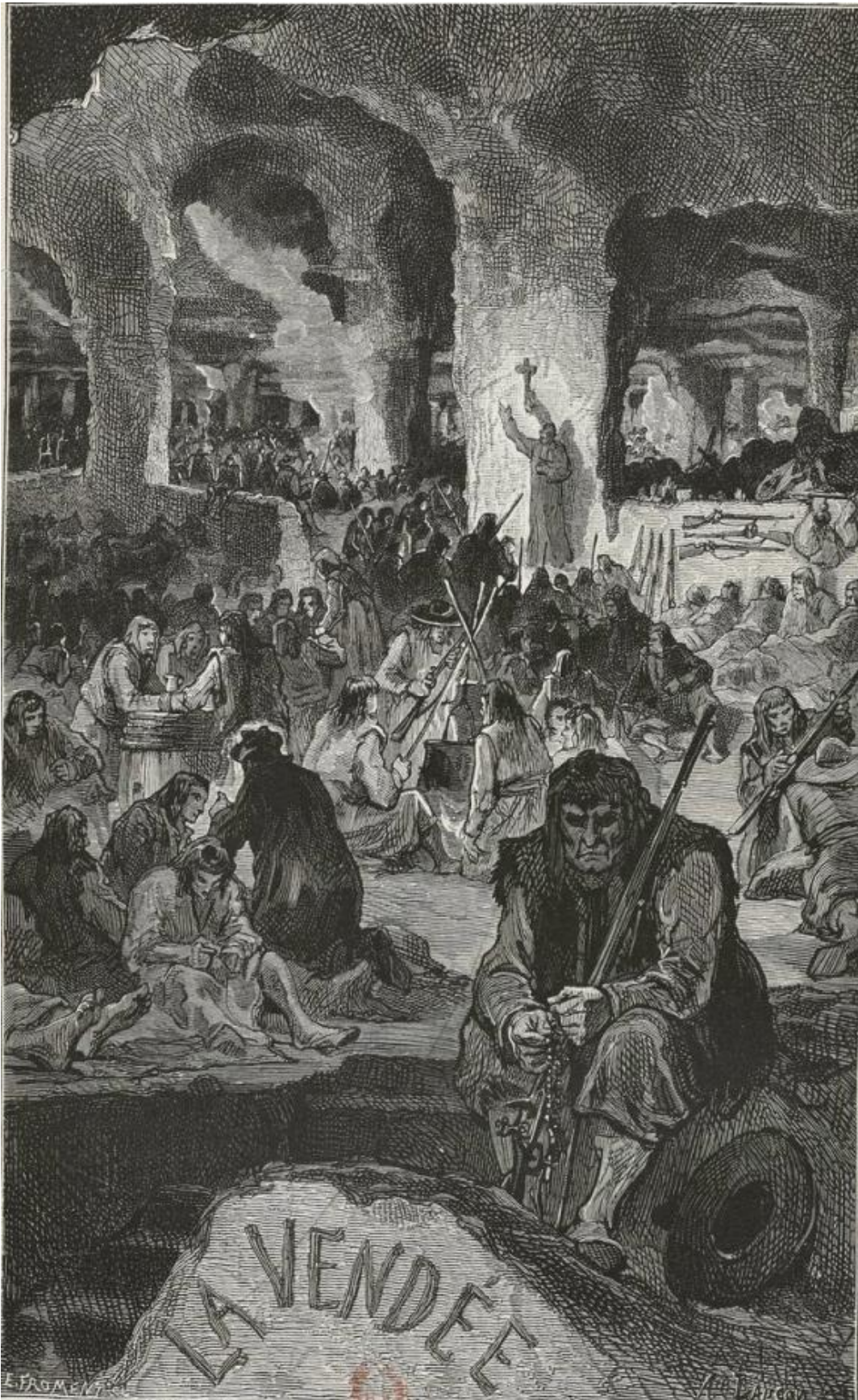


PART III.

IN THE VENDÉE.

BOOK I.

THE VENDÉE.



I.

THE FORESTS.



There were in Brittany at that time seven much-dreaded forests. The Vendean war was a rebellion among priests, and the forest was their auxiliary. The spirits of darkness help one another.

The seven Black Forests of Brittany were the forest of Fougères, which bars the passage between Dol and Avranches; the forest of Princé, eight miles in circumference; the forest of Paimpont, abounding in ravines and brooks, and almost inaccessible in the direction of Baignon, with an easy retreat towards Concornet, which was a Royalist town; the forest of Rennes, whence could be heard the tocsin of the Republican parishes, always numerous in the neighborhood of cities,—there it was that Puitsaye lost Focard; the forest of Machecoul, where Charette dwelt like a wild beast; the forest of La Garnache, belonging to the Trémoilles, the Gauvains, and the Rohans; and the forest of Brocéliande, that had been appropriated by the fairies.

One nobleman in Brittany was called the *Seigneur des Sept-Forêts*, and he was the Viscount de Fontenay, a Breton prince.

For the Breton prince was a creation quite distinct from the French prince. The Rohans were Breton princes. Gamier de Saintes, in his report to the Convention of the 15th Nivôse, year II., thus describes the Prince de Talmont,—“That Capet of brigands, the sovereign of Maine and Normandy.”

The events that transpired in Breton forests from 1792 to 1800 would form a history in themselves, blending like a legend with the stupendous affair of the Vendée.

There is truth in legend as well as in history, but the nature of legendary truth differs from that of historic truth. The former may be invention; but its result is reality. Both, however, have the same aim, inasmuch as each strives to depict the eternal type of mankind under the transitory specimen.

The Vendée cannot be fully understood unless legend is allowed to supplement history; history must present the total effect, legend describe the details.

We cannot refuse to acknowledge that the Vendée is well worth the trouble, for it is a prodigy.

That War of the Ignorant, so dull and yet so splendid, so detestable and at the same time so magnificent, was at once the despair and the pride of the nation. In the act of wounding France, the Vendée covered her with glory. There are times when human society presents enigmas whose meaning becomes evident to the wise, while for the ignorant it remains obscure, signifying nothing more than violence and barbarism. A philosopher is slow to accuse. He takes into consideration the disturbances caused by these problems, which never pass without casting a shadow like a cloud.

He who would understand the Vendée must picture the antagonism of the French Revolution on the one hand, and the Breton peasant on the other.

Face to face with these unparalleled events,—this tremendous promise of every advantage at once, this fit of rage on the part of civilization, this excess of infuriated progress, to be accompanied by an improvement that could neither be measured nor understood,—stands this serious and peculiar savage, this man with the keen eyes and long hair, who lives on milk and chestnuts; whose ideas are bounded by his roof, by his hedge, and by his ditch; who can distinguish each village by the sound of its bells; who drinks nothing but water, yet wears a leather waistcoat worked with silken arabesques,—a man uncultivated, dressed in embroidered garments, who tattoos his clothes as his ancestors the Celts used to tattoo their faces; who respects his master in the person of his executioner; who speaks a dead language, which is equivalent to keeping his mind in a tomb, goading his oxen, sharpening his scythe, hoeing his black grain, kneading his buckwheat cake; reverencing, first his plough, and secondly his grandmother; believing in the Blessed Virgin, and in the White Lady no less; worshipping before the altar, and also before the tall mysterious stone set up in the midst of the moor,—a laborer in the plain, a fisherman on the coast, a poacher in the thicket, devoted to his kings, his priests, his lords, and to his very lice; a man of

pensive mood, often standing motionless for hours on the wide deserted shore, listening gloomily to the sounding sea.

Is it then strange that this blind man failed to appreciate the light?

II.

MEN.

The peasant has confidence in the field that nourishes him, no less than in the wood that serves to hide him. It is no easy matter to conceive an idea of the forests of Brittany. They were cities in themselves. Nothing could be more secret, more silent, or more impenetrable than those tangled thickets of briars and branches offering shelter, repose, and silence. No solitude could seem more death-like and sepulchral; if one could, like a flash of lightning, have felled the entire forest at a single stroke, a swarm of human beings would have stood forth revealed within those shades.

Concealed on the outside by coverings of stones and branches were wells, round and narrow, sinking at first vertically and then horizontally, widening under the ground like funnels, and ending in dark chambers. Wells like these discovered by Westermann in Brittany were also found in Egypt by Cambyses,—with this difference, that while the Egyptian caves in the desert held dead men only, those in the forests of Brittany contained living human beings. One of the wildest glades in the woods of Misdon, intersected by subterranean passages and cells, wherein a mysterious population moved to and fro, was called "la Grande Ville." Another glade, just as deserted above ground, and no less populous below, was called "la Place Royale."

This subterranean life in Brittany had existed from time immemorial. Man had there sought refuge from his brother man. Hence these hiding-places, like the dens of reptiles, hollowed out under the trees. They dated from the times of the Druids, and some of the crypts were as old as the dolmens. All the evil spirits of legend and the monsters of history passed over this gloomy land,—Teutates, Cæsar, Hoël, Néomène, Geoffrey of England, Alain of the iron glove, Pierre Mauclerc, the French house of Blois and the English house of Montfort, kings and dukes, the nine barons of Brittany, the judges of the Great Days, the counts of Nantes who wrangled with the counts of Rennes, highwaymen, banditti, Free Lances, René II., the Viscount de Rohan, the king's governors, the "good Duke de Chaulnes" who hung the peasants under the windows of Madame de Sévigné, the seignorial butcheries in the fifteenth century, religious wars in the sixteenth and seventeenth, and the thirty thousand dogs trained to hunt men in the eighteenth. During this wild trampling, the people made up their

minds that it would be better for them to disappear. One after the other, the troglodytes seeking to escape from the Celts, the Celts from the Romans, the Bretons from the Normans, the Huguenots from the Catholics, and the smugglers from the excise officers, had sought refuge first in the forests, then underground. It is thus that tyranny forces the nations to the last resource of the hunted beast. For two thousand years had despotism, in all its varied forms,—of conquest, vassalage, fanaticism, and taxation,—hunted down this unfortunate and distracted Brittany; it was like an inexorable *battue* constantly changing its method of attack. Men disappeared underground. While that terror which is a sort of rage was brooding in human souls, and the dens in the forests were in waiting for them, the French Republic sprang into existence. Brittany, thinking this compulsory deliverance but a new form of oppression, broke into open rebellion,—a mistake usually made by enslaved peoples.

III.

CONNIVANCE OF MEN AND FORESTS.

Thus the tragic forests of Brittany once more resumed their ancient rôle of servant and accomplice to revolution.

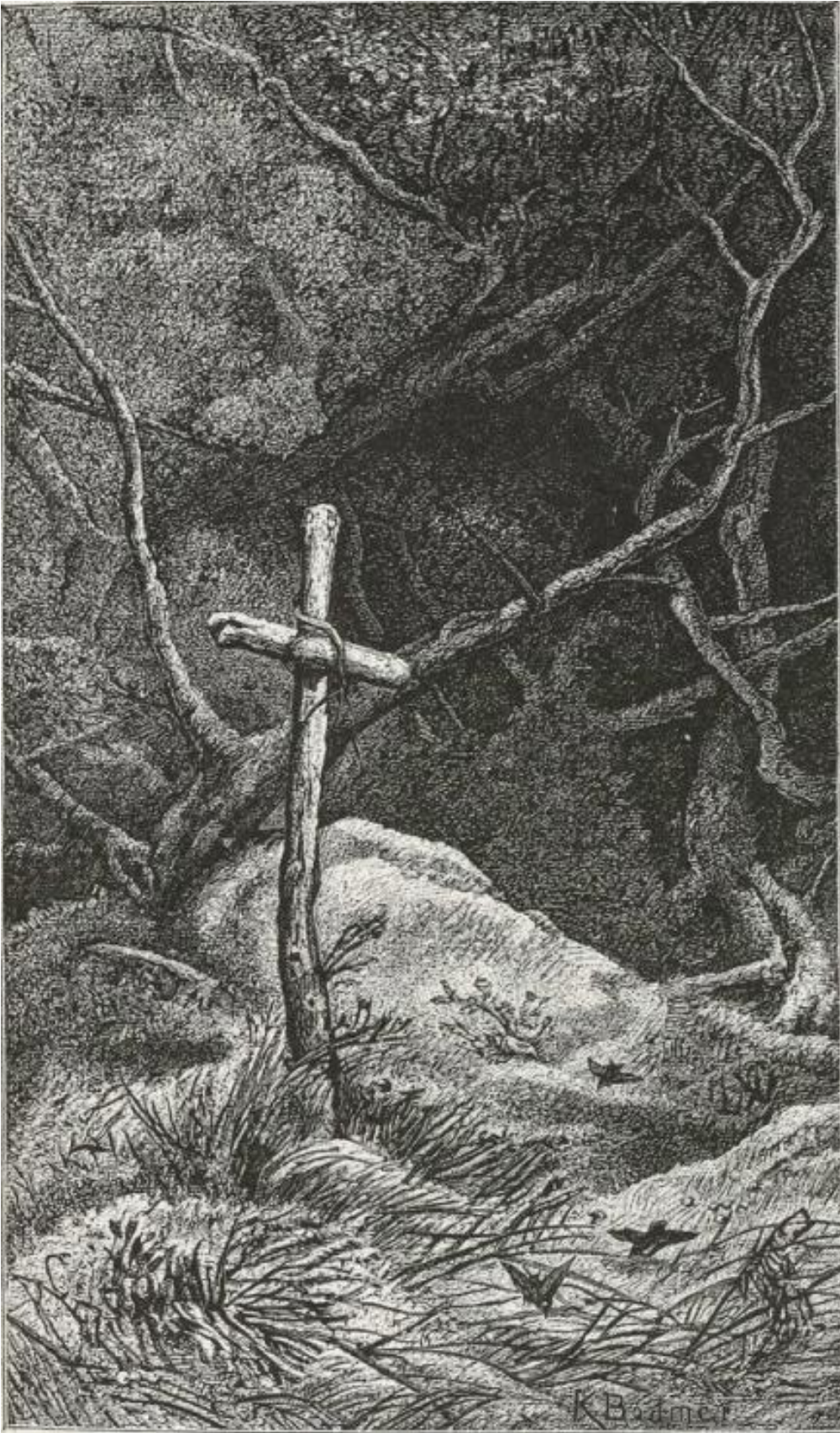
The subsoil of such a forest was like a madrepore pierced and intersected in all directions by a secret labyrinth of mines, cells, and galleries. Each of these hidden cells was large enough to shelter five or six men; the only difficulty was in breathing. Certain mysterious ciphers have been preserved that give us a clew to this powerful organization of the peasant rebellion. In Ille-et-Vilaine, in the forest of Pertre, where the Prince de Talmont had taken refuge, not a breath could be heard, not a trace of human life was visible; and yet Focard had there mustered six thousand men. In Morbihan, in the forest of Meulac, not a man of all the eight thousand there was to be seen. These two forests, le Pertre and Meulac, are not, however, to be reckoned among the great Breton forests. It would have been dangerous walking over their explosive soil. These treacherous copses, with their multitudes of combatants lurking in a sort of subterranean labyrinth, were like great black sponges, from which, beneath the pressure of Revolution's giant foot, civil war gushed forth. Invisible battalions were lying in wait. This army, unknown to the world, wound its way along under the feet of the Republican armies, leaping out of the ground at times in vast numbers, and disappearing as suddenly,—possessing the power of vanishing at will no less than the gift of ubiquity. It was like the descending avalanche that leaves but a cloud of dust behind, colossi with a marvellous genius for contraction, giants in warfare, dwarfs in flight, jaguars with the habits of moles. Moreover, there were woods

as well as forests. As the village ranks below the city, so the woods, bear a similar relation to the forests, which they serve to connect after the fashion of a labyrinth. Old castles, fortresses once upon a time, hamlets that had been camps, farms covered with ambushes and snares, divided by ditches and fenced in by trees, formed the meshes of the net in which the Republican armies were caught.

All this was called the Bocage.

There was the wood of Misdon, with a pond in its midst, held by Jean Chouan; the wood of Gennes, held by Taillefer; the wood of La Huisserie, held by Gouge-le-Bruant; the wood of La Charnie, held by Courtillé-le-Bâtard, called the apostle Saint Paul, chief of the camp of the Vache-Noire; the wood of Burgault, in possession of that enigmatical Monsieur Jacques, who was to meet with a mysterious death in the vault of Juvardeil; the wood of Charreau, where Pimousse and Petit-Prince, when attacked by the garrison of Châteauneuf, captured the grenadiers from the ranks of the Republicans in a hand-to-hand encounter; the wood of La Heureuserie, which witnessed the defeat of the military post of Longue-Faye; the wood of L'Aulne, whence the road between Rennes and Laval could be watched; the wood of La Gravelle, won by a Prince of La Tremoille in a bowling-match; the wood of Lorges in the Côtes-du-Nord, where Charles de Boishardy succeeded Bernard de Villeneuve; the wood of Bagnard, near Fontenay, where Lescure offered battle to Chalbos,—a challenge accepted by the latter although they were five to one against him; the wood of La Durondais, over which Alain le Redru and Hérispoux, sons of Charles the Bald, quarrelled in former times; the wood of Croque-loup, on the edge of that moor where Coupereau used to shear the prisoners; the wood of La Croix-Bataille, witness to the Homeric insults hurled against each other by Jambe d'Argent and Morière; the wood of La Saudraie, which the reader will remember was reconnoitred by the Paris battalion; and many others besides.

In several of these forests and woods there were not only subterranean villages grouped around the burrow-like headquarters of the chief, but actual hamlets composed of low cabins hidden under the trees in such numbers that the forest was often filled with them. Sometimes the smoke betrayed their presence. Two among these hamlets in the forest of Misdon have become famous,—Lorrière, near Létang, and the group of huts called La Rue-de-Bau, in the direction of Saint-Ouen-les-Toits.



The women lived in the huts, and the men in the caves. The galleries of the fairies and the old Celtic mines were utilized for purposes of warfare. Food was conveyed to the dwellers underground, and some there were who, forgotten, died of hunger. They, however, were awkward fellows, who had not sense enough to uncover their wells. This cover, usually made of moss and branches, and arranged so skilfully that it was impossible to distinguish it on the outside from the surrounding grass, was yet easily opened and closed from the inside. A den like this, known under the name of "la loge," was hollowed out with great care, and the earth taken therefrom thrown into some neighboring pond. The inside walls and the floor were afterwards lined with ferns and moss. It was fairly comfortable, save for the lack of light, fire, bread, and air.

To rise from underground and appear among the living without due precaution, possibly to disinter themselves at an inappropriate moment, would be a serious business. They might chance to encounter an army on the march. Those were dangerous woods, snares with a double trap. The Blues dared not enter, and the Whites dared not come out.

IV.

THEIR LIFE UNDER GROUND.

The men, wearied of living in these beasts' lairs, would sometimes venture to come out by night and dance on the neighboring moor; or else they said prayers, by way of killing time. "Jean Chouan made us say our beads from morning till night," says Bourdoiseau.

It was almost impossible, when the season arrived, to prevent the men of Bas-Maine from going to the Fête de la Gerbe. They clung to their own ideas. Tranche-Montagne says that Denys disguised himself as a woman, to go to the play at Laval; after which he returned to his den.

All at once they would rush out in search of death, changing one tomb for another.

Sometimes they would lift the cover of their grave and listen for any chance sounds of battle in the distance, following it with their ears, guided by the steady fire of the Republicans and the intermittent shots of the Royalists. When the platoon-firing suddenly ceased, they knew that the Royalists had lost the day; but if the scattering shots continued, receding into the distance, it was a sign that the victory was theirs.

The Whites always pursued; the Blues never did so, because the country was against them.

These underground belligerents were wonderfully well-informed. Nothing could be more rapid or more mysterious than their means of communication. The bridges and wagons had all been destroyed, yet they found means to keep one another informed of all that went on, and to send timely warning. Messenger-stations of danger were established from forest to forest, from village to village, from hut to hut, from bush to bush.

A stupid-looking peasant might be seen passing along; he carried despatches in his hollow staff.

Furnished by Boétidoux, a former constituent, with the modern Republican passport, in which a blank space is left for the name, bundles of which were in the possession of that traitor, they were enabled to travel from one end of Brittany to the other.

It was impossible to take them by surprise. Puyssaye^[1] states that "secrets confided to upwards of four thousand individuals have been religiously kept."

It seemed as though this quadrilateral, closed on the south by the line from Sables to Thouars, on the east by that from Thouars to Saumur as well as by the river of Thoué, on the north by the Loire, and on the west by the ocean, possessed a system of nerves in common, and that no single part of the ground could stir without shaking the whole. In the twinkling of an eye, they learned in Luçon what was going on in Noirmoutier, and the camp of La Loué knew what was passing in the camp La Croix-Morineau. It was as if the birds had carried the news. On the 7th Messidor, in the year III., Hoche wrote: "One might have supposed they had telegraphs."

They formed clans, as in Scotland, and each parish had its own captain. My father fought in this war, and I know whereof I am speaking.

V.

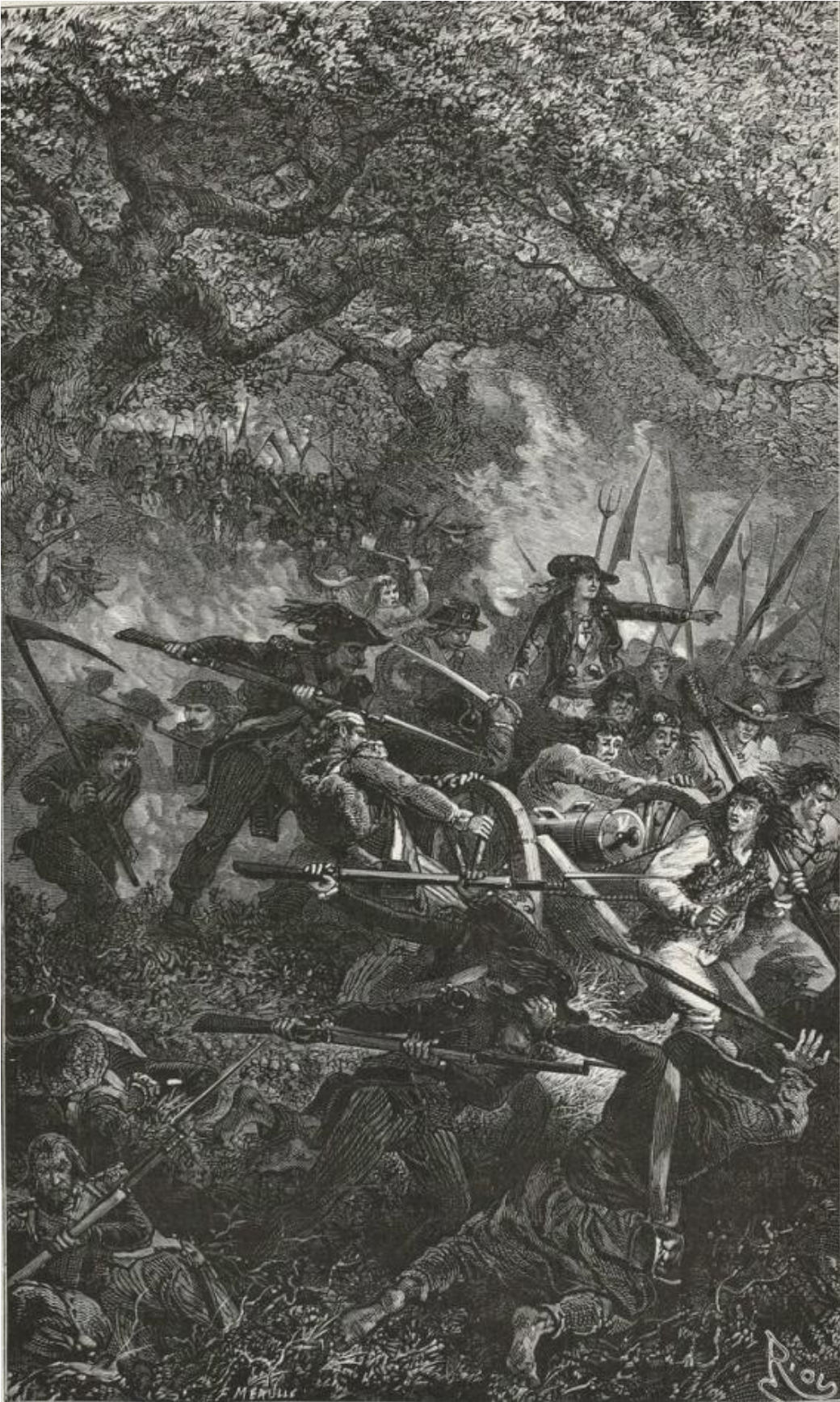
THEIR LIFE IN WARFARE.



Many of them had nothing but pikes; but good hunting-rifles were plentiful, and no marksmen were more expert than the poachers of the Bocage and the smugglers of Loroux. They were eccentric, terrible, and intrepid fighters. The proclamation of a decree to levy three hundred thousand men was the signal for ringing the tocsin in six hundred villages. The flames burst forth in all directions at once. Poitou and the Anjou revolted on the same day. Let us remark that the first rumbling was heard on the 8th of July, 1792, a month previous to the 10th of August, on the moor of Kerbader. Alain Redeler, whose name is now forgotten, was the forerunner of La Rochejaquelein and Jean Chouan. The Royalists forced all able-bodied men to march, under penalty of death. They confiscated harnesses, wagons, and provisions. Sapinaud at once assembled three thousand soldiers, Cathelineau ten thousand, Stofflet twenty thousand, and Charette took possession of Noirmoutier. The Viscount de Scépeaux roused the Haut-Anjou, the Chevalier de Dieuzie the Entre-Vilaine-et-Loire, Tristan

l'Hermite the Bas-Maine, the barber Gaston the city of Guéméné, and the Abbé Bernier all the others.

It required but little to excite the masses. A great black cat was placed in the tabernacle of a priest who had taken the civil oath,—a "priest-juror," as he was called,—whence it suddenly leaped forth in the middle of the Mass. "It's the Devil!" cried the peasants, and a whole district rose in revolt. Sometimes flames would be seen issuing from the confessionals. For assailing the Blues and crossing the ravines, they had sticks fifteen feet long, called the "ferte,"—a weapon of defence, which was likewise available for flight. In the very heat of the conflict, when the peasants were attacking the Republican squares, if they chanced to see on the battlefield a cross or a chapel, all fell on their knees and said their prayers under the fire of the enemy; and after finishing the rosary, those who had not been killed rushed upon the enemy. Alas! what giants were these! They loaded their muskets on the run; that was their special talent. They could be made to believe anything. Their priests showed them other priests whose necks had been reddened by a tightly drawn cord, saying to them: "These are the guillotined come to life again." They had their fits of chivalrous emotion; they paid military honors to Fesque, a Republican standard-bearer, who had allowed himself to be sabred without once losing hold of his banner. These peasants were at times derisive; they called the married Republican priests "sans-calottes devenus sans-culottes."^[2] At first they stood in awe of the cannon; but after a while they dashed upon them with no other weapons than their sticks, and captured several. The first one they took was a fine bronze cannon, which they baptized "le Missionnaire;" another gun, dating from the times of the Catholic wars, and which had Richelieu's arms and an image of the Virgin engraved upon it, they named Marie-Jeanne. When they lost Fontenay, they lost Marie-Jeanne, around which six hundred peasants fell fighting with unflinching courage.



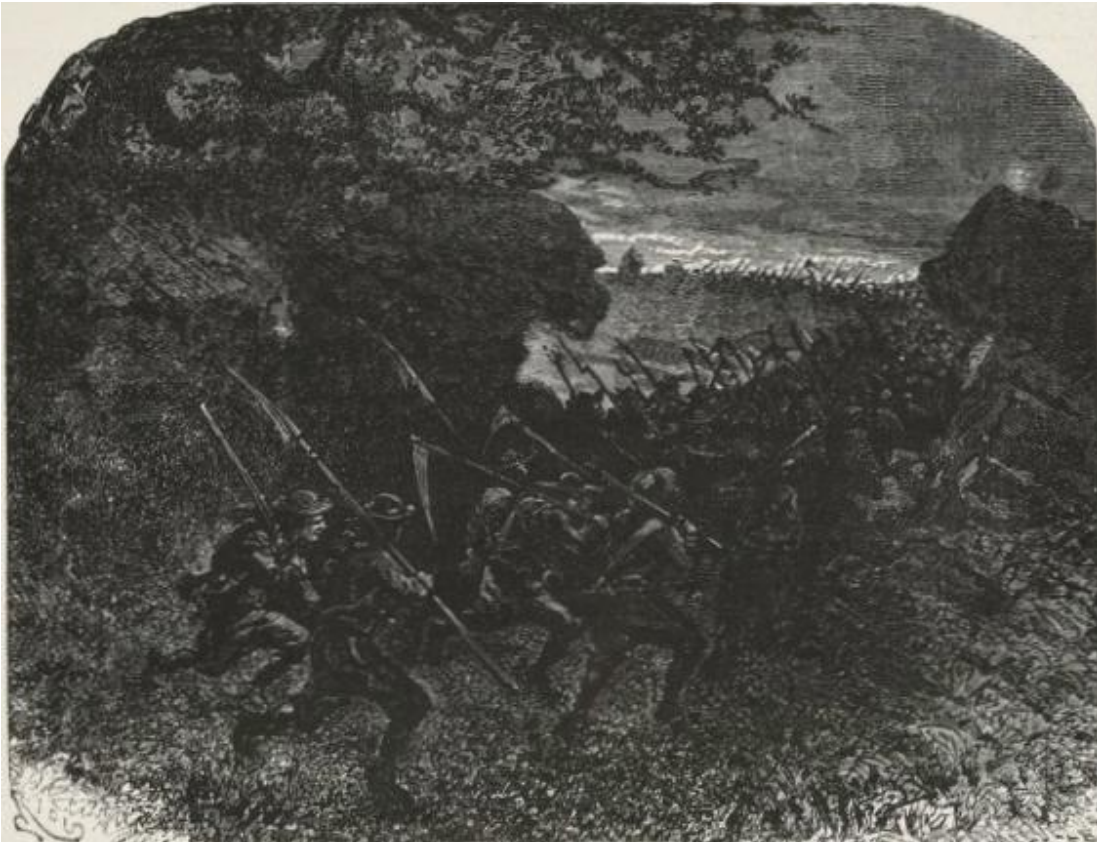
Later, they recaptured Fontenay in order to recover Marie-Jeanne, which they brought back under the fleur-de-lis flag, covering it with flowers, and making the women who passed by kiss it. But two cannon were insufficient. It was Stofflet who had captured Marie-Jeanne; Cathelineau, envying him, left Pin-en-Mange, attacked Jallais, and took possession of a third one. Forest fell on Saint-Florent and captured a fourth. Two other commanders, Chouppes and Saint-Paul, were still more successful. They manufactured imitation-cannon from the trunks of trees, using manikins for gunners; and with this artillery, over which they made merry, they forced the Blues to retreat to Mareuil. At that time they were in the height of their glory. Later, when Chalbos defeated La Marsonnière, the peasants left behind them on the dishonored battlefield two cannon, bearing the arms of England. At that time the French princes were paid by England, who, as Nantiat writes on the 10th of May, 1794, "remitted funds to Monseigneur because Mr. Pitt was told that it was the proper thing to do." Mellinet, in a report of the 31st of March, says: "The cry of the rebels is, 'Long live the English!'" The peasants tarried for purposes of pillage, for these devotees were thieves. Savages have their vices, and it is to these that civilization appeals. Puyssaye says: "Several times I have saved the town of Plélan from pillage." And again he says that he refrained from entering Montfort: "I made a circuit in order to avoid the sacking of the houses of the Jacobins."^[3] They pillaged Cholet; they sacked Chalans; passing by Granville, they robbed Ville-Dieu. They called the country-people who joined the Blues the "Jacobin herd," and exterminated them more fiercely than they did their other foes. They enjoyed carnage like soldiers, and revelled in massacre like brigands. To shoot the *patauds* was their delight. They called it breaking their fast.

At Fontenay one of their priests, named Barbotin, killed an old man with a blow from his sabre. At Saint-Germain-sur-Ille ^[4] one of their captains, a nobleman, shot the solicitor of the Commune, and took his watch. At Machecoul for the space of five weeks they made a practice of slaughtering the Republicans at the rate of thirty a day. Each string of thirty they called a rosary. Behind this row of men there was a trench prepared, into which the men fell back as they were shot; and when, as sometimes happened, a man was still alive, he was buried as if he were dead. Such acts have been witnessed in our own times. Joubert, president of the district, had his wrists sawed off. They had handcuffs for the Blues made expressly to cut the flesh. They slaughtered them in the public squares, sounding the halloo. Charette, who signed himself, "Fraternity, Chevalier Charette," and who, like Marat, wore a handkerchief knotted around his brows, burned the city of Pornic, with the inhabitants in their dwellings.

Meanwhile Carrier was frightful. Terror answered unto terror. The Breton rebel looked very much like the Greek insurgent, clad as he was in a short jacket, with a gun slung across his shoulders, leggings, wide trousers of a material not unlike fustian. The lads resembled a Greek klepht. Henri de la Rochejaquelein went into this war at the age of twenty-one, armed with a pair of pistols and a stick. There were one hundred and fifty-four divisions in the Vendean army. They laid regular sieges. The city of Bressuire was invested by them for three days. On a Good Friday ten thousand peasants bombarded the city of des Sables with red-hot cannon-balls. They succeeded in destroying in one day the fourteen Republican cantonments from Montigné to Courbeveilles. On the high wall at Thouars the following astonishing dialogue was heard between La Rochejaquelein and a lad: "Fellow!" "Here I am."—"Lend me your shoulders to climb up on." "Take them."—"Give me your gun." "Here it is." And La Rochejaquelein leaped into the city, and thus without the aid of scaling-ladders they captured the very towers once besieged by Duguesclin. They valued a cartridge far beyond a gold louis. They burst into tears whenever they lost sight of their village belfry. To run away seemed to them the simplest affair in the world. At such times their leaders would exclaim, "Throw away your sabots, but keep your guns!" When munitions failed, they said their beads, and proceeded to take the powder from the caissons of the Republican artillery; and afterwards d'Elbée demanded powder from the English. On the approach of the enemy they concealed their wounded in the tall grain, or among the brakes, and came back for them after the engagement was over. They wore no uniform, and their clothing was falling to pieces. Noblemen as well as peasants wore any rags that came to hand. Roger Mouliniers was arrayed in a turban and dolman taken from the ward-robe of the Théâtre de La Flèche; the Chevalier de Beauvilliers had a barrister's gown, and a lady's bonnet over a woollen cap. All wore the white belt and scarf. The different grades were indicated by a knot. Stofflet wore a red knot, La Rochejaquelein a black one. Wimpfen, a semi-Girondist, and who moreover had never been out of Normandy, wore the armllets of the Carabots of Caen.

They had women in their ranks,—Madame de Lescure, who afterwards became Madame de la Rochejaquelein; Thérèse de Mollien, mistress of La Rouarie, she who burned the list of parishes; Madame de la Rochefoucauld, young and beautiful, who sabre in hand rallied the peasants at the foot of the Tower of the Château Puy-Rousseau; and Antoinette Adams, styled the Chevalier Adams, so brave that when captured she was shot standing, out of respect for her courage. This epic period was a cruel one. Men behaved like maniacs. Madame de Lescure deliberately walked her horse over the Republicans who lay disabled on the battle-ground. She said they were dead, but very possibly they may have been only wounded. There was occasionally a

traitor among the men, but never among the women. It is true, Mademoiselle Fleury of the French Theatre forsook La Rouarie for Marat; but that was for love's sake. The commanders were often as ignorant as the soldiers. M. de Sapinaud could not spell correctly; he wrote, "*Nous orions de notre cauté.*"



The leaders hated one another. The captains of the Marais cried, "Down with the Mountaineers!" Their cavalry was few in numbers, and difficult to form. Puyssaye writes: "A man who would cheerfully give me his two sons grows cool when I ask for one of his horses." Poles, pitchforks, scythes, muskets, old and new, poacher's knives, spits, iron-pointed cud-gels studded with nails,—such were their weapons. Some carried a cross made of two human bones. They rushed to the attack with shouts, springing up at once from all quarters,—from woods, hills, underbrush, and hollow roads,—ranging themselves in a circle, killing, exterminating, striking terror, and then disappearing. Whenever they passed a Republican town they cut down the liberty-pole, set it on fire, and forming in a circle, danced around it. All their activity was displayed by night. The rule of the Vendean is to be always unexpected. They would

march fifteen leagues in utter silence, without so much as stirring a blade of grass. At night, their chiefs having determined in a council of war at what point the Republican posts were to be surprised the next day, they loaded their muskets, mumbled their prayers, and taking off their sabots, filed through the woods in long columns, barefoot across the heather and moss, noiseless, without uttering a sound or drawing a breath, like a procession of cats in the darkness.

VI.

THE SOUL OF THE EARTH PASSES INTO MAN.

The number of the rebels in the Vendée, including men, women, and children, cannot be estimated at less than five hundred thousand. Tuffin de la Rouarie states the sum total of the combatants to have been half a million.

The federalists helped them, and the Vendée had the Gironde on its side also. Lozère sent thirty thousand men into the Bocage. Eight departments formed a coalition: five in Brittany, three in Normandy. Évreux, who fraternized with Caen, was represented in the rebellion by Chaumont, its mayor, and Gardembas, a man of note. Buzot, Gorsas, and Barbaroux at Caen, Brissot at Moulins, Chassan at Lyons, Rabaut-Saint-Étienne at Nismes, Meillan and Duchâtel in Brittany, all fanned the flames of the furnace. There were two Vendées,—the great army fighting in the forests, and the smaller one carrying on the war in the bushes. And this marks the difference between Charette and Jean Chouan. The little Vendée was simple-minded and true; the great Vendée was corrupt. The little Vendée was the better of the two. The rank of Marquis, lieutenant-general of the king's armies, was bestowed upon Charette, and he received the grand cross of Saint-Louis. Jean Chouan remained Jean Chouan. Charette resembles a bandit, Jean Chouan is more like a paladin of old.

As to those magnanimous chiefs, Bonchamps, Lescure, La Rochejaquelein, they were mistaken; the great Catholic army was an insane attempt, upon whose heels disaster was sure to follow; imagine a crowd of peasants storming Paris, a coalition of villages besieging the Pantheon, a chorus of Christmas hymns and prayers striving to drown the Marseillaise, a cohort of rustics rushing upon a legion of enlightened minds. Mans and Savenay chastised this folly. The Vendée could not cross the Loire; that was a stride beyond its power. Civil war can make no conquests. Crossing the Rhine confirms the power of Cæsar and adds to that of Napoleon; crossing the Loire kills La Rochejaquelein. The genuine Vendée is the Vendée at home: there it is more than invulnerable; it is unconquerable. At home the Vendée is smuggler, laborer, soldier,

shepherd, poacher, sharpshooter, goat-herd, bell-ringer, peasant, spy, assassin, sacristan, and wild beast.

La Rochejaquelein is only an Achilles, while Jean Chouan is a Proteus.

The Vendée failed. Other revolts have been successful, that in Switzerland for instance. The difference between mountain insurgents like the Swiss and forest insurgents like the Vendean, exists in the fact that almost invariably, owing to some fatal influence of his surroundings, the former fights for an ideal, while the latter fights for a prejudice. The one soars, the other crawls. The one fights for humanity, the other for solitude; the one demands liberty, the other isolation; the one defends the commune, the other the parish. "The Commons! The Commons!" cried the heroes of Morat. The one has to do with precipices, the other with quagmires; the one is the man of torrents and foaming streams, the other of stagnant pools whence fever rises; one has the blue sky above his head, the other a thicket; one is on the mountain-top, the other among the shadows.

An education that is gained upon the heights is quite a different affair from that of the shallows.

A mountain is a fortress; a forest is an ambush; the former inspires courage, the latter teaches trickery. The ancients placed their gods upon a pinnacle, and their satyrs within copses. The satyr is a savage, half man, half beast. Free countries have their Apennines, Alps, Pyrenees, an Olympus. Parnassus is a mountain. Mont Blanc was the gigantic auxiliary of William Tell. Looking beyond and above those titanic contests between human intellect and the darkness of night, which form the subjects of the poems of India, one sees Himalaya towering overhead. Greece, Spain, Italy, Helvetia have the mountains for their inspiration. Cimmeria, whether it be Germany or Brittany, has but the woods. The forest tends to barbarism.

The formation of the soil influences man in many of his actions. It is more of an accomplice than one might imagine. When we consider certain wild scenery, we feel tempted to exonerate man and accuse Nature; we are conscious of an occult provocation on the part of Nature; the desert has sometimes an unwholesome influence upon the conscience, especially on one that is not enlightened. A conscience may be gigantic,—take for example Socrates or the Christ; it may be dwarf-like, in which case we find Atreus and Judas. A narrow conscience soon displays the attributes of the reptile; it delights to haunt the dim forests, it is attracted by the brambles, the thorns, the marshes underneath the branches, and absorbs the evil influences of the place. Optical illusions, mysterious mirages, the terrors of the hour and the place, inspire a man with that sort of half-religious, half-animal fear

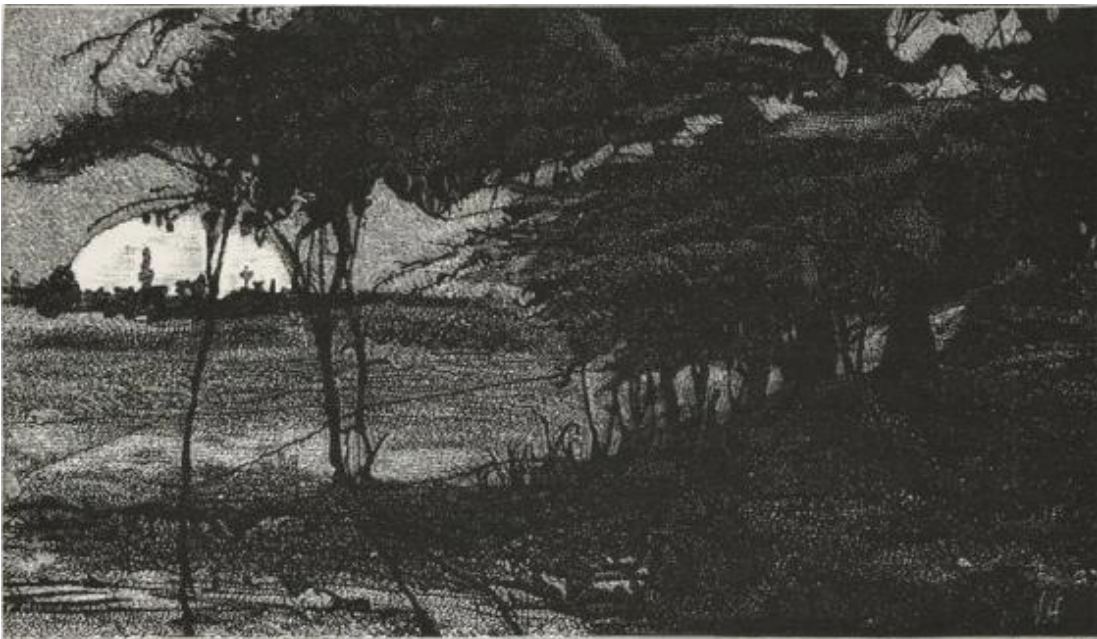
which in every-day life begets superstition, and in times of wild excitements degenerates into brutality. Hallucination holds the torch that lights the path to murder. A vertigo seizes the brigand. Nature, marvellous as she is, holds a double meaning that dazzles great minds and blinds the savage soul. When man is ignorant, and the desert is alive with visions, the gloom of solitude is added to the blindness of the intelligence; hence the abyss that sometimes yawns in the human soul. There are certain rocks, ravines, copses, weird spaces between the trees, revealing the blackness of the night, that incite man to mad and cruel deeds. One might say that the evil fiend possesses such spots. What tragic scenes has not the gloomy hill between Baignon and Plélan beheld!

Wide horizons tend to enlarge the mind; limited horizons, on the contrary, circumscribe it; hence men naturally kind-hearted, such, for instance, as Jean Chouan, grow narrow-minded.

It is the hatred of narrow minds for liberal ideas that fetters the march of progress. The Vendean war, a quarrel between the local and the universal idea, the contest of peasant and patriot, may be summed up in two words,—the village community and the fatherland.

VII.

THE VENDÉE HAS RUINED BRITTANY.



Brittany is an old rebel. In all her revolts in the past two thousand years she has had the right on her side until now; in her last rebellion she was wrong. And yet, after all, whether she was fighting against revolution or against monarchy, against the acting representative or against the ruling dukes and peers, against the financial resource of the assignats or the oppression of the salt-tax,—whoever might be fighting, whether it were Nicolas Rapin, François de La Noue, Captain Pluviaut, and The Lady of La Garnache, or Stofflet, Coquereau, and Lechandelier de Pierreville, and whether they were fighting under M. de Rohan against the king, or under M. de La Rochejaquelein for the king, it was practically the same war, that of local government against centralization.

These ancient provinces might be compared with a pond; stagnant water is not inclined to flow; the wind, instead of rousing it to life, simply irritates it. France ended at Finistère; that was the limit of the space granted to man, and there the forward march of generations ceased. "Pause!" cries the ocean to the land, and barbarism to civilization. Whenever it feels the influence of any excitement in Paris, whatever may be the occasion thereof, monarchy or republic, despotism or liberty, it is an innovation, and Brittany bristles with alarm, and says, "Let us alone! What do you want of us?" The Marais seizes its pitchfork, and the Bocage grasps its musket. All our attempts at reform in matters of education and legislation, our philosophical systems, our men of genius, our triumphs, fail before the Houroux; the tocsin of Bazouges holds the French Revolution in awe; the moor of Faou defies the stormy assemblies on our public squares; and the belfry of Haut-des-Près declares war against the Tower of the Louvre. Terrible blindness!

The Vendean insurrection was a melancholy misunderstanding.

An affray on a gigantic scale, wrangling among Titans, a colossal rebellion, fated to bequeath but one word to history, *The Vendée*,—a glorious though melancholy word, devoting itself to death for the absent, sacrificing itself to egotism, squandering its dauntless courage, offering itself in the cause of cowards, with neither foresight nor strategy, without tactics, plan, or aim, following no leader, accepting no responsibility, showing how powerless the human will may become, uniting the spirit of chivalry with the deeds of the savage, absurdity at its height, darkness screening itself from the light, ignorance offering a determined resistance to truth, justice, right, reason, and deliverance, the terror of eight years, the devastation of fourteen departments, the ravages in the fields, the destruction of crops, the burning of villages, the ruin of cities, the massacre of women and children, the torch applied to the thatch, the sword

plunged into the heart, the terror of civilization, the hope of Mr. Pitt,—such was this war, an unreasoning attempt at parricide.

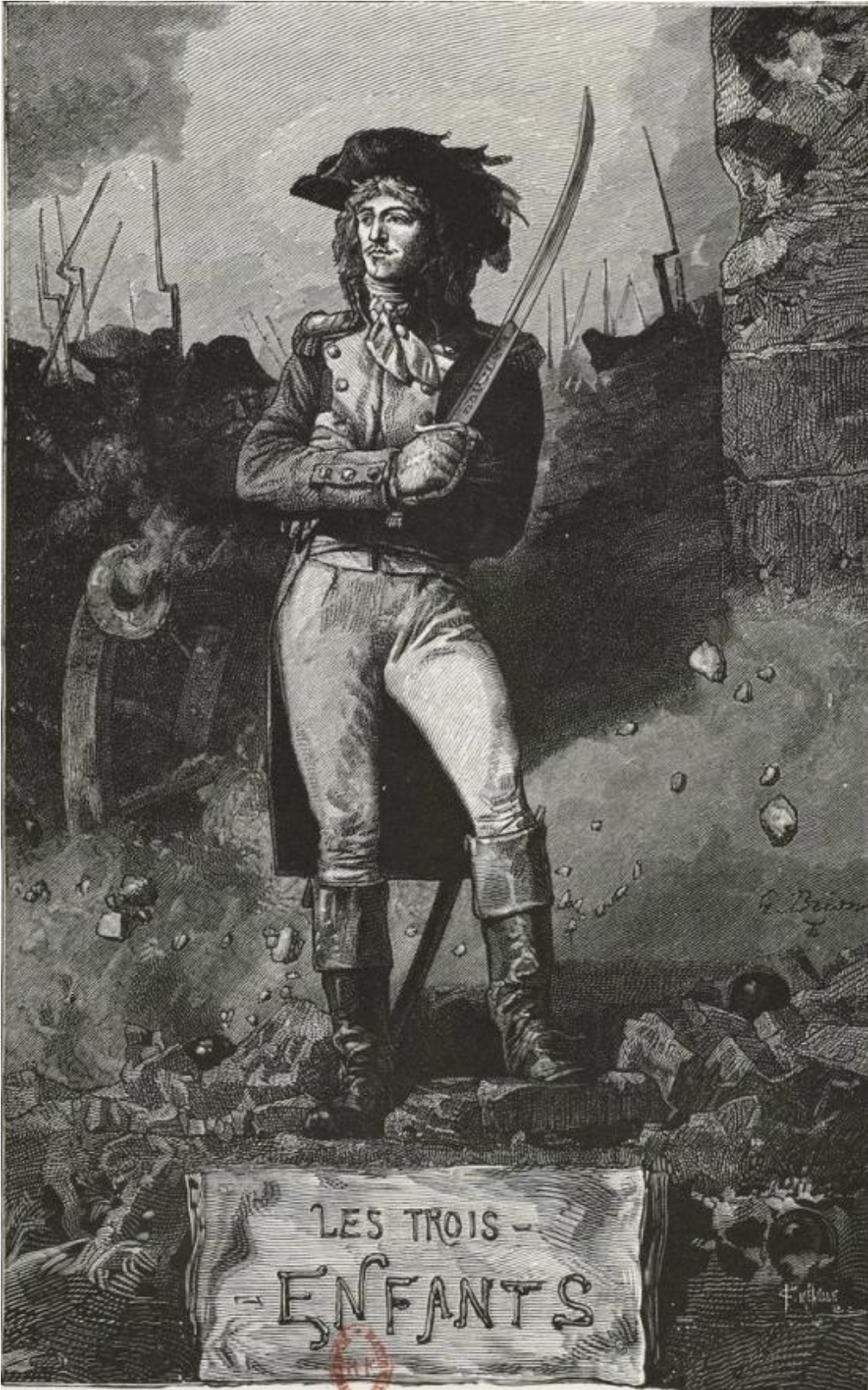
On the whole, the Vendée has served the cause of progress by showing the necessity of scattering the ancient shadows of Brittany by discharging into its thickets all the arrows of enlightenment. Catastrophes have a gloomy way of settling affairs.

[1]Vol. ii. p. 35.

[2]The uncapped become unbreeched.—TR.

[3]Puisaye, vol. ii. pp. 187, 434.

[4]Ibid., p. 35.



BOOK II.

THE THREE CHILDREN.



I.

PLUS QUAM CIVILIA BELLA.

The summer of 1792 had been a very rainy one; but that of 1793 was so extremely warm that, although the civil war had gone far towards ruining the roads in Brittany, the people—thanks to the fine weather—were able to travel from place to place, for a dry soil makes the best road.

At the close of a clear July day, about an hour after sunset, a man on horseback, riding from the direction of Avranches, stopped before the little inn called the Croix-Blanchard, situated at the entrance of Pontorson. For some years its sign had borne the following inscription: "Good cider obtained here." The day had been a very warm one, but now the wind was beginning to rise.

The traveller was wrapped in an ample cloak that fell over his horse's back. He wore a broad-brimmed hat, ornamented with a tricolored cockade, which was rather a bold

thing to do in a country like this, with its hedges and sharpshooting, for which a cockade offered an excellent target. The cloak fastened around his neck was pushed back, leaving his arms free, and revealing at the same time a tricolored belt and the butts of two pistols protruding from it, while a sabre hung down below the cloak. At the sound of the horses hoofs stopping before the inn the door opened, and the landlord came out, holding a lantern in his hand. It was just at twilight, when it is still light out of doors, although dark within.

The host glanced at the cockade.

"Do you mean to stop here, citizen?"

"No."

"Where are you going, then?"

"To Dol."

"In that case, you would do better to return to Avranches, or else remain at Pontorson."

"Why so?"

"Because they are fighting at Dol."

"Ah!" said the rider; then he continued, "Give my horse some oats."

The host, having brought the trough and poured the oats into it, proceeded to unbridle the horse, which began at once snuffing and champing, while the dialogue went on.

"Is this one of the requisition horses, citizen?" "No."

"Does it belong to you?"

"Yes. I bought him and paid for him."

"Where do you come from?"

"From Paris."

"Not directly?"

"No."

"I should say not. The roads are blocked; but the post still runs."

"As far as Alençon. I left it there."

"Ah, it will not be long before we shall have no more posts in France. The horses are all gone; one worth three hundred francs costs six hundred, and the price of fodder is

beyond all reason. I used to be a postmaster; and now, you see, I keep a tavern. Out of thirteen hundred and thirteen postmasters, two hundred have resigned. Have you been travelling according to the new tariff, citizen?"

"You mean the tariff of the 1st of May? Yes."

"Twenty sous a post for a carriage, twelve for a gig, five for a van. Did you not buy this horse at Alençon?"

"Yes."

"And you have been travelling all day?"

"Yes, since dawn."

"And yesterday?"

"And the day before."

"I should think so. You came by the way of Domfront and Mortain."

"And Avranches."

"You had better take my advice, and rest, citizen. Are you not tired? Your horse certainly is."

"Horses may be tired, but men have no right to give way to fatigue."

Again the host gazed at the traveller, whose face, grave, calm, and severe, was framed by gray hair.

Casting a glance along the road, that was deserted as far as the eye could reach, he said,—

"And so you are travelling alone."

"I have an escort."

"Where is it?"

"My sabre and pistols."

The innkeeper went for a pail of water; and while he was watering the horse he contemplated the traveller, saying to himself, "He looks like a priest, all the same."

The rider continued,—

"You say there is fighting at Dol?"

"Yes. They are just about ready to begin."

"Who is fighting?"

"One ci-devant against another."

"How is that?"

"I mean that the ci-devant who is a Republican is fighting against another who takes sides with the king."

"But there is no longer a king."

"There is the little fellow. But the strangest part is that the two ci-devants are related to each other."

Here the rider listened attentively, while the innkeeper continued:—

"One is a young man, and the other an old one. It is the grand-nephew fighting against his great-uncle. The uncle is a Royalist, while the nephew is a patriot; the uncle commands the Whites, the nephew the Blues. Ah! they will show no mercy to each other, you may be sure! It is a war to death!"

"Death?"

"Yes, citizen. Perhaps you might like to see the polite speeches they fling at each other's head. Here is a placard, which the old man has managed to post on all the houses and trees, and which I found had been stuck on my very door."

The host held up his lantern to a square bit of paper glued upon one of the panels of his door, and as it was written in very large characters, the rider was able to read it as he sat in his saddle:—

"The Marquis de Lantenac has the honor to inform his grand-nephew the Viscount Gauvain that if the Marquis is so fortunate as to take him prisoner, M. le Viscount may rest assured that he will be speedily shot."

"And here is the reply," continued the innkeeper.

He turned so as to throw the light of his lantern upon a second placard on the other panel of the door, directly opposite the first one.

"Gauvain warns Lantenac that if he catches him he will have him shot."

"Yesterday the first placard was posted on my door," said the host, "and this morning came the second. He was not kept waiting for his answer."

The traveller, in an undertone, as though speaking to himself, uttered certain words which the innkeeper caught without fully understanding their meaning:—

"Yes, this is more than waging war against one's native land; it is carrying it into the family. And it must needs be done; great regenerations are only to be purchased at this price."

And the traveller, with his eyes still riveted to the second placard, lifted his hand to his hat and saluted it.

The host continued:—

"You see, citizen, this is the way matters stand. In the cities and in larger towns we are in favor of revolution, but in the country they are opposed to it; which amounts to saying that we are Frenchmen in the cities, and Bretons in the villages. It is a war between the peasants and the townspeople. They call us *patauds*,^[1] and we call them *rustauds*.^[2] They have the nobles and the priests on their side."

"Not all of them," interrupted the rider.

"That is true, citizen, for here we have a Viscount fighting against a Marquis; and I verily believe," he added aside, "that I am speaking to a priest at this minute."

"Which of the two is likely to gain the day?"

"I should say the Viscount, so far. But he has a hard time of it. The old man is a tough customer. They belong to the Gauvains, a noble family in these parts, of which there are two branches; the Marquis de Lantenac is the head of the older, and the Viscount Gauvain of the younger branch. To-day the two branches are fighting each other. You never see this among trees, but often among men. This Marquis de Lantenac is all-powerful in Brittany; the peasants regard him as a prince. On the very day he landed he rallied eight thousand men; in a week three hundred parishes had risen. If he had only been able to establish a foothold on the coast, the English would have made a descent. Luckily Gauvain, who, strange to say, is his grand-nephew, was on the spot. He is a Republican commander, and has got the upper hand of his great-uncle. And then, as good luck would have it, this Lantenac at the time of his arrival, when he was massacring a multitude of prisoners, gave orders to have two women shot, one of whom had three children, who had been adopted by a Paris battalion. This roused the rage of the battalion, which is called the Bonnet-Rouge. There are but few of the original Parisians left, but they are desperate fighters. They have been incorporated into Commandant Gauvain's division. Nothing can resist them. Their great object is to avenge the women and recapture the children. No one knows what the old Marquis

did with the little ones, and that is what infuriates the Parisian grenadiers. Had not these children been mixed up in it, this war would not have been what it is. The Viscount is a good and brave young fellow; but the old man is a terrible Marquis. The peasants call this the war of Saint Michel against Beelzebub. You know, maybe, that Saint Michel is the patron of these parts. There is a mountain named after him in the middle of the bay. They give him credit for conquering the Devil and burying him under another hill not far away, called Tombelaine."

"Yes," murmured the rider. "Tumba Beleni,—the tomb of Belenus, Belus, Bel, Belial, Beelzebub."

"I see that you are well informed." And the host said to himself,—

"He knows Latin; surely he must be a priest." Then he added:—

"Well, citizen, this war is beginning all over again for the peasants. No doubt they think the Royalist general is Saint Michel, and the patriot commander Beelzebub; but if there is a devil it is Lantenac, and Gauvain is an angel if there ever was one. Will you take nothing, citizen?"

"I have my gourd and a bit of bread. But you have not told me what is going on at Dol."

"To be sure; well, Gauvain is in command of the exploring division of the coast. Now, Lantenac's plan was to stir up a general insurrection, to bring Lower Normandy to the aid of Lower Brittany, to throw open the door to Pitt, and to lend a helping hand to the great Vendean army in the shape of twenty thousand English and two hundred thousand peasants. Gauvain has checkmated this plan. He holds the coast and drives Lantenac back into the interior and the English into the sea. Lantenac was here, but Gauvain dislodged him, recaptured Pont-au-Beau, drove him out from Avranches and Villedieu, and prevented him from reaching Granville. He is manoeuvring now to force him to retreat into the forest of Fougères, and there to surround him. Yesterday everything was favorable, and Gauvain was here with his division. All at once, mind you, the old man, who is a shrewd one, made a point; the news came that he had marched on Dol. If he should take it, and succeeds in establishing a battery on Mont-Dol,—for he has artillery,—that will give the English a chance to land, and then all is lost. That is the reason why Gauvain, who has a head on his shoulders, knowing there was not a moment to be lost, consulted no one; nor did he wait for orders, but giving the signal to saddle, and harnessing his artillery, he collected his troops, drew his sabre, and while Lantenac is hurrying towards Dol, Gauvain is all ready to pounce upon Lantenac; and Dol is to be the place where these two Breton heads will clash, and a famous crash it will be. They are at it now."

"How long does it take to reach Dol?"

"For troops with artillery carriages, at least three hours; but they are there now."

The traveller, as he listened, said,—

"You are right; I think I can hear the cannon." The host, too, was listening.

"Yes, citizen, and the firing is steady. You had better spend the night here. There is nothing to be gained by going over there."

"I cannot stop. I must continue my journey."

"You are wrong. I do not know anything about your business, but the risk is great, and unless all that you hold dearest in the world is at stake—"

"That is precisely the state of things," replied the rider.

"Now, supposing your son—"

"You are very near the truth," said the rider.

The innkeeper raised his head as he said to himself,—

"And yet I thought this citizen was a priest." Then, after a moment's reflection, he added: "But a priest may have children, after all."

"Put the bridle back on my horse," said the traveller. "How much do I owe you?"

After receiving his pay, the host put the trough and bucket against the wall, and came back to the traveller.

"Since you are determined to go, take my advice. You must be going to Saint-Malo. Now, then, do not go by the way of Dol. There are two roads,—one leading through Dol, and the other along the coast. There is very little difference in their length. The road along the coast passes through Saint-Georges-de-Brehaigne, Cherrueix, and Hirelle-Vivier. You leave Dol to the south, and Cancale to the north, and at the end of this street, citizen, you will come to a place where the two roads fork,—that of Dol to the left, that of Saint-Georges-de-Brehaigne to the right. Mark my words: if you go to Dol, you will plunge headlong into the massacre; so do not take the left-hand turning, but keep to the right."

"Thank you," said the traveller.

And he set spurs to his horse.

As it was now quite dark, he soon vanished in the gloom, and the innkeeper lost sight of him.

When the traveller reached the end of the street where the two roads forked, he heard the voice of the innkeeper calling to him from the distance,—

"Turn to your right!"

He turned to the left.

II.

DOL.



Dol, a Franco-Spanish city in Brittany, as the old records call it, is not really a city; it is a street,—a grand old Gothic street, with rows of houses supported by pillars on both

sides of it. These houses are not built in straight lines, but stand irregularly, now and then elbowing into the street, which is, to be sure, a very wide one. The rest of the town is a mere network of lanes, all leading into this great diametrical street,—emptying into it, one might say, like streams into a river, with Mont-Dol towering above it. The city, with neither gates nor walls, could not have withstood a siege; but the street was quite capable of sustaining one. The houses, like promontories, which but fifty years ago were still standing, and the two pillared galleries bordering the street, made it a strong and well-nigh impregnable redoubt. Each of the houses was a fortress in itself, and the enemy would have found himself forced to capture them one by one. Almost in the middle of the street stood the old market.

The innkeeper of the Croix-Branchard had told the truth; a furious battle was raging in Dol even while he was speaking. A nocturnal duel between the Whites who arrived in the morning and the Blues who appeared at night had burst suddenly upon the town. The forces were unequal, the Whites numbering six thousand, while the Blues were only fifteen hundred; but they fought with equal fury. Surprising as it may seem, it was the fifteen hundred who attacked the six thousand.

A mob pitted against a phalanx. On one side were six thousand peasants, with images of the Sacred Heart upon their leathern waistcoats, white ribbons on their round hats, Christian emblems on their leather cuffs, rosaries hanging from their belts, carrying pitchforks oftener than sabres, and carbines without bayonets, dragging along cannon by means of ropes, wretchedly equipped, undisciplined, with no suitable weapons, yet mad with rage. On the other side were fifteen thousand soldiers, wearing three-cornered hats with the tricolored cockade, long-tailed coats, with broad lapels, and shoulder-belts crossed, short sabres with copper hilts, muskets with long bayonets, well-drilled and disciplined, obedient though savage, knowing how to obey like men who could at need command, volunteers like the others, but patriots withal, although barefooted and in rags; paladins in the shape of peasants fighting in defence of Monarchy; barefooted heroes in the ranks of the Revolution; while the life and soul of both Royalists and Republicans was centred in their leaders,—Lantenac, the man advanced in years, and the young Gauvain.

Standing side by side in the Revolution with young giants like Danton, Saint-Just, and Robespierre, were the ideal and youthful forms of Hoche and Marceau, and like unto them was Gauvain.

Gauvain was thirty years of age, with the chest of Hercules, the solemn eye of a prophet, and the laugh of a child. He never smoked; he neither drank nor swore. He carried a dressing-case with him throughout the entire war, and took great care of his

nails, his teeth, and his luxuriant brown hair. Whenever they halted, it was his habit carefully to shake his commander's uniform, riddled with balls and whitened with dust as it was. Though always rushing headlong into the thickest of the fray, he had never been wounded. His voice, unusually melodious, could assume at need the imperative ring of command. He set the example of sleeping on the ground, in the wind, the rain, and the snow, wrapped in his cloak, with his charming head resting on a stone. His was a heroic and innocent soul. Let him but take a sabre in his hand, he was straightway transformed. He had that effeminate aspect that changes to something formidable in battle.

A thinker and philosopher withal; in short, a youthful sage. Beautiful to look upon as Alcibiades, his speech showed the wisdom of Socrates.

In that grand improvisation which men called the French Revolution, this young man at once became a leader.

The division which he had formed was like a Roman legion; an army on a small scale, complete in itself; it consisted of infantry and cavalry; it had its scouts, its pioneers, its sappers, its engineers; and as the Roman legion had its catapults, this army had its cannon. Three well-mounted pieces strengthened the division, while leaving it easy to handle.

Lantenac was also a military leader, but a more accomplished one,—more cautious, and at the same time more daring. The veritable old hero is cooler than a younger man, because he is farther removed from the heyday of life, and more daring from the consciousness that he is nearer death. What has he to lose? So slight a matter. This explains the bold and yet scientific manoeuvres of Lantenac. Yet on the whole, in this obstinate wrestling-match between the old and the young, Gauvain almost always had the advantage, and he owed this rather to chance than to anything in himself. Every sort of good-fortune, even though it may be terrible, falls to the lot of youth. Victory has something feminine in its nature.

Lantenac was exasperated with Gauvain; first, because his nephew had defeated him, and second, because he was his nephew. What possessed him to be Jacobin?—a Gauvain! Unruly youngster that he was. His heir,—for the Marquis had no children,—a great-nephew, almost a grandchild! "Ah!" cried this quasi grandfather, "if he falls into my hands, I will kill him like a dog."

The Republic, moreover, had good reason to feel uneasy about this Marquis de Lantenac. He had no sooner landed than its terror began. The mere utterance of his name was like a powder-train spread through the Vendean insurrection, of which he

straightway became the centre. In a revolt of this kind, where each one is jealous of his neighbor, where each has his bush or his ravine, if a superior leader appears, the separate chiefs who have been on a level will rally round him and submit themselves to his authority. Nearly all the forest captains had joined Lantenac, and whether near or remote, they all obeyed him. Only Gavard, who had been the first to join him, had departed. And why was this? Because he had enjoyed the confidence of the Republic and been in a position of authority. Gavard had held all the secrets and had adopted the old-fashioned system of civil war, which Lantenac had come to change and replace. A successor can hardly agree with a man of that stamp. The shoe of La Rouarie was not a fit for Lantenac, and so Gavard had gone to join Bonchamp.

Lantenac belonged to the military school of Frederic II.; he understood the art of warfare, which consists of combining the greater with the lesser; he favored neither the great Catholic and Royal army, that "mass of confusion" destined to be crushed, nor the guerilla troops scattered through the thickets and hedges, useful to harass, but powerless to crush. There is either no end to guerilla warfare, or else it comes to an unfortunate one: it begins by attacking the Republic and ends by robbing a diligence. Lantenac did not propose to carry on the Breton war altogether in the open country like La Rochejaquelein, nor yet in the forest like Chouan. He neither approved of the Vendée nor of the Chouannerie; he believed in real warfare; he was willing to use the peasant, but he wished to support him by the soldier. He required bands for strategy and regiments for tactics. The village armies so easily disbanded he considered excellent for an attack, an ambush, or a surprise, but he felt that they lacked solidity; they were like water in his hands; he sought a solid foundation for this unstable and diffusive warfare; to the savage army of the forest he proposed to add regular troops as a sort of pivot about which to manoeuvre the peasants. Had this scheme, deep-laid and terrible as it was, proved successful, the Vendée would never have been conquered.

But where could regular troops be found? Where look for soldiers? Where seek for regiments, and find a ready-made army? In England. Hence Lantenac's determination that the English should effect a landing. Thus do parties compromise with their consciences. He quite lost sight of the red coat, eclipsed as it was by the white cockade. Lantenac had but one idea,—first to seize upon some point on the coast, and then to deliver it into the hands of Pitt. It was with this object that, seeing Dol unprotected, he had thrown himself upon it, knowing that once in possession of Dol, he could readily gain Mont-Dol, and by means of the latter gain a footing on the coast.

The spot was well chosen. From Mont-Dol the cannon would sweep Fresnois on one side; and Saint-Brelade, on the other, would keep the fleet of Cancale at a distance,

and leave the whole beach, from Raz-sur-Couesnon to Saint-Méloir-des-Ondes, open to an attack.

In order to insure success, Lantenac had brought with him six thousand of the most active men in the regiment at his disposal, together with all his artillery,—ten sixteen-pound culverins, one demi-culverin, and one four-pounder. He proposed to establish a strong battery on Mont-Dol, on the principle that a thousand shots fired from ten cannon do more execution than fifteen hundred fired from five cannon.

With six thousand men, he felt sure of success. In the direction of Avranches they had nothing to fear but Gauvain with his fifteen hundred men. Towards Dina there was Léchelle, to be sure, with twenty-five thousand; but he was twenty leagues away. In regard to the latter, Lantenac felt quite safe, the distance offsetting the numbers; and as for Gauvain though he was quite near, his force was very small. WE may here remark that Léchelle was a fool, who afterwards allowed his twenty-five thousand men to be slaughtered on the moors of Croix-Bataille,—a mistake for which he strove to atone by suicide.

So Lantenac felt quite safe. His entrance into Dol had been sudden and stern. The Marquis de Lantenac enjoyed a hard reputation; and knowing him to be merciless, the terrified inhabitants shut themselves up in their houses without attempting resistance, and the six thousand Vendéans installed themselves in the city after the disorderly fashion of a band of rustics. It was almost like a market-ground; in default of quartermasters, they chose their own quarters, camping at haphazard, cooking, in the open air, dispersing hither and yonder through the churches, dropping their muskets to take up their rosaries. Lantenac, accompanied by a few artillery officers, proceeded without delay to reconnoitre Mont-Dol, leaving Gouge-le-Bruant, whom he had appointed field-sergeant, in command. This Gouge-le-Bruant has left but an indistinct trace in history. He had two nicknames, *-Brise-Bleu* in token of his massacre of the patriots, and *Imânus*, because there was something indescribably horrible about him. *Imânus* is derived from *immanis*, an old Low-Norman word, which expresses a superhuman degree of ugliness, almost godlike in its terror,—a demon, a satyr, an ogre. An old manuscript says, "With my own eyes I beheld Imânus." To-day the old people in Brittany no longer know who Gouge-le-Bruant was, nor what *Brise-Bleu* means; but they have a vague idea of the *Imânus*, whose name is interwoven with all the local superstitions. He still is spoken of in Trémoré and Plumaugat,—the two villages where Gouge-le-Bruant has left the impress of his ill-omened footstep. In the Vendée, where all the inhabitants were savages, Gouge-le-Bruant was the barbarian. He was a sort of Cacique tattooed all over with crucifixes and fleurs-de-lis. Upon his face was the hideous, almost supernatural glow of a soul unlike that of any

other human being. He was as brave in battle as Satan himself, and atrociously cruel when the battle was over. His heart, full of mysterious determinations, now urged him to acts of devotion, now to deeds of wildest fury. Did he use his reason? Yes, after a serpentine fashion. Heroism was his starting-point, murder his goal. It was impossible to conceive how his resolutions, often grand in their very monstrosity, could have entered his mind. He was capable of any horror, when least expected. His ferocity was on a scale of epic grandeur.

Hence his peculiar surname, Imânus.

The Marquis de Lantenac relied upon his cruelty; but while none could dispute the fact that he excelled in cruelty, in matters of strategy and tactics he was less efficient, and it may perhaps have been a mistake on the part of the Marquis when he made him his field-sergeant. But however that may be, he left him behind in charge, with the injunction to look after matters in general.

Gouge-le-Bruant was more of a fighter than a soldier, and guarding a town was not so much in his line as massacring a clan would have been; still, he posted sentries. When at nightfall the Marquis, having decided upon the position of his battery, was returning to Dol, he suddenly caught the sound of cannon. Looking in the direction of the sound, he saw a red smoke rising from the street. This meant a surprise, an invasion, an attack; fighting was going on in the town.

Although not easily taken by surprise, he was now utterly amazed, for he had anticipated nothing of the sort. What could it mean? Evidently not Gauvain, for a man would hardly attack an enemy outnumbering him four to one. Could it be Léchelle? But was it possible for him to have made such a forced march? Léchelle was improbable, Gauvain impossible.

Lantenac urged on his horse. On the way he met some of the inhabitants in the act of flight; but when he questioned them, they seemed beside themselves with terror, crying, "The Blues! the Blues!" And on his arrival he found the situation a bad one.

This is what had happened.

III.

SMALL ARMIES AND GREAT BATTLES.



On their arrival at Dol, the peasants, as we have seen, had dispersed through town, each man guided by his own fancy, as it often happens when "on obéit d'amitié," as the Vendéans expressed it,—a form of obedience that may produce heroes, but not well-disciplined soldiers. They had stored their artillery, together with the baggage, under the arches of the old market, and feeling weary, when they had eaten and drunk and said their beads, they stretched themselves out in the middle of the principal street, that was encumbered rather than guarded. As night came on most of them fell asleep, pillowing their heads on their knapsacks, some having their wives beside

them; for it often happened that the peasant women followed the men. In the Vendée, women about to become mothers frequently acted as spies. It was a mild July night. The constellations shone forth against the deep-blue sky. The entire bivouac, which might have been mistaken for the halt of a caravan rather than for a military encampment, gave itself up to quiet slumber. Suddenly by the glimmering twilight those who were still awake perceived three cannon levelled at the entrance of the principal street.

It was Gauvain. He had surprised the guard, had entered the town, and with his division held the entrance of the street.

A peasant started up, crying, "Who goes there?" and fired off his musket. A cannon-shot, followed by a terrific volley of musketry, was the reply. The whole sleeping crowd sprang up with a start. It was a rude shock to be roused by a volley of grape-shot from a peaceful sleep beneath the stars.

The first moment was terrific. There is nothing more tragic than the confusion of a panic-stricken crowd. They snatched their weapons. Many fell as they ran yelling to and fro. Confused by the unexpected assault, the lads lost their heads and fired madly at one another. The townspeople, bewildered by all this confusion, rushed in and out of their houses, shouting to each other as they wandered helplessly about,—a dismal struggle in which women and children played a part. The balls whistling through the air left streaks of light in the darkness behind them. Amid the smoke and tumult a constant firing issued from every dark corner. The entanglement of the baggage-wagons and cannon-carriages was added to the general confusion. The horses, rearing, trampled upon the wounded, whose groans could be heard on every side. Some were horror-stricken, others stupefied. Officers were looking for their men, and soldiers for their officers. In the midst of all this some there were who displayed a stolid indifference. One woman, seated on the fragment of a wall, was nursing her new-born babe, while her husband, with bleeding wounds and a broken leg, leaned against it as he calmly loaded his musket and fired at random in the darkness, killing or not, as it happened. Men lying flat on the ground fired between the spokes of the wagon-wheels. At times there rose a hideous din of clamors, and again the thundering voice of the cannon would overwhelm all. It was frightful,—like the felling of trees when one falls upon the other.



Gauvain from his ambush aimed with precision, and lost but few men. But at last the peasants, intrepid in spite of the disaster, ended by taking the defensive. They fell back on the market, which was like a great dark fortress, with its forest of stone pillars. There they made a stand; anything that resembled a forest inspired them with courage. The Imânus did his best to atone for the absence of Lantenac. They had cannon; but, to the great surprise of Gauvain, they made no use of them. This was due to the fact that the artillery officers had gone with the Marquis to reconnoitre Mont-Dol, and the peasants did not know how to manage the culverins and demi-culverins; but they riddled with balls the Blues who cannonaded them. The peasants answered the grape-shot by a volley of musketry. They now had the advantage of a shelter, having heaped up the drays, the carts, the baggage, and all the small casks that were lying about in the old market, thus improvising a high barricade, with openings through which they could pass their muskets, and from which they opened a deadly fire. So rapidly had they worked, that in a quarter of an hour the market presented an impregnable front.

Matters were beginning to look serious for Gauvain. The sudden transformation of a market into a fortress, and the peasants assembled in a solid mass within, was a condition of affairs which he had not anticipated. He had taken them by surprise, it is true; but he had not succeeded in routing them. He had dismounted, and holding his sword by the hilt, he stood with folded arms, gazing steadfastly into the gloom, his own figure distinctly revealed by the flame of the torch that lighted the battery,—a target for the men of the barricade; of which fact he took no heed, as he stood there lost in thought, while a shower of balls from the barricade fell around him.

He set his cannon against their rifles; and victory is ever on the side of the cannon-ball. He who has artillery is sure to win the day, and his well-manned battery gave him the advantage.

Suddenly a flash of lightning burst forth from the dark market; there came a report like a peal of thunder, and a bullet went crashing through a house over Gauvain's head.

The barricade was paying him back in his own coin.

What was going on? This was a new development. The artillery was no longer confined to one side.

A second ball followed the first, embedding itself in the wall close to Gauvain; and a third ball knocked off his hat.

These balls were of a calibre so heavy that they must have been fired from a sixteen-pounder.

"They are aiming at you, commander," cried the gunners, as they put out the torch; and Gauvain, still absorbed in his reverie, stooped to pick up his hat.

Some one was indeed aiming at Gauvain, and it was Lantenac.

The Marquis had just reached the barricade from the opposite side.

The Imânus hastened to meet him.

"Monseigneur, we have been taken by surprise."

"By whom?"

"I do not know."

"Is the road to Dinan open?"

"I believe so."

"We must begin to retreat."

"We have done so. Many have already fled."

"I am not speaking of flight, but of retreat. Why did you not use the artillery?"

"The men were beside themselves, and then the officers were absent."

"I was to be here."

"Monseigneur, I sent everything I could on to Fougères,—the women, the baggage, and all useless incumbrances; but what is to be done with the three little prisoners?"

"Do you mean the children?"

"Yes."

"They are our hostages. Send them on to the Tourgue."

So saying, the Marquis started for the barricade, and directly after his arrival things took on another aspect. The barricade was not well constructed for artillery; there was room for but two cannon; the Marquis placed in position the two sixteen-pounders for which embrasures were made. As he was leaning on one of the cannon, watching the enemy's battery through the embrasure, he caught sight of Gauvain.

"It is he!" he cried.

Then, taking the swab and the ramrod, he loaded the piece, adjusted the sight, and took aim.

Three times he aimed at Gauvain and missed him, but the third shot knocked off his hat.

"Bungler!" murmured Lantenac. "A little lower, and I should have had his head."

Suddenly the torch went out, and he had only darkness before him.

"Well, let it go," he said.

And turning to the peasant gunners, he exclaimed:

"Let them have the grape-shot!"

Gauvain for his part was also in deadly earnest. The situation had become a serious one since the development of this new phase of the conflict, and the barricade was now cannonading him. Who could tell how soon it might pass from the defensive to the offensive? The enemy numbered at least five thousand, even allowing for the dead and the fugitives, while he had no more than twelve hundred service-able men at his command. What would happen to the Republicans if the enemy should become aware of their limited number? Their rôles would soon be reversed; from playing the part of assailants, he would become the object of assault. If the barricade were to make a sortie, all would be lost.

What was to be done? It was out of the question to think of attacking the barricade in front; an attempt to capture it by main strength would be folly; twelve hundred men could not dislodge five thousand. Imperative as it was to make an end of it, knowing as he did that delay was fatal, still he realized that to force the enemy's hand would be impossible. What was he to do?

Gauvain belonged to this neighborhood; he was familiar with the town, and knew that behind the old market, where the Vendéans were intrenched, was a labyrinth of narrow and crooked streets.

He turned to his lieutenant, the brave Captain Guéchamp, who afterwards became famous for clearing the forest of Concise, where Jean Chouan was born, and who prevented the capture of Bourgneuf by cutting the rebels off from the highway that led to the pond of La Chaine.

"Guéchamp," said Gauvain, "I intrust you with the command. Fire as rapidly as possible. Riddle the barricade with cannon-balls, and keep them busy over yonder."

"I understand," said Guéchamp.

"Mass the whole column with their guns loaded, and hold them in readiness for an attack."

He whispered a few words in Guéchamp's ear.

"It shall be done," said the latter.

Gauvain continued,—

"Are all our drummers ready?"

"Yes"

"We have nine. Keep two and give me seven."

The seven drummers silently ranged themselves in front of Gauvain.

"Step forward, battalion of the Bonnet-Rouge!" exclaimed Gauvain.

Twelve soldiers, one of whom was a sergeant, stepped from the ranks.

"I called for the whole battalion," said Gauvain.

"Here it is," replied the sergeant.

"Are there but twelve?"

"Only twelve of us left."

"Very well," said Gauvain.

This sergeant was that very Radoub, the rough and kindly soldier who in the name of the battalion had adopted the three children found in the forest of La Saudraie.

It will be remarked that only half that battalion was massacred at Herbe-en-Pail, and Radoub, by good luck, was not among them.

A forage-wagon was standing near, and Gauvain pointed it out to the sergeant.

"Let your men weave ropes of straw and bind them around their muskets to deaden the noise when they clash against each other."

A minute went by; the order was silently executed in the darkness.

"It is done," said the sergeant.

"Take off your shoes, soldiers," continued Gauvain.

"We have none," replied the sergeant.

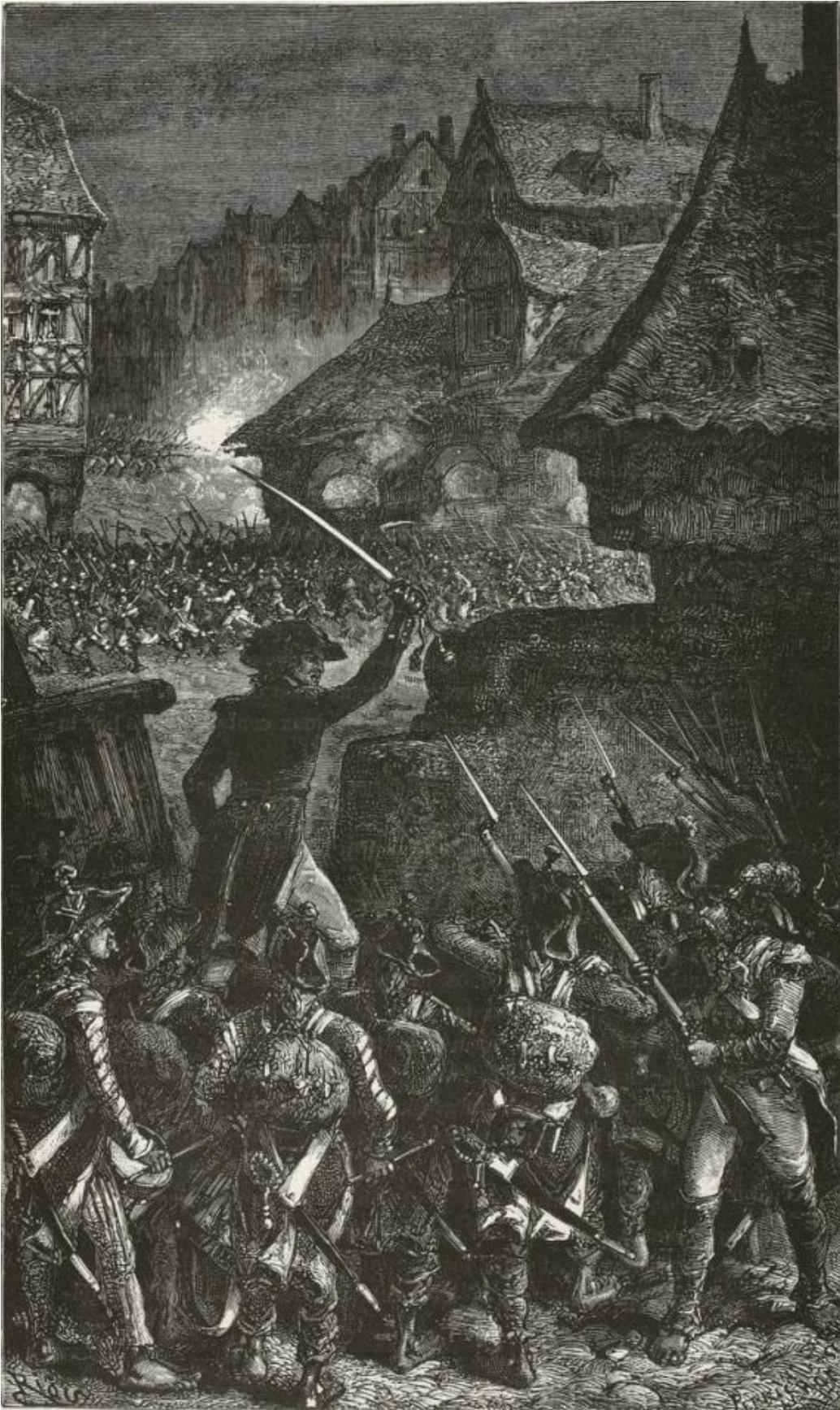
Including the drummers, they numbered nineteen men; Gauvain was the twentieth.

"Follow me, in single file!" cried Gauvain. "Let the drummers go before the battalion. You will command the battalion, sergeant!"

He placed himself at the head of this column, and while the cannonading still continued on both sides, these twenty men glided along like shadows and plunged into the deserted lanes.

Thus they proceeded for some time, skirting along the fronts of the houses. It seemed as though the whole town were dead; the citizens had taken refuge in their cellars. Every door was barred and every shutter closed. Not a light was to be seen anywhere.

But through this silence they still heard the awful din on the principal street: the cannonading went on; the Republican battery and the Royal barricade spit out their grape-shot with unabated fury.



After marching twenty minutes, winding in and out, Gauvain, who had led the way unerringly through this darkness, reached the end of a lane that led into the principal street; they were now, however, on the other side of the market.

The position was changed. On that side there was no intrenchment,—a common mistake of barricade builders; the market was open, and one could walk in under the pillars, where several baggage-wagons stood ready to leave. Gauvain and his nineteen men were in the presence of the five thousand Vendéans as before, only instead of facing them they found themselves in their rear.

Gauvain whispered to the sergeant; the straw was unwound from the muskets, and the twelve grenadiers ranged themselves in a line behind the corner of the lane, while the seven drummers, with uplifted drumstick, waited for the signal.

The artillery firing was intermittent, when suddenly, during the interval between two discharges, Gauvain raised his sword, and in a voice that rang out like a clarion upon the silence, exclaimed,—

"Two hundred men to the right, two hundred to the left, the rest in the centre."

The drums beat and the twelve musket-shots were fired.

Then Gauvain uttered the formidable battle-cry of the Blues,—

"Charge! Bayonets!"

The effect was wonderful.

All this crowd of peasants finding themselves assailed in the rear, imagined that another army had come up from behind. At the same time, on hearing the beating of the drums, the column which held the upper part of the street and was commanded by Guéchamp began to move, sounding the charge in its turn, and starting on the run, attacked the barricade; the peasants saw themselves between two fires. A panic magnifies, and at such moments a pistol-shot sounds like the report of a cannon; imagination distorts every sound, and the barking of a dog seems like the roar of a lion. Let us add, moreover, that the peasant takes fright as easily as a thatch catches fire, and as quickly as a burning thatch becomes a conflagration, a panic among peasants grows into a rout; and on this occasion the flight was beyond description.

In a few moments the market was deserted; the terrified lads scattered in all directions, and the officers were helpless. The Imânus killed two or three of the fugitives, but it was of no avail. Nothing could be heard save the cry, "Sauve qui peut,"

and with the rapidity of a cloud driven onward by a hurricane, the entire army scattered through the streets as through the meshes of a sieve and vanished into the country.

Some fled towards Châteauneuf, some towards Plerguer, and others in the direction of Antrain.

The Marquis de Lantenac, who was the last man to leave the scene, spiked the guns with his own hands, and then quietly and calmly took his departure, saying as he went,—

"It is evident that the peasants cannot be depended upon to stand their ground. We need the English."



IV.

A SECOND TIME.



They had won the victory, and, turning to the men of the battalion of the Bonnet-Rouge, Gauvain exclaimed,—

"Though you are but twelve, you are equal to a thousand."

One word from the chief in times like these was as good as the cross of honor.

Guéchamp, who had been sent by Gauvain outside the city in pursuit of the fugitives, captured many of them.

Torches were lighted, and the town was searched.

All those who had not been able to escape, surrendered themselves. The principal street, illuminated by *pots-à-feu*, was strewn with the dead and the wounded. The fierce struggle that always terminates a battle was still continued by a few groups of desperate fighters, who, however, on being surrounded, threw down their arms and surrendered.

Gauvain had observed amid the wild tumult of the flight a fearless man, vigorous and agile as a faun, who stood his own ground while covering the flight of the others. This peasant, after handling his musket like an expert, alternately firing: and Rising the butt as a club, until he had broken it, now stood grasping a pistol in one hand and a sabre in the other, and no man dared approach him. Suddenly Gauvain saw him reel, and lean against one of the pillars of the principal street. He was evidently wounded, but he still held his sabre and his pistols. Gauvain put his sword under his arm and came up to him. As he called upon him to surrender, the man gazed steadily at him, while the blood oozing from his wound formed a pool at his feet.

"You are my prisoner," said Gauvain. "What is your name?"

"Danse-à-l'Ombre," was the reply.

"You are a brave fellow," said Gauvain, extending his hand.

"Long live the King!" cried the man.

Then gathering all his strength, and raising both hands simultaneously, he fired his pistol at Gauvain's heart, at the same time aiming a blow at his head with the sabre.

This movement, tiger-like in its rapidity, was yet forestalled by the action of another. A horseman had appeared on the scene; he had been there for some moments without attracting attention, and when he saw the Vendean lift his sabre and pistol, he threw himself between the latter and Gauvain, intercepting the sabre-thrust by his own person, while his horse was struck by the pistol-shot, and both horse and rider fell to the ground. Thus Gauvain's life was saved. All this took place as quickly as one would utter a cry.

The Vendean also sank to the pavement.

The blow from the sabre struck the man full in the face; he lay on the ground in a swoon. The horse was killed.



Gauvain drew near, asking, as he approached, if any could tell who he was.

On looking at him more closely he saw that the blood was gushing over the face of the wounded man, covering it as with a red mask, and rendering it impossible to distinguish his features. One could see that his hair was gray.

"He has saved my life," said Gauvain. "Does any one here know him?"

"Commander," said a soldier, "he has but just arrived in town. I saw him coming from the direction of Pontorson."

The surgeon-in-chief of the division hurried up with his instrument-case.

The wounded man was still unconscious, but after examining him the surgeon said,—

"Oh, this is nothing but a simple cut. It can be sewed, and in eight days he will be on his feet again. That was a fine sabre-cut."

The wounded man wore a cloak and a tricolored belt, with pistols and a sabre. They placed him on a stretcher, and after undressing him, a bucket of water was brought, and the surgeon washed the wound. As the face began to appear, Gauvain studied it attentively.

"Has he any papers about him?" he asked.

The surgeon felt in his side pocket and drew out a pocket-book, which he handed to Gauvain.

Meanwhile the wounded man, revived by the cold water, was regaining his consciousness. His eyelids quivered slightly.

Gauvain was looking over the pocket-book, in which he discovered a sheet of paper folded four times; he opened it and read,—

"Committee of Public Safety. Citizen Cimourdain—"

"Cimourdain!" he cried; whereupon the wounded man opened his eyes.

Gauvain was beside himself.

"It is you, Cimourdain! For the second time you have saved my life."

Cimourdain looked at Gauvain, while a sudden burst of joy, impossible to describe, lit up his bleeding face.

Gauvain fell on his knees before him, exclaiming:

"My master!"

"Thy father!" said Cimourdain.

V.

A DROP OF COLD WATER.

It was many a year since last they met, but their hearts had never been separated, and they knew each other again as if they had parted but yesterday.

A hospital had been improvised in the town hall of Dol, and Cimourdain was placed on a bed in a small room adjoining the large hall devoted to the other wounded men. The surgeon who had sewed up his wound put a stop to all exciting conversation between the two men, considering it wiser to leave Cimourdain to sleep. Besides, Gauvain was called away by the thousand duties and cares incident to victory. Cimourdain was left alone, but he could not sleep, excited as he was by the double fever of his wound and of his joy.

He knew he was not sleeping, and yet he hardly felt sure that he was awake. Could it be possible that his dream had come to pass? Cimourdain was one of those men who

have no faith in good luck, and yet it had fallen to his lot. He had found Gauvain. He had left him a child, he found him a man,—a grand, brave, awe-inspiring conqueror, and that in the cause of the people. In the Vendée, Gauvain was the pillar of the Revolution, and it was really Cimourdain himself who had bestowed this support upon the Republic. This conqueror was his pupil. Cimourdain beheld his own thought illumining the youthful countenance of this man, for whom a niche in the Republican Pantheon was perhaps reserved; his disciple, the child of his mind, was a hero from this time forth, and would soon become famous; it seemed to Cimourdain like seeing his own soul transformed into a genius. As he watched Gauvain in the battle he had felt like Chiron watching Achilles. There is a certain analogy between the priest and the Centaur, since a priest is but half a man.

The incidents of this day's adventure, added to the sleeplessness caused by his wound, filled Cimourdain with a strange sort of intoxication. He seemed to see a youthful destiny rising before him in all its splendor, and the knowledge of his own absolute control of this destiny contributed to increase his deep joy. It needed but one more triumph like that which he had just witnessed, and at a word from Cimourdain, the Republic would place Gauvain at the head of an army. Nothing dazzles one so much as an unexpected success. This was the epoch of military dreams. Every man had a longing to create a general; Westermann was the hero of Danton's dream, Rossignol of Marat's, Ronsin of Hébert's; and Robespierre would have liked to ruin them all. So why not Gauvain? Cimourdain asked himself; and thereupon he proceeded to lose himself in dreams. There were no limits to his imaginings; as he passed from one hypothesis to another, all obstacles vanished before him. For this is a ladder on which, having once set foot, one never pauses; the ascent is a long one, starting from man and ending at the stars. A great general is only the commander of an army; a great captain is also a leader of thought; Cimourdain pictured Gauvain as a great captain. It seemed to him—for fancies travel fast—that he saw him on the sea, pursuing the English; on the Rhine, driving before him the kings of the North; in the Pyrenees, repulsing Spain; on the Alps, setting the signal for insurrection before the eyes of Rome. Cimourdain was a man who possessed two distinct natures,—the one tender, the other gloomy,—both of which were satisfied; for since the inexorable was his ideal, it gratified him to see Gauvain at once glorious and terrible. Cimourdain thought of all he had to pull down before he could build up. "And certainly," he said to himself, "this is no time to indulge in tender emotions. Gauvain will be up *à la hauteur*,"^[3]—an expression of the day. Cimourdain pictured Gauvain to himself with a sword in his hand, girded in light, a flaming meteor on his brow, spreading the grand

ideal wings of justice, right, and progress, and, like an angel of extermination, crushing the darkness beneath his heel.

Just at the crisis of this reverie, which one might almost have called an ecstasy, through the half-open door he heard men talking in the great ambulance-hall adjoining his room, and he recognized Gauvain's voice, which, in spite of years of absence, had always rung in his ears; for the voice of the man often retains something of its childish tones. He listened. There was a sound of footsteps, and he heard the soldiers saying,—

"Here is the man who fired at you, commander. He had crawled into a cellar when no one was watching; but we found him, and here he is."

Then Cimourdain heard the following conversation between Gauvain and the man:—

"Are you wounded?"

"I am well enough to be shot."

"Put this man to bed, dress his wounds, take good care of him until he recovers."

"I want to die."

"But you are going to live. You tried to kill me in the name of the King; I pardon you in the name of the Republic."

A shadow crossed Cimourdain's brow. He seemed to wake as with a start, and whispered to himself in a tone of gloomy dejection,—

"Yes, he has a merciful nature, there can be no doubt."

VI.

A HEALED BREAST, BUT A BLEEDING HEART.

A Gash is quickly healed; but there was elsewhere one more seriously wounded than Cimourdain. This was the woman who had been shot, and whom the beggar Tellmarch had rescued from the great pool of blood at the farm Herbe-en-Pail.

Michelle Flécharde was in a more critical condition than Tellmarch had supposed. There was a wound in the shoulder-blade corresponding to that above her breast; one ball had broken her collar-bone, while another had entered her shoulder; but as the lung was uninjured, she might recover. Tellmarch was what in peasant language is called a "philosopher," that is to say, a combination of doctor, surgeon, and wizard.

Upon the bed of seaweed in his underground den he nursed the wounded woman, using those mysterious remedies called "simples;" and thanks to his care, she lived.

The collar-bone knitted together, the wounds in the breast and the shoulder closed, and after a few weeks the wounded woman became convalescent.

One morning she was able to walk out of the *carnichot*, leaning on Tellmarch; she seated herself under the trees, in the sun. Tellmarch knew very little about her; for a wound in the breast necessitates silence, and during the death-like agony which preceded her recovery she had hardly spoken a word. Whenever she seemed about to open her lips, Tellmarch would prevent her; but he could not control her thoughts, and he observed by the expression in her eyes the heart-rending nature of her ever-recurring fancies. This morning she felt strong, and could almost walk alone. The doctor who has cured his patient enjoys a sense of fatherhood; and as he watched her, Tellmarch felt happy. The good old man began to smile as he addressed her.

"Well, it seems we are up; our wounds are healed."

"All but those of the heart."

And presently she added,—

"Then you don't know where they are?"

"Whom do you mean?" asked Tellmarch.

"My children."

The word "then" revealed a whole world of meaning; it seemed to say: "Since you do not speak of them to me, since you have been with me for so many days without opening your lips to me on the subject, since you silence me every time I try to speak, since you seem to fear that I am going to talk about them,—it must mean that you have nothing to tell me." During the course of her fever she had often noticed that whenever, in her delirious ramblings, she had called for her children (the perceptions of delirium are sometimes acute), the old man would make no reply.

The truth was that Tellmarch did not know what to tell her. It is not easy to speak to a mother of her lost children; and besides, what did he know? Nothing at all, in fact,—that a mother had been shot, that he had found this mother on the ground, that when he had lifted her up she was nearly dead, that this dying woman had three children, and lastly, that the Marquis de Lantenac, after ordering the mother to be shot, had carried away the children; and here his information ceased. What had become of the children? Were they still living? Having made inquiries, he had learned that there were

two boys, and a little girl barely weaned; and this was the extent of his knowledge. He asked himself more questions than he could answer in regard to this unhappy family; but the neighbors whom he had asked only shook their heads. M. de Lantenac was a man of whom no one cared to talk.

They were equally reluctant either to speak about Lantenac or to talk to Tellmarch. Peasants have their own peculiar superstitions. They disliked Tellmarch. Tellmarch le Caimand was a perplexing man. Why was he always looking up at the sky? What was he doing, what could he be thinking about, when he stood motionless for hours at a time? Surely he must be a very odd sort of man. While the district was in a state of combustion and conflagration, when warfare, devastation, and carnage were the sole occupations of life, when every man was doing his best to burn houses, murder families, massacre outposts, and plunder villages, thinking of nothing but setting ambushes and traps and killing one another, here was this hermit absorbed in nature, enjoying absolute peace of mind, gathering plants and herbs, interested only in flowers, birds, and stars,—of course he was a dangerous character! He must be insane. He never hid behind a bush to fire at his fellow-men. "The man is mad!" said the passers-by. Hence he inspired a certain awe, and men avoided him, thus increasing the isolation of his life.



They asked him no questions, and seldom vouchsafed replies; therefore he had been unable to get the information he wanted. The conflict had been transferred to other districts, and the fighting was more remote. The Marquis de Lantenac had vanished from the horizon; and war must set its foot on a man of Tellmarch's character before he becomes aware of its existence.

After hearing these words, "My children!" Tellmarch ceased to smile, and the mother sank into deep thought. What was passing in her soul? She seemed to have plunged into the depths. Suddenly she looked up at Tellmarch, and repeated her demand almost angrily,—

"My children!"

Tellmarch bent his head like a culprit.

He was thinking of the Marquis de Lantenac, who, so far from returning his thought, had probably forgotten his very existence. He realized the fact as he said to himself, "When a nobleman is in danger he reckons you among his acquaintance; but let the danger pass, and he forgets that he ever saw you."

And he asked himself, "Why, then, did I save him?" To which question he made reply, "Because he was a man."

For some moments he dwelt upon this thought; then he resumed the thread of his meditations,—

"Am I sure of this?"

And presently he repeated those bitter words: "Had I but known!"

This whole experience gave him a sense of oppression, for his own action in the affair was enigmatical to him. His thoughts were sad, since a sense of guilt had crept into them. A kindly act may prove in the end to have been an evil one. He who saves the wolf kills the sheep; he who sets the vulture's wing is responsible for his talons. The unreasoning anger of this mother was therefore justified.

Still he felt a certain consolation in the knowledge that he had saved the mother, which partly balanced his regret for having saved the Marquis.

"But the children?"

The mother was also thinking; and these two currents of thoughts moved side by side, perhaps to mingle unawares in the shadowy land of reverie.

Meanwhile her eyes, gloomy as the night, rested again on Tellmarch.

"We cannot go on like this," she said.

"Hush!" rejoined Tellmarch, putting his finger on his lips.

She continued,—

"I am angry with you for saving me; you did wrong. I would rather have died, for then I should surely see them and know where they are. They would not see me, but I should be near them. The dead must have power to protect."

He took her by the arm, and felt her pulse.

"You must calm yourself, or you will have a relapse."

She asked him almost harshly,—

"When can I go away?"

"Go away?"

"Yes. When shall I be fit for tramping?"

"Never, if you are unreasonable; to-morrow, if you are good."

"What do you call being good?"

"Trusting in God."

"God? What has He done with my children?"

She seemed to be wandering. Her voice had grown very gentle.

"You must see," she went on to say, "that I cannot stay like this. You never had any children; but I am a mother: that makes a difference. One cannot judge of a thing unless he knows what it is like. Did you ever have any children?"

"No," replied Tellmarch.

"But I have. Can I live without my children? I should like to be told why my children are not here. Something is happening, but what it is I cannot understand."

"Come," said Tellmarch, "you are feverish again. You mustn't talk any more."

She looked at him and was silent.

And from that day she kept silence again.

This implicit obedience was more than Tellmarch desired. She spent hour after hour crouching at the foot of the old tree, like one stupefied. She pondered in silence,—that refuge of simple souls who have sounded the gloomy depths of woe. She seemed to give up trying to understand. After a certain point despair becomes unintelligible to the despairing.

As Tellmarch watched her, his sympathy increased. The sight of her suffering excited in this old man thoughts such as a woman might have known. "She may close her lips," he said to himself, "but her eyes will speak, and I see what ails her. She has but one idea; she cannot be resigned to the thought that she is no longer a mother. Her mind dwells constantly on the image of her youngest, whom she was nursing not long ago. How charming it must be to feel a tiny rosy mouth drawing one's soul from out one's body, feeding its own little life on the life of its mother!"

He too was silent, realizing the impotence of speech in the presence of such sorrow.

There is something really terrible in the silence of an unchanging thought, and how can one expect that a mother will listen to reason? Maternity sees but one side. It is useless to argue with it. One sublime characteristic of a mother is her resemblance to a wild animal. The maternal instinct is divine animalism. The mother ceases to be a woman; she becomes a female, and her children are her cubs.

Hence we find in the mother something above reason and at the same time below it,—a something which we call instinct. Guided as she is by the infinite and mysterious will of the universe, her very blindness is charged with penetration.

However anxious to make this unfortunate woman speak, Tellmarch could not succeed. One day he said to her:—

"Unfortunately I am old, and can no longer walk. My strength is exhausted before I reach my journey's end. I would go with you, only that my legs give out in about fifteen minutes and I have to stop and rest. However, it may be just as well for you that I cannot walk far, as my company might be more dangerous than useful. Here, I am tolerated; but the Blues suspect me because I am a peasant, and the peasants because they believe me to be a wizard."

He waited for an answer, but she did not even raise her eyes.

A fixed idea ends either in madness or heroism. But what heroism can be expected from a poor peasant woman? None whatever. She can be a mother, and that is all. Each day she grew more and more absorbed in her reverie. Tellmarch was watching her.

He tried to keep her busy. He bought her needles, thread, and a thimble, and to the delight of the poor Caimand, she really began to busy herself with sewing; she still dreamed, it is true, but she worked also,—a sure sign of health,—and by degrees her strength returned. She mended her underwear, her dress, and her shoes, her eyes all the while preserving a strange, far-away look. As she sewed she hummed to herself unintelligible songs. She would mutter names, probably children's names, but not distinctly enough for Tellmarch to understand. Sometimes she paused and listened to the birds, as though she expected a message from them. She watched the weather, and he could see her lips move as she talked to herself in a low voice. She had made a bag and filled it with chestnuts, and one morning Tellmarch found her gazing vaguely into the depths of the forest, and he saw that she was all ready to start.

"Where are you going?" he asked.

And she replied,—

"I am going to look for them."

He made no effort to detain her.



VII.

THE TWO POLES OF TRUTH.

After a few weeks, crowded with the vicissitudes of civil war throughout the district of Fougères, the talk ran for the most part upon two men, wholly unlike in character, who were nevertheless engaged in the same work, fighting side by side in the great revolutionary struggle. The savage duel still continued, but the Vendée was losing ground,—especially in Ille-et-Vilaine, where, thanks to the young commander who at

Dol had so opportunely confronted the audacity of six thousand Royalists with that of fifteen hundred patriots, the insurrection, if not suppressed, was at least far less active, and restricted to certain limits. Several successful attacks had followed that exploit, and from these repeated victories a new state of affairs had sprung into existence. Matters had assumed a different aspect, but a singular complication had arisen.

That the Republic was in the ascendant throughout this region of the Vendée was beyond a doubt; but which Republic? Amidst the dawning of triumph, two republics confronted each other,—that of terror, determined to conquer by severity, and that of mercy, striving to win the victory by mildness. Which was to prevail? The visible representatives of these two forms, one of which was conciliatory and the other implacable, were two men, each possessing influence and authority,—one a military commander, the other a civil delegate. Which of the two would win the day? The delegate was supported by a tremendous influence; he came bringing with him the threatening watchword from the Paris Commune to the battalion of Santerre: "No mercy, no quarter!" As a means of compelling implicit obedience to his authority, he had the decree of the Convention reading as follows: "Penalty of death to whomsoever shall set at liberty or connive at the escape of a rebel chief," and also full powers from the Committee of Public Safety, with an injunction commanding obedience to him as a delegate, signed by Robespierre, Danton, and Marat. The soldier, for his part, had but the power that is born of pity.

His weapons of defence were his right arm to chastise the enemy, and his heart to pardon them. As a conqueror, he felt that he had a right to spare the conquered.

Hence a conflict, deep but as yet unacknowledged, between these two men. They lived in different atmospheres, both wrestling with rebellion,—the one armed with the thunderbolts of victory, the other with those of terror.

Throughout the Bocage, men talked of nothing else; and the extreme intimacy of two men of such utterly opposite natures contributed to increase the anxiety of those who were watching them on every side. These two antagonists were friends. Never were two hearts drawn together by a deeper or a nobler sympathy. The man of ungentle nature had saved the life of him who was merciful; the scar on his face bore witness to the fact. These men represented in their own persons the images of death and of life, embodying the principle of destruction and that of peace, and they loved each other. Conceive, if you can, Orestes merciful and Pylades pitiless. Try to imagine Arimanes the brother of Ormus!

Let us also add that of these two men, the one who was called ferocious showed himself at the same time the most brotherly of men. He dressed wounds, nursed the sick, spent his days and nights in the ambulances and hospitals, took pity on the barefooted children, kept nothing for himself, but gave all he had to the poor. He never missed a battle,—always marching at the head of the columns; was ever in the thickest of the fight,—armed, it is true, for he always wore in his belt a sabre and two pistols, yet practically unarmed, for no one had ever seen him draw his sword or raise his pistols. He faced blows, but never returned them. It was said that he had been a priest.

These two men were Gauvain and Cimourdain,—at variance in principles, though united in friendship: it was like a soul cleft in twain; and Gauvain had in truth received the gentler half of Cimourdain's nature. One might say that the latter has bestowed the white ray upon Gauvain, and kept the black one for himself. Hence a secret discord. Sooner or later this suppressed disagreement could hardly fail to explode; and one morning the contest began as follows.

Cimourdain said to Gauvain,—

"What have we accomplished?"

To which the latter replied,—

"You know as well as I. I have dispersed Lantenac's bands. He has but a few men left, and has been driven to the forest of Fougères. In eight days he will be surrounded."

"And in fifteen?"

"He will be captured."

"And then?"

"You have seen my notice?"

"Yes; and what then?"

"He is to be shot."

"A truce to clemency. He must be guillotined."

"I approve of a military death."

"And I of a revolutionary one."

Looking Gauvain full in the face, Cimourdain said,—

"Why did you order those nuns of the convent of Saint-Marc-le-Blanc to be set at liberty?"

"I do not wage war against women," replied Gauvain.

"Those women hate the people; and when there is a question of hatred, one woman is equal to ten men. Why did you refuse to send that band of fanatical old priests, whom you took at Louvigné, before the revolutionary tribunal?"

"Neither do I wage war against old men."

"An old priest is worse than a young one. The rebellion that is advocated by white hair is so much the more dangerous. People have faith in wrinkles. Do not indulge in false pity, Gauvain. The regicide is the true liberator. Keep your eye on the tower of the Temple."

"The Temple Tower! I would have the Dauphin out of it. I am not making war against children."

Cimourdain's eye grew stern.

"Learn then, Gauvain, that one must make war on a woman when her name is Marie-Antoinette, on an old man if he happens to be Pope Pius VI., and upon a child who goes by the name of Louis Capet."

"I am no politician, master."

"Try, then, not to be a dangerous man. Why was it that during the attack of the post of Cossé, when the rebel Jean Treton, repulsed and defeated, rushed alone, sabre in hand, against your entire division, you cried, 'Open the ranks! Let him pass through!'"

"Because it is not fit that fifteen hundred men should be allowed to kill one man."

"And why at Cailleterie d'Astillé, when you saw that your soldiers were about to kill the Vendean Joseph Bézier, who was wounded and just able to drag himself along, did you cry, 'Forward! leave this man to me!' and directly afterwards fire your pistol in the air?"

"Because one shrinks from killing a fallen enemy."

"There you were wrong. Both of these men are leaders at this present moment. Joseph Bézier is known as Moustache, and Jean Treton as Jambe-d'Argent. By saving their lives you presented the Republic with two enemies."



"I should prefer to make friends for her rather than enemies."

"After the victory of Landéan, why did you not shoot the three hundred peasant prisoners?"

"Because Bonchamp pardoned the Republican prisoners, and I wished it to be known that the Republic pardons the Royalist prisoners."

"Then I suppose you will pardon Lantenac if you take him?"

"No."

"Why not,—since you pardoned three hundred peasants?"

"The peasants are only ignorant men. Lantenac knows what he is about."

"But Lantenac is your kinsman."

"And France nearer than he."

"Lantenac is an old man."

"To me Lantenac is a stranger; he has no age. He is ready to summon the English, he represents invasion, he is the country's enemy, and the duel between us can only be ended by his death or mine."

"Remember these words, Gauvain."

"I have said them."

For a while both men remained silent, gazing at each other; then Gauvain continued,—

"This will be a bloody year,—this '93."

"Tate care," cried Cimourdain. "There are terrible duties to be performed, and we must beware of accusing the innocent instrument. How long since we have blamed the doctor for his patient's illness? Yes, the chief characteristic of this stupendous year is its pitiless severity. And why is this? Because it is the great revolutionary year,—the year which is the very incarnation of revolution. Revolution feels no more pity for its enemy, the old world, than the surgeon feels for the gangrene against which he is fighting. The business of revolution is to extirpate royalty in the person of the king, aristocracy in that of the nobleman, despotism in that of the soldier, and superstition and barbarism in the persons of the priest and the judge,—in one word, of every form

of tyranny in the image of the tyrant. The operation is a fearful one, but revolution performs it with a steady hand. As to the amount of sound flesh that must be sacrificed, ask a Boerhave what he thinks of it. Do you suppose it possible to remove a tumor without loss of blood? Can a conflagration be extinguished without violent efforts? These terrible necessities are the very condition of success. A surgeon may be compared to a butcher, or a healer may seem like an executioner. Revolution is devoted to its fatal work. It mutilates that it may save. What! can you expect it to take pity on the virus? Would you have it merciful to poison? It will not listen. It holds the past within its grasp, and it means to make an end of it. It cuts deeply into civilization, that it may promote the health of mankind. You suffer, no doubt; but consider for how short a time it will endure,—only so long as the operation requires; and after that is over you will live. Revolution is amputating the world; hence this hemorrhage,—'93."

"A surgeon is calm," said Gauvain, "and the men I see are violent."

"Revolution requires the aid of savage workmen," replied Cimourdain; "it repulses all trembling hands; it trusts only such as are inexorable. Danton is the impersonation of the terrible, Robespierre of the inflexible, Saint-Just of the immovable, and Marat of the implacable. Take note of it, Gauvain. We need these names. They are worth as much as armies to us. They will terrify Europe."

"And possibly the future also," replied Gauvain. He paused, and then continued,—

"But really, master, you are mistaken. I accuse no one. My idea of revolution is that it shall be irresponsible. We ought not to say this man is innocent, or that one is guilty. Louis XVI. is like a sheep cast among lions. He wishes to escape, and in trying to defend himself he would bite if he could; but one cannot turn into a lion at will. His weakness is regarded as a crime; and when the angry sheep shows his teeth, 'Ah, the traitor!' cry the lions, and they proceed straightway to devour him, and afterwards fall to fighting among themselves."

"The sheep is a brute."

"And what are the lions?"

This answer set Cimourdain thinking.

"The lions," he replied, "represent the human conscience, principles, ideas."

"It is they who have caused the Reign of Terror."

"Some day the Revolution will justify all that."

"Take care lest Terror should prove the calumny of the Revolution."

Gauvain continued,—

"Liberty, equality, fraternity,—these are the dogmas of peace and harmony. Why give them so terrible an aspect? What are we striving to accomplish? To bring all nations under one universal republic. Well, then, let us not terrify them. Of what use is intimidation? Neither nations nor birds can be attracted by fear. We must not do evil that good may come. We have not overturned the throne to leave the scaffold standing. Death to the king, and life to the nations. Let us strike off the crowns, but spare the heads. Revolution means concord, and not terror. Schemes of benevolence are but poorly served by merciless men. Amnesty is to me the grandest word in human language. I am opposed to the shedding of blood, save as I risk my own. Still, I am but a soldier; I can do no more than fight. Yet if we are to lose the privilege of pardoning, of what use is it to conquer? Let us be enemies, if you will, in battle; but when victory is ours, then is the time to be brothers."

"Take care!" repeated Cimourdain for the third time; "take care, Gauvain! You are dearer to me than a son."

And he added, thoughtfully,—

"In times like these pity may be nothing less than treason in another form."

Listening to these two men, one might have fancied himself hearing a dialogue between a sword and an axe.

