

IN THE TIME OF LAFAYETTE



1—Early in the Night.

It was a terrible night. Not terrible because of a storm, not terrible because of the lightning or the wind or the rain, but terrible because of the wickedness of men.

The whole city of Paris seemed to have gone mad. Persons who had been kindly enough, who had little children of their own, and dear old grandfathers and grandmothers, watched the carts go by that held the wretched people on their way to have their heads cut off by the instrument called the guillotine.

Little children were homeless and without food because they happened to be the children of aristocrats, and the people of Paris hated aristocrats.

The dance became faster and faster; the torches flared; the light and shadows made the faces of the people under the red caps more wicked than ever.

Not long before this night, the beautiful Princess de Lamballe, the dear friend of the imprisoned Queen Marie Antoinette, had been dragged through the streets—and afterwards through the same streets on a pike.

It was a terrible night over a hundred years ago, when Hugh O'Regan and Henry Bahe met in the streets of Paris.

Hugh O'Regan was about the same age as young Bahe. His grandfather, the Count O'Regan, had served under Dillon in the Irish Brigade, and he and his mother had come to Paris to live in his grandfather's house.

"I leave thee my heart, For all my heart is thine; Time can never part, When love and love entwine."

When the returned, she was gone. He found a piece of white paper in the floor, on which was scrawled in charcoal: "I have been arrested. Trust in God. We shall, at best, meet in heaven. Je te laisse mon coeur."

"About the same time Henry Bahe had followed a crowd who were singing and dancing. He was fifteen years old, and his curiosity much to be forgiven. When he returned to the house in which his parents had lodged since Lafayette had left Paris, they were gone.

"The citizens had taken the aristocrats to the guillotine, the servant said, as well as Henry could understand, for he did not know French well; and he had better run or they would cut his head off, too."

"And so, on this terrible night, when the streets of Paris resounded with shouts and vile songs, and torches flared everywhere, and men and women and children, with red caps on their heads, danced and sang songs in honor of Liberty, these two boys stood at the corner of a street, knowing no which way to turn.

"I will never be well again; For all the chains that bind, Are broken—so farewell!"

"His hair, long and curly, fell on his shoulders. A light sword, a gift

from his grandfather, hung by his side. He was large for his age, and at home in Ireland no noted had he been in all athletic exercises that he was rather too proud of his strength.

Henry Bahe, who stood near him watching the hideous dance, was slighter than Hugh. Baseball had not been invented in America, but he could ride a pony with anybody, toss quoits, and he had even tried his skill at quintan—a old-fashioned form of polo.

"We never break our word," answered Hugh, creeping through the shadows toward the trees.

"You speak English," Hugh said, in his soft voice, "and you are in trouble."

"And you are Irish," said Henry, holding out his hand, "and—with a quick look at his face—"and are in trouble."

"Alas, yes," answered Hugh, in that soft tone, and accent which betrayed his nationality, "I am very sad, and I know not what to do."

"And I am ever sadder," said Henry, drawing to this boy at the sense of his loneliness. The one who spoke his language seemed like a friend. "I am most wretched. My father and mother have been taken away by these demons who pretend to love liberty. Liberty means a different thing over in our country. We did not hurt women, or murder, or slug and dance like fools. Why, even old Parson Duchoe, who wanted Gen. Washington to betray the cause, was not hurt. Oh, that we were home again!"

"We might fight in Ireland, if we could," said Hugh, who, grave and sad, looked much older than he was. "We are not permitted to know what freedom is."

"And may I ask your name?" said Henry.

"The Count Hugh O'Regan," "Count?" whispered Henry, looking around. "They would kill you if they heard you say that. Many persons are guillotined every day simply because they bear titles."

"I am what I am," said Hugh, proudly. "We were in Brittany when these horrors broke out, but my mother hastened here, believing we could save my grandfather's house, which was in charge of servants, and put me quietly to school. I had been only two days with the good Abbe Gaillard when—but what is that?"

What seemed to be a black bundle on the ground outside the circle of dancers moved and stood erect. A man, hideous in face, rushed at it, and beat it to the stones. It fell with a groan.

Hugh half drew his sword. "Stop!" Henry Bahe said. "If you fight you are lost. And I must ask you to help me, though I know not how. I have lost my father and mother, and I must save them."

"And I my mother. You must help me, too."

"Mother of God, help us," he whispered, clutching Henry's arm. "His Father Gaillard—the wretches have almost killed him."

"Stay—he has reached the shadow of

the tree. No—I spoke hastily. You promised to help me, and I will not desert you—even if I must risk my life for a Roman priest."

"If we go forward, we shall attract attention to the old man. Wait—a moment—let me think. I tell you, he said, as Hugh struggled, "that you are a fool. Wait! I will help you; and no English descendant breaks his word."

Hugh stood still, his eyes fixed on the figure that now lay in the shadow of the trees. It was plain to him that his companion was right. Some soldiers had joined the dancing ring, and two drums lay on the ground, east there hastily—for there was no order among the soldiers in those days.

"I will draw them around me," said Bahe, struck by a sudden thought. "God help us!" ejaculated Hugh. "You will run to the right, into the Faubourg; at the first corner is my lodging. It was an inn, and there is a sign hanging above the door. Go in—Jacques the servant has run away long ago. And now for it. How do you say, 'I am an American?'" asked Bahe.

"Je suis Americain," "Now," whispered Bahe, growing very pale, and setting his teeth, "go to your old man; but I expect you to help me to the death."

Henry Bahe breathed hard. Then he sprang forward like a deer, jumped onto the big drum, and seized the little one. Hat-tat-rat-tat.

"Je suis Americain," he called out, in a shrill, high voice. "Yankee Doodle die." And then he crowded with all the strength of his lungs.

"Vive l'Amérique," cried the soldiers. And Henry began in a high voice the song, "Yankee Doodle."

Then he began to sing. To make him stand higher, the soldiers brought him an empty wine cask. Some of them had been in America, too, even though for when he sang with his Doodle, with many gestures with his drum-sticks, they joined in the chorus.

But suddenly there was a howl; a soldier had caught sight of Hugh and the priest. Henry became aware of this. He jumped from his perch, and reached Hugh's side just in time to strike back the arm of the soldier with his clasped knife. The boy and the priest vanished in the darkness. Henry faced the soldier, who made a movement to grasp him. Henry threw the drum in his face and ran.

"Je suis Americain," he said. "Aristocrat! Aristocrat! Hang him," called the soldier; but Henry had disappeared.

The dancers of the Armagnole soon returned to their places. "Ah, what a droll, savage Yankee boy," they said. And some of them listened to the stories told by the soldiers, who had been in America, of the strange, barbarous manners of the country. And the old priest had escaped—what of it?—tomorrow, he would die, they said. All priests must be killed by good citizens sooner or later.

When Henry crept into the doorway of his lodging-house he was dripping with perspiration. It was not that he had run so fast, but that even when he had seemed boldest. He believed that if he lost his life his father and mother might be lost, and this was enough to make him afraid of death.

He found Hugh and the Abbe Gaillard in one of the bedrooms, of the deserted house. Hugh had got a candle, and as few boys then were even without tinder and flint—there were no matches—he easily made a light. The old priest sat in an armchair; he was very white, and a cut in his forehead was bandaged with Hugh's handkerchief.

"They both started as they heard Henry's footsteps. As he entered the old priest held out his thin hand. "Ah, my brave boy," he said, "I thank you—you have saved our lives. And I thank you how grateful I am, since I have with me the Blessed Sacrament."

"Henry bowed; he did not fully comprehend. "Monsieur," said Hugh, gravely, "I promise you that your father and mother shall be saved. You know not what you have done, but you have brought a great blessing on yourself to-night. I promise."

"Henry was silent. Then he took Hugh's hand. "As sure," he said, "as my name is Henry Bahe, if what you say turns out to be true—if your God saves my parents, I will worship Him—I will have your old priest tell me how to do it. I like his face."

"But he is a Jesuit," said Hugh, looking straight into Henry's face. Henry hesitated. "Well, I have been told—but never mind—the must be good since he has been evilly treated by those fiends. And he is a brave man. Now you must help me find my father and mother."

"Father Gaillard had listened; he understood English sufficiently to get at what Henry was saying. "His father and mother?" he asked of Hugh. "What does he say of his father and mother?" "They are in prison."

"No," said the boy; "I am of English descent," he added proudly. "My name is Henry Bahe."

"Bahe," said the priest; "Bahe — Bahe." He tried it again to get the pronunciation. "Ah, I remember. Your father and mother are with Mme. O'Regan, in the Conciergerie. It was Madame who sent me by a trusted servant a note, telling me that she and Americans had been thrust into prison. She told me also of a dying nun in the same prison. To her I was going, when the mob, God forgive them! recognized me."

"I must go," he said, "to find this prison. You are safe. There is wine in the cupboard, and meat downstairs. I will leave you the key. The landlord will never come back. He was guillotined yesterday for harboring an aristocrat."

"You must not go," said Hugh. "It means death. We must consult."

"I am sure," said Hugh, "that God will not let me break my word." And he turned to the priest.

"Oh, Father," said Hugh, the weight of grief falling heavier on his heart, "I must go, too—I must, I must—I think of my dear mother among those demons. I will, at least, die with her."

Henry took his hand again. "Let us go!" "Father Gaillard saw that he could not keep them, and he felt a faintness creeping over him.

"Hugh drew Bahe to his knees with him. And then the old priest blessed them both. Hugh rushed up to him and kissed him on both cheeks, and Henry hastily brought wine and bread and put them, with the key, on the table within reach of the Abbe.

"The boy went downstairs together. The old man's blessing did me good—though my father would laugh over it with his friend, Mr. Tom Paine," said Henry. "I don't care if he is a Jesuit—he is a good man. But—what shall I call you?"

"Well, Hugh, you must put on some of my clothes. You had better not go out again with those clothes. You are an aristocrat; they will recognize you as a—what do they call it?"

He thanked Henry. (In a few minutes he had dressed himself in a suit of coarse brown cloth, put on a round cap, and carefully laid his ruffles and sword aside. Henry gave him a stout stick, and they went into the street. The Abbe waved his hand to them.

"God will reward Hugh's faith," he said, sinking back into his chair. "Oh, if I could walk!"

"He did not lock the door of the room. The boys might return, pursued, and all must be open to them. Surely two boys never started out to do a more hopeless thing. The Conciergerie, as the prison was called, was doubly guarded. They had no friends, and at any moment they might on some pretext be arrested and guillotined. At this time neither women or children were spared.

"I feel," said Hugh, as they went on, "that only God can help us. I shall say the Litany of the Blessed Virgin as I go along. She went to look for the Infant Lord when He was lost, and we have lost our parents. She has felt our sorrow. She can understand us."

Henry said nothing, but when they had walked on in silence for a time, he spoke. "If I knew a payer, I would say it."

"Say 'Son of God, help us.' Henry repeated it reverently. "Now," said he, "we must leave the rest to Him."

"They were passing some official house. A crowd of howling women ran down the steps, singing a blasphemous song. One of them stopped, and insisted on pinning two stained roses on the jackets of the boys.

"Let them be," said Henry, as Hugh was about to tear his off. "They are red, white and blue."

"They passed a group of men on a corner. Hugh asked one of them the way to the prison. "Ah," said the man, who had too much wine, pointing out the direction. "You will be just in time, if you want to join the condemned. Robespierre has ordered that a great crowd of prisoners shall be guillotined by moonlight. Hurry! It seems to me, citizens," he said turning to his friends, "that if this goes on there will be none of us left."

as the Revolutionists called it—between July and August. The air was still. Slowly a heavy cart came out of the iron gates. And just then a quarter to nine o'clock struck.

The cart moved heavily onward. The faces of all the condemned could be plainly seen. There was no need of torches. The moon was full and silvery. Hugh felt Henry Bahe clutch his arm.

Hugh looked. He saw his mother's face, calm, serene, smiling at him; she held her rosary in her hand. Leaning against her was a weeping woman; and near this woman stood a man, pale, horror-stricken. Hugh knew at once that this was Henry's father. They were on their way to death.

"You promised—you promised," whispered Henry. "You cannot take them now." It seemed frozen to the spot. His father did not see him, and his mother's face was hidden.

Hugh was a strong boy. He thrust right and left with his stick—and perhaps the rosette on his jacket saved him from being knocked down at once. He made his way, however, thinking of nothing but the faces before him, he sprang upon the cart and clung to its side.

"Hugh, God bless you," and he felt his mother's arms around his neck. "Monsieur," he said, to the wild-eyed man, "Henry is living; he prays for you—see."

Henry's eyes met his father's, and a great sob rose from the man's throat. Strong hands tried to tear Hugh from his mother; he clung to her and Mrs. Bahe to him.

"Henry is alive," he said again, and Mrs. Bahe raised her pale, agonized face to see her son, whom the people held back.

"You promised," shrieked Henry, above the noise, "you promised." "Don't you see," Hugh cried, frantically, as the guards threw him to the ground, "these people are Americans!"

"Aristocrats," said the guards. "Let me die with them," cried Henry, jumping, bleeding as he was, on the wheel.

"I will die, too, but oh, Mother of God, I promised," cried Hugh. The tumbril stopped; it was impeded by the crowd ahead; there had arisen a sudden commotion in advance—but the groups about the condemned prisoners were suddenly silent. A priest man, who stood near the cart, muttered—

"Are whole families to be thus slaughtered?" "We have had enough of it," murmured his companion.

"Leave me! Leave me!" whispered Mrs. Bahe, to Hugh. "Ah, no, and my boy turn to God. This kind woman has taught me—"

"Halt," called out a strong voice in front. "Halt—I command you."

"It is too late—too late—too late," shrieked Henry.

"No," cried Hugh, "It cannot be too late. And with all his heart he prayed; "Help of Christians! Help of Christians!"

The cart moved on; both the boys had climbed into it. Henry's arms were about his mother's neck. "We are Americans," he called out, "You must not kill us—we are not aristocrats."

"They are Americans," repeated Hugh. "They are the father and mother of this boy. See," he cried, pointing to the rosettes, "we wear the tricolor."

"Robespierre has fallen," called out another voice from the crowd. "Let the prisoners go. There has been too much blood."

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