

They had marched a full half hour ; from time to time as I have said before a ray of the moon filtrating between two clouds, shewed the guide still guarded by a soldier on each side as he lent an attentive ear to the least noise. By times they heard on their flank a rustling amidst the leaves, the head of the column stopped abruptly.—Several voices exclaimed : who goes there ! Naught answered, and the peasant said laughingly : It is a hare starting from its lair. Often the two soldiers thought they saw in motion before them something they could not discover, and would say one to the other, look, look, and the Vendean would answer : It is your shadow, let us proceed. Suddenly at a turn in the road they beheld two men rising before them ; they attempted to speak ; one of the soldiers fell before he could utter a word, the other staggered a moment and had but time to exclaim for succour. That instant a score of shots were fired, by the light of the flash the men were seen flying, one of them staggered, crawled a short way along the bank in hopes of reaching the other side of the hedge. They ran towards him ; it was not the guide ; they questioned him, he answered not : a soldier stabbed him in the arm to ascertain if he were dead,—he was. Marceau then became their guide. In short, after fifteen minutes march the darkness of the forest was descried. It was there, according to the advice the republicans had received, that the inhabitants of a few villages and the remains of several armies, about eighteen hundred men in all—were to assemble in order to hear a mass :

The two generals separated their small troop into several columns with orders to encircle the forest and pursue their way through every road leading to the centre ; it was calculated that a half hour might suffice them to assume their respective positions. A platoon halted at the route that was opposite them, the others spread in a circle on the wings, the noise of their measured tread was heard a moment as it became fainter and fainter, it died away and silence reigned. The half hour that precedes a combat flies rapidly. Hardly has the soldier time to see if his rifle is well primed, and to say to his comrade : I