town went hungry. His agents talked of famine, complained of delay in making the Constitution, and gave large sums to the poor in ways that fed their worst passions, while supplying their very real need for bread.

Even after the lapse of one hundred and thirty years it is uncertain just how much of a part he played in the stormy happenings of the early days of October, 1789. On the night of the 2d of October the king and queen visited the hall at Versailles where the Garde du Corps, the royal bodyguard, was giving a banquet. The diners sprang to their feet and drank toasts more fervent than discreet. In the course of the next two days rumor spread to Paris that they had trampled upon the Tricolor and substituted the white of the Bourbons. Out of the garrets and slums of the city the mob boiled toward the Hôtel de Ville, crying that a counter-revolution had been started

and that the people were betrayed. Lafayette talked and harangued. On the 5th he held the crowds in check from nine o'clock in the morning until four, when he learned that a stream of malcontents, many of them women, had broken away and started for Versailles, muttering threats and dragging cannon with them. [Pg 204]

Lafayette had confessed to Gouverneur Morris only a few days before that his National Guard was not as well disciplined as he could wish. Whether this was the reason or because he felt it necessary to get express permission from the Hôtel de Ville, there was delay before he and his militia set out in pursuit. He had sworn to use the Guard only to execute the will of the people. For what followed he has been severely blamed, while other witnesses contend just as hotly that he did all any commander could do. That night he saved the lives of several of the Garde du Corps; posted his men in the places from which the palace guard had been withdrawn by order of the king; made each side swear to keep the peace; gave his personal word to Louis that there would be no violence; saw that everything was quiet in the streets near the palace where the mob still bivouacked; then, worn with twenty hours' incessant labor, went to the house of a friend for a little sleep.

That sleep was the cause of more criticism than any act of his seventy-six years of life; for the mob, driven by an instinct for evil which seems strongest in crowds at dawn, hurled itself against the palace gates, killed the two men on guard before the queen's door, and forced its way into her bedchamber, from which she fled, half dressed, to take refuge with the king. Lafayette hurried back with all possible haste; made his way to the royal couple; addressed the crowd in the palace courtyard, telling them the king would show his trust by going back with them voluntarily to take up his residence in Paris; and persuaded the queen to appear with him upon a balcony, where, in view of all the people, he knelt and kissed her hand. After that he led out one of the palace guard and presented him with a tricolored cockade; and, touched by these tableaux, the mob howled delight. That night, long after dark, the royal family entered the Tuileries, half monarchs, half prisoners. But discontent had been only partly appeased, and during the melancholy ride to the city Marie Antoinette gave the mob its watchword. Seeing a man in the dress of the very poor riding on the step of her coach she had remarked disdainfully that never before had a sans-culotte—a man without knee-breeches—occupied so honorable a position. The speech was overheard and taken up and shouted through the crowd until "sans-culotte" became a symbol of the Revolution. [Pg 205]

The events of that day proved that Lafayette had not the quality of a great leader of men. How much of his ill success was due to bad luck, how much to over-conscientiousness in fulfilling the letter of his oath, how much to physical weariness, we may never know. The royal family believed he had saved their lives, and the vilest accusations against him, including the one that he really wished Louis to fall a victim of the mob, appear to have been manufactured twenty-five years later in the bitterness of another political struggle. It is significant that very soon after the king came to Paris Lafayette held a stormy interview with the Duc d'Orléans, who forthwith left France.

Since that melancholy ride back to Paris the rulers of France have never lived at Versailles. Within ten days the National Assembly followed the king to town, and during the whole remaining period of the Revolution the mob had the machinery of government in its keeping. It invaded the legislative halls to listen to the making of the Constitution, it howled approval of speeches or drowned them in hisses, and called out from the windows reports to the crowds packing the streets below. [Pg 206]

Political clubs soon became the real censors of public opinion, taking an ever larger place in the life of the people, until, alas! they began to take part in the death of many of them. The most influential club of all was the Jacobins, known by that name because of the disused monastery where it held its meetings. It began as an exclusive club of well-to-do gentlemen of all parties, who paid large dues and met to discuss questions of interest. Then it completely changed its character, took into its organization other clubs in Paris and other cities, and by this means became a vast, nation-wide political machine of such iron discipline that it was said a decree of the Jacobins was better executed than any law passed by the National Assembly. When its decrees grew more radical its membership changed by the simple process of expelling conservative members, until Robespierre became its controlling spirit. Another club more radical still was the Cordelières, in which Marat and Danton, those stormy petrels of the Terror, held sway. This smaller organization influenced even the Jacobins and through them every village in France. Several of the most radical leaders published newspapers of vast influence, like Marat's *Ami du Peuple*, which carried their opinions farther than the spoken word could do, out into peaceful country lanes. In the cities the great power of the theater was directed to the same violent ends. In vain the more conservative patriots started clubs of their own; the others had too great headway. The Feuillants, that Lafayette and Bailly were instrumental in founding, was called contemptuously the club of the monarchists. All these changes were gradual, but little by little, as time passed, the aims of the revolutionists altered. What had been at first a cry for justice became an appeal for liberty, then a demand for equality, and finally a mad howl for revenge. [Pg 207]

[Pg 208]

XXIII
POPULARITY AND PRISON

So many local National Guards and revolutionary town governments had been formed that France was in danger of being split into a thousand self-governing fragments. Some of these came together in local federations for mutual benefit; and as the anniversary of the fall of the Bastile rolled around, Paris proposed a grand federation of all such organizations as a fitting way to celebrate the new national holiday. The idea caught popular fancy, and the city made ready for it with a feverish good will almost as strange as that of the memorable night when nobles and clergy in the National Assembly had vied with one another to give up their century-old privileges.

The spot chosen for the ceremonies was the Champs de Mars, where the Eiffel Tower now stands. It is a deal nearer the center of Paris now than it was in 1790, when it was little more than a great field on the banks of the Seine, near the military academy. This was to be changed into an immense amphitheater three miles in circumference, a work which required a vast amount of excavating and building and civil engineering. Men and women of all classes of society [Pg 209] volunteered as laborers, and from dawn till dark a procession, armed with spades and every implement that could possibly be used, passed ceaselessly between the heart of the city and the scene of the coming festivity. Eye-witnesses tell us that on arriving each person threw down his coat, his cravat, and his watch, "abandoning them to the loyalty of the public" and fell to work. "A delicate duchess might be seen filling a barrow to be trundled away by a fishwife"; or a chevalier of the Order of Saint-Louis laboring with a hurried, flustered little school-boy; or a priest and an actor doing excellent team-work together. A hundred orchestras were playing; workers quitted their labors for a few turns in the dance, then abandoned that again for toil.

Lafayette encouraged them by his enthusiastic presence, and filled and trundled a barrow with his own hands; and when the king appeared one day to view the strange scene he was greeted with extravagant joy. Though this went on for weeks, the undertaking was so vast and the best efforts of duchesses and school-boys so far from adequate, that a hurry call had to be sent out, in response to which it was estimated that during the last few days of preparation two hundred and fifty thousand people were busy there. Evil rumors were busy, too, under cover of the music, and whispers went through the crowd that no provisions were to be allowed to enter Paris during the entire week of festivities and that the field had been honeycombed with secret passages and laid with mines to blow up the whole great throng. Such rumors were answered by a municipal [Pg 210] proclamation which ended with the words, "Cowards may flee these imaginary dangers: the friends of Revolution will remain, well knowing that not a second time shall such a day be seen."

The miracle was accomplished. By the 14th of July the whole Champs de Mars had been transformed into an amphitheater of terraced greensward, approached through a great triumphal arch. But on the day itself not a single green terrace was visible, so thick were the masses of people crowding the amphitheater and covering the hills on the other side of the river. Opposite the triumphal arch a central pavilion for the king, with covered galleries on each side, had been built against the walls of the military school. On the level green in the center of the great Champs de Mars stood an altar to "The Country," reached by a flight of fifty steps. One hundred cannon, two thousand musicians, and two hundred priests with the Tricolor added to their vestments, were present to take part in the ceremonies. A model of the destroyed Bastile lay at the foot of the altar. Upon the altar itself were inscriptions, one of which bade the spectators "Ponder the three sacred words that guarantee our decrees. The Nation, the Law, the King. You are the Nation, the Law is your will, the King is the head of the Nation and guardian of the Law."

The multitude was treated first to the spectacle of a grand procession streaming through the three openings of the triumphal arch. Deputies from the provinces, members of the National Assembly, and representatives of the Paris Commune, with Mayor Bailly at their head, marched [Pg 211] slowly and gravely to their places. After them came the visiting military delegations, the Paris guards, and regular troops who had been called to Paris from all parts of the kingdom, to the number of forty thousand or more, each with its distinctive banner. These marched around the altar and broke into strange dances and mock combats, undeterred by heavy showers. When the rain fell the ranks of spectators blossomed into a mass of red and green umbrellas, no longer the novelty they once had been. When a shower passed umbrellas were furled and the crowd took on another color. At three o'clock the queen appeared with the Dauphin beside her. Then the king, in magnificent robes of state, took his seat on a purple chair sown with fleurs-de-lis, which had been placed on an exact line and level with a similar chair upholstered in blue for the president of the National Assembly.

The king had been named for that one day Supreme Commander of all the National Guards of France. He had delegated his powers, whatever they may have been, to Lafayette; and it was Lafayette on a white horse such as Washington rode who was here, there, and everywhere, the central figure of the pageant as he moved about fulfilling the duties of his office. General Thiébault wrote in his *Memoirs* that the young buoyant figure on the shining horse, riding through that great mass of men, seemed to be commanding all France. "Look at him!" cried an enthusiast. "He is galloping through the centuries!" And it was upon Lafayette, at the crowning [Pg 212] moment of the ceremony, that all eyes rested. After the two hundred priests had solemnly marched to the altar and placed ahead of all other banners their sacred oriflamme of St.-Denis, Lafayette dismounted and approached the king to receive his orders. Then, slowly ascending the many steps to the altar, he laid his sword before it and, turning, faced the soldiers. Every arm was raised and every voice cried, "I swear!" as he led them in their oath of loyalty; and as if in answer to the mighty shout, the sun burst at that instant through the stormclouds. Music and artillery crashed in jubilant sound; other cannon at a distance took up the tale; and in this way news of the oath was borne to the utmost limits of France. The day ended with fireworks,

dancing, and a great feast. Lafayette was the center of the cheers and adulation, admirers pressing upon him from all sides. He was even in danger of bodily harm from the embraces, "perfidious or sincere," of a group of unknown men who had to be forcibly driven away by his aides-de-camp. That night somebody hung his portrait upon the railing surrounding the statue of France's hero-king, Henri IV; an act of unwise enthusiasm or else of very clever malignity of which his critics made the most.

After this, his enemies increased rapidly. The good will and harmony celebrated at the Feast of the Federation had been more apparent than real; a "delicious intoxication," as one of the participants called it, and the ill-temper that follows intoxication soon manifested itself. The Jacobins grew daily more radical. The club did not expel Lafayette; he left it of his own accord in [Pg 213] December, 1790; but that was almost as good for the purposes of his critics.

The task he had set himself of steering a middle course between extremes became constantly more difficult. Mirabeau was president of the Jacobin Club after Lafayette left it, and their mutual distrust increased. Gouverneur Morris thought Lafayette able to hold his own and that "he was as shrewd as any one." He said that "Mirabeau has the greater talent, but his adversary the better reputation." In spite of being president of the Jacobins, Mirabeau was more of a royalist than Lafayette and did what he could to ruin Lafayette with the court party. The quarrel ended only with Mirabeau's sudden death in April, 1791. At the other extreme Marat attacked Lafayette for his devotion to the king, saying he had sold himself to that side. Newspapers circulated evil stories about his private life. Slanders and attacks, wax figures and cartoons, each a little worse than the last, flooded Paris at this time. Some coupled the queen's name with his, which increased her dislike of him, and in the end may have played its small part in her downfall.

The king and queen were watched with lynxlike intensity by all parties, and about three months after Mirabeau's death they made matters much worse by betraying their fear, and what many thought their perfidy, in an attempt to escape in disguise, meaning to get help from outside countries and return to fight for their power. There had been rumors that they contemplated something of this sort, and Lafayette had gone frankly to the king, urging him not to commit such [Pg 214] folly. The king reassured him, and Lafayette had announced that he was willing to answer "with his head" that Louis would not leave Paris. One night, however, rumors were so persistent that Lafayette went himself to the Tuileries. He talked with a member of the royal family, and the queen saw him when she was actually on her way to join the king for their flight. Luck and his usual cleverness both failed Lafayette that night. He suspected nothing, yet next morning it was discovered that the royal beds had not been slept in and that the fugitives were already hours on their way. Lafayette issued orders for their arrest, but clamor was loud against him and Danton was for making him pay literally with his head for his mistake.

Almost at the frontier the king and queen were recognized through the likeness of Louis to his portrait on the paper money that flooded the kingdom, and they were brought back to Paris, real prisoners this time. They passed on their way through silent crowds who eyed them with terrifying hostility. The queen, who was hysterical and bitter, insisted on treating Lafayette as her personal jailer. Louis, whatever his faults, had a sense of humor and smiled when Lafayette appeared "to receive the orders of the king," saying it was evident that orders were to come from the other side. It is strange that he was not dethroned at once, for he had left behind him a paper agreeing to repeal every law that had been passed by the National Assembly. Dread of civil war [Pg 215] was still strong, however, even among the radicals, and he was only kept a prisoner in the Tuileries until September, when the new Constitution was finished and ready for him to sign. After he swore to uphold it he was again accorded royal honors.

But meantime there had been serious disturbances. Lafayette had felt it his duty to order the National Guard to fire upon the mob; and for that he was never forgiven. On that confused day an attempt was made upon his life. The culprit's gun missed fire, and when he was brought before Lafayette the latter promptly set him at liberty; but before midnight a mob surrounded Lafayette's house, crying that they had come to murder his wife and carry her head to the general. The garden wall had been scaled, and they were about to force an entrance when help arrived.

After the Constitution became the law of the land, Lafayette followed Washington's example, resigned his military commission, and retired to live at Chavaniac. Several times before when criticism was very bitter he had offered to give up his sword to the Commune, but there had been no one either willing or able to take his place and he had been persuaded to remain. Now he felt that he could withdraw with dignity and a clear conscience. In accepting his resignation the Commune voted him a medal of gold. The National Guard presented him with a sword whose blade was made from locks of the old Bastille, and on his 360-mile journey to Chavaniac he received civic crowns enough to fill his carriage. His reception at home was in keeping with all [Pg 216] this. "Since you are superstitious," he wrote Washington, "I will tell you that I arrived here on the anniversary of the surrender of Cornwallis." But even in far-away Chavaniac there were ugly rumors and threats against his life. The local guard volunteered to keep a special watch; an offer he declined with thanks.

Bailly retired as mayor of Paris soon after this, whereupon Lafayette's friends put up his name as a candidate. The election went against him two to one in favor of Pétion, a Jacobin, and from that time the clubs held undisputed sway. According to law the new Assembly had to be elected from men who had not served in the old one; this was unfortunate, since it deprived the new body of experienced legislators. The pronounced royalists in the Assembly had now dwindled to a scanty hundred.

Neighboring powers showed signs of coming to the aid of Louis, and the country did not choose to wait until foreign soldiers crossed its frontiers. Nobody knew better than Lafayette how unprepared France was for war against a well-equipped enemy, but the marvels America had accomplished with scarcely any equipment were fresh in his memory, and he looked upon foreign war as a means of uniting quarreling factions at home—a dangerous sort of political back-fire, by no means new, but sometimes successful. Before December, 1791, three armies had been formed for protection. Lafayette was put in command of one of them, his friend Rochambeau of another, and the third was given to General Luckner, a Bavarian who had served France faithfully since [Pg 217] the Seven Years' War.

Lafayette's new commission bore the signature of the king. He hurried to Paris, thanked his sovereign, paid his respects to the Assembly, and departed for Metz on Christmas Day in a semblance of his old popularity, escorted to the city barriers by a throng of people and a detachment of the National Guard. He entered on his military duties with enthusiasm, besieging the Assembly with reports of all the army lacked, consulting with his co-commanders, and putting his men through stiff drill.

By May war had been declared against Sardinia, Bohemia, and Hungary, but the back-fire against anarchy did not work. Troubles at home increased. The Paris mob became more lawless, and on the 20th of June, 1792, the Tuileries was invaded and the king was forced to don the red cap of Liberty; a serio-comic incident that might easily have become tragedy if Louis had possessed more spirit. Lafayette spoke the truth about this king when he said that he "desired only comfort and tranquillity—beginning with his own."

Feeling that his monarch had been insulted, Lafayette hurried off to Paris to use his influence against the Jacobins. He went without specific leave, though without being forbidden by General Luckner, his superior officer, who knew his plan. To his intense chagrin he found that he no longer had an atom of influence in Paris. The court received him coldly, the Assembly was completely in the hands of the Jacobins, timid people were too frightened to show their real [Pg 218] feelings, and the National Guard, upon whose support Lafayette had confidently relied, was now in favor of doing away with kingship altogether.

Lafayette could not succor people who refused to be helped, and he returned to the army, followed by loud accusations that he had been absent without leave and that he was "the greatest of criminals." "Strike Lafayette and the nation is saved!" Robespierre had shouted, even before he appeared on his fruitless mission. "Truly," wrote Gouverneur Morris, "I believe if Lafayette should come to Paris at this moment without his army he would be knifed. What, I pray you, is popularity?"

In July Prussia joined the nations at war, threatening dire vengeance if Paris harmed even a hair of the king or queen. The mob clamorously paraded the streets, led by five hundred men from Marseilles, singing a new and strangely exciting song whose music and whose words, "To arms! To arms! Strike down the tyrant!" were alike incendiary. In spite of his recent rebuff, Lafayette made one more attempt to rescue the king, not for love of Louis or of monarchy, but because he believed that Louis now stood for sane government, having signed the Constitution. It is doubtful whether the plan could have succeeded; it was one of Lafayette's generous dreams, based on very slight foundation. He wanted to have himself and General Luckner called to Paris for the coming celebration of July 14th. At that time, making no secret of it, the king should go with his generals before the Assembly and announce his intention of spending a few days at Compiègne, [Pg 219] as he had a perfect right to do. Once away from Paris and surrounded by the loyal troops the two generals would have taken care to bring with them, Louis could issue a proclamation forbidding his brothers and other *émigrés* to continue their plans and could say that he was himself at the head of an army to resist foreign invasion; and, having taken the wind out of the sails of the Jacobins by this unexpected move, could return to Paris to be acclaimed by all moderate, peace-loving men.

There were personal friends of the king who urged him to try this as the one remaining possibility of safety. Others thought it might save Louis, but could not save the monarchy. The queen quoted words of Mirabeau's about Lafayette's ambition to keep the king a prisoner in his tent. "Besides," she added, "it would be too humiliating to owe our lives a second time to that man." So Lafayette was thanked for his interest and his help was refused. On the 10th of August there was another invasion of the Tuileries, followed this time by the massacre of the Swiss Guard. The royal family, rescued from the palace, was kept for safety for three days in a little room behind the one in which the Assembly held its sessions; then it was lodged, under the cruel protection of the Commune, in the small medieval prison called the Temple, in the heart of Paris.

With the Commune in full control, it was not long before an accusation was officially made against Lafayette. "Evidence" to bear it out was speedily found; and on August 19th, less than ten days after the imprisonment of the king, the Assembly, at the bidding of the Commune, declared [Pg 220] Lafayette a traitor. He knew he had nothing to hope from his own troops, for only a few days before this his proposal that they renew their oath of fidelity to the Nation, the Law, and the King had met with murmurs of disapproval, until one young captain, making himself spokesman, had declared that Liberty, Equality, and the National Assembly were the only names to which the soldiers could pledge allegiance.

Lafayette still had faith in the future, but the present offered only two alternatives—flight, or staying quietly where he was to be arrested and carried to Paris, where he would be put to death as surely as the sun rose in the east. This was what his Jacobin friends seemed to expect him to do, and they assailed him bitterly for taking the other course. He could not see that his death at

this time and in this way would help the cause of civil liberty. He said that if he must die he preferred to perish at the hands of foreign tyrants rather than by those of his misguided fellow-countrymen. He placed his soldiers in the best position to offset any advantage the enemy might gain through his flight, and, with about a score of officers and friends, crossed the frontier into Liège on the night of August 20th, meaning to make his way to Holland and later to England. From England, in case he could not return and aid France, he meant to go to America.

Instead of that, the party rode straight into the camp of an Austrian advance-guard.

XXIV
SOUTH CAROLINA TO THE RESCUE!

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It was eight o'clock at night, a few leagues from the French border. Their horses were weary and spent. The road approached the village of Rochefort in such a way that they could see nothing of the town until almost upon it, and the gleam of this camp-fire was their first intimation of the presence of the Austrians. It would have availed nothing to turn back. If they went toward the left they would almost certainly fall in with French patrols, or those of the *émigrés* who were at Liège. To the right a whole chain of Austrian posts stretched toward Namur. "On all sides there was an equality of inconvenience," as Lafayette said. One of the party rode boldly forward to interview the commandant and ask permission to spend the night in the village and continue the journey next day. This was granted after it had been explained that they were neither *émigrés* nor soldiers on their way to join either side, but officers forced to leave the French army, whose only desire was to reach a neutral country.

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A guide was sent to conduct them to the village inn. Before they had been there many minutes Lafayette was recognized, and it was necessary to confess the whole truth. The local commander required a pass from the officer at Namur, and when that person learned the name of his chief prisoner he would hear nothing more about passports, but communicated in joyful haste with his superior officer, the Duc de Bourbon. At Namur Lafayette received a visit from Prince Charles of Lorraine, who sent word in advance that he wished "to talk about the condition in which Lafayette had left France." Lafayette replied that he did not suppose he was to be asked questions it might be inconvenient to answer, and when the high-born caller entered with his most affable manner he was received with distant coolness by all the prisoners.

From Namur they were taken to Nivelles, where they were presented with a government order to give up all French treasure in their possession. Lafayette could not resist answering that he was quite sure their Royal Highnesses would have brought the treasure with them had they been in his place; and the amusement of the Frenchmen increased as the messenger learned, to his evident discomfiture, that the twenty-three of them combined did not have enough to keep them in comfort for two months. That same day the prisoners were divided into three groups. Those who had not served in the French National Guard were given their liberty and told to leave the country. Others were sent to the citadel at Antwerp and kept there for two months. Lafayette and three companions who had served with him in the Assembly, Latour Maubourg, a lifelong friend, Alexander Lameth, and Bureaux de Pusy, were taken to Luxembourg. There was only time for a hurried leave-taking. Lafayette spent it with an aide who was to go to Antwerp. Feeling sure he was marked for death, he dictated to this officer a message to be published to the French people when he should be no more.

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Before leaving Rochefort he had found means of sending a letter to his wife, who was at Chavaniac overseeing repairs upon the old manor-house. It was from this letter that she learned what had befallen him, and she carried it in her bosom until she was arrested in her turn. The message to Adrienne began characteristically on a note of optimism. "Whatever the vicissitudes of fortune, dear heart, you know my soul is not of a temper to be cast down." He told of his misfortune in a gallant way, saying the Austrian officer thought it his duty to arrest him. He hurriedly reviewed the reasons that led up to his flight, said that he did not know how long his journey "might be retarded," and bade her join him in England with all the family. His closing words were: "I offer no excuses to my children or to you for having ruined my family. There is not one of you who would owe fortune to conduct contrary to my conscience. Come to me in England. Let us establish ourselves in America, where we shall find a liberty which no longer exists in France, and there my tenderness will endeavor to make up to you the joys you have lost."

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His journey was "retarded" for five years, and for a large part of that time seemed likely to end only at the grave, possibly by way of the executioner's block. It is to be hoped that his sense of humor allowed him to enjoy one phase of his situation. He had been driven from France on the charge that he favored the king, yet he was no sooner across the border than he was arrested on exactly the opposite charge; that of being a dangerous revolutionist, an enemy to all monarchs. When he demanded a passport he received the sinister answer that he was to be kept safely until the French king regained his power and was in a position to sentence him himself. He was sent from prison to prison. First to Wezel, where he remained three months in a rat-infested dungeon, unable to communicate with any one, and watched over by an officer of the guard who was made to take a daily oath to give him no news. "One would think," said Lafayette, "that they had imprisoned the devil himself." He was so thoroughly isolated that Latour Maubourg, a few cells away, learned only through the indiscretion of a jailer that he was seriously ill. Maubourg asked

permission, in case the illness proved fatal, to be with him at the last, but was told that no such privilege could be granted. But Lafayette did not die and even in the worst of his physical ills had the spirit to reply, "The King of Prussia is impertinent!" when a royal message came offering to soften the rigors of his captivity in return for information about France. The message was from that "honest prince" who in Lafayette's opinion "would never have the genius of his uncle."

Another answer, equally inconsiderate of royal feelings, resulted in the transfer of the prisoners [Pg 225] to Magdebourg, where they were kept a year. On these journeys from place to place they served as a show to hundreds who pressed to see them. There were even attempts to injure them, but Lafayette believed he saw more pitying faces than hostile ones in the crowds. Once fate brought them to an inn at the same moment with the Comte d'Artois and his retinue, all of whom, with a single exception, proved blind to the presence of their former friends. We have details of the way in which Lafayette was lodged and treated at Magdebourg, from a letter he managed to send to his stanch friend, the Princesse d'Hénin in London.

"Imagine an opening under the rampart of the citadel, surrounded by a high, strong palisade. It is through that, after opening successively four doors each guarded with chains and padlocks and bars of iron, that one reaches, not without some trouble and some noise, my dungeon, which is three paces wide and five and a half long. The side wall is covered with mold; that in front lets in light, but not the sun, through a small barred window. Add to this two sentinels who can look down into our subterranean chamber, but are outside the palisade so that we cannot speak to them.... The noisy opening of our four doors occurs every morning to allow my servant to enter; at dinner-time, that I may dine in presence of the commandant of the citadel and of the guard; and at night when my servant is taken away to his cell." The one ornament on his prison wall was [Pg 226] a French inscription, in which the dismal words *souffrir* and *mourir* were made to rhyme. The one break in the prison routine had been an execution, upon which, had he chosen, Lafayette could have looked from his window as from a box at the opera.

After a year of this he was moved again and turned over to the Emperor of Prussia, his prison journeys ending finally at the gloomy fortress of Olmütz in the Carpathian Mountains. Something may be said in defense of the severity with which his captors guarded him. He steadfastly refused to give his parole, preferring, he said, to take his liberty instead of having it granted him. This undoubtedly added a zest to life in prison which would otherwise have been lacking, and very likely contributed not a little to his serenity and even to his physical well-being. It transformed the uncomfortable prison routine into a contest of wits, with the odds greatly against him, but which left him honorably free to seize any advantage that came his way. He foiled the refusal to allow him writing materials by writing letters as he wrote that one to Madame d'Hénin, with vinegar and lampblack in a book on a blank leaf which had escaped the vigilant eye of his guard. Knowing very little German, he dug out of his memory forgotten bits of school-day Latin to use upon his jailers. He took every bit of exercise allowed him in order to keep up his physical strength. He believed he might have need of it. He even lived his life with a certain gay zest, and took particular delight in celebrating the Fourth of July, 1793, in his lonely cell by writing a letter [Pg 227] to the American minister at London. He gave his vivid imagination free rein in concocting plans of escape.

Friends on the outside were busy with plans, too; and though he got no definite news of them, his optimism was too great to permit him to doubt that they were doing everything possible for his release. At the very outset of his captivity he applied to be set free on the ground that he was an American citizen, though there was small chance of the request being granted. He was sure Washington would not forget him; he knew that Gouverneur Morris had deposited a sum of money with his captors upon which he might draw at need. Madame de Staël, the daughter of Necker, and the Princesse d'Hénin were in London, busy exercising feminine influence in his behalf. General Cornwallis and General Tarleton had interceded for him, and later he learned that Fitzpatrick, the young Englishman he had liked on their first meeting in London, the same who afterward carried letters for him from America, had spoken for him in Parliament. Fox and Sheridan and Wilberforce added their eloquence; but the cautious House of Commons decided it was none of its business and voted against the proposal to ask for Lafayette's release, in the same proportion that the citizens of Paris had rejected him for mayor.

French voices also were raised in his behalf. One of the earliest and most courageous was that of Lally Tollendal, who as member of the French Assembly had quarreled with Lafayette for being so much of a monarchist. But later he changed his mind and acted as go-between in the [Pg 228] negotiations for Lafayette's final plan to remove the royal family to Compiègne. From his exile in London Lally Tollendal now addressed a memorial to Frederick William II, telling him the plain truth, that it was unjust to keep Lafayette in jail as an enemy of the French king, because it was an effort to save Louis which had proved his ruin. "Those who regard M. de Lafayette as the cause, or even one of the causes, of the French Revolution are entirely wrong," this friend asserted. "He has played a great role, but he was not the author of the piece.... He has not taken part in a single one of its evils which would not have happened without him, while the good he did was done by him alone."

Then Lally Tollendal went on to tell how on the Sunday after Louis was arrested and brought back from Varennes Lafayette by one single emphatic statement had put an end, in a committee of the Assembly, to an ugly discussion about executing the king and proclaiming a republic. "I warn you," he had said, "that the day after you kill the king the National Guard and I will proclaim the prince royal." Lally Tollendal expatiated upon how evenly Lafayette had tried to deal out justice to royalists and revolutionists alike; how in the last days of his liberty he had said in so many words that the Jacobins must be destroyed; and that he had with difficulty been restrained

from raising a flag bearing the words, "No Jacobins, no Coblenz," as a banner around which friends of the king and conservative republicans might rally. But the strict impartiality this disclosed had little charm for a king of Prussia and the appeal bore no fruit. [Pg 229]

There were more thrilling efforts to aid him close at hand. "It is a whole romance, the attempt at rescuing Lafayette," says a French biographer. The opening scene of this romance harks back to the night when Lafayette made his first landing on American soil, piloted through the dark by Major Huger's slaves. The least noticed actor in that night's drama had been Major Huger's son, a very small boy, who hung upon the words of the unexpected guests and followed them with round, child eyes. Much had happened to change two hemispheres since, and even greater changes had occurred in the person of that small boy. He had grown up, he had resolved to be a surgeon, had finished his studies in London, and betaken himself to Vienna to pursue them further. There in the autumn of 1794 in a café he encountered a Doctor Bollman of Hanover. They fell into conversation, and before long Bollman confided to Huger that he had a secret mission. He had been charged by Lally Tollendal and American friends of Lafayette then in London to find out where the prisoner was and to plan for his escape. In his search he had traveled up and down Germany as a wealthy physician who took an interest in the unfortunate, particularly in prisoners, and treated them free of charge. For a long time he had found no clue, but at Olmütz, whose fortifications proved too strong in days past even for Frederick the Great, he had been invited to dinner by the prison doctor and in turn had entertained him, plying him [Pg 230] well with wine. They talked about prisoners of note. The prison doctor admitted that he had one now on his hands; and before the dinner was over Bollman had sent an innocent-sounding message to Lafayette. Later he was allowed to send him a book, with a few written lines purporting to be nothing more than the names of some friends then in London.

When the book was returned Bollman lost no time in searching it for hidden writing. In this way he learned that Lafayette had lately been allowed to drive out on certain days a league or two from the prison for the benefit of his health, and that his guard on such occasions consisted of a stupid lieutenant and the corporal who drove the carriage. The latter was something of a coward. Lafayette would undertake to look after both of them himself if a rescuer and one trusty helper should appear. No weapons need be provided; he would take the officer's own sword away from him. All he wanted was an extra horse or two, with the assurance that his deliverers were ready. It was a bold plan, but only a bold plan could succeed. There were too many bolts and bars inside the prison to make any other kind feasible. Lameth had been set at liberty; his two other friends, Latour Maubourg and Bureaux de Pusy, were in full sympathy with the plan, and to make it easier had refrained from asking the privilege of driving out themselves. Bollman added that he could not manage the rescue alone and had come away to hunt for a trusty confederate. Huger had already told of his unforgotten meeting with Lafayette, and there was no mistaking the [Pg 231] eagerness with which he awaited Bollman's next word or the joy with which he accepted the invitation to take part in the rescue. He was moved by something deeper than mere love of adventure. "I simply considered myself the representative of the young men of America and acted accordingly," he said long after.

The two men returned to Olmütz and put up at the inn where Bollman had stayed before. They managed to send a note to Lafayette. His answer told them he would leave the prison on November 8th for his next drive, how he would be dressed, and the signal by which they might know he was ready. It was a market day, with many persons on the road. They paid their score, sent their servants ahead with the traveling-carriage and luggage to await their arrival at a town called Hoff, while they came more slowly on horseback. Then they rode out of the gray old town. Neither its Gothic churches, its hoary university, nor the ingenious astronomical clock that had rung the hours from its tower for three hundred and seventy years; not even the fortifications or the prison itself, built on a plain so bare that all who left it were in full view of the sentinels at the city gates, interested these travelers as did the passers-by. Presently a small phæton containing an officer and a civilian was driven toward them, and as it went by the pale gentleman in a blue greatcoat raised his hand to pass a white handkerchief over his forehead. The riders bowed slightly and tried to look indifferent, but that was hard work. Turning as soon as they dared, they saw that the carriage had stopped by the side of the road. Its two passengers alighted; the [Pg 232] gentleman in blue handed a piece of money to the driver, who drove off as though going on an errand. Then leaning heavily upon the officer, seeming to find difficulty in walking, he drew him toward a footpath. But at the sound of approaching horsemen, he suddenly seized the officer's sword and attempted to wrench it from its scabbard. The officer grappled with him. Bollman and Huger flew to his assistance. In the act of dismounting Bollman drew his sword and his horse, startled by the flashing steel, plunged and bolted. Huger managed to keep hold of his own bridle, while he helped Bollman tear away the officer's hands that were closing about Lafayette's throat. The Austrian wrenched himself free and ran toward the town, shouting with all his might.

Here were three men in desperate need of flight, the alarm already raised, and only two horses to carry them to safety—one of these running wild. Huger acted with Southern gallantry and American speed. He got Lafayette upon his own steed, shouted to him to "Go to Hoff!" and caught the other horse. Misunderstanding the injunction, Lafayette, who thought he had merely been told to "Go off," rode a few steps, then turned back to help his rescuers. They motioned him away and he disappeared, in the wrong direction. The remaining horse reared and plunged, refusing to carry double. Huger persuaded Bollman to mount him, since he could be of far greater use to Lafayette, and saw him gallop away. By that time a detachment of soldiers was bearing down [Pg 233] upon him, and between their guns he entered the prison Lafayette had so lately quitted.

At the end of twenty miles Lafayette had to change horses. He appealed to an honest-looking

peasant, who helped him to find another one, but also ran to warn the authorities. These became suspicious when they saw Lafayette's wounded hand, which had been bitten by the officer almost to the bone. They arrested him on general principles and he was carried back to a captivity more onerous than before. He was deprived of all rides, of course, of all news, even of the watch and shoe-buckles which up to this time he had been allowed to retain. Bollman reached Hoff and waited for Lafayette until nightfall, then made his way into Silesia. But he was captured and returned to Austria and finally to Olmütz.

The treatment accorded Lafayette's would-be rescuers was barbarous in the extreme. Huger was chained hand and foot in an underground cell, where he listened to realistic descriptions of beheadings, and, worse still, of how prisoners were walled up and forgotten. Daily questions and threats of torture were tried to make him confess that the attempt was part of a wide-spread conspiracy. As his statements and his courage did not waver, the prison authorities came at last to believe him, and he was taken to a cell aboveground where it was possible to move three steps, though he was still chained. He found that Bollman was confined in the cell just above him. The latter let down a walnut shell containing a bit of ink and also a scrap of paper. With these [Pg 234] Huger wrote a few lines to the American minister at London, telling of their plight and ending with the three eloquent words, "Don't forget us!"—doubly eloquent to one who knew those stories of walled-up prisoners underground. They bribed the guard to smuggle this out of the prison, and in time it reached its destination. The American minister did not forget them. Through his good offices they were released and told to leave the country. They waited for no second invitation, which was very wise, because the emperor repented his clemency. He sent an order for their rearrest, but it arrived, fortunately, just too late to prevent their escape across the border.

XXV
VOLUNTEERS IN MISFORTUNE

[Pg 235]

Lafayette, in his uncomfortable cell, was left in complete ignorance of the fate of Bollman and Huger, though given to understand that they had been executed or soon would be, perhaps under his own window. The long, dreary days wore on until more than a year had passed, with little to make one day different from another, though occasionally he was able to communicate with Pusy or Maubourg through the ingenuity of his "secretary," young Felix Pontonnier, a lad of sixteen, who had managed to cling to him with the devotion of a dog through all his misfortunes. Prison air was hard upon this boy and prison officials were harder still, but his spirits were invincible. He whistled like a bird, he made grotesque motions, he talked gibberish, and these antics were not without point. They were a language of his own devising, by means of which he conveyed to the prisoners such scraps of information as came to him from the outside world.

His master had need of all Felix's cheer to help him bear up against the anxiety that grew with each bit of news from France, and grew greater still because of the absence of news from those he loved best. For the first seven months he heard not a word from wife and children, though [Pg 236] soon after his capture he learned about the early days of September in Paris, when the barriers had been closed and houses were searched and prisons "purged" of those suspected of sympathy with the aristocracy. Since then he had heard from his wife; but he had also learned of the trial and death of the king; and rumors had come to him of the Terror. Adrienne's steadfastness had been demonstrated to him through all the years of their married life. Where principle was involved he knew she would not falter; and he had little hope that she could have escaped imprisonment or a worse fate. He had heard absolutely nothing from her now for eighteen months. His captivity has been called "a night five years long," and this was its darkest hour.

Then one day, without the least previous warning, the bolts and bars of his cell creaked at an unusual hour; they were pushed back—and he looked into the faces of his wife and daughters. The authorities broke in upon the first instant of incredulous recognition to search their new charges; possessed themselves of their purses and the three silver forks in their modest luggage, and disappeared. The complaining bolts slid into place once more and a new prison routine began, difficult to bear in spite of the companionship, when he saw unnecessary hardships press cruelly upon these devoted women. Bit by bit he learned what had happened in the outside world: events of national importance of which he had not heard in his dungeon, and also little incidents that touched only his personal history; for instance, the ceremonies with which the Commune [Pg 237] publicly broke the mold for the Lafayette medal, and how the mob had howled around his Paris house, clamoring to tear it down and raise a "column of infamy" in its place. He forbore to ask questions at first, knowing how tragic the tale must be, and it was only after the girls had been led away that first night and locked into the cell where they were to sleep that he learned of the grief that had come to Adrienne about a week before the Terror came to an end—the execution on a single day of her mother, her grandmother, and her beloved sister Louise.

In time he learned all the details of her own story: the months she had been under parole at Chavaniac, where through the kind offices of Gouverneur Morris she received at last the letter from her husband telling her that he was well. Her one desire had been to join him, but there was the old aunt to be provided for, and there were also pressing debts to settle; a difficult matter after Lafayette's property was confiscated and sold. Mr. Morris lent her the necessary money, assuring her that if she could not repay it Americans would willingly assume it as part of the far

larger debt their country owed her husband.

She asked to be released from her parole in order to go into Germany to share his prison. Instead she had been cast into prison on her own account. The children's tutor, M. de Frestel, who had been their father's tutor before them, conspired with the servants and sold their bits of valuables that she might make the journey to prison in greater comfort. He contrived, too, that the mother [Pg 238] might see her children before she was taken off to Paris, and she made them promise, in the event of her death, to make every effort to rejoin their father. In Paris she lived through many months of prison horror, confined part of the time in the old Collège Du Plessis where Lafayette had spent his boyhood, seeing every morning victims carried forth to their death and expecting every day to be ordered to mount into the tumbrels with them. Had she known it, she was inquired for every morning at the prison door by a faithful maidservant, who in this way kept her children informed of her fate. George was in England with his tutor. At Chavaniac the little girls were being fed by the peasants, as was the old aunt, for the manor-house had been sold and the old lady had been allowed to buy back literally nothing except her own bed.

At last Robespierre himself died under the guillotine and toward the end of September, 1794, a less bloodthirsty committee visited the prisons to decide the fate of their inmates. Adrienne Lafayette was the last to be examined at Du Plessis. Her husband was so hated that no one dared speak her name. She pronounced it clearly and proudly as she had spoken and written it ever since misfortune came upon her. It was decided that the wife of so great a criminal must be judged by higher authority; meanwhile she was to be kept under lock and key. James Monroe, who was now American minister to Paris, interceded for her, but she was only transferred to another prison. Here a worthy priest, disguised as a carpenter, came to her to tell her how on a [Pg 239] day in July the three women dearest to her had been beheaded, and how he, running beside the tumbrel through the storm that drenched them on their way to execution, had been able, at no small risk to himself, to offer them secretly the consolations of religion.

Finally in January, 1795, largely through the efforts of Mr. Monroe, she was released. Her first care was to make a visit of thanks to Mr. Monroe and to ask him to continue his kindness by obtaining a passport for herself and her girls so that they might seek out her husband. George was to be sent to America, for she felt sure that his father, if still alive, would desire him to be there for a time under the care of Washington, and, if he had perished in prison, would have wished his son to grow up an American citizen.

Getting the passport proved a long and difficult undertaking. When issued it was to permit Madame Motier of Hartford, Connecticut, and her two daughters to return to America. It was necessary to begin the journey in accordance with this, and they embarked at Dunkirk on a small American vessel bound for Hamburg. There they left the ship and went to Vienna on another passport, but still as the American family named Motier. In Vienna the American family hid itself very effectively through the help of old friends, and Adrienne contrived to be received by the emperor himself, quite unknown to his ministers. His manner to her and her girls was so gracious that she came away "in an ecstasy of joy," though he told her he could not release the prisoner. She was so sure her husband was well treated and so jubilant over the emperor's permission to [Pg 240] write directly to him if she had reason to complain, that she was not at all cast down by the warnings and evident unfriendliness of the prime minister and the minister of war with whom she next sought interviews.

Leaving Vienna by carriage, she and her daughters traveled all one day and part of the next northward into the rugged Carpathian country before an interested postboy pointed out the steeples and towers of Olmütz. Once in the town, they drove straight to the house of the commandant, who took good care not to expose his heart to pity by seeing these women, but sent the officer in charge of the prison to open its doors and admit them to its cold welcome.

The room in which they found Lafayette did well enough in point of size and of furnishings. It was a vaulted stone chamber facing south, twenty-four feet long, fifteen wide, and twelve high. Light entered by means of a fairly large window shut at the top with a padlock, but which could be opened at the bottom, where it was protected by a double iron grating. The furnishings consisted of a bed, a table, chairs, a chest of drawers, and a stove; and this room opened into another of equal size which served as an antechamber. The vileness consisted in the sights and smells outside the window and the dirt within.

The routine that began when the door of this room opened so unexpectedly to admit Lafayette's wife and daughters continued for almost two years. Madame Lafayette described it in a letter to her aunt, Madame de Tessé, an exile in Holstein, with whom she and her girls spent a few days [Pg 241] after leaving the ship at Hamburg. "At last, my dear aunt, I can write you secretly. Friends risk their liberty, their life, to transmit our letters and will charge themselves with this one for you.... Thanks to your good advice, dear aunt, I took the sole means of reaching here. If I had been announced I would never have succeeded in entering the domains of the emperor.... Do you wish details of our present life? They bring our breakfast at eight o'clock in the morning, after which I am locked with the girls until noon. We are reunited for dinner, and though our jailers enter twice to remove the dishes and bring in our supper, we remain together until they come at eight o'clock to take my daughters back to their cage. The keys are carried each time to the commandant and shut up with absurd precautions. They pay, with my money, the expenses of all three, and we have enough to eat, but it is inexpressibly dirty.

"The physician, who does not understand a word of French, is brought to us by an officer when we have need of him. We like him. M. de Lafayette, in the presence of the officer, who understands Latin, speaks with him in that language and translates for us. When this officer, a

huge corporal of a jailer, who does not dare to speak to us himself without witnesses, comes with his great trousseau of keys in his hand to unpadlock our doors, while the whole guard is drawn up outside in the corridor and the entrance to our rooms is half opened by two sentinels, you would laugh to see our two girls, one blushing to her ears, the other with a manner now proud, [Pg 242] now comic, passing under their crossed sabers; after which the doors of our cells at once close. What is not pleasant is that the little court on the same level with the corridor is the scene of frequent punishment of the soldiers, who are there beaten with whips, and we hear the horrible music. It is a great cause of thankfulness to us that our children up to the present time have borne up well under this unhealthy regime. As for myself, I admit that my health is not good."

It was so far from good that she asked leave to go to Vienna for a week for expert medical advice, but was told, after waiting long for an answer of any kind, that she had voluntarily put herself under the conditions to which her husband was subject, and that if she left Olmütz she could not return. "You know already that the idea of leaving M. de Lafayette could not be entertained by any one of us. The good we do him is not confined to the mere pleasure of seeing us. His health has been really better since we arrived. You know the influence of moral affections upon him, and however strong his character, I cannot conceive that it could resist so many tortures. His excessive thinness and his wasting away have remained at the same point since our arrival, but his guardians and he assure me that it is nothing compared to the horrible state he was in a year ago. One cannot spend four years in such captivity without serious consequences. I have not been able to see Messrs. Maubourg and Pusy, or even to hear their voices. Judging from the number of [Pg 243] years with which their so-called guardians credit them, they must have aged frightfully. Their sufferings here are all the harder for us to bear because these two loyal and generous friends of M. de Lafayette have never for an instant permitted their case to be considered separately from his own. You will not be surprised that he has enjoined them never to speak for him, no matter what may be the occasion or the interest, except in a manner in harmony with his character and principles; and that he pushes to excess what you call 'the weakness of a grand passion.'"

So, in mingled content and hardship, the days passed. The young girls brought a certain amount of gaiety into the gray cell, even of material well-being. After their arrival their father was supplied with his first new clothing since becoming a prisoner, garments of rough cloth, cut out "by guesswork," that his jailer rudely declared were good enough for him. Out of the discarded coat Anastasie contrived shoes to replace the pair that was fairly dropping off his feet; and one of the girls took revenge upon the jailer by drawing a caricature of him on a precious scrap of paper which was hidden and saved and had a proud place in their home many years later. Madame Lafayette, though more gravely ill than she allowed her family to know, devoted herself alternately to her husband and to the education of the girls; and in hours which she felt she had a right to call her own wrote with toothpick and lampblack upon the margins of a volume of Buffon that biography of her mother, the unfortunate Madame d'Ayen, which is such a marvel of tender [Pg 244] devotion. In the evenings, before his daughters were hurried away to their enforced early bedtime, Lafayette read aloud from some old book. New volumes were not allowed; "everything published since 1788 was proscribed," says a prison letter of La tour de Maubourg's, "even though it were an *Imitation of Jesus Christ*."

Long after she was grown Virginia, the younger daughter, remembered with pleasure those half-hours with old books. From her account of their prison life we learn that it was the rector of the university who enabled her mother to send and receive letters unknown to their jailers. "We owe him the deepest gratitude. By his means some public news reached our ears.... In the interior of the prison we had established a correspondence with our companions in captivity. Even before our arrival our father's secretary could speak to him through the window by means of a Pan's pipe for which he had arranged a cipher known to M. de Maubourg's servant. But this mode of correspondence, the only one in use for a long time, did not allow great intercourse. We obtained an easier one with the help of the soldiers whom we bribed by the pleasure of a good meal. Of a night, through our double bars, we used to lower at the end of a string a parcel with part of our supper to the sentry on duty under our windows, who would pass the packet in the same manner to Messrs. Maubourg and Pusy, who occupied separate parts of the prison."

Though they could see no change from day to day, the prisoners were conscious, on looking back [Pg 245] over several weeks or months, that they were being treated with greater consideration. After every vigorous expression in favor of Lafayette by Englishmen and Americans, especially after every military success gained by France, their jailers became a fraction more polite. When talk of peace between Austria and France began, Tourgot, the emperor's prime minister, preferred to have his master give up the prisoners of his own free will rather than under compulsion. In July, 1797, the Marquis de Chasteler, "a perfect gentleman, highly educated, and accomplished," came to Olmütz to inquire with much solicitude, on the emperor's behalf, how the prisoners had been treated, and to offer them freedom under certain conditions. One condition was that they should never set foot again on Austrian territory without special permission. Another stipulated that Lafayette should not even stay in Europe, but must sail forthwith for America. To this he replied that he did not wish to stay in Austria, even at the emperor's most earnest invitation, and that he had often declared his intention of emigrating to America; but that he did not propose to render account of his actions to Frederick William II or to make any promise which seemed to imply that that sovereign had any rights in the matter. Madame Lafayette and his two friends, Maubourg and Pusy, whom he saw for the first time in three years when they were brought to consult with him over this proposal, agreed fully with Lafayette's stand; and the result was that all of them stayed in prison.

XXVI
EXILES

[Pg 246]

But hope grew. On the very day of Chasteler's visit the prisoners learned that negotiations for peace, already begun, contained a clause which would set them free. These negotiations were being directed in part—a very important part—by a remarkable man who had been only an unknown second lieutenant when the troubles began in France, but whose name was now on everybody's lips and whose power was rapidly approaching that of a dictator. The elder De Ségur, father of Lafayette's friend, had started him on his spectacular career by placing him in the military academy. His name was Napoleon Bonaparte. A man even less sagacious than he would have seen the advantage of making friends rather than enemies of Lafayette's supporters in Europe and America.

Thus it was partly because of repeated demands for his release coming from England and France and America, and largely because Napoleon willed it, that Lafayette was finally set free. Also there is little doubt that Austria was heartily tired of being his jailer. Tourgot said that Lafayette would have been released much earlier if anybody had known what on earth to do with him, but [Pg 247] that neither Italy nor France would tolerate him within its borders. Tourgot supposed the emperor would raise no objection to the arrangement he had concluded to turn over "all that caravan" to America as a means of getting rid of him; "of which I shall be very glad," he added. The American consul at Hamburg was to receive the prisoners, and he promised that they should be gone in ten days. This time Lafayette was not given a chance to say Yes or No.

On September 18, 1797, five years and a month after he had been arrested, and two years lacking one month from the time Madame Lafayette and the girls joined him, the gates of Olmütz opened and he and his "caravan" went forth: Latour Maubourg, Bureaux de Pusy, the faithful Felix, and other humble members of their retinue who had shared imprisonment with them. Louis Romeuf, the aide-de-camp, who had taken down Lafayette's farewell words to France and who had been zealous in working for his relief, rode joyously to meet them, but so long as Austria had authority the military kept him at arm's-length. The party had one single glimpse of him, but it was not until they had reached Dresden that he was permitted to join them.

Gradually sun and wind lost their feeling of strangeness on prison-blanched cheeks. Gradually the crowds that gathered to watch them pass dared show more interest. Lafayette's face was not unknown to all who saw him. An Austrian pressed forward to thank him for saving his life in Paris on a day when Lafayette had set his wits against the fury of the mob. When the party reached [Pg 248] Hamburg Gouverneur Morris and his host, who was an imperial minister, left a dinner-party to go through the form of receiving the prisoners from their Austrian guard, thus "completing their liberty." The short time spent in Hamburg was devoted to writing letters of thanks to Huger, to Fitzpatrick, and the others who had worked for their release.

The one anxiety during this happy journey had been caused by the condition of Madame Lafayette, who showed, now that the strain was removed, how very much the prison months had cost her. She did her best to respond to the demands made upon her strength by the friendliness of the crowds; but it was evident that in her state of exhaustion a voyage to America was not to be thought of. From Hamburg, therefore, the Lafayettes went to the villa of Madame Tessé on the shores of Lake Ploën in Holstein. Here they remained several weeks in happy reunion with relatives and close friends; and it was here a few months later that Anastasie, Lafayette's elder daughter, was married to a younger brother of Latour de Maubourg, to the joy of every one, though to the mock consternation of the lively, white-haired Countess of Tessé, who declared that these young people, ruined by the Revolution, were setting up housekeeping in a state of poverty and innocence unequaled since the days of Adam and Eve.

The Lafayettes and the Maubourgs took together a large castle at Lhemkulen, not far from Madame de Tessé, where Lafayette settled himself to wait until he should be allowed to return to [Pg 249] France. It was here that George rejoined his family. He had been a child when his father saw him last; he returned a man, older than Lafayette had been when he set out for America. Washington had been very kind to him, but his years in America had not been happy. Probably he felt instinctively the constraint in regard to him.

Washington had been much distressed by Lafayette's misfortune and had taken every official step possible to secure his release. It was through the good offices of the American minister at London that Lafayette had learned that his wife and children still lived. Washington had sent Madame Lafayette not only sympathetic words, but a check for one thousand dollars, in the hope that it might relieve some of her pressing necessities. He even wrote the Austrian emperor a personal letter in Lafayette's behalf. When he heard that George was to be sent him he "desired to serve the father of this young man, and to become his best friend," but he did not find the godfatherly duty entirely easy. It threatened to conflict with his greater duty as father of his country, strange as it seems that kindness to one innocent, unhappy boy could have that effect. Washington was President of the United States at the time and it behooved the young nation to be very circumspect. Diplomacy is a strange game of many rules and pitfalls; and it might prove embarrassing and compromising to have as member of his family the son of a man who was looked upon by most of the governments of Europe as an arch criminal. [Pg 250]

Washington wrote to George in care of the Boston friend to whose house the youth would go on landing, advising him not to travel farther, but to enter Harvard and pursue his studies there. But M. Frestel also came to America, by another ship and under an assumed name, and George

continued his education with him instead of entering college. He possessed little of his father's faculty for making friends, though the few who knew him esteemed him highly. The most impressionable years of his life had been passed amid tragic scenes, and his natural reserve and tendency to silence had been increased by anxiety about his father's fate. After a time he went to Mount Vernon and became part of the household there. One of Washington's visitors wrote: "I was particularly struck with the marks of affection which the general showed his pupil, his adopted son, son of the Marquis de Lafayette. Seated opposite to him, he looked at him with pleasure and listened to him with manifest interest." A note in Washington's business ledger shows that the great man was both generous and sympathetic in fulfilling his fatherly duties. It reads: "By Geo. W. Fayette, gave for the purpose of his getting himself such small articles of clothing as he might not choose to ask for, $100." It was at Mount Vernon that the news of his real father's release came to George. He rushed out into the fields away from everybody, to shout and cry and give vent to his emotion unseen by human eyes.

His father was pleased by the development he noted in him; pleased by the letter Washington [Pg 251] sent by the hand of "your son, who is highly deserving of such parents as you and your estimable lady." Pleased, too, that George had the manners to stop in Paris on the way home long enough to pay his respects to Napoleon, and that, in the absence of the general, he had been kindly received by Madame Bonaparte. Natural courtesy as well as policy demanded that the Lafayettes fully acknowledge their debt to Napoleon. One of Lafayette's first acts on being set free had been to write him the following joint letter of thanks with Maubourg and Pusy:

> "Citizen General: The prisoners of Olmütz, happy in owing their deliverance to the good will of their country and to your irresistible arms, rejoiced during their captivity in the thought that their liberty and their lives depended upon the triumphs of the Republic and of your personal glory. It is with the utmost satisfaction that we now do homage to our liberator. We should have liked, Citizen General, to express these sentiments in person, to look with our own eyes upon the scenes of so many victories, the army which won them, and the general who has added our resurrection to the number of his miracles. But you are aware that the journey to Hamburg was not left to our choice. From the place where we parted with our jailers we address our thanks to their victor.
>
> "From our solitary retreat in the Danish territory of Holstein, where we shall endeavor to re-establish the health you have saved to us, our patriotic prayers for the Republic [Pg 252] will go out united with the most lively interest in the illustrious general to whom we are even more indebted for the services he has rendered liberty and our country than for the special obligation it is our glory to owe him, and which the deepest gratitude has engraved forever upon our hearts.
>
> "Greetings and respect.
>
> "La Fayette,
>
> Latour Maubourg,
>
> Bureaux de Pusy."

Lafayette could no more leave politics alone than he could keep from breathing; and even in its stilted phrases of thanks this letter managed to show how much more he valued the Republic than any individual. Perhaps even at that early date he mistrusted Napoleon's personal ambition.

With the leisure of exile on his hands, and pens and paper once more within easy reach, he plunged into correspondence and into the project of writing a book with Maubourg and Pusy to set forth their views of government. Pens and paper seem to have been the greatest luxuries of his exile, for the family fortunes were at a low ebb. Two of Madame Lafayette's younger sisters joined her and the three pooled their ingenuity and their limited means to get the necessaries of life at the lowest possible cost. "The only resource of the mistress of the establishment was to make 'snow eggs' when she was called upon to provide an extra dish for fifteen or sixteen persons all dying of hunger." This state of things continued after they had gone to live at Vianen [Pg 253] near Utrecht in Holland, in order to be a little closer to France. Lafayette had asked permission of the Directory to return with the officers who had left France with him, but received no answer.

Since Madame Lafayette's name was not on the list of suspected persons, she could come and go as she would, and she made several journeys, when health permitted, to attend to business connected with the inheritance coming to her from her mother's estate. She was in Paris in November, 1799, when the Directory was overthrown and Napoleon became practically king of France for the term of ten years with the title of First Consul. She sent her husband a passport under an assumed name and bade him come at once without asking permission of any one and without any guaranty of personal safety beyond the general one that the new government promised justice to all. This was advice after his own heart and he suddenly appeared in Paris. Once there he wrote to Napoleon, announcing his arrival. Napoleon's ministers were scandalized and declared he must go back. Nobody had the courage to mention the subject to the First Consul, whose anger was already a matter of wholesome dread; but Madame Lafayette took the situation into her own hands. She went to see Napoleon as simply as if she were calling upon her lawyer, and just as if he were her lawyer she laid her husband's case before him. The calm and gentle effrontery filled him with delight. "Madame, I am charmed to make your acquaintance!" he [Pg 254] cried; "you are a woman of spirit—but you do not understand affairs."

However, it was agreed that Lafayette might remain in France, provided he retired to the country and kept very quiet while necessary formalities were complied with. In March, 1800, his name and those of the companions of his flight were removed from the lists of *émigrés*. After this visit of Madame Lafayette to the First Consul the family took up its residence about forty miles from

Paris at La Grange near Rozoy, a château dating from the twelfth century, which had belonged to Madame d'Ayen. But it was not as the holder of feudal dwellings and traditions that Lafayette installed himself in the place that was to be his home for the rest of his life. He had willingly given up his title when the Assembly abolished such things in 1790. Mirabeau mockingly called him "Grandison Lafayette" for voting for such a measure. It was as an up-to-date farmer that he began life all over again at the age of forty-two. He made Felix Pontonnier his manager, and they worked literally from the ground up, for the estate had been neglected and there was little money to devote to it. Gradually he accumulated plants and animals and machines from all parts of the world; writing voluminous letters about flocks and fruit-trees, and exchanging much advice and many seeds; pursuing agriculture, he said, himself, "with all the ardor he had given in youth to other callings." A decade later he announced with pride that "with a little theory and ten years of experience he had succeeded fairly well."

As soon as Napoleon's anger cooled he received Lafayette and Latour Maubourg, conversing affably, even jocularly about their imprisonment. "I don't know what the devil you did to the Austrians," he said, "but it cost them a mighty effort to let you go." For a time Lafayette saw the First Consul frequently and was on excellent terms with other members of his family. Lucien Bonaparte is said to have cherished the belief that Lafayette would not have objected to him as a son-in-law. But in character and principle Lafayette and the First Consul were too far apart to be really friends. It was to the interest of each to secure the good will of the other, and both appear honestly to have tried. The two have been said to typify the beginning and the end of the French Revolution: Lafayette, the generous, impractical theories of its first months: Napoleon, the strong will and strong hand needed to pull the country out of the anarchy into which these theories had degenerated. Lafayette was too much of an optimist and idealist not to speak his mind freely to the First Consul, even when asking favors for old friends. Napoleon was too practical not to resent lectures from a man whose theories had signally failed of success; and far too much of an autocrat to enjoy having his personal favors refused. The grand cross of the Legion of Honor, a seat in the French Senate at a time when it depended on the will of Napoleon and not on an election of the people, and the post of minister to the United States were refused in turn. [Pg 255] Lafayette said he was more interested in agriculture than in embassies, and made it plain that an office to which he was elected was the only kind he cared to hold. [Pg 256] If Napoleon hoped to gain his support by appealing to his ambition, he failed utterly.

Gradually their relations became strained and the break occurred in 1802 when Napoleon was declared Consul for life. Lafayette was now an elector for the Department of Seine and Marne, an office within the gift of the people, and as such had to vote on the proposal to make Bonaparte Consul for life.

He cast his vote against it, inscribing on the register of his Commune: "I cannot vote for such a magistracy until public liberty is sufficiently guaranteed. Then I shall give my vote to Napoleon Bonaparte"; and he wrote him a letter carefully explaining that there was nothing personal in it. "That is quite true," says a French biographer. "A popular government, with Bonaparte at its head, would have suited Lafayette exactly."

Napoleon as emperor and autocrat suited him not at all. He continued to live in retirement, busy with his farm, his correspondence, and his family, or when his duties as Deputy took him to Paris, attending strictly to those and avoiding intercourse with Napoleon's ministers. He made visits to Chavaniac to gladden the heart of the old aunt who was once more mistress of the manor-house, and he rejoiced in George's marriage to a very charming girl. In February, 1803, while in Paris, a fall upon the ice resulted in an injury that made him lame for life. The surgeon experimented with a new method of treatment whose only result was extreme torture even for Lafayette, whose [Pg 257] power of bearing pain almost equaled that of his blood brothers, the American Indians. It was during this season of agony that Virginia, his youngest child, was married in a neighboring room to Louis de Lasteyrie, by the same priest who had followed the brave De Noailles women to the foot of the scaffold. Instead of the profusion of plate and jewels which would have been hers before the Revolution, the family "assessed itself" to present to the bride and her husband a portfolio containing two thousand francs—about four hundred dollars.

In 1807 the greatest grief of Lafayette's life came to him in the death of his wife, who had never recovered from the rigors of Olmütz. "It is not for having come to Olmütz that I wish to praise her here," the heartbroken husband wrote to Latour Maubourg soon after the Christmas Eve on which her gentle spirit passed to another life, "but that she did not come until she had taken the time to make every possible provision within her power to safeguard the welfare of my aunt and the rights of my creditors, and for having had the courage to send George to America." The gallant, loving lady was buried in the cemetery of Picpus, the secret place where the bodies of the victims to the Terror had been thrown. A poor working-girl had discovered the spot, and largely through the efforts of Madame Lafayette and her sister a chapel had been built and the cemetery put in order—which perhaps accounts for the simplicity of Virginia's wedding-gift.

XXVII
A GRATEFUL REPUBLIC

[Pg 258]

During the long, dark night of Lafayette's imprisonment he had dreamed of America as the land

of dawn and hope, and planned to make a new home there, but when release came this had not seemed best. Madame Lafayette's health had been too frail, and La Grange, with its neglected acres, was too obviously awaiting a master. "Besides, we lack the first dollar to buy a farm. That, in addition to many other considerations, should prevent your tormenting yourself about it," he told Adrienne. One of these considerations was the beloved old aunt at Chavaniac, who lived to the age of ninety-two and never ceased to be the object of his special care. Also his young people, with their marriages and budding families, were too dear to permit him willingly to put three thousand miles of ocean between them and himself.

But he had never lost touch with his adopted country. At the time he declined Napoleon's offer to make him minister to the United States he wrote a correspondent that he had by no means given up the hope of visiting it again as a private citizen; though, he added, humorously, he fancied that if he landed in America in anything except a military uniform he would feel as embarrassed and [Pg 259] as much out of place as a savage in knee-breeches. After Napoleon sold Louisiana to the United States, foreseeing he could not profitably keep it, Jefferson sounded Lafayette about coming to be governor of the newly acquired territory. That offer, too, he had seen fit to refuse; but his friends called him "the American enthusiast."

Time went by until almost fifty years had passed since the "Bostonians" took their stand against the British king. To celebrate the semi-centennial, America decided to raise a monument to the heroes of Bunker Hill. Lafayette was asked to lay the corner-stone at the ceremonies which were to take place on the fiftieth anniversary of the battle. It became the pleasant duty of President James Monroe, who had served as a subaltern in the battle where Lafayette received his American wound, to send him the official invitation of Congress and to place a government frigate at his disposal for the trip. A turn of French elections in 1824 had left him temporarily "a statesman out of a job," without even the duty of representing his district in the Chamber of Deputies. There was really no reason why he should not accept and every reason why he might at last gratify his desire to see America and American friends again.

He sailed on July 12, 1824, not, however, upon the United States frigate, but on the *Cadmus*, a regular packet-boat, preferring, he said, to come as a private individual. His son accompanied him, as did Col. A. Lavasseur, who acted as his secretary. These, with his faithful valet, Bastien, [Pg 260] made up his entire retinue, though he might easily have had a regiment of followers, so many were the applications of enthusiastic young men who seemed to look upon this as some new sort of military expedition. On the *Cadmus* he asked fellow-travelers about American hotels and the cost of travel by stage and steamboat, and M. Lavasseur made careful note of the answers. He had no idea of the reception that awaited him. When the *Cadmus* sailed into New York harbor and he saw every boat gay with bunting and realized that every man, woman, and child to whom coming was possible had come out to meet him, he was completely overcome. "It will burst!" he cried, pressing his hands to his heart, while tears rolled down his cheeks.

Whether he wished or no, he found himself the nation's guest. The country not only stopped its work and its play to give him greeting; it stopped its politics—and beyond that Americans cannot go. It was a campaign summer, but men forgot for a time whether they were for Adams or Crawford, Clay or Jackson. Election Day was three months off, politics could wait; but nobody could wait to see this man who had come to them out of the past from the days of the Revolution, whose memory was their country's most glorious heritage. They gave him salutes and dinners and receptions. They elected him to all manner of societies. Mills and factories closed and the employees surged forth to shout themselves hoarse as they jostled mayors and judges in the [Pg 261] welcome. Dignified professors found themselves battling in a crowd of their own students to get near his carriage. Our whole hard-headed, practical nation burst into what it fondly believed to be poetry in honor of his coming. Even the inmates of New York's Debtors' Prison sent forth such an effusion of many stanzas. If these were not real poems, the authors never suspected it. There was truth in them, at any rate. "Again the hero comes to tread the sacred soil for which he bled" was the theme upon which they endlessly embroidered. Occasionally the law sidestepped in his honor. A deputy sheriff in New England pinned upon his door this remarkable "Notice. Arrests in civil suits postponed to-day, sacred to Freedom and Freedom's Friend."

Lafayette arrived in August and remained until September of the following year, and during that time managed, to tread an astonishing amount of our sacred soil, considering that he came before the day of railroads. The country he had helped to create had tripled in population, and, instead of being merely a narrow strip along the Atlantic, now stretched westward a thousand miles. He visited all the states and all the principal towns. It was not only in towns that he was welcomed. At the loneliest crossroads a musket-shot or a bugle-call brought people magically together. The sick were carried out on mattresses and wrung his hand and thanked God. Babies were named for him. One bore through life the whole name Welcome Lafayette. Miles of babies already named were held up for him to see—and perhaps to kiss. Old soldiers stretched out hands [Pg 262] almost as feeble as those of babies in efforts to detain him and fight their battles o'er. With these he was very tender. Small boys drew "Lafayette fish" out of the brooks on summer days, and when he came to their neighborhood ran untold distances to get sight of him. Often he helped them to points of vantage from which they could see something more than forests of grown-up backs and legs during the ceremonies which took place before court-houses and state-houses. Here little girls, very much washed and curled, presented him with useless bouquets and lisped those artless odes of welcome. Sometimes they tried to crown him with laurel, a calamity he averted with a deft hand. Back of the little girls usually stood a phalanx of larger maidens in white, carrying banners, who were supposed to represent the states of the Union; and back of the maidens was sometimes a wonderful triumphal arch built of scantling and covered with painted

muslin, the first achievement of its kind in local history.

The country was really deeply moved by Lafayette's visit. It meant to honor him to the full, but it saw no reason to hide the fact that it had done something for him as well. "The Nation's Guest. France gave him birth; America gave him Immortality," was a statement that kept everybody, nations and individuals alike, in their proper places. In short, the welcome America gave Lafayette was hearty and sincere. Whether it appeared as brilliant to the guest of honor, accustomed from youth to pageants at Versailles, as it did to his hosts we may doubt. It was [Pg 263] occasionally hard for M. Lavasseur to appear impressed and not frankly astonished at the things he saw. Lafayette enjoyed it all thoroughly. The difficult rôle fell to his son George, who had neither the interest of novelty nor of personal triumph to sustain him. He already knew American ways, and it was equally impossible for him to join in the ovation or to acknowledge greetings not meant for himself. He made himself useful by taking possession of the countless invitations showered upon his father and arranging an itinerary to embrace as many of them as possible.

MARQUIS DE LAFAYETTE IN 1824
From a painting by William Birch

MADAME DE LAFAYETTE
After a miniature in the possession of the family

To those who have been wont to think of this American triumphal progress of Lafayette's as steady and slow, stopping only for demonstrations of welcome and rarely if ever doubling on its tracks, it is a relief to learn that Lafayette did occasionally rest. He made Washington, the capital of the country, his headquarters, and set out from there on longer or shorter journeys. The town had not existed, indeed had scarcely been dreamed of, for a decade after his first visit. What he thought of the straggling place, with its muddy, stump-infested avenues, we shall never know. He had abundant imagination—which was one reason the town existed; for without imagination he would never have crossed the ocean to fight for American liberty. Among the people he saw about him in Washington during the official ceremonies were many old friends and many younger faces mysteriously like them. To that striking sentence in Henry Clay's address of welcome in the House of Representatives, "General, you find yourself here in the midst of posterity," he could [Pg 264] answer, with truth and gallantry, "No, Mr. Speaker, posterity has not yet begun for me, for I find in these sons of my old friends the same political ideals and, I may add, the same warm sentiments toward myself that I have already had the happiness to enjoy in their fathers."

His great friend Washington had gone to his rest; but there were memories of Washington at every turn. He made a visit to Mount Vernon and spent a long hour at his friend's tomb. He entered Yorktown following Washington's old campaign tent, a relic which was carried ahead of the Lafayette processions in that part of the country, in a spirit almost as reverent as that the Hebrews felt toward the Ark of the Covenant. At Yorktown the ceremonies were held near the Rock Redoubt which Lafayette's command had so gallantly taken. Zachary Taylor, who was to gain fame as a general himself and to be President of the United States, presented a laurel wreath, which Lafayette turned from a compliment to himself to a tribute to his men. "You know, sir," he said, "that in this business of storming redoubts with unloaded arms and fixed bayonets, the merit of the deed lies in the soldiers who execute it," and he accepted the crown "in the name of the light infantry—those we have lost as well as those who survive."

Farther south, at Camden, he laid the corner-stone of a monument to his friend De Kalb; and at Savannah performed the same labor of love for one erected in honor of Nathanael Greene and of [Pg 265] Pulaski. At Charleston, also, he met Achille Marat, come from his home in Florida to talk with Lafayette about his father, who met his death at the hands of Charlotte Corday during the French

Revolution. There were many meetings in America to remind him of his life abroad. Francis Huger joined him for a large part of his journey; he saw Dubois Martin, now a jaunty old gentleman of eighty-three. It was he who had bought *La Victoire* for Lafayette's runaway journey. In New Jersey he dined with Joseph Bonaparte, brother of Napoleon, who was living there quietly with his daughter and son-in-law.

Both on the Western frontier and at the nation's capital he met Indian chiefs with garments more brilliant and manners quite as dignified as kings ever possessed. In a time of freshet in the West he became the guest of an Indian named Big Warrior and spent the night in his savage home. On another night he came near accepting unwillingly the hospitality of the Ohio River, for the steamboat upon which he was traveling caught fire, after the manner of river boats of that era, and "burned a hole in the night" and disappeared. He lost many of his belongings in consequence, including his hat, but not his serenity or even a fraction of his health, though the accident occurred in the pouring rain.

Everywhere, particularly in the West, he came to towns and counties bearing his own name. In the East he revisited with his son spots made memorable in the Revolution. On the Hudson he rose early to point out to George the place where André had been taken and the house to which [Pg 266] he and Washington had come so soon after Arnold's precipitate flight. At West Point he reviewed the cadets, slim and straight and young, while General Scott and General Brown, both tall, handsome men, looking very smart indeed in their plumes and dress uniforms, stood beside their visitor, who was almost as tall and military in his bearing and quite as noticeable for the neatness and plainness of his civilian dress.

Lafayette was broader of shoulder and distinctly heavier than he had been forty years before. Even in his youth he had not been handsome, though he possessed for Americans the magnetism his son so sadly lacked. His once fair complexion had turned brown and his once reddish hair had turned gray, but that was a secret concealed under a chestnut wig. He carried a cane and walked with a slight limp, which Americans attributed enthusiastically to his wound in their service, but which was really caused by that fall upon the ice in 1803. Despite his checkered fortunes his sixty-eight years had passed lightly over his head. Perhaps he did not altogether relish being addressed as Venerable Sir by mayors and town officials, any more than he liked to have laurel wreaths pulling his wig awry, but he knew that both were meant in exquisite politeness.

And, true Frenchman that he was, he never allowed himself to be outdone in politeness. Everywhere incidents occurred, trivial enough, but very charming in spirit, that have been treasured in memory and handed down to this day. In New London two rival congregations besought him to come to their churches and listen to their pastors. He pleased them both. He led [Pg 267] blind old ladies gallantly through the minuet. He held tiny girls in his arms and, kissing them, said they reminded him of his own little Virginia. He chatted delightfully with young men who accompanied him as governors' aides in turn through the different states; and if he extracted local information from these talks to use it again slyly, with telling effect, in reply to the very next address of welcome, that was a joke between themselves which they enjoyed hugely. "He spoke the English language well, but slower than a native American," one of these young aides tells us. He was seldom at a loss for a graceful speech, though this was a gift that came to him late in life. And his memory for faces seldom played him false. When William Magaw, who had been surgeon of the old First Pennsylvania, visited him and challenged him for recognition, Lafayette replied that he did not remember his name, but that he knew very well what he had done for him—he had dressed his wound after the battle of the Brandywine!

The processions and celebrations in Lafayette's honor culminated in the ceremony for which he had crossed the Atlantic, the laying of the corner-stone at Bunker Hill. Pious people had said hopefully that the Lord could not let it rain on such a day; and their faith was justified, for the weather was perfect. We are told that on the 17th of June "everything that had wheels and everything that had legs" moved in the direction of the monument. Accounts tell of endless organizations and of "miles of spectators," until there seemed to be not room for another person [Pg 268] to sit or stand. The same chaplain who had lifted up his young voice in prayer in the darkness on Cambridge Common before the men marched off to battle was there in the sunlight to raise his old hands in blessing. Daniel Webster, who had not been born when the battle was fought, was there to make the oration. He could move his hearers as no other American has been able to do, playing upon their emotions as upon an instrument, and never was his skill greater than upon that day. He set the key of feeling in the words, "Venerable men," addressed to the forty survivors of the battle, a gray-haired group, sitting together in the afternoon light. Lafayette had met this little company in a quiet room before the ceremonies began and had greeted each as if he were in truth a personal friend. After his part in the ceremony was over he elected to sit with them instead of in the place prepared for him. "I belong there," he said, and there he sat, his chestnut wig shining in the gray company.

While Webster's eloquence worked its spell, and pride and joy and pain even to the point of tears swept over the thousands of upturned faces as cloud shadows sweep across a meadow, Lafayette must have remembered another scene, a still greater assembly, even more tense with feeling, in which he had been a central figure: that fête of the Federation on the Champs de Mars. Surely no other man in history has been allowed to feel himself so intimately a part of two nations in their moments of patriotic exaltation.

XXVIII
LEAVE-TAKINGS

[Pg 269]

Though the celebration at Bunker Hill was the crowning moment of Lafayette's stay in America, he remained three months longer, sailing home in September, 1825. The last weeks were spent in and near Washington. Here he had fitted so perfectly into the scheme of life that his comings and goings had ceased to cause remark, except as a pleasant detail of the daily routine. Perhaps this is the subtlest compliment Americans paid him. One of the mottoes in a hall decorated in his honor had read, "*Où peut-on être mieux qu'au sein de sa famille?*" "Where can a man feel more at home than in the bosom of his family?"—and this attitude of Washingtonians toward him showed how completely he had been adopted as one of themselves.

He had made himself one in thought and spirit with the most aggressively American of them all. A witty speech of his proves this. A bill had been introduced in Congress to present him with two hundred thousand dollars in money and "twenty-four thousand acres of fertile land in Florida" to right a wrong unintentionally done him years before. He had been entitled at the time of our [Pg 270] Revolution to the pay of an officer of his rank and to a grant of public land to be located wherever he chose. He refused to accept either until after the Revolution in France had swept away his fortune. Then his agent in the United States chose for him a tract of land near New Orleans which Jefferson thought would be of great value. Congress was not informed and granted this same land to the city. Lafayette had a prior claim, but flatly refused to contest the matter, saying he could have no quarrel with the American people. Everybody wanted the bill concerning this reparation in the way of money and Florida land to pass, and it was certain to go through, but there were twenty-six members of the House and Senate who, for one reason and another, felt constrained to vote against it. Some voted consistently and persistently against unusual appropriations of any kind; some argued that it was an insult to translate Lafayette's services into terms of cold cash. The struggle between private friendship and public duty was so hard that some of them came to make a personal explanation. "My dear friends!" he cried, grasping their hands, "I assure you it would have been different had I been a member of Congress. There would not have been twenty-six objectors—there would have been twenty-seven! " During this American visit he renewed old ties with, or made the acquaintance of, nine men who had been or were to become Presidents of the United States: John Adams and his son John Quincy Adams, Jefferson, Madison, Monroe, William Henry Harrison, Andrew Jackson, Zachary Taylor, and Franklin Pierce. [Pg 271] Perhaps there were others. He broke the rules of the Puritan Sabbath by driving out to dine on that day with the venerable John Adams at his home near Boston; but there was only one white horse to draw his carriage instead of the customary four, and not a hurrah broke the orderly quiet. Had it been a week-day the crowds would have shouted themselves hoarse. Jefferson, ill and feeble, welcomed him on the lawn at Monticello, the estate so dear to him which had been ravaged by the British about the time Lafayette began his part in driving Cornwallis to Yorktown.

As was quite fitting, Lafayette was the guest of President John Quincy Adams at the White House during the last days of his stay. One incident must be told, because it is so very American and so amusing from the foreign point of view. He expressed a desire to make a visit of farewell to his old friend James Monroe, who had been President the year before. He was now living on his estate of Oak Hill, thirty-seven miles away. President Adams offered to accompany him, and on an August day they set out by carriage after an early dinner. Mr. Adams, both Lafayettes, and a friend rode in the presidential carriage. Colonel Lavasseur and the son of the President followed in a "tilbury," a kind of uncovered gig fashionable then on both sides of the Atlantic. Servants and luggage brought up the rear.

Lafayette had been passed free over thousands of miles of toll-road since he landed in the United States, but when they reached the bridge across the Potomac the little procession halted and Mr. [Pg 272] Adams paid toll like an ordinary mortal. Scarcely had his carriage started again when a plaintive, "Mr. President! Mr. President!" brought it to a standstill. The gatekeeper came running up with a coin in his hand. "Mr. President," he panted, "you've done made a mistake. I reckon yo' thought this was two bits, but it's only a levy. You owe me another twelve and a half cents." The President listened, gravely examined the coin, counted the noses of men and horses, and agreed that he was at fault. He was just reaching down into the presidential pocket when he was arrested by a new exclamation. The gatekeeper had recognized Lafayette and was thoroughly crestfallen. "I reckon the joke's on me," he said, apologetically. "All the toll-roads has orders to pass the general free, so I owe you something instid of you owin' me money. I reckon I ought to pass you-all as the general's bodyguard." But to this Adams demurred. He was not anybody's bodyguard. He was President of the United States, and, though it was true that toll-roads passed the guest of the nation free, General Lafayette was riding that day in his private capacity, as a friend of Mr. Adams. There was no reason at all why the company should be cheated out of any of its toll. The gatekeeper considered this and acknowledged the superiority of Yankee logic. "That sounds fair," he admitted. "I reckon you-all do owe me twelve and a half cents." In the tilbury young Adams grinned and Colonel Lavasseur chuckled his appreciation. "The one time General Lafayette does [Pg 273] not pass free over your roads," he said, "is when he rides with the ruler of the country. In any other land he could not pay, for that very reason."

When the day of farewell came Washington streets were filled with men and women come out to see the last of the nation's guest. Stores and public buildings were closed and surrounding regions poured their crowds into the city. Everybody was sad. The cavalry escort which for a year had gathered at unholy hours to speed Lafayette on his way or to meet him on his return,

whenever he could be persuaded to take it into his confidence, met for the last time on such pleasant duty, taking its station near the White House, where as many citizens as possible had congregated. The hour set for departure was early afternoon. Officials had begun to gather before eleven o'clock. At noon the President appeared and took his place with them in a circle of chairs in the large vestibule, whose outside doors had been opened wide to permit all who could see to witness the public leave-taking.

After a brief interval of silence an inner door opened and Lafayette came forward with the President's son and the marshal of the District. Mr. Adams rose and made a short address. Lafayette attempted to reply, but was overcome with feeling, and it was several moments before he regained control of his voice. At the end of his little speech he cried, "God bless you!" and opened his arms wide with a gesture that included everybody. Then the crowd pressed forward and surrounded him until he retired to Mrs. Adams's sitting-room for the real farewell with the [Pg 274] President's household. After that Mr. Adams and he appeared upon the portico. Lafayette stepped into a waiting carriage. Flags dipped, cannon boomed, and the procession took up its march to the wharf where a little steamer waited to carry the travelers down the Potomac to the new government frigate Brandywine, on which they were to sail. At the river's edge he reviewed the militia of the District of Columbia, standing with some relatives of Washington's during this final ceremony. It is said that a cheer that was like a cry of bereavement rose from the crowd and mingled with the last boom of the military salute as the boat swung out into the stream.

The sun had dropped below the horizon when they neared Mount Vernon. The company was at dinner, everybody, even George Lafayette, working hard to overcome the sadness that threatened to engulf the company. The marshal came and bent over Lafayette, who pushed back his plate and bowed his head upon his breast. Then he rose and hurried to the deck for a parting look, at the home of his friend most of the company following him. The eyes of both father and son sought out the stately house set on a hill, which held so many associations for both of them. The younger man had found the beautiful place less well cared for than during the lifetime of its owner. Lafayette had returned to it only to visit a tomb.

The trees near the mansion were already beginning to blur in the short September twilight. Silently, with his head a little bent and a little turned to the right, as was his habit, he watched it [Pg 275] as the boat slipped by. The afterglow behind the house had deepened to molten gold when a bend in the river blotted it from his sight. He turned like a man coming out of a dream and hurried to his cabin without a word.

"Only then," says Lavasseur, "did he fully realize the sacrifice made to France in leaving America."

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XXIX
PRESIDENT—OR KING-MAKER?

The ocean was no kinder than usual to Lafayette on his homeward voyage and the reception he met in Havre lacked enthusiasm. Louis XVIII, who was king when he went away, had died during his absence and another brother of the ill-fated Louis XVI had mounted the throne, with the title of Charles X. He was no other than the Comte d'Artois who had presided over Lafayette's section in the Assembly of Notables and had been blind to his presence when the two reached the same inn at the same moment in Austria. His ministers were no more friendly to liberals of Lafayette's way of thinking than those of his brothers had been; but the liberals of France showed a distinct desire to notice the home-coming of Lafayette. Police could and did disperse young men on horseback who gathered under his windows at the inn in Rouen for a serenade; but there were other ways of paying respect. One took the form of a contest of poets "to celebrate a voyage which history will place among the great events of the century." There were eighty-three contestants, and Béranger, who had already paid his tribute, acted as a judge. In due time the [Pg 277] victor was ceremoniously given a prize. Lafayette must have been reminded of the burst of rhyme in America quite as much by contrast as by similarity.

His children came to meet him, which more than compensated for official neglect; and the welcome of several hundred neighbors when he reached La Grange convinced him that his local popularity was not impaired. On the whole he had reason to be well content. He brought home ruddy health, knowledge of the love in which he was held by twelve million warm-hearted Americans, and, a lesser consideration, doubtless, but one for which to be properly grateful, the prospect of speedily rebuilding the family fortunes. The grant of land voted by Congress was for thirty-six sections of six hundred and forty acres each, "east of and adjoining the city of Tallahassee in Leon County, Florida." So far as the writer has been able to learn, it never greatly benefited him or his heirs; but that fact was mercifully hidden in the future. In addition to the land there was a goodly sum of money to his credit in a Philadelphia bank.

He had stood the fatigues of the trip wonderfully. His cousin who went to see him soon after his return marveled to find him "big, fat, fresh, and joyous," showing not the least ill effects from having "gone several months practically without sleep, in addition to talking, writing, traveling, and drinking for all he was worth (*pour tout de bon*) ten hours out of the twenty-four." And he brought home from across the sea another gift: an ease in public speaking which astonished the [Pg 278]

friends who remembered the impatient scorn his silences roused in Marie Antoinette and how seldom he made speeches in the Assembly of Notables. During his command of the National Guard of Paris his utterances had of necessity been more frequent and more emphatic, but they betrayed none of the pleasure in addressing audiences that he now evidently felt. It was as though the friendliness of the American people had opened for him a new and delightful channel through which he could express his good will toward all the world. His voice lent itself well to public speaking; it could be soft or sonorous by turns, and he had the art of using plain and simple words. His physician, Doctor Cloquet, tells how some workmen were seen puzzling over a newspaper and criticizing it rather severely until they came to a speech by Lafayette. "Good!" said the reader, his face clearing. "At least we can understand what this man says. He speaks French."

Delighting workmen was not a gift to ingratiate him with a Bourbon king whose government was growing less popular every day. Lafayette retired to La Grange among its vineyards and orchards in the flat region of La Brie and took up life there again; cultivating his estate; carrying on an immense correspondence in that small, well-formed script of his which is yet so difficult to read; rejoicing in his family and receiving many visitors. It was a cosmopolitan procession that made its way up the Rozoy road to the château whose Norman towers had been old before the discovery of the New World. Some in that procession were old friends, members of the French nobility, who [Pg 279] came in spite of Lafayette's politics; others were complete strangers drawn to him from distant parts of the earth by these same opinions. French, English, Americans, Austrians, Algerian sheiks, black men from the West Indies—all were welcome.

In his study, an upper room in one of his five towers, he was literally in the center of his world. From a window overlooking the farm-yard he could direct the laborers by megaphone if he did not choose to go down among them. His "speaking-trumpet," as Charles Sumner called it, still lay on his desk when this American made his pious pilgrimage years after Lafayette's death. On the walls of the library and living-room hung relics that brought vividly to mind the history of two continents during momentous years. The American Declaration of Independence and the French Declaration of Rights hung side by side. A copy in bronze of Houdon's bust of Washington had the place of honor. A portrait of Bailly, a victim of the Revolution, hung over the fireplace in Lafayette's study. There were swords presented by French admirers and gifts from American cities and Indian chiefs. There was one room which was entered only by Lafayette and his children, and that but once a year, on the anniversary of his wife's death. It had been hers and was closed and kept just as she left it.

Her death marked a distinct period in his life. There were those who said that when she died Lafayette lost more than a loved companion; that he lost his conscience. In proof of this they [Pg 280] pointed out how in the later years of his life, after her steadying influence was removed, he veered about in the troubled sea of French politics, like a ship without a rudder. It is true only in a superficial sense; but it is true that he was never quite the same after she died.

For seven years immediately after this loss he took no active part in public affairs; partly because of his private sorrow, partly because of his opposition to the emperor. He had been disappointed in Napoleon and the latter distrusted him. "All the world is reformed," Napoleon grumbled, "with one exception. That is Lafayette. He has not receded from his position by so much as a hair's breadth. He is quiet now, but I tell you he is ready to begin all over again." George and Lafayette's son-in-law suffered from this displeasure in their army careers. "These Lafayettes cross my path everywhere!" Napoleon is said to have exclaimed when he found the names of the young men on an army list submitted for promotion, and promptly scratched them off.

Then fortune began to go against the emperor and invading armies came marching into France. Lafayette offered his sword and his experience to his country, but the advice he gave appeared too dangerous and revolutionary. What he desired was to force the abdication of Napoleon at that time. He was in Paris on March 31, 1814, when foreign soldiers entered the city. Powerless to do anything except grieve, he shut himself up in his room. Napoleon retired to Elba and the brother of Louis XVI was summoned to take the title of Louis XVIII. This was the prince Lafayette had [Pg 281] intentionally offended when he was scarcely more than a boy.

After he was made king, however, Lafayette wrote him a note of congratulation and appeared in uniform at his first royal audience wearing the white cockade. That certainly seemed like a change of front, but Lafayette thought it a necessity. "It had to be Napoleon or the Bourbons," he wrote Jefferson. "These are the only possible alternatives in a country where the idea of republican executive power is regarded as a synonym for excesses committed in its name." He accepted the government of Louis XVIII as more liberal than that of the emperor. Time and again after this he aided in the overthrow of one man or party, only to turn against the new power he had helped create. He even tried to work with Napoleon again after Louis XVIII fled to Ghent and Bonaparte returned from Elba to found his "new democratic empire," known as the Hundred Days. Waterloo came at the end of it; then Lafayette voiced the demand for the emperor's abdication and pressed it hard.

"What!" he cried in answer to Lucien Bonaparte's appeal to the Chamber of Deputies not to desert his brother, because that would be a violation of national honor, "you accuse us of failing in duty toward honor, toward Napoleon! Do you forget all we have done for him? The bones of our brothers and of our children cry aloud from the sands of Africa, from the banks of the Guadalquivir and the Tagus, from the shores of the Vistula and the glacial deserts of Russia. [Pg 282] During more than ten years three million Frenchmen have perished for this man who wants to-day to fight all Europe. We have done enough for him. Our duty now is to save our country!"

Lafayette was one of the deputation sent by the Chamber to thank the ex-emperor after his abdication, and admired Napoleon's self-possession during that trying scene. He thought Napoleon "played grandly the role necessity forced upon him." Lafayette was also one of the commission sent to negotiate with the victorious allies. It was there that he gave his spirited answer to the demand that Napoleon be given up. "I am astonished you should choose a prisoner of Olmütz as the person to whom to make that shameful proposal."

Louis XVIII returned to power and soon Lafayette was opposing him. So it went on for years. He said of himself that he was a man of institutions, not of dynasties; and that he valued first principles so much that he was very willing to compromise on matters of secondary importance. He cared nothing for apparent consistency and did whatever his erratic republican conscience dictated, without a thought of how it might look to others. He was a born optimist, but a poor judge of men; and in spite of repeated disappointments believed the promises of each new ruler who came along. Liberal representative government was of supreme importance in his eyes. If France was not yet ready for a president, she could have it under a king. Each administration that promised a step in this direction received his support, each lapse from it his censure. That [Pg 283] appears to be the key to the many shifting changes of his later life.

His popularity among the people waxed and waned. Usually it kept him his seat in the Chamber of Deputies. From 1818 to 1824 he represented the Sarthe; from 1825 to the close of his life the district of Meaux. It was in the interval between that he made his visit to America. He returned to find Charles X king. As that monarch lost popularity his own influence gained. Charles's ministers thought their sovereign showed ill-placed confidence and esteem when he freely acknowledged that this liberal leader had rendered services to his family that no true man could forget. "I know him well," Charles said. "We were born in the same year. We learned to mount a horse together at the riding academy at Versailles. He was a member of my division in the Assembly of Notables. The fact is neither of us has changed—he no more than I." That was just the point. Neither had changed. Charles X was a Bourbon to the bone, and Lafayette had come back from America with renewed health, replenished means, and all the revolutionary impetuosity of youth. He had not one atom of that willingness to put up with "things as they are" which grows upon many reformers as their hair turns gray. John Quincy Adams divined this and advised Lafayette to have nothing more to do with revolutions. "He is sixty-eight years old, but there is fire beneath the cinders," the President of the United States confided to his diary in August, 1825.

The cinders glowed each time Charles X emphasized his Bourbonism; and caught fire again when [Pg 284] the king made the Prince de Polignac prime minister in defiance of all liberal Frenchmen. That happened in 1829. Lafayette took occasion to visit Auvergne, the province of his birth, in company with his son, and was received with an enthusiasm rivaling his most popular days in America. The journey was prolonged farther than strict necessity required and did much to unite opposition to the king, for leaders of the liberal party profited by banquets and receptions in Lafayette's honor to spread their doctrines. More than one official who permitted such gatherings lost his job in consequence. Lafayette returned to La Grange; but in the following July, when the storm broke, he called for his horses and hurried to Paris. The Chamber of Deputies was not in session; he thought it ought to be; and he started as soon as he had read a copy of the Royal Ordinances which limited the freedom of the press and otherwise threatened the rights of the people.

Before he reached Paris blood had been shed and barricades had been thrown across the streets. Alighting from his carriage, he told the guards his name, dragged his stiff leg over the obstructions, and joined the little group of legislators who were striving to give this revolt the sanction of law. Having had more experience in revolutions than they—this was his fourth—he became their leader, and on July 29, 1830, found himself in the exact position he had occupied forty years before, commander of the National Guard and practically dictator of France. An [Pg 285] unwillingly admiring biographer says that he had learned no wisdom in the interval; that he "pursued the same course with the same want of success." This time he held the balance of power for only two days, but it was actual concentrated power while it lasted. It was he who sent back to Charles the stern answer that his offers of compromise came too late, that the royal family had ceased to reign. And it was he who had to choose the next form of government for France.

It was a dramatic choice. He was frankly ambitious; and quite within his reach lay the honor he would have preferred above all others. The choice lay between becoming himself President of France or, making a new king. It was put to him fairly and squarely: "If we have a republic you will be president. If a monarchy, the Duc d'Orléans will be king. Will you take the responsibility of a republic?" A man with "a canine appetite for fame" and nothing more could have found but one answer, and that not the answer Lafayette gave. In his few hours of power he had talked with men from all parts of France. These confirmed his belief that the country was not yet ready for the change to a republic. It would be better to have a king for a while longer, provided he was a liberal king, pledged to support a constitution. The Duc d'Orléans gave promise of being just such a king. He was son of the duke Lafayette had banished from Paris after the mob attacked Versailles in 1789; but he had fought on the liberal side. The people knew him as Philippe Égalité [Pg 286] —"Equality Philip"—and during recent years he had given evidence of being far more democratic than any other member of his family. To choose him would please liberals and conservatives alike, because he was next in line of succession after the sons of the deposed king.

Being by no means devoid of ambition, the duke was already in Paris, awaiting what might happen. The Deputies sent him an invitation to become lieutenant-general of the kingdom. Accounts vary as to the manner in which it was accepted. One has him walking with ostentatious

humility through the streets to the Hôtel de Ville, preceded by a drummer to call attention to the fact that he was walking and that he wore a tricolored scarf. Another has him on horseback without the scarf. It matters little; they agree that he was not very well received and that shouts of "No more Bourbons!" betrayed the suspicion that the duke's liberality, like the scarf, if he wore one, could be put on for the occasion. Accounts agree, too, that it was Lafayette who swung popular feeling to his side. He met him at the foot of the stairs and ascended with him to the Chamber of Deputies; and in answer to the coolness with which he was greeted and the evident hostility of the crowd outside, thrust a banner into the duke's hand and drew him to a balcony, where he publicly embraced him. Paris was easily moved by such spectacles. Carried away by the sight of the two enveloped in the folds of the same flag, and that the Tricolor, which had been forbidden for fifteen years, they burst into enthusiastic shouts of "Vive Lafayette!" "Long live the [Pg 287] Duc d'Orléans!" Chateaubriand says that "Lafayette's republican kiss made a king," and adds, "Singular result of the whole life of the hero of two worlds!"

MARQUIS DE LAFAYETTE AND LOUIS PHILIPPE
After the Revolution of 1830, it was Lafayette who swung popular feeling to the side of Louis Philippe

Louis Philippe, the new king, promised to approve certain very liberal measures known as the program of the Hôtel de Ville; Lafayette saw to that. The king even agreed in conversation with Lafayette that the United States had the best form of government on earth. He had spent some years in America and probably knew. He was called, enthusiastically or mockingly, as the case might be, the Bourgeois King; but the suspicion that his sympathies with the people were only assumed proved well founded. As time wore on it became manifest that he was as eager for arbitrary power as ever Louis XIV had been, without possessing Louis XIV's great ability. At first,

however, everything was rose-colored. A few days after the new king had ascended the throne Lafayette wrote: "The choice of the king is good. I thought so, and I think so still more since I know him and his family. Things will not go in the best possible way, but liberty has made great progress and will make still more. Besides, I have done what my conscience dictated; and if I have made a mistake, it was made in good faith."

That belief at least he could keep to the end. Two weeks after Louis Philippe became king Lafayette was appointed general in command of the National Guards of the kingdom, a position he held from August until Christmas. Then a new law abolished the office in effect but not in appearance. Lafayette sent the king his resignation and refused to reconsider it or even to talk [Pg 288] the matter over, as the king asked him to do. "No, my dear cousin, I understand my position," Lafayette wrote Philip de Ségur. "I know that I weigh like a nightmare on the Palais Royal; not on the king and his family, who are the best people in the world, and I love them tenderly, but on the people who surround them.... Without doubt I have been useful in his advancement. But if I sacrificed for him some of my personal convictions, it was only on the faith of the program of the Hôtel de Ville. I announced a king basing his reign on republican institutions. To that declaration, which the people seem to forget, I attach great importance; and it is that which the court does not forgive.... From all this the conclusion follows that I have become bothersome. I take my stand. I will retain the same friendliness for the royal family, but I have only one word of honor, and I cannot change my convictions."

So once again, near the close of his life, he found himself in opposition to a government he had helped to create.

XXX
SEVENTY-SIX YEARS YOUNG

[Pg 289]

Although he had resigned the office to which the king had appointed him, Lafayette continued to hold his place in the Chamber of Deputies; the office to which the people had elected him. Here he worked in behalf of the oppressed of his own and other nations; the Irish, for example, and the Poles, in whose struggles for liberty he was deeply interested.

When the Chamber of Deputies was in session he lived in Paris. Vacations were spent at La Grange, where he pursued the varied interests of his many-sided life, particularly enjoying, in his character of farmer, the triumph of his beasts and fruits in neighborhood fairs. In the winter of 1834 he was as usual in Paris, and on the 26th of January made the speech in behalf of Polish refugees then in France which proved to be his last public address. A few days later he attended the funeral of one of the Deputies, following the coffin on foot all the long distance from the house to the cemetery, as was the French custom, and standing on the damp ground through the delivery of the funeral discourses. The exposure and fatigue were too much for even his hardy old [Pg 290] body.

He was confined to his room for many weeks, but carried on a life as normal as possible, having his children around him, receiving visits of intimate friends, reading journals and new books, and dictating letters. One of these was to Andrew Jackson about his fight with the United States Senate. The inactivity of the sick-chamber was very irksome to him, and by the 9th of May he was so far improved that his physicians allowed him to go for a drive. Unfortunately a storm came up, the weather turned suddenly cold, and he suffered a chill, after which his condition became alarming. When it was known that he was a very sick man, friends and political enemies—he had no personal enemies—hastened to make inquiries and to offer condolences. Occasionally George Lafayette was able to answer that his father seemed better; but the improvement was not real. On the 20th of May he appeared to wake and to search for something on his breast. His son put into his hands the miniature of Adrienne that he always wore. He had strength to raise it to his lips, then sank into unconsciousness from which he passed into the sleep of death.

He was laid to rest in the cemetery of Picpus beside the wife who had awaited him there for more than a quarter of a century; but his grave was made in earth from an American battle-field that he had brought home with him after his last visit. Fifteen natives of Poland bore the coffin to the hearse. There were honorary pall-bearers representing the Chamber of Deputies, the National [Pg 291] Guard, the Army, the United States, Poland, and his own electoral district of Meaux. It was purely a military funeral. His party friends hotly declared that it was not a funeral at all, only a monster military parade. The government feared that his burial might be made the occasion for political demonstrations and ordered out such an immense number of troops that "the funeral car passed almost unseen in the midst of a battalion whose bayonets ... kept the people from rendering homage to their liberator." "He was there lifeless, but not without honor," wrote an indignant friend. "The French army surrounded him in his coffin as relentlessly as the Austrian army had held him a prisoner at Olmütz." Even the cemetery was guarded as if to withstand a siege. "Only the dead and his family might enter.... One would say that the government looked upon the mortal remains of this friend of liberty as a bit of prey which must not be allowed to escape." The liberals resented this fancied attitude of the government so bitterly that a cartoonist drew Louis Philippe rubbing his hands together with satisfaction as the procession passed and saying, gleefully, "Lafayette, you're caught, old man!" Only one incident occurred to justify so many precautions. In the Place Vendome a few score young men carrying a banner tried to break

through the line of soldiers, but were repulsed. Elsewhere people looked on in silence.

Lafayette's political friends complained that not one of the king's ministers was to be seen in the procession. The ministers answered that politics were out of place at the funeral of such a [Pg 292] distinguished man; and that the government rendered its homage regardless of party. While friends and foes wrangled thus over the coffin, Nature did her beautiful consoling best. Chateaubriand, standing in the silent crowd, saw the hearse stop a moment as it reached the top of a hill, and as it stopped a fugitive ray of sunlight came to rest upon it, then disappeared, gilding the guns and military trappings as it passed.

In spite of all this recrimination Lafayette's death passed comparatively unnoticed in France, for it occurred during a season of political turmoil and he had retired several years before from active affairs. Three thousand miles away the news produced far greater effect. He was mourned in America with universal sorrow. All over the country flags floated at half-mast. The House and Senate of the United States passed resolutions which were sent to George Lafayette, while the members wore crape upon their arms for thirty days and the Senate Chamber and Hall of Representatives remained draped in black until the end of the session. Our army and navy wore a tribute of crape upon their sleeves also, and on a given day every city in the Union heard the mourning salute of twenty-four guns, and after that at half-hour intervals until sunset the booming of a single cannon. "Touching honors," says a French writer, "rendered by a great people to the memory of a stranger who had served them sixty years before."

Lafayette lived to hold his great-grandchild in his arms, yet the period of his life seems very short [Pg 293] if measured by the changes that came about while he walked the earth. It was a time when old men dreamed dreams and young men saw visions, and during Lafayette's seventy-six years some of the visions became realities, some of his dreams he saw well on the way to fulfilment.

The French regard Lafayette's American career as only an episode in his life; while Americans are apt to forget that he had a career in France. He lived in three distinct periods of history, so different that they might have been centuries apart. He saw medieval Europe; the stormy period of change, and something very like the modern world we know to-day. Peasants knelt in the dust before the nobles, after he was a grown man; yet, in his old age, railroads and republicanism were established facts. "To have made for oneself a rôle in one or another of these periods suffices for a career," says his French biographer Donoil; "very few have had a career in all."

Lafayette played an important part in all three. Not only that; it was his strange good fortune to hold familiar converse with two of the greatest figures in history—the two very greatest of his own age—Washington and Napoleon. That he seems even measurably great in such company shows his true stature. Washington was his friend, who loved him like a son. Napoleon appears to have been one of the very few men Lafayette could never quite bring himself to trust, though Napoleon rendered him an immense service and did everything in his great power to win his [Pg 294] support.

If, as certain French historians say, Lafayette and Napoleon were dictators in turn, Lafayette's task was in a way the harder of the two; for Napoleon's turn came after the fury had spent itself and men were beginning to recover, sobered by their own excesses. It was in the mounting delirium of their fever that Lafayette's middle course brought upon him first distrust, then enmity from both sides.

If an Austrian prison had not kept him from destruction he must have perished during the Revolution, for he was never swerved by fear of personal danger. One of his eulogists asserts that he was "too noble to be shrewd." Another says that he judged men by his own feelings and was "misled by illusions honorable to himself." After his experience in America he undoubtedly expected to play a great part in the uprising in France, and, not realizing the strength of selfishness and passion, helped to let loose forces too powerful to control. One of his critics has asserted that he never made a wise or a correct decision; but critics and eulogists alike agree that he was upright and brave. They are justified in saying he was vain. His vanity took the form of believing himself right.

He was not self-seeking, and the lack of that quality caused him to be regarded with puzzled surprise by men who could not understand his willingness to step aside in favor of some one else, when he thought the cause demanded it. "It seemed so foolish," said Madame de Staël in her sympathetic portrait, "to prefer one's country to oneself... to look upon the human race, not as [Pg 295] cards to be played for one's own profit, but as an object of sacred devotion." Chateaubriand said that forty years had to pass after Lafayette's death before people were really convinced that he had been an idealist and not a fool. The fact was brought home to them, little by little, as records scattered to the four winds during the Revolution gradually saw the light of print; here a public document, there a private letter, there again a bit of personal reminiscence. Fitting together like a puzzle, they showed at last how one single idea had inspired all Lafayette's acts, even when they seemed most erratic. "Fortunately for him," says one of his French biographers, "it was the idea of the century—political liberty."

In his lifetime he arranged his papers for publication and dictated occasional bits of comment; but these were only fragmentary, as many of his papers were lost. Besides, it was a task for which he had no great zest. He said it seemed ungracious to accuse men of persecuting him who afterward died for the very principles he upheld. He was sure history would accord to each his just deserts. Madame de Staël said that his belief in the final triumph of liberty was as strong as

the belief of a pious man in a future life. He said himself that liberty was to him a love, a religion, a "geometric certainty."

To his last day he pursued this ideal of his wherever it led him. His failure to learn worldly wisdom irritated many. It was incongruous, like the contrast between his polished old-time manners and the rash utterances that fell from his lips. It must be confessed that in his latter [Pg 296] years he was not always clear-sighted as to the means he employed. Once he descended to methods better suited to Italy in the Middle Ages than to political reformers in 1822. There were times, too, when he seemed bent on self-destruction. Those near him were convinced that he would like to lose his life provided he could thereby add to the luster of his reputation. "I have lived long," was his answer to intimate friends who gave him counsels of prudence. "It seems to me that it would be quite fitting to end my career upon the scaffold, a sacrifice to liberty."

Napoleon's estimate of him was short and severe. "Lafayette was another of the fools; he was not cut out for the great rôle he wanted to play." When some one ventured to remind the ex-emperor of Lafayette's spirited refusal to give him up on the demand of the allied powers, Napoleon answered dryly that he was not attacking Lafayette's sentiments or his good intentions, but was merely complaining of the mess he made of things. Lafayette's estimate of the former emperor was even more severe. He thought Napoleon's really glorious title had been "Soldier of the Revolution" and that the crown was for him "a degradation." American history would have been the loser if either of these men had not lived. Lafayette helped win us our country. By selling us Louisiana, Napoleon almost doubled its extent. Napoleon's heart rarely led him into trouble; personal ambition seldom led Lafayette far astray. The two can be contrasted, but not compared. [Pg 297] There is food for thought in the fact that a statue of Lafayette, modeled by an American sculptor and given by five million American schoolchildren to France, should have been erected in the Louvre on the spot once set apart for a statue of the French emperor.

Madame de Staël thought Lafayette more like the English and Americans than like the French, even in his personal appearance. Another French estimate, that he had "a cold manner, masking concentrated enthusiasm," is quite in keeping with American character, as was his incorrigible dash of optimism. It was to America, a country of wide spaces and few inhabitants, that he followed his vision of liberty in early manhood, and there where the play and interplay of selfish interests was far less complicated than in France he saw it become a practical reality. Later he championed many noble causes in many parts of the world. Next to political freedom and as a necessary part of it, he had at heart the emancipation of the negroes. This he tried himself to put into practice. He was shocked when he returned to our country in 1824 to find how much race prejudice had increased. He remembered that black soldiers and white messed together during the American Revolution.

Religious liberty for Protestants, civil rights for Jews and Protestants; suppression of the infamous *lettres de cachet*; trial by jury; a revision of French criminal law to allow the accused the privilege of counsel, of confronting witnesses, and of free communication with his family—benefits, by the way, which were all enjoyed by the accused in the state trials which took place [Pg 298] while Lafayette was in power; abolition of the death penalty and freedom of the press were some of the measures most ardently championed by this believer in liberty and law.

He remained a man of visions to the end. After his death one of the men who wrote in praise of him said that if he had lived during the Middle Ages he would have been the founder of a great religious order, one which had a profound moral truth as its guiding principle. Another compared him to a Knight of the Round Table fighting for the lady of his adoration, whose name was Liberty. Possibly no knight-errant, ancient or modern, can seem altogether sane, much less prudent, to the average unimaginative dweller in this workaday world. Yet what would the workaday world be without its knights-errant of the past; the good their knight-errantry has already accomplished; the courage it inspires for to-day; the promise it gives us for the future?

If we dwell on the few times that Lafayette did not choose wisely, the times when the warm impulses of his heart would have carried farther had his head taken a more masterful part in directing his acts, we are tempted to echo the criticism made upon the unfortunate Louis XVI, "What a pity his talents did not equal his virtues!" But when we think of the generous, optimistic spirit of Lafayette, and how that spirit remained unchanged through good fortune and ill from boyhood to old age; of his fearless devotion to right as he saw the right; of his charm, and of the [Pg 299] great debt our country owes him, his mistakes fade away altogether and we see only a very gallant, inspiring figure uniting the Old World with the New.

There can be no better eulogy for this brave gentleman, beloved of Washington, than the few words he wrote in all simplicity after he had been called upon to make his great decision between Louis Philippe and himself:

"I did as my conscience dictated. If I was mistaken, the mistake was made in good faith."

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THE END

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