

there—of the shadow to disappear within it. He had once more become the formidable, the dangerous wanderer—the captain of the invincibles—the chief of the underground forces—the master of the woods. Gauvain had the victory, but Lantenac had his liberty. Henceforth Lantenac had safety before him, limitless freedom, an inexhaustible choice of asylums. He was not to be seen, unapproachable, inaccessible. The lion had been taken in the snare, and had broken through. Well, he had re-entered it.

The Marquis de Lantenac had voluntarily, spontaneously, by his own free act, left the forest, the shadow, security, liberty, to return to that horrible peril; intrepid when Gauvain saw him the first time plunge into the conflagration at the risk of being engulfed therein; intrepid a second time, when he descended that ladder which delivered him to his enemies—a ladder of escape to others, of perdition to himself.

And why had he thus acted? To save three children. And now what was it they were about to do to this man? Guillotine him.

Had these three children been his own? No. Of his family? No. For three little beggars—chance children, foundlings, unknown, ragged, barefooted—this noble, this prince, this old man, free, safe, triumphant—for evasion is a triumph—had risked all, compromised all, lost all; and at the same time he restored the babes, had proudly brought his own head; and this head, hitherto terrible, but now august, he offered to his foes. And what were they about to do? Accept the sacrifice.

The Marquis de Lantenac had had the choice between the life of others and his own; in this superb option he had chosen death. And it was to be granted him. He was to be killed. What a reward for heroism! Respond to a generous act by a barbarous one! What a degrading of the Revolution! What a lowering of the Republic!

As this man of prejudice and servitude, suddenly transformed, returned into the circle of humanity, the men who strove for deliverance and freedom elected to cling to the horrors of civil war, to the routine of blood, to fratricide! The divine law of forgiveness, abnegation, redemption, sacrifice, existed for the combatants of error, and did not exist for the soldiers of truth!

What! Not to make a struggle in magnanimity? Resign themselves to this defeat? They, the stronger, to show themselves the weaker? They, victorious, to become assassins, and cause it to be said that there were those on the side of Monarchy who saved children, and those on the side of the Republic who slew old men!

The world would see this great soldier, this powerful old man of eighty, this disarmed warrior, stolen rather than captured, seized in the performance of a good action, seized by his own permission with the sweat of a noble devotion still upon his brow, mount the steps of the scaffold as he would mount to the grandeur of an apotheosis! Would they lay beneath the knife that head about which would circle, as suppliants, the souls of the three little angels he had saved! And before this punishment—infamous for the butchers—a smile would be seen on the face of that man, and the blush of shame on the face of the Republic! And this would be accomplished in the presence of Gauvain, the chief! And he who might hinder this would abstain. He would rest content under that haughty absolution; "This concerns thee no longer." And he was not even to say to himself that in such a case abdication of authority was complicity! He was not to perceive that, of two men engaged in an action so hideous, he who permits the thing is worse than the man who does the work, because he is the coward!

But this death—had he not threatened it! Had not he, Gauvain, the merciful, declared that Lantenac should have no mercy, that he would himself deliver that Lantenac to Cimourdain? That head—he owed it. Well, he would pay the debt. So be it. But was this, indeed, the same head?

Hitherto, Gauvain had seen in Lantenac only the barbarous warrior, the fanatic of royalty and feudalism, the slaughterer of prisoners, an assassin whom war had let loose, a man of blood. That man he had not feared; he had proscribed that proscription; the implacable would have found him inexorable. Nothing more simple; the road was marked out and terribly plain to follow; everything foreseen; he would kill those who killed; the path of horror was clear and straight. Unexpectedly that straight line had been broken; a sudden turn in the way revealed a new horizon; a metamorphosis had taken place. An unknown Lantenac entered upon the scene. A hero sprung up from the monster; more than a hero—a man. More than a soul—a heart. It was no longer a murderer that Gauvain had before him, but a saviour. Gauvain was flung to the earth by a flood of celestial radiance. Lantenac had struck him with the thunderbolt of generosity.

And Lantenac transformed could not transform Gauvain!

What! Was this stroke of light to produce no counter-stroke? Was the man of the Past to push on in front, and the man of the Future to fall back? Was the man of barbarism and superstition suddenly to unfold angel pinions, and soar aloft, to watch the man of the ideal crawl beneath him in the mire and the night? Gauvain to lie wallowing in the blood-stained rut of the Past, while Lantenac rose to a new existence in the sublime Future?

This blood which he was about to spill—for to let it be spilled was to spill it himself—was not this his blood, his, Gauvain's? His grandfather was dead, but his great-uncle lived, and this great-uncle was the Marquis de Lantenac. Would not that ancestor who had gone to the grave rise to prevent his brother from being forced into it? Would he not command his grandson henceforth to respect that crown of white hair become pure as his own angelic halo? Did not a spectre loom with indignant eyes between him, Gauvain, and Lantenac?

Was, then, the aim of the Revolution to denaturalize man? Had it been born to break the ties of family and to stifle the instincts of humanity? Far from it. It was to affirm these glorious realities, not to deny them, that '89 had risen. To overturn the bastilles was to deliver humanity; to abolish feudality was to found families. The author being the point from whence authority sets out, and authority being included in the author, there can be no other authority than paternity; hence the legitimacy of the queen-bee who creates her people, and who, being mother, is queen; hence the absurdity of the king-men, who, not being father, cannot be master. Hence the suppression of the king; hence the Republic that comes from all this. Family, humanity, revolution. Revolution is the accession of the people, and at the bottom the People is Man.

The thing to decide was whether, when Lantenac returned into humanity Gauvain should go back to his family. The

thing to decide was whether the uncle and nephew should meet again in a higher light, or whether the nephew's recoil should reply to the uncle's progress.

The questions in this pathetic debate between Gauvain and his conscience had resolved itself into this, and the answer seemed to come of itself—he must save Lantenac. Yes, but France?

Here the dizzying problem suddenly changed its face. What! France at bay? France betrayed, flung open, dismantled? Having no longer a moat Germany would cross the Rhine; no longer a wall, Italy would leap the Alps and Spain the Pyrenees. There would remain for France that great abyss, the ocean. She had for her the gulf. She could back herself against it, and giantess, supported by the entire sea, could combat the whole earth. A position, after all, impregnable. Yet no; this position would fail her. The ocean no longer belonged to her. In this ocean was England. True, England was at a loss how to cross it. Well, a man would fling her a bridge; a man would extend his hand to her; a man would go to Pitt, to Craig, to Cornwallis, to Dundas, to the pirates, and say, "Come!" A man would cry, "England seize France!" And this man was the Marquis de Lantenac.

This man was now held fast. After three months of chase, of pursuit, of frenzy, he had at last been taken. The hand of the Revolution had just closed upon the accursed one; the clenched fist of '93 had seized this royalist murderer by the throat. Through that mysterious premeditation from on high which mixes itself in human affairs, it was in the dungeon belonging to his family that this parricide awaited his punishment. The feudal lord was in the feudal oubliette. The stones of his own castle rose against him and shut him in, and he who had sought to betray his country had been betrayed by his own dwelling. God had visibly arranged all this; the hour had sounded; the Revolution had taken prisoner this public enemy; he could no longer fight, he could no longer struggle, he could no longer harm; in this Vendée, which owned so many arms, his was the sole brain; with his extinction civil war will be extinct. He was held fast; tragic and fortunate conclusion. After so many massacres, so much carnage, he was a captive. This man, who had slain so mercilessly, it was his turn to die. And if some one should be found to save him?

Cimourdain, that is to say, '93, held Lantenac, that is to say, Monarchy, and could any one be found to snatch its prey from that hand of bronze? Lantenac, the man in whom concentrated that sheaf of scourges called the Past—the Marquis de Lantenac was in the tomb—the heavy eternal door had closed upon him—would some one come from without to draw back the bolt? This social malefactor was dead, and with him died revolt, fratricidal contest, bestial war; and would anyone be found to resuscitate him? Oh, how that death's head would grin! That spectre would say: "It is well; I live again—the idiots!"

How he would once more set himself at his hideous work; how joyously and implacably this Lantenac would plunge anew into the gulf of war and hatred, and on the morrow would again be seen houses burning, prisoners massacred, the wounded slain, women shot.

But after all, did not Gauvain exaggerate this action which had fascinated him? Three children were lost; Lantenac saved them. But who had flung them into that peril? Was it not Lantenac? Who had set those three cradles in the heart of the conflagration? Was it not Imánus? Who was Imánus? The lieutenant of the marquis. The one responsible is the chief. Hence the incendiary and the assassin was Lantenac. What had he done so admirable? He had not persisted—that was all. After having conceived the crime he had recoiled before it. He had become horrified at himself. That mother's cry had awakened in him those remains of human mercy which exist in all souls, even the most hardened. At this cry he had returned upon his steps. Out of the night where he had buried himself he hastened toward the day. After having brought about the crime, he caused its defeat. His whole merit consisted in this—not to have been a monster to the end. And in return for so little, to restore him all! To give him freedom, the fields, the plains, air, day; restore to him the forest which he would employ to shelter his bandits; restore him liberty, which he would use to bring about slavery; restore life, which he would devote to death.

As for trying to come to an agreement with him, attempting to treat with that arrogant soul, propose his deliverance under certain conditions, demand if he would consent, were his life spared, henceforth to abstain from all hostilities and all revolt—what an error such an offer would be—what an advantage it would give him—what scorn would the proposer hurl against himself—how he would baffle the questioner by his answer—"Keep such shame for yourself—kill me!"

There was, in short, nothing to do with this man but to slay or set him free. He stood upon a pinnacle. He was ever ready to soar or to plunge down. To himself he was both an eagle and a precipice. Marvellous soul! To slay him? What anxiety! To set him free? What a responsibility!

Lantenac saved, all would begin anew with Vendée, like a struggle with a hydra whose heads had been spared. In the twinkling of an eye, with the rapidity of a meteor, the flame extinguished by this man's disappearance would blaze up again. Lantenac would never rest until he had carried out that execrable plan of flinging, like the cover of a tomb, Monarchy upon the Republic, and England upon France. To save Lantenac was to sacrifice France. Life to Lantenac was death to a host of innocent beings—men, women, children, caught anew in that domestic war; it was the landing of the English, the retreat of the Revolution; it was the sacking of the villages, the rending of the people, the mangling of Brittany; it was flinging the prey back into the tiger's claw. And Gauvain, in the midst of uncertain gleams and rays of introverted light beheld vaguely rise upon his reverie this problem, which stood before him—the setting the tiger at liberty.

And then the quest reappeared under its first aspect; the stone of Sisyphus, which is no other than the combat of man with himself, fell back—Was Lantenac that tiger?

Perhaps he had been, but was he still? Gauvain was dizzy beneath the whirl and conflict in his soul; his thoughts turned and circled upon themselves with snake-like swiftness. After the closest examination could anyone deny Lantenac's devotion, his stoical self-abnegation, his superb disinterestedness? What! To prove his humanity in the presence of the open jaws of civil war! What! In the contest of inferior truths to bring the highest truths of all! What! To prove that above royalties, beyond revolutions, above earthly questions, is the grand tenderness of the human soul, the recognition of the protection due to the feeble from the strong, the

safety due to those who are perishing from those who are saved, the paternity due to all little children from all old men. To prove these magnificent truths by giving up his life! To be a general, and renounce strategy, battle, revenge! What! To be a royalist, and to take a balance and put in one scale the king of France, a monarchy of fifteen centuries, old laws to re-establish, ancient society to restore, and in the other, three little unknown peasants, and to find the king, the throne, the sceptre, and fifteen centuries of monarchy too light to weigh against these three innocent creatures. And then—was all that nothing? What! Could he who had done this remain a tiger? Ought he to be treated like a wild beast? No, no, no! The man who had just illuminated the abyss of civil war by the light of a divine action was not a monster. The sword-bearer was metamorphosed into the angel of light. The infernal Satan had again become the celestial Lucifer. Lantenac had atoned for all his barbarities by one act of sacrifice; in losing himself materially he had saved himself morally; he had become innocent again; he had signed his own pardon. Does not the right of self-forgiveness exist? From this time he was to be venerated.

III.—THE COMMANDANT'S HOOD.

It was, after all, with Duty that these victors had to deal. Duty came forth—stern to Cimourdain's eyes—terrible to those of Gauvain. Simple before the one; complex, diverse, tortuous, before the other.

Midnight sounded; then one o'clock.

Without being conscious of it, Gauvain had gradually approached the entrance to the breach. The expiring conflagration only flung out intermittent gleams. The plateau on the other side of the tower caught the reflexion and became visible for an instant, then disappeared from view as the smoke swept over the flames. This glare, reviving in jets and cut by sudden shadows, threw objects out of proportion and made the sentinels look like phantoms. Lost in his reverie, Gauvain mechanically watched the strife between the flame and smoke. These appearances and disappearances of the light before his eyes had a strange, subtle analogy with the revelation and concealment of the truth in his soul.

Suddenly, between two clouds of smoke, a long streak of flame shot out from the decreasing furnace, lit up vividly the summit of the plateau, and brought out the shadow of a waggon against the vermilion background.

Gauvain stared at this waggon; it was surrounded by horsemen wearing gendarmes' hats. It seemed to him the waggon which he had looked at through Guéchamp's glass several hours before, when the sun was setting and the waggon away off on the verge of the horizon. Some men were mounted on the cart and appeared to be unloading it. That which they took off seemed to be heavy, and now and then gave out the sound of the clanking iron. It would have been difficult to tell what it was; it looked like beams for a framework. Two of the men lifted between them and set upon the ground a box, which, as well as he could judge by the shape, contained a triangular object.

The streak of the light faded; all was again buried in darkness. Gauvain stood with fixed eyes lost in thought upon that which the darkness hid.

Lanterns were lighted; men came and went on the plateau; but the forms of those moving about were confused, and, moreover, Gauvain was below and on the other side of the ravine, and therefore could see little of what was passing. Voices spoke, but he could not catch the words. Now and then came a sound like the shock of timbers striking together. He could hear also a strange metallic creaking, like the sharpening of a scythe.

Two o'clock struck.

(To be continued.)

AT HOME AND ABROAD.

M. Thiers is endeavouring to create a feeling of sympathy abroad for the French Republic.

A despatch to the London *Globe* from Shanghai says war has been declared between China and Japan.

All the delegates to the International Congress at Berne have signed the Postal Convention, except those from France.

Orders have been issued for the commencement of criminal proceedings against members of the White League in Louisiana.

At a large mass meeting held at Buffalo last week, the adoption of the proposed Reciprocity Treaty was most strongly opposed.

The idea is gaining favour in Denmark of submitting the Schleswig-Holstein difficulty to the arbitration of the Queen of England.

The inhabitants of Turkestan are plundering tribes friendly to Russia, which it is expected will cause the armed intervention of the latter country.

It is rumoured that another French man-of-war is to be stationed off the coast, at the disposal of the Pope, in place of the "Orenoque," which was fatally withdrawn from Civita Vecchia.

At the Annual Convention of the Wool Manufacturers of the United States, held at New York last week, a resolution was adopted unanimously opposing the ratification of the Reciprocity Treaty with Canada.

The management of the Direct Cable Company have decided to abandon about thirty miles of the lost cable, and effect a splice at a more favourable point. About 1,100 miles of cable have been laid so far.

The Buenos Ayres insurrection is becoming still more serious. The vanguard of the rebel forces is at the gates of the capital. Residents are leaving the city in the greatest alarm, and all merchant vessels are provided with convoys.

Mr. Bradlaugh came out at the bottom of the poll at the election at Northampton. After the election, a disappointed mob of his supporters made such a disturbance that the Riot Act had to be read and the military called out.

The French Minister to Spain tells M. Sagasta that the sentiments of France are opposed to the Carlists and in sympathy with the Government. The French Government has announced its intention of taking measures to prevent the shipment of contraband of war across the Spanish Frontier.

It is now authoritatively stated that the documents detained by Count Von Arnim are State papers. Heavy bail has been refused for the prisoner, and it is likely he will shortly be arraigned before the Criminal Court in Berlin. A special to the *Pall Mall Gazette* from that city, says the Emperor William has desired that no stone shall be left unturned in order to recover the stolen papers.