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Mrs. C. L. Anderson

THE
CHEVALIER DE MAISON ROUGE



THE AVENGING SWORD OF MAURICE HAD ALREADY CUT THROUGH MORE
THAN TEN UNIFORMS

Dumas, Vol. Eleven

THE WORKS OF
ALEXANDRE DUMAS

IN THIRTY VOLUMES



THE CHEVALIER DE
MAISON ROUGE



ILLUSTRATED WITH DRAWINGS ON WOOD BY
EMINENT FRENCH AND AMERICAN ARTISTS



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THE

CHEVALIER DE MAISON ROUGE.

CHAPTER I.

THE ENROLLED VOLUNTEERS.

It was on the evening of the 10th of March, 1793 ; ten o'clock was striking from Notre Dame, and each stroke sounding, emitted a sad and monotonous vibration. Night had fallen on Paris, not boisterous and stormy, but cold, damp, and foggy. Paris itself at that time was not the Paris of our day ; glittering at night with thousands of reflected lights, the Paris of busy promenades, of lively chat, with its riotous suburbs, the scene of audacious quarrels and daring crime, but a fearful, timid, busy city, whose few and scattered inhabitants, even in crossing from one street to another, ran concealing themselves in the darkness of the alleys, and ensconcing themselves behind their porte-cochères, like wild beasts tracked by the hunters to their lair.

As we have previously said, it was the evening of the 10th of March, 1793. A few remarks upon the extreme situation, which had produced the changed aspect of the capital before we commence stating the events, the recital of which form the subject of this history. France, by the death of Louis XVI., had become at variance with all Europe.

To the three enemies she had first combated, that is to say, Prussia, the Empire, and Piedmont, were now joined England, Holland, and Spain. Sweden and Denmark alone preserved their old neutrality, occupied as they

were besides in beholding Catherine II. devastating Poland.

The state of affairs was truly frightful. France, more respected as a physical power but less esteemed as a moral one, since the massacres of September and the execution of the 21st of January, was literally blockaded, like a simple town, by entire Europe. England was on our coasts, Spain upon the Pyrenees, Piedmont and Austria on the Alps, Holland and Prussia to the north of the Pays Bas, and with one accord, from Upper Rhine to Escant, two hundred and fifty thousand combatants marched against the Republic. Our generals were repulsed in every direction. Miacrinski had been obliged to abandon Aix-la-Chapelle, and draw back upon Liege; Steingel and Neuilly were driven back upon Limbourg; while Miranda, who besieged Maestricht, fell back upon Tongres. Valence and Dampierre, reduced to beat a retreat, did so with a loss of half their number. More than ten thousand deserters had already abandoned the army, and cleverly scattered themselves in the interior. At last, the Convention, having no hope except in Dumouriez, despatched courier after courier, commanding him to quit the borders of Bribos (where he was preparing to embark for Holland), and return to take the command of the Army of the Meuse.

Sensible at heart, like an animated body, France felt at Paris—that is to say, at its heart's core—each and every blow leveled at it by invasion, revolt, or treason, even from quarters the most distant. Each victory was a riot of joy; every defeat an insurrection of terror. It is therefore easy to comprehend what tumult was produced by the news of these successive losses, which we are now about to explain.

On the preceding evening, the 9th of March, they had had at the Convention a sitting more stormy than usual; all the officers had received orders to join their regiments at the same time, and Danton, that audacious proposer of improbable things (but which nevertheless were accomplished), Danton, mounting the tribune, cried out:

“The soldiers fail, say you? Offer Paris an opportunity of saving France; demand from her thirty thousand men, send them to Dumouriez, and not only is France saved, but Belgium is reassured, and Holland is conquered.”

This proposition had been received with shouts of enthusiasm; registers had been opened in all the sections, inviting them to reunite in the evening. Places of public amusement were closed, to avoid all distraction, and the black flag was hoisted at the Hôtel de Ville, in token of distress. Before midnight five-and-thirty thousand names were inscribed on the registers; only this evening, as it had before occurred in September, in every section, while inscribing their names the enrolled volunteers had demanded that before their departure the traitors might be punished. The traitors were, in fact, the “contre-revolutionists” who secretly menaced the Revolution. But, as may be easily understood, the secret extended to all those who wished to give themselves to the extreme parties who at this period tore France. The traitors were the weaker party, as the Girondins were the weakest. The Montagnards decided that the Girondins must be the traitors. On the next day, which was the 10th of March, all the Montagnard deputies were present at the sitting. The Jacobins, armed, filled the tribunes, after having turned out the women; the mayor presented himself with the Council of the Commune, confirming the report of the Commissioners of the Convention respecting the devotedness of the citizens, but repeating the wish, unanimously expressed the preceding evening, for a Tribunal Extraordinary appointed to judge the traitors. The report of the committee was instantly demanded with loud vociferations. The committee reunited immediately, and in a few minutes afterward they were informed by Robert Lindet that a tribunal would be formed, composed of nine judges (independent of all forms, and acquiring proof by every means), divided into two permanent sections, and prosecuting, directly by order of the Convention, all those who were found guilty in any

way of either tempting or misleading the people. This was a sweeping clause, and the Girondins, comprehending it would cause their arrest, rose *en masse*. Death, cried they, rather than submit to the establishment of this threatened imposition.

The Montagnards, in reply to this apostrophe, demanded the vote in a loud tone.

"Yes," replied Ferrand, "let us vote to make known to the world men who are willing to assassinate innocence under the mask of the law."

They voted to this effect; and, against all expectation, the majority decided—first, they would have juries; second, that these juries should be of equal numbers in each department; third, they should be nominated by the Convention. At the moment these three propositions received admission, loud cries were heard; but the Convention, accustomed to receive occasional visits from the populace, inquired their wishes, and were informed, in reply:

"It was merely a deputation of enrolled volunteers, who, having dined at the Halle-au-Blé, demanded to be permitted to display their military tactics before the Convention."

The doors were opened immediately, and six hundred men, armed with swords, pistols, and pikes, apparently half intoxicated, fled off amid shouts of applause, and loudly demanded the death of the traitors.

"Yes," replied Collot d'Herbois, addressing them, "yes, my friends, we will save you—you and liberty, notwithstanding these intrigues."

These words were followed by an angry glance toward the Girondins, which plainly intimated they were not yet beyond reach of danger. In short, the sitting of the Convention terminated, the Montagnards scattered themselves among other clubs, running first to the Cordeliers and then to the Jacobins, proposing to place the traitors beyond the reach of the law, by cutting their throats the same night.

The wife of Louvet resided in the Rue St. Honoré, near

the Jacobins. She, hearing these vociferations, descended, entered the club, and heard this proposition ; then quickly retraced her steps, and warned her husband of the impending danger. Louvet, hastily arming himself, ran from door to door to alarm his friends, but found them all absent ; then fortunately ascertaining from one of the servants they had gone to Petion's house, he followed them there. He found them quietly deliberating over a decree, which ought to be presented on the morrow, and which, by a chance majority, they hoped to pass. He related what had occurred, communicated his fears, informed them of the plot devised against them by the Cordeliers and Jacobins, and concluded by urging them, on their side, to pursue some active and energetic measure.

Then Petion rose, calm and self-possessed as usual, walked to the window, opened it, and then extended his hand, which he drew in covered with moisture.

"It rains," he said ; "there will be nothing to-night."

"Through this half-opened window the last vibration of the clock was heard striking ten.

Such were the occurrences of the 10th of March, and the evening preceding it—occurrences which, in this gloomy obscurity and menacing silence, rendered the abodes destined to shelter the living like sepulchers peopled by the dead. In fact, long patrols of the National Guard, preceded by men marching with fixed bayonets, troops of citizens, armed at hazard, pushing against one another, gendarmes closely examining each doorway, and strictly scrutinizing every narrow alley—those were the sole inhabitants who ventured to expose themselves in the streets. Every one instinctively understood something unusual and terrible was taking place. The cold and drizzling rain, which had tended so much to reassure Petion, had considerably augmented the ill-humor and trouble of these inspectors, whose every meeting resembled preparation for combat, and who, after recognizing one another with looks of defiance, exchanged the word of command slowly and with a very bad grace.

Indeed, it was said, seeing one and the other returning after their separation, that they mutually feared an attack from behind. On the same evening, when Paris was a prey to one of those panics (so often renewed that they ought, in some measure, to have become habitual), this evening the massacre of the lukewarm revolutionists was secretly debated who, after having voted (with restriction for the most part) the death of the king, recoiled to-day before the death of the queen, a prisoner in the temple with her sister-in-law and her children. A woman, enveloped in a mantle of lilac printed cotton, with black spots, her head covered and almost buried in the hood, glided along the houses in La Rue St. Honoré, seeking concealment under a door-porch, or in the angle of a wall, every time a patrol appeared, remaining motionless as a statue, and holding her breath till he had passed, and then again pursuing her anxious course with increasing rapidity, till some danger of a similar nature again compelled her to seek refuge in silence and immobility.

She had already, thanks to the precautions she had taken, traveled over with impunity part of La Rue St. Honoré, when she suddenly encountered, not a body of patrol, but a small troop of our brave enrolled volunteers, who, having dined at La Halle-au-Blé, found their patriotism considerably increased by the numerous toasts they had drunk to their future victories. The poor woman uttered a cry, and made a futile attempt to escape by La Rue du Coq.

“Ah, ah ! citoyenne,” cried the chief of the volunteers (for already, with the need of command, natural to man, these worthy patriots had elected their chief). “Ah ! where are you going ?”

The fugitive made no reply, but continued her rapid movement.

“What sport,” said the chief ; “it is a man disguised, an aristocrat, who thinks to save himself.”

The sound of two or three guns escaping from hands rather too unsteady to be depended upon announced to the poor woman the fatal movement she had made.

“No, no,” cried she, stopping running, and retracing her steps; “no, citizen; you are mistaken. I am not a man.”

“Then advance at command,” said the chief, “and reply to my questions. Where are you hastening to, charming belle of the night?”

“But, citizen, I am not going anywhere. I am returning.”

“Oh! returning, are you?”

“Yes.”

“It is rather a late return for a respectable woman, citoyenne.”

“I am returning from visiting a sick relative.”

“Poor little kitten!” said the chief, making a motion with his hand, before which the horrified woman quickly recoiled. “Where is your passport?”

“My passport? What is that, citizen? What do you mean?”

“Have you not read the decree of the Commune?”

“No.”

“You have heard it proclaimed, then?”

“Alas! no. What, then, said this decree, *mon Dieu?*”

“In the first place, we no longer say God; we only speak of the Supreme Being now.”

“Pardon me, I am in error. It is an old custom.”

“Bad habit—the habit of the aristocracy.”

“I will endeavor to correct myself, citizen; but you said——”

“I said that the decree of the Commune prohibited, after six in the evening, any one to go out without a civic pass. Now, have you this civic pass?”

“Alas! no.”

“You have forgotten it at your relation’s?”

“I was ignorant of the necessity of going out with one.”

“Then come with us to the first post, there you can explain all prettily to the captain; and if he feels perfectly satisfied with your explanation, he will depute two men to conduct you in safety to your abode, else you will be detained for further information.”

From the cry of terror which escaped the poor prisoner, the chief of the enrolled volunteers understood how much the unfortunate woman dreaded this interview.

"Oh, oh!" said he, "I am quite certain we hold distinguished game. Forward, forward—to the route, my little *ci-devant*."

And the chief, seizing the arm of the former, placed it within his own, and dragged her, notwithstanding her cries and tears, toward the post Du Palais Egalité.

They were already at the top of the barrier of Sergens, when suddenly a tall young man, closely wrapped in a mantle, turned the corner of La Rue des Petits Champs at the very moment when the prisoner endeavored, by renewing her supplications, to regain her liberty. But, without listening, the chief dragged her brutally forward. The woman uttered a cry of terror, mingled with despair. The young man saw the struggle; he also heard the cry, then bounded from the opposite side of the street, and found himself facing the little troop.

"What is all this? What are you doing to this woman?" demanded he of the person who appeared to be the chief.

"Before you question me you had better attend to your own business."

"Who is this woman, and what do you want with her?" repeated the young man, in a still more imperative tone than at first.

"But who are you, that you interrogate us?"

The young man opened his cloak, when an epaulet was visible, glistening on his military costume.

"I am an officer," said he, "as you can see."

"Officer! in what?"

"In the Civic Guard."

"Well, what of that?" replied one of the troop. "What do we know here of the officers of the Civic Guard?"

"What is that he says?" asked another man, in the drawling and ironical tone peculiar to a man of the people, or, rather, of the Parisian populace, beginning to be angry.

“He says,” replied the young man, “that if the epaulet cannot command respect for the officer, the sword shall command respect for the epaulet.”

At the same time, making a retrograde movement, the unknown defender of the young woman had disengaged his arms from the folds of his mantle, and drawn from beneath it, sparkling by the glimmer of a lamp, a large infantry saber. Then, with a rapid movement which displayed his familiarity with similar scenes of violence, seized the chief of volunteers by the collar of his blouse, and placing the saber to his throat :

“Now,” said he, “let us speak like friends.”

“But, citizen,” said the chief, endeavoring to free himself.

“I warn you that at the slightest movement made, either by you or any of your men, I pass my saber through your body.”

During this time two men belonging to the troop retained their hold of the woman.

“You have asked who I am,” continued the young man, “which you had no right to do, since you do not command a regular patrol. However, I will inform you. My name is Maurice Lindey ; I commanded a body of artillerymen on the 10th of August, am now lieutenant in the National Guards, and secretary to the section of Brothers and Friends. Is that sufficient ?”

“Well, Citizen Lieutenant,” replied the chief, still menaced with the blade, the point of which he felt pressing more and more, “this is quite another thing. If you are really what you say, that is a good patriot——”

“There, I knew we should soon understand each other,” said the officer. “Now, in your turn, answer me ; why did this woman call out, and what are you doing with her ?”

“We are taking her to the guard-house.”

“And why are you taking her there ?”

“Because she has no civic pass, and the last decree of the Commune ordered the arrest of any and every individual appearing on the streets of Paris without one after

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