CHAPTER FIFTEEN

1
The situation became hourly more alarming and not a day passed without executions. I lodged near enough to the Place Dauphine to hear the roll of drums which marked the fall of each head. I could count the victims before seeing their names in the evening papers. The garden, which my room overlooked, lay next to the garden of a former church. It had been taken over by a club calling itself the 'Friends of the People' and when the evening gathering was noisy, I could hear, even in my room, the shouts, applause and clamour of the villains collected there.

The news I received from my husband described his position at Tesson as very precarious. Grégoire was continually being threatened with the occupation of the château by a body of troops, which would have forced my husband to move. I did not know where else to put him with any safety. To summon him back to join me in Bordeaux was not to be thought of, on account of the girl who looked after my child. From his hiding place, Dupouy had again had me warned to beware of her, but I did not dare dismiss her in case worse should befall.

A recent incident had proved to me that I was not so unknown in Bordeaux as I had hoped. The man who looked after my affairs had written to me from Paris that a law had just been passed establishing certificates of residence, signed by nine witnesses, to be renewed every three months under pain of confiscation of any property in communes where one did not normally live. As I had a house in Paris and certain state bonds, it was necessary to get this certificate. Bonie undertook to find the nine witnesses,
none of whom had seen me before, but all of whom accepted his
assurance concerning me. We went together one morning to the
municipality and it was not without extreme distress that I
penetrated into a room where there were about a dozen clerks, all
wearing the red bonnet. I sat down by the fire, while Bonie
had the certificate made out and got the witnesses to sign it. He
had asked that I should not be kept waiting as I was nursing my
baby and this plea moved these cut-throats to compassion. One
of them even pushed up to me and removed my sabots to warm
them with not cinders, a local courtesy in Bordeaux. Then, going
to a cupboard, he took out a nice little white loaf and urged me
a present of it, calling me 'charmante nourrice' (charming
nursemaid). A look from Bonie warned me that I must not refuse it.
But I took it with shame, for I had seen an old lady on the other
side of the fire, wrapped in a pale blue satin pelisse edged with
wussdown, who had been waiting for perhaps two hours without
any breakfast. She was certainly cutting the young busby with her
grey madras kerchief knotted over one ear, her red waistcoat, her
short skirt and her sabots. At last the moment came for me to
sign, and the municipal official, with a respect which somewhat
astonished me, gave me his chair so that I might sit down to
write. Then, to my very great shame, the certificate was read
aloud from beginning to end. At the name of Dillon, one of these
monsters interrupted: 'Ah, so the likewise would seem to be
a sister or niece of all the émigrés of that name who are on our
list?' I was just about to deny it when the chief clerk broke in:
'You don't know what you're talking about. She isn't even a
relation.' I looked at him in some surprise and he said to me in a
low voice as he passed me his pen to sign: 'You're the niece of
the Archbishop of Narbonne. I come from Sète.' I thanked
him with a slight inclination of the head, but thought as I went
away that if I had been known in Bordeaux, it would be neces-
sary to move from there.

II

I was driven to the insult. I could see that Bonie was uneasy
about me. Many ways of escape had had to be dismissed as impracticable.
Every day there were executions of people who had thought
themselves safe. The unfortunate young members of the Associa-
tion had all, to the very last of their number, been arrested or
denounced and then executed without trial, on a mere statement
of identity, for they had all—in a body—been declared to be
outside the law. I could no longer sleep at night and every time
I heard a sound, thought they had come to arrest me. I hardly dared
to go out. My milk dried up and I was afraid of falling ill just at
the very moment when I needed my health more than ever before
in order to be ready to act if need arose. It was then that, while
paying a morning call on M. de Brouqueens, who was still under
house arrest, I happened to be standing by his table deep in
thought when my eyes moved mechanically to the morning paper,
which lay open. There, in the trading news I read that: 'The ship
Dione of Boston, 110 tons, will leave in eight days' time, in
ballast, by permission of the Minister of Marine.' Now, for over a
year eighty American ships had lain mooring in the port, unable
to get permission to sail. Without a word, I rose immediately and
was about to leave when M. de Brouqueens looked up from what he was writing and asked me where I was off to in such a hurry. 'I am going to America.' I told him, and left.

I went straight to Mme de Fontenay and told her of my
decision. She approved the more as she had received bad news
from Paris. Tallien had been denounced there by his colleague
and was liable to be recalled from one minute to the next. She
thought this recall would be the signal for even greater cruelty
in Bordeaux and did not want to stay on if Tallien left. We had
not a minute to lose if we wished to be saved.

I went home and called for Bonie, telling him that he must find
me a man to be trusted who would go and fetch my husband. He
said without any hesitation: 'The errand is dangerous. I know
only one man to undertake it, and that is my self. If I was so well
assured that he would succeed and I put my trust in his zeal and intelligence.
He was trusting his life, for if they were discovered, not only my
husband's life, but his own would be forfeit. However, if that
happened, my own would be in similar case, so I did not scruple
to accept his offer.

I lost not a minute. I went to find an old ship owner, a friend
of my father’s, who was also a ship-broker. He was very devoted to me and undertook to reserve passages on the _Diane_ for me, my husband and our two children. I should have liked to take my good Marguerite with me, but for six months she had been suffering from a double tertian fever and no remedy had been found for it. I feared that it was impossible to set out in the bad season, for we were then in the last days of February, would be fatal to her. In any case, how could we stay in a country where she did not understand the language, for she was already fairly advanced in years and even more accustomed to it than to all the comforts of civilised living. I decided, therefore, to leave her behind. When I returned to M. de Brouquets’ house with everything already arranged, he was amazed. He told me that he had seen in Paris setting him free and that he himself intended leaving within a few days. He suggested that I should lunch the following day at Canoles, which he had not visited since the day of the search.

Returning home again, I confided my plans to my good Zamore, for the greatest problem was to find a way of packing our belongings without the maid being aware of it. She would certainly have denounced us immediately to the police. She slept with my small daughter, then nearly six months old, in a long room lined with cupboards in which I had stowed all that had been sent from Le Bouilh, as well as everything I had taken with me when I went to live at Canoles. On one side was a door leading into my room; on the other, a door leading into Marguerite’s room and from there, still a third door opening on to a small stair which led to the cellar. Bonie was a provident man and had long ago arranged, without saying a word to me, that if they came to arrest me, I would go down to this cellar and hide there for a few hours. The cellar was full of old cases. Luckily, being devoutly of the maid, I had always kept all the cupboards locked. I arranged with Zamore that I would take the maid and the children to Canoles, and then return to the house and out during his absence he would empty all the cupboards, carry the contents down the small stair to the cellar and pack them in cases there. I warned him against dropping even the smallest piece of thread, for it might betray that the cupboards had been recently opened. He carried out the whole operation in his usual intelligent fashion.

III

The next day, therefore, I set out with M. de Chambert to lunch with M. de Brouquets at Canoles. We were all three at table, the garden gate opened and there stood Mme de Fontenay on Tallien’s arm. I was greatly surprised, for I had not told them we were coming. Brouquets was dumbfounded, but quickly recovered. As for me, I was trying to master an emotion which had been much increased by the sight of a second man who had entered with Tallien, walking a little behind him. He had looked at me and put a finger to his mouth, so I immediately looked away. It was M. de Jumilhac, whom I had known very well and who was in hiding in Bordeaux under another name. Tallien, after courteously apologising to de Brouquets for the liberty he had taken in crossing his garden on the way to visit the Swedish Consul, came up to me with all the grace of manner which had characterised the great gentlemen of the former Court and said in the kindest possible way: ‘I understand, Madame, that I can today make amends for the wrongs I have done you, and I wish to do so.’ At that, I allowed myself to unbend and put aside the cold laughter which I had at first assumed. In a more reasonably polite manner, I explained that I had certain financial interests in Martinique—it was almost true—and that, as I wished to travel there to deal with them, I was asking him for a passport for myself, my husband and my children. He asked: ‘But where, then, is your husband? To which I replied laughingly: ‘You must forgive me, Citizen Representative, if I do not tell you.’ ‘As you wish,’ he said gaily. The monster was attempting to please. His beautiful mistress had threatened not to see him again if he did not save me.

IV

Two hours after my return to Bordeaux, Alexandre, Tallien’s secretary, brought me the order enjoining the municipality of Bordeaux to issue a passport to Citizen Latrous, his wife and their two small children for the purpose of visiting Martinique on
board the ship Diana. Once in possession of that precious document, I was able to tell my husband to come to Bordeaux, for the American captain would not have agreed to take him on board if these papers had not been in order.

The journey from Tesson to Bordeaux was every bit as difficult as it was hazardous. As I have said, Bonnie did not hesitate for a moment. He left for Blaye as soon as the tide was on the ebb. He had previously a valid passport for himself, for without one it was impossible to leave the Department or to enter that of the Charente-Inférieure where Tesson lay, only ten leagues from the borders of the Girondine. Once in the Girondine, a simple identity card, with any details, was sufficient for travel anywhere. Bonnie, indeed, had his own identity card, but he needed one for my husband as well. He therefore went to see one of his friends who was lying sick in bed and, on the pretext of having lost his own card, borrowed the friend's for a few days. The poor sick man, snug in bed, had no idea of the danger he was in, for one thing was certain: if my husband had been caught with the card on him, his real owner would have gone with him to the guillotine. Bonnie's passport stated that he was going to fetch grain—the Charente-Inférieure was overflowing with it, but in Bordeaux there was none at all and the bakers were putting all kinds of flour into their bread, some of it made from oats, some from beans and so on.

It was evening when Bonnie set out. If I had an enemy, I could not wish for him any worse punishment than to have to endure the mortal anxiety that I endured during the three days that followed. At a time when blood was flowing as freely day after day, when so many unfortunate victims had perished through the treason and cowardice of those they had once helped, I had put the life of the man I loved most in all the world into the hands of another man whom I had known for barely six months. He played the part of a revolutionary so very well. Was it really a part? Might it not rather be his kindnesses which were the presence? I tried to push these terrible doubts away from me, but the more I reminded myself of the dangers Bonnie was braving, the more difficult I found it to explain his devotion.

I had calculated every second of the time that dangerous journey would take. Anxiously I counted the minutes and on the third day, towards nine o'clock in the evening, I thought I might begin to hope that the ferry boat which came daily to Blaye on the tide would bring the passenger for whom I so anxiously waited. Burning with impatience, I could not remain indoors. As soon as it was dark, I went with M. de Chambeau to the Quai des Charrons, to the place where I knew the boat from Blaye arrived. It was so dark that it was impossible to see even the water in the river. I did not dare to ask for news, as I knew that all the points on the river where passengers landed were thickly posted with police spies. Eventually, after a long wait, we heard half past nine striking and M. de Chambeau, who had no identity card, remarked that we had only half an hour left if we were to return home in safety. At that moment, two sailors passed near us speaking together in English. I asked asking them, in their own tongue, the state of the tide. They told me without hesitation that it had been on the ebb for an hour. Hearing this, I lost all hope for that day and returned desolate to the house, where I spent the night imagining in anguish all the obstacles which might have delayed Bonnie and his unfortunate companion. Seated on my bed, beside my two dear children, I listened for the slightest sound which might revive my hopes. Alas, never had the house been so still.

While I trembled thus with anxiety and impatience, haunted by terrible visions of my husband being recognised, arrested, taken before the tribunal and, from there, dragged to the scaffold, he was sleeping quietly on a comfortable bed which Bonnie had prepared for him before he left in an unused room far from the other occupants of the house. In the morning, when the maid came to dress my small daughter, she said casually: 'By the way, Madame. M. Bonnie is there and asks if you are up?' I made a prodigious effort not to cry out and you will understand that my toilette did not take me long. Bonnie came in as soon as I was ready and told me that they had arrived at Blaye too late to take the usual boat, on which, in any case, my husband ran the risk of being recognised. Instead, he had hired a fishing boat and although the ebb still had three hours to run, the wind was favourable and very strong, so they had set sail and soon caught up and passed
the regular boat. They had therefore already arrived when I was standing there on the bank, waiting so despairingly.

I was dying with impatience to go to the room which held th\ being I loved most in all the world. But Bonie advised me to\ dress as if I intended going out, so as to deceive the nurse, a very\ necessary precaution which was sheer torture to me. Finally, half\ an hour later, I went out on the pretext of doing some shopping\ and having rejoined Bonie, went with him by a secret stair to\ my husband’s room. And so, at last, we found one another again\ after six months of most painful separation.

In every lifetime there are a few luminous memories that shine\ like stars in the darkness of night. The day of our reunion was one\ of them. We were not in safety. Indeed, the danger which now\ threatened was closer and clearer than any of the perils we had\ so far surmounted; yet we were happy, and death, which we felt\ so very close to us, no longer frightened us, for it was possible\ again to hope that if it struck it would strike us down together.

When Bonie arrived at Tesson, his sans-culotte dress, his red\ bonnet and enormous saber so terrified good Madame Grégoire\ that she firmly denied that my husband was there. In vain did\ Bonie beg and beseech her, and talk to her of me and my children: nothing would make her admit it. When all his arguments were\ exhausted, he tipped the lining of his jacket, took out a small piece\ of paper, put it on the table and went out into the courtyard. This\ small piece of paper bore only a few words in my handwriting:

‘Trust the bearer. In three days we shall be in safety.’ No sooner\ did Madame Grégoire see the brigand, as she called him, out of\ the room than she rushed off with the paper to the poor prisoners.\ When my husband saw it, he ordered Bonie to be admitted, but it\ was not without great trepidation that good Madame Grégoire\ allowed the man, that unknown man whom she could not bring\ herself to regard as a savior, into the room which my husband had\ not left for two months.

At nightfall, M. de La Tour du Pin changed into some peasant\ clothes that I had previously sent him and set out with Bonie on\ foot, taking roads he knew. They reached the highway to Blaye

at daybreak. After travelling a few leagues along this road which,\ like all French roads in those days, was in the last stages of dis\ repair, my husband said he could go no further and lay down by\ the roadside. Bonie, seeing how pale and weak he was, thought he\ was going to die and his despair was intense. Fortunately, a\ peasant passed by in a trap on his way to market at Blaye. Re\ assured by Bonie’s patriotic dress, he agreed to let the two\ travelers climb up beside him so that they reached Blaye fairly\ rested and made their way to the port on foot. In those terrible\ days, everything represented a danger and two men, one of them\ looking like a beggar, could not have asked a boatman for the\ hire of a boat for their personal use without arousing suspicion.\ But Bonie thought of everything. He said he had been sent by a\ commune up river from Bordeaux to buy grain for the people.\ No one, therefore, was surprised that he should hire a boat for\ his own use, or that he should take along with him, out of charity,\ a poor ailing citizen who had escaped from the Departments in\ revolt. That last detail was necessary to avoid rousing any suspi\ cion in the boatman’s mind if he should happen to notice that\ M. de La Tour du Pin spoke with no trace of a Gascon accent.

Looking back, now, after many years, and calling to mind the\ depth of the mistrust, absurdity, unreasonableess and fear which\ held even intelligent minds in thrall during this period—so aptly\ known as the Terror—the whole situation seems inconceivable.\ The simplest of reasons, even that of a ten-year-old child, should have been sufficient to banish this confusion and fear.\ No one asked, for example, how it was that people were dying of\ hunger in Bordeaux, when just across the river the necessities of\ life abounded. No one could explain why, but the fact remains\ that no peasant from Blaye or Royan would have dared to bring\ two bags of flour to the great city. He would immediately have\ been denounced for hoarding. These facts have not been explained\ in any memoirs of the period. I leave the task to historians and\ return to my own story.
Two months previously, I had obtained the certificate of residence in the name of Dillon Gouvernez, attested by nine witnesses. Now it was necessary to ask for a passport in the name of Latour, avoiding that of Dillon which was too well known in Bordeaux. I decided to drop the Dillon and adopt the name of Lee, which my uncle, Lord Dillon, had added to his own name after inheriting property from Lord Lischiéld, his great-uncle and my great-great-uncle. There could be no turning back.

The passport office shut at nine o'clock and it was half past eight when we went to the commune. It was quite dark. The date was the 8th of March 1794. My husband walked with Bonnie and I followed with a friend of Bonnie’s, walking some distance behind them carrying my six-months’ old daughter and holding the hand of my son, who was not yet four. Because of the English on American name I wished to use, I was dressed as a lady, but very shabbily, and was wearing an old straw hat. In the Hôtel de Ville we found ourselves in a room very full of people, and there we were given the permit which the passport office needed before it could issue a passport. I was terrified in case someone from Saint-André-en-Cubzac or Bordeaux should recognise us and, to reduce this danger, M. de La Tour du Pin and I were very careful to keep far apart and to avoid the lighted parts of the room.

Armed with this permit, we went up to the passport office, arriving just as the clerk was saying: ‘That’s more than enough for today; the rest can wait until tomorrow’. Any delay would have cost us our lives, as you will see. Bonnie leapt over the counter saying: ‘If you’re tired, citizen, I’ll do the writing for you.’ The clerk agreed to this and Bonnie drew up a collective passport for the Latour family. There were many people in the office so that when the Town Clerk, in his red bonnet, said: ‘Citizen Latour, take off your hat so that we can put down your description’, my heart beat so violently that I almost fainted. Fortunately, I was sitting in a dark corner. At the same moment, my son, who had looked up, threw himself upon me, burying his face in my little hands. Thinking it was only from fear of those men in red bonnets, I said nothing.

When the passport was signed, we carried it off with a feeling of deep relief, though we were indeed still very far from being safe. To avoid being in the same house and having to cross Bordeaux together the following morning in broad daylight, we had arranged that M. de La Tour du Pin should sleep at the house of M. Meyer, the Dutch Consul, who lived in the last house on the Quai des Chartres. He was most devoted to us. As for me, after taking my children home, I went to see Mme de Fontenay, thinking I would meet Tallien at her house and that he would visa our passport. I found her in tears. Tallien had been recalled and had left two hours earlier. She herself was to leave the next day and did not hide from me her fear that Tallien’s colleague, the fierce Ysabeau, would refuse us a visa. But Alexander, Tallien’s secretary, swore by his own head that Ysabeau would give us one. He said that since he always signed papers at ten o’clock, after leaving the theatre, he was in a hurry to get his supper, and did not look very closely at what was put before him. Providence in its goodness had ordained that Ysabeau should have asked Tallien to leave his secretary, who was not only very useful to him, but had also been sufficiently clever to make himself indispensable.

As I entered Mme de Fontenay’s house, Alexander was on his way out with papers for signature. He took the passport and put it among all the other papers. Ysabeau was that day very much occupied with the arrival of a new colleague who was due to reach Bordeaux the following day, and he signed without paying any attention. As soon as Alexander was free to leave, he rushed back to Mme de Fontenay’s, where I was waiting for him, more dead than alive. I was not alone. A person of some distinction whom I did not know and who looked extremely worried, was also there. It was M. de Fontenay, who had ignored the most elementary notions of delicacy, and had come to ask his wife to
save him. Alexander arrived with the passport unfolded in his hand. He was so out of breath that he fell into an armchair, unable to say more than: 'Here it is.' Mme de Fontenay embraced him most warmly, and so did I, for it was he who really saved us. I have never seen him since; he may have paid with his life for the services he rendered to so many people who have forgotten all about them.

The young emissary from the Convention who arrived the following day was Julien de Toulouse, and the purpose of his mission was to revive the patriotism of the people of Bordeaux. He was nineteen years old, and his cruelty surpassed even the most atrocious crimes of those terrible years. By our flight, we had the honour of causing him the most burning regret. He tore his hair with rage when he heard that we had escaped him, said he, we were mentioned in his notes.

Alexander was preparing to leave, for it was nearly midnight, and I rose to leave with him. But Mme de Fontenay kept me, saying she would send someone to accompany me home, and that first she wanted to show me something pretty. I followed her to her bedroom, where M. de Fontenay, still silent, accompanied us. From a drawer she took a handkerchief and spread it on a table. Then, opening a very beautiful box which served as a jewel case, she took out a magnificent pair of diamonds of the finest quality and, after showing them to me, tumbled them bell mull into the handkerchief. When she had thus emptied all the compartments of the jewel case, leaving not even the smallest trinket behind, she tied the corners of the handkerchief and held it out to M. de Fontenay saying: 'Take them all.' And he did indeed take them, and left without a word. I made no attempt to hide my amazement, and seeing it, she answered my thoughts: 'He gave me some of them; the remainder came from my mother. He, too, is leaving tomorrow for America.'

I would not have mentioned this incident, for it does not

1 Mme de La Tour de Pin is mistaken in saying that Julien de Toulouse of the National Convention—who at this time would have been 14 years old—acceded Tallien in Bordeaux as the emissary of the Convention. Robespierre himself sent to this town, to replace Tallien and act as a check on Yvarnie, a young man of very advanced ideas, a member of the Jacobin club, aged only 16—Julien de Paris, eldest son of Julien de la Dehme, of the National Convention.
had been unable to procure anything. A few jars of potted goose, a few sacks of potatoes or French beans, a small case of bottled jam and fifty bottles of Bordeaux wine constituted our entire store. It is true that Captain Pease had some barrels of biscuit, but they were a year old and a half and had already made the journey from Baltimore. M. Meyer gave me a small bag of fresh biscuits, which I saved to make soup for my small daughter. But what did it all matter in the face of what had been accomplished: my husband’s life was saved!

Mme de Fontenay rejoiced in the result of her work. Her lovely face was wet with tears of joy as we climbed into the dinghy. She has since told me that, thanks to our expressions of gratitude, that moment counted as one of her dearest memories.

When the Captain seated himself at the tiller and shouted ‘Off’, an inexpressible happiness flowed through me. Seated opposite my husband, whose life I was saving, with my two children on my knee, nothing seemed impossible. Poverty, work, misery, nothing was difficult with him beside me. There is no doubt that the brave of the sea with which the sailor pushed us off from the shore was the happiest moment in my life.

The Diana had gone down on the preceding tide to the Bec d’Amboise, where we were to join her. We were compelled by the authorities to stop alongside a warship stationed on sentry duty in the middle of the river, at the entrance to the port. The Captain prepared to show his papers and our passports. It was a bad moment. We did not dare to speak in French or look up towards the warship’s deck. The Captain went on board alone. He knew not a word of French, though his ship had been lying in embargo a whole year at Bordeaux. A voice shouted from the deck: ‘Tell that woman to come up and interpret’, and there followed some coarse words asking if she were young or old I experienced a deadly fear. Our Captain leaned over the side and told me not to answer. I dared not even raise my eyes. At that moment, a French answer. The boat full of men in uniform drew near in a great hurry. The Captain took advantage of this to collect his papers, jumped into the dinghy and made off as fast as possible.

At last we reached our small boat, the Diana, and settled ourselves on board as best we could. The next ebb tide took us down
to Paulliac. There we had to submit to still another visit from two more guardians. My husband, already seasick, was in bed. The officers who came on board were very polite, but wanted to know a great deal. They took a liking to my lamb which, unfortunately, was still alive. They coolly asked me to give it to them and promised to send a goat in exchange, which delighted me for my children's sake. But they took away the lamb and we never saw the goat, for shortly afterwards we weighed anchor to move in towards Paulliac, where the sea was less rough.

III

Our small ship was a vessel of only 150 tons. Her solitary mast was very tall, as in all American-built ships, and as there was no safeguard except for our twenty-five cases, the rolling was horrible. My apprenticeship to the sea was of the very grimmest kind.

We had arranged that the Captain should get a supply of food for us, but he had just as much difficulty as we in obtaining it and had been able to get only such victuals as his consignees had managed to procure for him from the naval stores.

As we left Bordeaux, one of the four sailors had a terrible fall from the masthead to the hold. He was, naturally, out of commission, which meant that only three were left to man the ship.

The entire crew consisted of these three sailors, a cabin boy who acted as steward, the Captain, a young man of no great ability, his mate who came, like the Captain, from Nanucket and an old sailor called Harper, wellsalted in experience who, though new to the ship, was consulted by the Captain at every turn.

The cabin, used only by the Captain, was, as you may imagine, very small. He had given one cabin to my husband and me, and another to M. de Chamber. He himself slept in his cabin on a sort of chest which served as a bench during the daytime. For thirty days my husband did not leave his bed. He suffered terribly from seasickness and also from the bad food. The only nourishment he could take was tea made with water, and a few pieces of toasted biscuit soaked in sweet wine. As for me, when I look back across the years, I cannot conceive how I was able to withstand the weakness and the hunger. I was feeding my baby at the time and, being only twenty-four, had naturally a most excellent appetite, but in this very strange life, I had not even time to eat.

Fortunately, the movement of the ship lulled my poor little daughter. She slept nearly all day. But for that very reason, she allowed me no peace when she felt me beside her at night and I could never sleep for more than half-an-hour at a time. I was so afraid of rolling over against her in my sleep and smothering her that I had a piece of cloth passed around the middle of my body and fastened to the wooden frame of the bed. I could neither turn nor change my position, but although at first it was torture I soon grew used to it.

In those days, the Americans were at war with the Algerians who had already seized a number of their ships. Our Captain's dread of these pirates was such that, when we were barely two leagues out from the Tour de Courouan, he headed due north decimating that nothing in the world would reassure him until he had reached the waters north of Ireland. He had little faith in the French Navy's power of protection against these marauders and put all his trust in the English Navy, considering that the Algerians would not dare risk provoking it.

In terrible equinoctial gales, we steered a course that kept us twenty leagues out from the coast of France, a course which, from our point of view, was not very reassuring. We had heard at Paulliac that a French frigate, the Audacieuse, I believe, had met an American boat carrying a number of French passengers at the entrance to the port of La Rochelle, had seized it and taken the French passengers to Brest, where they were all guillotined.

This encouraging story gave us something of a distaste for any course within reach of the French coast. However, though I pleaded hard with the Captain to set a direct course for his own country, he only repeated his fears of the Algerians and being cast into slavery and since M. de La Tour du Pin felt as he did, he encouraged him to hold to his northerly course.

One day, when the seas were so high that we had to fasten the scuttles and were confined to the living quarters with the lights lit, even though it was midday, the hoarse voice of the sailor of the watch was suddenly heard to shout the news we so

1 A light-house on a rock at the entrance to the Gironde estuary.
dreaded: 'French man o' war ahead.' In one bound, the Captain was on deck, having first ordered us to remain out of sight. We beard a cannon shot, the opening round in a parley which meant life or death for us. The frigate declared her French nationality, running up the flag. We hastily declared ours in the same manner and after the customary questions, heard our Captain's reply: 'No passengers, no cargo.' To this, the Ajaxant replied, 'Come aboard.' The Captain said the seas were too high. It was indeed very rough and as we have to, we were bounced around to such an extent that the only way to keep one's feet was to hold on to some support. The imposing challenger ended the exchange with one word: 'Follow,' and continued on her course. We unfurled our only sail and prepared to follow meekly in her wake.

The Captain came down from the deck saying gaily: 'In an hour it will be dark and a fog is coming up.' Never was a fog welcomed more joyfully. We soon lost sight of the frigate in the darkness and as we had put on as little sail as possible, despite a cannon shot intended to burry us up, she drew slowly ahead of us. She had signalled to us that she was making for Brest and that we were to follow her there. As soon as it was dark, we set a directly opposite course and, the wind being high, and in a favourable direction, we made off to the north-west with all canvas spread, not worrying at all whether it was in the direction of Boston, the port for which we were bound.

This incident threw us right off our course and as the thick fogs made it impossible to take a bearing for twelve or fifteen days, the colour of the water was the only indication that we were off the coast of Newfoundland. Strong westerly winds drove us back continually. Food became short and water had to be rationed. At this point, we met an English boat coming from Ireland, and the Captain went on board and returned with a sack of potatoes and two small jars of butter for me and my children. Having compared his position with that taken by the English captain, he found we were fifty leagues north of the Azores. In fact, for several days, feeling himself out of reach of the Algerians, he had been steering south-west by a good north-east wind.

Learning this, my husband besought him to land us in the Azores, for we could have found our way therefrom to England, but the Captain refused to do this. Providence had decided otherwise for us, and how very grateful I have since been. However, at the time, in our human blindness, we grumbled. If we had gone to England, we would have arrived just as the expedition was preparing to set out for Quiberon Bay. It is certain that my husband would have gone with it, along with his two friends, M. d'Herville and M. de Kerlajarte, and he would certainly have perished as they did. But God did not want to take from me all the years of domestic happiness with which I have since been blessed on this earth. He has taken back to Himself the children I had then, and the latter ones who made me such a happy, proud mother, I hope perhaps He will leave me, to close my eyes, the one I have loved most of all, the only son¹ remaining to me, and also my two grandchildren² whom I adore. Of these, one has been entrusted to me and I have had charge of her upbringing. I look on her as my own child, and at the same time as a very dear friend.

IV

My life on board, though hard, had one advantage: it put forcibly beyond my reach the small pleasures which we do not value when we have always had them. In fact, deprived of everything, without a minute of leisure, entirely occupied with caring for my children and my sick husband, not only had I not made what people call their 'toilette' since going on board, but I had not even had time to remove the Madras kerchief I wore on my head. Fashion still decreed quantities of powder and pomade. One day, after the encounter with the Ajaxant, I decided to dress my hair while my daughter was asleep. It was very long hair and I found it so

¹ Frédéric-Claude Aymer.
² The children of Florent-Charles-Auguste, Comte de Lislekerbe Beaufort and of Alla, known as Chalandre, de la Tour du Pin de Gubernier.

(a) Hadrien-Saint-Merri, Comte de Lislekerbe Beaufort, born in Brussels on the 11th March 1816, died in Brussels on the 1st of January 1870;
tangled that, despairing of ever being able to restore it to order, I took the scissors and cut it quite short, anticipating, as it happened, the ‘Tinut’ fashion. My husband was very angry. I dropped the hair overboard and with it went all the frivolous ideas which my pretty fair curls had encouraged.

My recreation during the journey was the time I spent in the galley. In shape it resembled a berline; there were no doors and it was secured to the mast. One sat right at the back and the pots boiled on a sort of furnace which had to be lit from outside. More than once, a wrong twist of the helm brought us a good wetting from some passing wave, but we were warm in there, or, to be more exact, our feet were warm. I say ‘we’ because I did not have this delightful kitchen to myself. A sailor known as the cook used to fetch me and install me there beside him to spend an hour or two cooking those hardiest beans which had already crossed the ocean from Baltimore and which had spent at least a year in store at Bordeaux. The cook’s name was Boyd. He was twenty-six and it was obvious that under his mask of grime and grease he was very handsome. He was the son of a farmer on the outskirts of Boston and much better educated than a Frenchman of the same class would have been. He understood at once that I was a lady, who wanted information about country ways and customs in his homeland. It was indeed thanks to him that I acquired a knowledge of the tasks that were to fall to me when I became a farmer’s wife. My husband used to say laughingly: ‘The beans are boiled to a mash because my wife forgot herself with Boyd!’

When water became rationed, he promised to see that we did not go short. This was particularly useful to my husband, since tea was the only thing he could drink without a recurrence of the seasickness. Personally, I suffered greatly from the shortage of food. The biscuit had become so hard that I could not eat it without making my gums bleed. When I tried to soften it with liquid, the wheevis came out, and I found this utterly disgusting. For my children, I crushed the biscuit into a kind of soup, and in making such mixtures had already used up the two small jars of butter given us by the English boat. The shortage of food caused my milk to dry and I could see my daughter shrinking visibly, while my son begged me with tears, for one of our poodles, though he had eaten the last several days before. Our plight was terrible and I could not rid myself of the fear that I would see my children die of hunger.

For ten days, we had been unable to take a bearing, and the fog was so thick that, even on our small ship, it was impossible to see the bowspirit. The Captain had no idea where he was. In vain did old Harper declare that he felt land below us: we thought he was only trying to hearten us.

On the 12th of May 1794, at daybreak, the weather was warm and the sea calm, so we went on deck to sit with our children, to play with them and enjoy the fresh air. The fog was still just as thick and the Captain declared that, whatever land it was that we were approaching, it was still at least some fifty to sixty leagues away. I noticed, however, that the dog was excited. It was a black terrier bitch of which I was very fond and which had developed an affection for me, to the very great disgust of its owner, the Captain. The poor animal would rush forward, barking loudly, and then come back to me, licking my son’s hands and face, and then rush off again. This odd behaviour had been going on for about an hour when a small decked-in boat, a pilot boat, passed near us and the man aboard her shouted in English that ‘if we didn’t change our course, we would founder on the point’. We immediately threw him a rope and he jumped aboard. It is quite impossible to describe the depth of our joy at seeing this Boston pilot.

Though we had been unaware of it, we were at the entrance to that magnificent roadstead which has no equal among even the most beautiful of the European lakes. Leaving a sea whose waves were breaking in fury against the rocks, we entered through a passage so narrow that two ships could not pass abreast, into waters as smooth and peaceful as a mirror. A slight land breeze sprang up and, like the changing décor on a theatre stage, the friendly land appeared, waiting to welcome us.

My son’s transports of joy defied all description. For sixty days he had heard us talking of the dangers from which we had, thank God, escaped. With his four-year-old mind, he had grasped that, in order to avoid those men in red bonnets of whom he had been so frightened, and who had threatened to kill his father, he
would have to live a life which lacked many of the good things to which he had been accustomed. He often remembered the fine white bread and the good milk of earlier days, and he found it very disagreeable to be without these things. Vague recollections such as these caused him sometimes to cry without apparent reason. But when, from the narrow creek through which we were sailing, he saw the green fields, the flowering trees and all the beauty of a most luxuriant vegetation, his joy was beyond words. Ours, though less exuberant, was quite as deep.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

At Lucca, 7th of February 1843.

I

It is probably very presumptuous to continue writing these memoirs when in ten days' time I shall enter on my seventy-fourth year. But today I finished copying out the part I had written on loose sheets of paper and I assure you, my dear son,1 that you will have the remainder, God willing, either with or without crossings-out, so long as I retain a little strength, power of mind and the sight of my eyes to guide my pen. An undertaking of this kind needs memory above all and it seems to me that I have not entirely lost mine. You know that it is as good for the past as for the present, and the present holds memories perhaps as distressing as any in my earlier days, many as have been the misfortunes which have darkened my long life.

But let us set aside these preliminaries and return to the entrance of the Boston Roads, where I left your poor brother Humbert joyfully gazing once again on cows, hens, trees, flowers and all the other things that his youthful imagination had almost forgotten.

II

I admit with shame that the joy felt by the rest of us, the grown-ups, was entirely focused on the enormous fish which the pilot

1 Ayvac de La Tour du Pin.

had just caught and which, with a jar of milk, some fresh butter and white bread, was to provide what the Captain called 'a welcome breakfast'. While we were eating this meal and satisfying our famished appetites, the boat was drawing further into this magnificent bay, towed by our dinghy. At two cables' length from land, the Captain dropped anchor and then left us, promising to return in the evening after finding lodgings for us.

We had not a single letter of introduction and waited patiently for his return. Meantime, supplies of fresh food were arriving from all sides. So also were a number of Frenchmen, very impatient for news and besieging us with questions to which we could only give the scantiest of answers. One wanted to know what was happening in Lille, another in Grenoble, a third in Metz, and they were all amazed and indeed almost angry when we could only tell them about Paris or about France in general. For the most part, they were very ordinary people: tradesmen who had been ruined, workmen seeking jobs. They all seemed to us more or less in sympathy with the Revolution, and they, in their turn, looked on us as aristocrats fortunate to have escaped the death which, according to them, we fully merited for our past tyranny. They left us angrily, and we were rid of them for the remainder of our stay in Bonn.

The rest of the day was spent in putting our belongings in order. In the evening, the Captain returned. He had found a small lodging for us on the Market Square and he brought offers of help from the owner of the ship. My husband resolved to call on him the following day when we landed. The Captain told us he was a rich man and greatly esteemed, and that we were very fortunate to be under his protection.

You will have no difficulty in believing that by dawn the next morning, I was already awake. I dressed my children and as soon as the dinghy was ready, said goodbye to all the crew, shaking hands warmly with each one, for these good fellows had been extremely kind and obliging. The cabin boy was bitterly at being separated from what he called 'his boy'. Each had some personal regret to express and I myself was very sorry not to be able to take along with me 'Black' the dog, who had become so attached to me. I had asked my friend, Boyd, if the Captain would be
willing to give her to me. But Boyd assured me he would refuse, so I did not care to ask.

Someone who has never been exposed to the sufferings we had experienced for two months, the restrictions which I had had to endure before that, the anxiety for my husband's safety and also for my own, the anguish of mind caused by living for months in continual fear of imminent death, knowing that it would leave my two poor children entirely alone, without help or protection, will never be able to fully appreciate my joy when I set foot on that friendly shore. Our good Captain was as happy about it as we were ourselves. He took us first to one of the best inn's, where he had previously ordered an excellent lunch with everything we had lacked for so long. Although it may seem trivial to people who have never been deprived of anything, I would ask them to indulge me for a moment while I say that when I saw that plentiful table, I felt a pleasure so vivid that it surpassed any pleasures I had known till then.

Afterwards, we set out for the small lodging chosen by our kind Captain, and my husband left me there while he went to call on the owner of the ship.

Mr Geyer was one of the richest men in Boston. Although he had returned after the peace treaty to enjoy his fortune in the country of his birth, he had been among those who supported England and had taken no part in the revolt against the mother-country. Following the example of many other Boston merchants, he had even taken his family to England. My husband was received by him with a warm friendliness which quite charmed him. I forgot to tell you that at Paulliere we had anchored alongside a ship which, like ours, was waiting for a favourable wind and which was headed for England. I therefore wrote a few hurried lines to Mme d'Herlin, who was living in London, asking her to write to us at Boston, in care of Mr Geyer, whose name the Captain had given me. Our crossing took so long that there had been time for a reply to arrive from my aunt and when we landed we found letters which settled for us the question of where in the United States, we were to live. I will come back to that in a minute.
on me, bringing his wife and daughter. He himself spoke French fairly well but the ladies did not know a single word of the language. They were therefore delighted to find that their tongue was as familiar to me as to them. Their kindly hospitality did not need the formality of letters of introduction. The strangers through which we had passed in France evoked general sympathy and people were inclined to think our story had something of the miraculous about it. They insisted on believing that my hair had been cut short at the back as a preparation for execution. This belief still further intensified their interest in us and it was quite in vain that I explained that I had cut it for a very different reason. There seemed no means of persuading the good people of Boston that they were wrong.

Forty-five years ago, the town was still just like an English colony, yet it was there that the first movements of rebellion against the mother-country had begun to stir. We were shown with pride the column that had been erected on top of the hill where the people had gathered to pass the first resolutions against the unjust taxes with which England was crippling the colony; the part of the harbour where the two shiploads of tea were tipped into the sea rather than pay the exorbitant duty charged on that commodity; the fine lawn where the first armed troops had gathered and the site of the first battle: Bunker’s Hill. But the richer and more distinguished inhabitants, although they submitted to the new government, regretted — though they did not disapprove — the separation from the mother-country. They were still linked to England by ties of affection and family. They preserved the customs of that country quite unchanged, and many of them who had taken refuge here, did not return until the peace had been signed. They were known as the Loyalists. Among them was Mr Jeffreys, brother of the famous editor of the Edinburgh Review, and a family named Russell who took care to make known their close relationship to the Duke of Bedford. All these people welcomed us with the greatest kindness and took an active interest in our welfare.

Mr Geyer suggested we should live on a farm of his about eighteen miles from Boston. Perhaps it would have been wiser to accept, but my husband wanted to be nearer to Canada, where he hoped to settle eventually. He spoke English with difficulty, though he understood it perfectly, and the knowledge that French was spoken in Montreal, as it still is today made him want to be close to that city.

We had just received letters from England. Our aunt, Mme d’Henin, wrote that she was sorry we had not joined her there, but sent letters of introduction from an American friend of hers, a Mrs Church, to her family in Albany. Mrs Church was a daughter of General Schuyler, who so greatly distinguished himself during the War of Independence. He had captured General Burgoyne and the whole army corps he was bringing from Canada to reinforce the English army then besieged in New York. The capitulation of this Corps at Saratoga had won him great popularity. Since the end of the war, General Schuyler, who was of Dutch descent, had been living on his estates with all his family. His eldest daughter had married the head of the Renslac family, which lived in Albany and owned enormous wealth in the country.

And so, Mrs Church, seeing the deep and motherly interest taken in us by my aunt, who was a dear friend of hers, wrote to her parents and when we arrived in Boston, we received most pressing letters from General Schuyler telling us to come without delay to Albany, assuring us we would find it easy to settle there. He assured us of his full support in the matter. We therefore decided to accept his offer and shipped our belongings by sea to New York, and from there up the Hudson to Albany. We waited in Boston until we heard that they had arrived and then set out to follow them by the land route. We preferred to travel this way as the five hundred mile journey would give us an opportunity to see the country without involving us in any extra expense.

Before despatching our belongings, we had to empty all the cases and re-pack them. In his haste, Zamoore had piled things in pell-mell and quite indiscriminately. The cases held a multitude of things altogether useless to people like us, who were going to live very modestly in the country, in conditions comparable with those of peasants in Europe. There was nothing to indicate that

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3 According to historians of the American war, it was General Schuyler’s successor, General Gates, who found General Burgoyne to surrender at Saratoga. His forces were immensely superior to General Burgoyne’s. (T)
the turmoil of the Revolution would permit us to return to Europe for many years to come, and I admit that I was glad my husband had been so well received in the United States that he had lost all wish to return to England, for I had a kind of pre-
sentiment that we might not be very well received by my family.

In Boston, I sold everything we had that would fetch money. As the Diana had made the crossing in ballast, no charge had been made for our luggage and we had brought a considerable amount. We now reduced it by more than half, clothing, materials, laces, a piano, music, porcelain, everything that would be superfluous in a small household was turned first into money and then into bills of exchange on reliable people in Albany.

IV

We stayed a month in Boston, going nearly every day to visit the kindly people who had showered attentions and kindnesses on us. I also received visits from many Creoles from Martinique who had known my father. One of them, who had married in Boston, made us promise to spend a few days with him in the country, and we did so with great pleasure. He lived in Wrentham, a village half way between Boston and Providence. It was a delightful spot, cool, unspoilt and very fertile. There were lakes strewn with small forested islands which looked like gardens floating on the water; there were great trees, old as time itself, dipping their ancient trunks and their younger shoots into water clear as crystal. It was a place of enchantment. So that it should lack none of the material of a poet's dreams—if a poet had been among us who were so taken up with clearing, ploughing and potatoes—there was also a love story. I will tell it to you.

It was during the last year of the war and Sally W... was to marry a young officer named William. Sally was young and pretty and had been very well educated in England. But the young man's regiment was suddenly ordered to embark and re-join the English army at Boston. The marriage was postponed. Sally's grief was so intense that her father, whose only daughter she was, consented to take her by boat to Providence, only eighteen miles away,
encouraged the growth of an enormous number of parasitic plants, wild vines and lianas which wound themselves from one tree to the next. In the more open areas, there were thickets of flowering rhododendrons, some of them purple, others pale lilac, and roses of every kind. The flowers made a vivid splash of colour against the grassland, which was itself studded with mosses and flowering plants, while in the low-lying places which were furrowed, and watered by small streams or creeks, as they are called, every kind of water plant was in full flower. This unspoilt nature enchanted me to such an extent that I spent the entire day in ecstasy.

Towards midday, we stopped for lunch at an inn set up not long before in the midst of this immense forest. In America, when a house is built in a forest and close to a road, the owner’s first expenditure is for a sign, even if only one traveller is likely to pass in the whole of the year, and his first task the planting of a pole on which to hang it. Then under the sign, a letter box is nailed to the pole. The road may be barely visible, but thenceforward the place is marked on the map as a town.

The wooden house at which we stopped had reached the second stage of civilisation for it was a frame house, that is to say, a house with glazed windows. But it is the incomparable beauty of the family who lived in it that particularly remains in my memory and which I still never forget. There were three generations: first, the husband and wife, aged about forty to forty-five, both remarkable for their strength and beauty and gifted with that exquisite perfection of form which is to be found only in the paintings of the greatest masters; about them were grouped eight or ten children, boys and girls, and in them you could admire everything, from the young girl so like one of Raphael’s beautiful virgins, to the smaller children with the faces of angels whom Rubens would not have disowned; also in this house lived a grandfather, most venerable in appearance, his hair whitened by the years, but quite unhampered by infirmity.

After we had finished lunch, which we ate together, he arose, took off his cap, and in a most respectful manner, announced: ‘We shall drink to the health of our beloved President.’ In those days there was not a single cabin, even among those most deeply
buried in the forest, where this demonstration of love for the great Washington was not renewed at the end of every meal. Sometimes the health of ‘The Marquis’ was added. M. de la Fayette had left a much-loved memory in the United States.

At Lebanon there was a sulphur bath establishment which was even then quite well known. The inn was very good, and above all, impeccably clean. But the luxury of white sheets was still unknown in that part of the United States. To ask for sheets that had not been used by others would have been considered a quite unreasonable caprice, and when the bed was fairly wide, you would even be asked, if it were the most normal thing in the world, to allow someone to share it with you. This is what happened to M. de Chambene that very evening at Lebanon. In the middle of the night, we suddenly heard a stream of French oaths, which could come only from him. In the morning we learned that towards midnight he had been awakened by a gentle man who was sliding, without so much as a ‘by your leave’ into the empty half of his double bed. Frightened at this invasion, he promptly got out at the outer side and spent the night in a chair listening to his companion’s snores, for he had been in no way disturbed by M. de Chambene’s anger. This misadventure led to much teasing from everyone. When we arrived that evening at Albany, a small room was reserved for him alone, and this comforted him.

VI

Two years earlier, the town of Albany had been almost entirely burned down as the result of a negro plot. In the State of New York, slavery had been abolished for children born in the year 1794 and later. They were to be given their freedom when they reached their twentieth year, a very wise measure both for the negroes and the owners of slaves. It obliged the latter to support their slaves during childhood and it compelled the slaves, in their turn, to work sufficiently long for the masters to repay the cost of their upbringing. One negro, a very bad lot, who had hoped that the Government’s measure would give him unconditional liberty, resolved to avenge his disappointment. He collected a few other malcontents and they arranged to set fire to the city on a certain day, where most of the buildings were still of wood. This horrible plot succeeded beyond their wildest imaginations. The fire caught hold in twenty places at once and its destructive efforts of the inhabitants, led by old General Schuyler and his entire family, houses, shops and merchandise were reduced to ashes. A small twelve-year-old negro was caught in the act of setting fire to her master’s hay store. She revealed the names of the plotters and the following day the Court assembled in the smoking debris of the building where it had been accustomed to hold its sessions and condemned the negro leader and six of his accomplices to be hanged. The sentence was carried out there and then.

The Renslaer and Schuyler families accomplished wonders of intelligent generosity and the energy with which they set about repairing the effects of the disaster set an example to everyone. Convoys arrived from New York laden with merchandise, bricks and furnishings and a charming new town gradually rose on the ashes of the old. The new houses were of stone or brick, usually of the latter, and were roofed with sheets of zinc and tin plate. By the time we arrived in Albany, no trace of the fire remained.

The houses of General Schuyler and his son-in-law, Mr. Renslaer, were both surrounded by gardens and had not been touched by the fire. There, we found a welcome that was as flattering as it was kind. When General Schuyler saw me, he exclaimed: ‘And now I shall have a sixth daughter.’ He entered into all our plans, our wishes and our interests. He spoke French perfectly, as did all his family. This is the place to tell you something about his family, or rather, about his son-in-law’s family.

It was very powerful in the county of Albany which was originally settled by the Dutch.

Before William III usurped the throne of England,¹ in the days when he was still only the Prince of Orange and Stadtholder of Holland, Dutch colonists sailed up the North River, or Hudson and settled on² the flats at the confluence of the Hudson and the Mohawk, a fine plain stretching from Albany to Half Moon Point.

¹ Mes de La Tour du Pin’s spelling.
² He was, in fact, invited to the throne in 1688, his wife, Mary, being a daughter of King James II of England.
³ This settlement was founded in 1661, before the birth of William III.
One of William's young pages, a member of a noble Guelder family named Rensselaer, has been able to secure his master's good-will and one day, as he served the Prince at table, told him of a dream he had had. He had dreamed that he walked behind William carrying the train of the royal mantle at his coronation as King of England. Hearing this, the Prince of Orange replied that if ever the dream came true, the page might ask any favour and be sure that it would be granted.

Time and events made Rensselaer's dream a reality. He reminded William III of his promise, presented him with a map of the county of Orange in the United States and asked for a concession of land in the Mohawk country. Taking a pencil, the King traced a rectangle forty-two miles long and eighteen miles wide, with the North River running through the middle.

Rensselaer crossed over America with his unchallengable legal act of cession and settled in Albany, in those days only a very small settlement with few colonists. He drew others to the place by granting land on perpetual lease in return for annual payments in grain or silver, usually such very small payments that their only value lay in the recognition of the right of ownership. He also sold lands and farms, thus considerately increasing his fortune, which the Revolution still further enlarged.

When we landed in America, the Rensselaer family was divided into numerous branches, all of them wealthy; the eldest member of the family, who was also its head, had married General Schuyler's eldest daughter. People had christened him 'The Patton', a Dutch word meaning 'lord'. On the very day of our arrival in Albany, as we were walking in the evening down a long and lovely street, we came across some enclosed grounds surrounded by a plain white fence. It was a well-tended park, planted with beautiful trees and flowers, and in it stood a pretty house, simple in style and with no outward pretensions to art or beauty. Extensive outbuildings could be seen stretching away behind it and these gave to the whole establishment the air and appearance of a splendid farm, wealthy and carefully looked after. A boy opened a gate to allow us to go down to the river bank and I asked him who owned this large house. 'But,' he said in amazement, 'it's the Patton's house.' I told him I did not know who the Patton was, and he lifted his arms to heaven exclaiming: 'You don't know? You don't know who the Patton is? Who can you be, then?' And he hurried off, horrified and slightly frightened at having spoken to people who had never heard of the Patton.

Two days later, we were received in this same house with a kindness, an attentiveness and a friendliness which were never to change. Mrs. Rensselaer was a woman of thirty who spoke French well, for she had learned it when visiting the headquarters of the French and American armies with her father. She was blessed with a superior mind and a rare accuracy of judgement for both men and things. She had been unable to leave her house for many years, and for months at a time would be confined to her armchair, for her health was poor and she was already suffering from the illness from which she died a few years later. From the newspapers she had learned the state of the parties in France, the blunders which had caused the Revolution, the vices of the upper classes and the follies of the middle classes. With extraordinary insight, she had grasped the causes and effects of the disorders in our country better than we had ourselves. She was very anxious to meet M. de Talleyrand, who had just arrived in Philadelphia, having been forced to leave England at eight days' notice. With diabolical shrewdness, he realised that France had not yet completed all the phases of her revolution. He brought us important letters from Holland which Mme d'Hénin had entrusted to his care. She wrote, among other things, that M. de Talleyrand had come to the country of true liberty to await the end of the period of cruel madness through which France was passing. M. de Talleyrand asked where he could find me on his return from a journey into the interior which he was planning to make with M. de Beaumetz, a friend of his, and an English millionaire from India.
to us of the 11,000 francs we had brought with us from Bordeaux, and put aside to cover our living expenses during the first year and to meet any unexpected demands, such as the loss of negroes or cattle.

I resolved to equip myself to run my house as well as any good farmer's wife. I began by accustoming myself to never remaining in bed after sunrise. In summer, I was up and dressed by three o'clock in the morning. My room opened on to a small lawn stretching down to the river. When I say 'opened', I am not speaking of a window, but of the door itself, which was level with the lawn. From my bed, I could have watched the boats passing.

The van Buren's farm was an old Dutch house occupying a delightful position at the water's edge. It had no approach from landward, but was easily reached across the river. Opposite, on the road to Canada, stood a large inn where all the news, gazettes and sales notices were to be found. Two or three stage coaches stopped there every day. Van Buren owned two canoes and the river was always so calm that it could be crossed at any time. The property was unbroken by any road and its boundaries were marked a few hundred fathoms away by a mountains covered with fine trees which also belonged to the van Burens. We used to say sometimes that this farm would suit us very well, but it would have cost more than we could afford. It was indeed only that which prevented us from buying it, for in the America of those days, and I think it may not have changed, no matter how attached a man might be to his house, his farm, his horse or his negro, if he were offered a price one-third higher than the real value, he could be relied upon to sell. It was a country where everything had a reckoned value. A path led from the farm to the small new town of Troy. For a quarter of a mile, it passed between grasses which were cut each autumn to provide bedding for the cows. The speed at which plants grew in the soil near the stream was prodigious. Grasses which, when we arrived, had been only five or ten inches high had grown by the time we left, two months later—in September—to a height of eight or ten feet. You could walk in

1 He was executed on the 18th of April 1794.
2 Probably the Spanish piaster, worth a little over 1 N. Francs today. (7)
their shade. Later on, I rode on horseback through fields of Indian corn, which stood much taller than both me and my horse.

A few days after our arrival at the van Burens, I needed to go to Troy to buy various things, I was told to follow the path and to be careful not to leave it. I came in this way to the point where a creek or stream, joined the Hudson River. It was filled with great logs on their way to a sawmill. They were tied together and could not separate. But not being, as yet, very hardened, I hesitated to trust myself to this moving bridge, especially as the tide was high. I noticed that the path ended at the water's edge, began again on the opposite bank and that the logs bore traces of footsteps. Obviously, it was a crossing. Black was with me and went backwards and forwards over the logs several times. But Black was very light and I...? However, I was ashamed to return to the house and admit that I had not dared to cross. Everyone would laugh at me. It was a bad moment. And then, realising that if there had been any danger, I would have been warned, I put a foot on the first log. I dizzied a little, but I realised that was the worst it would do and that the danger was not, after all, very frightening. I was careful not to tell anyone of my fears, and later on I crossed there every day without hesitation.

II

In September, my husband opened negotiations with a farmer whose land lay two miles inland on the other side of the river, on the road from Troy to Schenectady. It was on a hill overlooking a wide stretch of country, and we thought it is very pleasant situation. The house was new and pretty, and in good condition. Only a part of the land was in cultivation. There were 150 acres under clover, a similar area of woodland and pasture, a small kitchen garden of a quarter of an acre filled with vegetables, and a fine orchard sewn with red clover and planted with ten-year-old cider apple trees, all in fruit. We were told that the price was twelve thousand francs, which General Schuyler thought not excessive. The property was four miles from Albany, on the line of the road which it was planned to build between Albany and Schenectady, a town which was then expanding rapidly. In other words, it was 'in a thriving situation', an all-important phrase in that country.

The owner did not want to move until after the first snows. Since our agreement with the van Burens had been for only two months and since it was clear that they had had enough of us, this meant we had to find other lodgings from the 1st of September to the 1st of November. At Troy, for a modest rent, we found a little wooden house standing in a large yard enclosed by clapboard walls. We moved in and as it would eventually be necessary to buy certain furnishings for the farm, decided to buy them now. These furnishings, added to what we had brought from Europe, made it possible for us to move in without delay. I had engaged a very reliable white girl. She was to be married in two months' time and agreed to enter my service while waiting for her future husband to finish building the log house where they were to live after their marriage.

I must explain what is meant by a log house, though it is more easily drawn than described. A site fourteen to fifteen feet square is levelled off, and before any other work is begun, a brick chimney is built. This is the most important part of the house. When it has been completed, the walls are put up, built with large planks of wood still covered in bark and cut to fit very closely together. On top of these walls is set the roof, with a hole for the chimney. A door is then cut into the south wall. You can see many such buildings in Switzerland, in the pastures of the Upper Alps, where they are used only for sheltering the cattle and the herdsmen. In America they represent the first step in settlement—and often the last, for there are always the unlucky ones, and when a town has prospered, these log houses become the refuge of the poor.

Betsy, then, was waiting until her future husband, an odd-job man, had built a house for her to live in. He hired himself out by the day, working sometimes in the small gardens of the townsfolk who kept those shops where one found such an amazing assortment of goods: nails and ribbons, muslin and salted pork, needles and ploughshares. The rest of the time, he took on a variety of jobs. He earned up to a dollar or a piastre a day and by now is certainly a wealthy man and the owner of a property.
One day, towards the end of September, I was out in the yard, chopping in hand, busy cutting the bone of a leg of mutton which I was about to roast on the spit for our dinner. As Betsey did not cook, I had been left in charge of everything concerned with food and, with the help of the Cuisine Bourgeoise, acquitted myself as best I could. Suddenly from behind me, a deep voice remarked in French: ‘Never was a leg of mutton spitted with greater majesty.’ Turning quickly round, I saw M. de Talleyrand and M. de Beaumetz. They had arrived in Albany the previous day and had learned our whereabouts from General Schuyler. They had come to invite us, on his behalf, to dine and spend the next day with them at his house. These gentlemen were staying only two days in Albany as the English friend who was with them was extremely anxious to return to New York. However, as M. de Talleyrand was so much amused at the sight of my leg o’ mutton, I insisted that he should return the following day and share it with us. This he promised to do. Leaving the children in the care of M. de Chambeau and Betsey, we went off to Albany. And that is the whole story of my meeting with M. de Talleyrand, a meeting which Mme d’Abrantès and Mme de Genlis have invested with such stupid and ridiculously romantic circumstances.

III

We had a great deal to talk about on the war, and passed from one subject to another as people do when they meet after a long time. They had returned only the previous evening from their journey to Niagara and had therefore heard none of the latest news, which was worse than ever. Blood flowed everywhere in Paris. Mme Elisabeth had perished. Each of us had relatives and friends among the victims of the terror. Nor could we see an end to it. When we arrived at the good General’s house, he was on the porch making signs to us from afar and shouting: ‘Come along, come along. There’s fine news from France!’ We hurried into the drawing-room and each seized a gazette.

In them we found accounts of the revolt of 9 Thermidor, of

8 Sister of King Louis XVI

the death of Robespierre and his supporters, the end of the murders and the just execution of the members of the Revolutionary Tribunal. We all rejoiced together, though the deep mourning worn by my husband and myself bore sad witness to the fact that, for us, this divine justice had arrived too late. We, personally, had less cause for rejoicing than M. de Talleyrand and M. de Beaumetz.

The former rejoiced especially that his sister-in-law Mme Anshambauld de Pégigord, had escaped death, but much later in the evening, taking up a gazette which he thought he had already read, he found the terrible list of victims executed on the morning of 9 Thermidor itself, during the actual session at which Robespierre was denounced, and in that list he found her name. He was grieved as much as others at the news. His brother, who never troubled about his wife, had left France as early as 1790 and as their fortune belonged to her, he had found it most fitting, and above all, more convenient, that it should be she who remained behind in France to ensure that the property was not confiscated. This virtuous woman had obeyed his wishes and when, after she had been condemned, it was suggested to her that she should declare herself pregnant, which would have ensured her safety within a few hours, she had refused to do so. She left three children: a daughter, Mme Juste de Noailles, now the Duchess de Poix, and two sons—Louis, who died with the Army under Napoleon, and Edmund, who married the youngest daughter of the Duchess de Courlande. If it had not been for this very sad piece of news, our evening with General Schuyler would have been extremely pleasant.

Mr Law, who was travelling with M. de Talleyrand and M. de

1 Robespierre, lawyer, second disciple of Rousseau and a Jacobin. In July 1793 he gained control of the all-powerful Committee of Public Safety and became the most powerful man in France. He did not start the Terror, it was self-propagating, but he used it to further his ideal, a France depending on virtue, peace and religion. On the 15th of May, he had secured from the Convention a decree recognising Rousseau’s ‘Supreme Being’ and on the 15th of July he made a long speech in the Convention aiming at establishing a more concentrated form of Government—perhaps even Rousseau’s despotism. But the Convention mustered the courage to reject him again the following day, 9 Thermidor, he was refused a hearing and arrested. After a night of fighting between the forces of the Convention and those controlled by Robespierre, he was captured and executed immediately. (T)
Beausmetz, might well be considered the most eccentric of Englishmen, though they see all eccentric in a greater or lesser degree. He was a tall, fair man, between forty and forty-five, with a handsome, melancholy face. When grasping with some idea, the entire house might fall about his ears without causing him to look up. In the evening, after they had returned to the inn, he suddenly said to M. de Talleyrand:

'Mon cher, we won't leave tomorrow.'

'Why not? You have booked your passage on the sloop sailing down to New York.'

'Oh, that doesn't matter. I don't want to go. These people from Troy whom you have been to see ...'

'Well? What about them?'

'I wish to see them again, often. Will you be going to see them tomorrow?'

'Yes.'

'Then I'll come to fetch you in the evening. I want to see that woman in her own home.'

And he fell silent again. Nothing would persuade him to say anything more.

Next morning, M. de Talleyrand and my husband lunches with our fatherly General before returning to Troy. I had returned earlier in the morning, having to prepare dinner for our guests. A little negro boy driving a carriage, a carriage rather like the horse-drawn chairs—the 'barocchi'—which cover Tuscan roads at such a pace, and easily hired in Albany for a dollar, had carried me back to my duties as cook and steward.

M. de Talleyrand was amiable, as he invariably was to me, and his conversation had a grace and ease which has never been surpassed. He had known me since my childhood and always talked to me with an almost paternal kindliness which was delightful. One might, in one's inmost mind, regret having so many reasons for not holding him in respect, but memories of his wrong-doing were always dispelled by an hour of his conversation. Worthless himself, he had, oddly enough, a horror of wrong-doing in others. Listening to him, and not knowing him, one thought him a virtuous man. Only his exquisite sense of propriety prevented him from saying things to me which would have displeased me, and if, as sometimes happened, they did escape him, he would recollect himself immediately, and say: 'Ah yes, but you don't like that.'

In the evening, Mr Law came with M. de Beausmetz to take tea with us. I already had a cow, and so was able to give them excellent cream. We went walking. Mr Law offered me his arm, and we talked for a long time together.

He was a brother of Lord Landaff, and when still very young had gone to India as Governor of Panna, or something of the kind. He was there fourteen years, and married a very rich Brahmin widow, by whom he had two sons, who were still children. His wife had died, leaving him a considerable fortune. He returned to England, but grew bored and decided to come to America and use part of the money he had brought from India to buy land. His intention was to discover whether this new nation merited the esteem he was ready to give it. I myself did not think it did, and made no attempt to hide this from him, but he did not agree with me. He had created for himself an imaginary America, and was unwilling to give it up. He was an idealist, but witty and cultivated, and both a poet and an historian. He had written a number of interesting pieces in English concerning the history of the Mogol, and had translated a Hindu poem written by the last ruler, whose eyes had been put out and who had been in prison for I do not know how many years. After promising to send me this translation the next day, he fell into a deep reverie and did not speak again till the end of our walk. Then, as he re-entered the house, he sighed deeply and murmured: 'Poor Mogol!'

Two days later, we went to spend the day at Mrs Rensler's house with all the Schuylers. M. de Talleyrand had been extremely impressed by Mrs Rensler's outstanding qualities of mind and found it impossible to believe, from her manner of judging men and events, that she had not spent many years in Europe. It was also very interesting to hear her talking about America and the revolution that had taken place in that country, for she had a

1 The Grand Mogol, ruler of the former empire of the Mogols, or Mogols, in Hindustan.
2 Chah-Allen II, 1779-1806.
wide and very profound knowledge of it, thanks to her brother-in-law Colonel Hamilton, the friend and most intimate confidant of Washington.

Colonel Hamilton was expected in Albany, where he intended to spend some time with his father-in-law, General Schuyler. He had just left the Ministry of Finance, of which he had been the head ever since the peace, and it was thanks to him that such excellent order had been established in that particular branch of the United States' Government. M. de Talleyrand knew him and had the highest regard for him. But he found it very strange that a man of his quality, blessed with such outstanding gifts, should resign a ministry in order to return to the practice of law, and give as his reason that as a Minister he did not earn enough to bring up his eight children. Such an excuse seemed most odd to M. de Talleyrand, and in fact, rather stupid.

After dinner, Mr. Law took M. de Talleyrand by the arm and led him into the garden where they remained quite a long time. The departure of these gentlemen had been arranged for the following day, and it had been agreed that they would come to Troy in the morning to say goodbye to us. After talking with M. de Talleyrand, Mr. Law said he had letters to write and returned to his inn. M. de Talleyrand, taking my husband and me into a corner of the drawing-room, told us that Mr. Law had said to him, using these very words: 'My dear friend, I like those people (meaning us), very much and it is my intention to lend them a thousand lous. They have just bought a farm. They need cattle, horses, negroes and so forth. So long as they live in this country, they will not repay my loan... in any case, I would not allow them to do so... I feel that to be useful to them will procure my own happiness and if they refuse... my nerves are very bad... I shall fall ill. They will truly render me a service in accepting my offer.' Then he added: 'That woman, so well bred! Who does her own cooking... who milks the cow... who does her own washing. I find it unendurable... the thought of it kills me... two nights now, I have not been able to sleep on account of it.'

M. de Talleyrand was too sensitive to ridicule such a state of mind. He asked us very seriously what answer he was to give.

To tell the truth, we felt very deeply touched by this proposal, despite the odd manner in which it was made. We asked him to express to his friend all our very sincere gratitude and to assure him that for the moment we were able to meet all the needs of our establishment, but we promised that if, through unexpected circumstances, we should later find ourselves in difficulty, we would have recourse to him. This promise, of which he was informed that same evening, calmed Mr. Law a little. The following morning, he came to say goodbye. The poor man was as embarrassed as if he had committed some error. I shook his hand warmly, and most sincerely, but made no mention of what had passed. He had brought me his translation of the Mogul poem in English verse. To my great surprise, I recognised it to be the story of Joseph and his love for Potiphar's wife, word for word as it is told in the Bible.

IV

We waited impatiently for the first snow to fall and for the moment when the river would freeze over for three or four months. The freeze-up happens suddenly, and if the ice is to be solid, it has to harden within twenty-four hours to a depth of two or three feet. This was a local peculiarity, unaffected by latitude, and due solely to the enormous stretches of forest which covered that huge continent to the west and north of the settlements in the United States. Since the lakes are today—that is to say, in 1845—almost entirely surrounded by cultivated land, it is very probable that the climate of the region where we lived has greatly changed. However that may be, at the time of which I am writing, things were as I shall describe them.

Between the 25th of October and the 1st of November, the sky would become covered by a mass of cloud so thick that the daylight faded. These clouds were driven violently before a horribly cold north-west wind and everyone began preparing to put under shelter everything that could not be left out and buried under the snow. Boats, canoes and ferries were hauled out of the water and those which were not docked in were turned keel upwards. It was a time of intense activity for everyone. Then the snow would begin to fall, so thickly that it was impossible to
see a man at ten paces. Usually, the river would have frozen hard several days before. The first precaution was to mark out a wide path along one of the river banks with pine branches. Places where the bank was not steep and where it was safe to walk on the ice were similarly marked. It would have been dangerous to walk anywhere but between these markers for in many places the ice at the edge was not very solid.

We had bought mocassins, which are like shoes. They are made by the savages in buffalo hide. Sometimes, as for instance, when they are embroidered with dyed buck or porcupine quills, they are quite costly.

It was when buying these shoes that I saw the savages for the first time, the last survivors of the Mohawk nation whose territory had been bought or seized by the Americans after the war. At about the same time, the Onondagas, who lived near Lake Champlain, had also sold their forests and dispersed, but now and again some of them were still to be seen. I was rather startled, I must admit, the first time I met a man and a woman, both stark naked, walking calmly along the road. But no one seemed to find it strange and I soon grew used to it. When I was living at the farm, I saw these people nearly every day during the summer time.

We took advantage of the days immediately after the melting out of the road and the hardening of the snow to begin our removal. The funds we had been waiting for from Holland had arrived and my grandmother, Lady Dillon, who was still alive but had never set eyes on me, had also sent me three hundred louis,1 which we used to buy farm implements. We already owned four good horses and two work sledges. A third was kept for our personal use and was known as the 'pleasure sledge.' It held six people and was rather like a very shallow box. At the back was the main bench, a little wider than the remainder of the sledge, it was mounted over a cupboard which served to hold small packages. it had a back-piece higher than head level so that it sheltered us from the wind. The other benches, two in number, were just

1 In fact, Lady Dillon, who died on the 19th of June, 1794, had left Mon de La Tour du Pin a legacy of three hundred guineas for the purpose, as her will states, of 'going into mourning for her.'
country where there were eight or ten neighbouring farms, all owned by people named Lansing. This arose probably from the fact that the first man to buy land in those parts would have had to pay only four or five sous an acre for it, since it was covered with forest. He would have begun the work of clearing, and his children would have continued it. The latter would, in due course, build on the land they had cleared, and each house would be exactly like the original one. And that is why it was not uncommon to spend an entire day going from farm to farm, finding in each someone of the same name, but never the person one was seeking.

However, Mr. de Tilly knew that he was a Baptist, and was anxious to discover, in its heart-halting English, if we had brought the money. My husband counted out on the table the thousand francs I had been holding under my cloak, and at that moment, Mr. Lansing came in. He was a very tall man, dressed in a good coat of homespun grey cloth. He called Minck in, and taking his hand, put it into his husband’s saying: “This is your master.” When that had been done, we told Minck that we were ready to leave. But Mrs. Lansing having set out Madeira wine and cake for us, we had to stay a little longer, under pain of being thought unkindly. In the course of conversation, Mr. Lansing learned that my husband had represented the King of France in Holland, his mother country, as he called it. His opinion of us rose prodigiously. We took our leave, and found Minck already installed in the sledge. He had gone up to his room to put on his best clothes. These belonged to him, for he took away nothing that had been bought with his master’s money, not even his moccasins. All his other personal belongings, so few that they could have been carried in the crown of a hat, he put into the sledge locker and then turning to us and touching his hat like any well-trained coachman, he pointed to the horses and asked: “Are they my horses?” Told that they were, he took up the reins and set off at a gallop for his new home, much less preoccupied than I, for it was the first time I had ever bought a man and I still felt quite overcome by the way in which it had been done.

V

A few days later, the people from whom we had bought the farm moved out, leaving it dirty and in bad condition, which considerably lowered their reputation. They were English colonists, that is to say, from the coast. They had lived several years on the farm and were leaving because it had become too small for them. They intended clearing fresh land on the far side of the river. These people had not been able to raise sufficient money to permit the different generations of the family to separate and have their own establishments. To continue living together was a sign of poverty, bad management or lack of intelligence. The Americans are like bees: swarms must leave the hive from time to time and settle elsewhere.

As soon as we had the house to ourselves, we used some of our money to set it in order. It consisted of only a ground floor, raised five feet above the ground. The builders had begun by sinking a wall six feet down, leaving only two feet above ground level. This formed the cellar and the dairy. Above this, the remainder of the house was of wood, of a type still frequently seen in the Emmental region of Switzerland. The gaps in the wooden frame were filled with sun-dried bricks so that the wall was compact and very warm. We had the inside walls covered with a layer of plaster into which some colour had been mixed, and the whole effect was very pretty.

M. de Chambeau had put his four months’ apprenticeship to the master carpenter to good use and had become a very skilled workman. It would, in any case, have been impossible for him to dream of becoming careless, for my own activity allowed no slackening. My husband and M. de Chambeau could well have said of me as M. de Talleyrand said of Napoleon: ‘Anyone who could teach a little idleness to that man would benefit the universe.’ And indeed, during the whole time I lived on the farm, whether I was well or ill, the sun never caught me in bed.

Minck had thought that by taking a new situation he would escape not only from his master’s severity, but from his father’s.
He was therefore much disappointed when a few days later he saw his father arrive at our farm to settle the price of his purchase with us. He was a negro of forty-five to forty-eight years of age, with a considerable reputation for intelligence, experience and knowledge in agricultural matters. He had cleverly and rightly calculated that, with master of good social standing but without experience, it would be easy for him to assume control of the house and to make himself indispensable. He really had a very superior mind, and had often thought of improvements, but old Lansing had never been willing to listen. He longed to be with new people who would not be ruled entirely by prejudice, as his Dutch master was; he refused to permit the slightest change in the ways of life that had been followed for a hundred years.

We went to consult General Schuyler and Mr Rensselaer, both of whom knew this negro by reputation. They congratulated us on his wishing to belong to us and made it promise to take him. They even advised us to consult him on the details of the farm routine. We bought him very cheaply on account of his age, for it was against the law to sell a negro of more than fifty. Mr Lansing even invoked this law to prevent us buying him, but the negro produced his certificate of baptism which proved that he was only forty-eight.

We were very glad to see him settle on the farm. The only person who did not share our satisfaction was his son. The father's name was Prime, a nickname given him because of his all round superiority. To conclude this description of our settling-in, and of our negroes, I will tell you that we bought two more and in doing so made them very happy. One was a woman. She had been married for fifteen years and had lost all hope of being reunited to the husband she adored because her master, a brutal and wicked man, always refused to sell her. Prime persuaded us to buy the husband, an excellent man and a good worker, and I thought it would be a good idea to buy the woman as well. I needed a negro, for I had too much to do and a daily woman would have cost me too much. I therefore went by sledge one morning, with a bag of money, and I fetched Judith from her master's house. He was a Mr Wilbeck, a brother of Mr Rensselaer's agent. I told him that I had

Learned from the Patroon of his intention to sell Judith. He refused, saying she was very useful to him. I replied that he must know it was impossible to refuse to sell a negro who wished to be sold; and I added that I knew this woman had told him that this was her wish, whereupon he had hesitated almost to death and that she was still ill from the effects of it. He brutally replied that she could find another master when she was cured. 'Call her,' I told him, 'she has found one.' She came. Learning that I had bought her husband and wished to buy her also so that they might be reunited, the poor woman sank fainting on a chair. Then Wilbeck, who knew of our friendship with Mr Rensselaer, dropped his opposition. I counted out the money before him and told Judith that her husband would come to fetch her and her small daughter. This three-year-old child had, by law, to go with her mother. And that is how we collected our negro staff. We were indeed exceedingly fortunate. The woman, like her husband, was excellent, being active, hard-working and intelligent. They were passionately devoted to us, for a good negro does not give his affection by halves; their devotion can be counted on to death itself. Judith was thirty-four and very ugly, but that did not prevent her husband being madly attached to her. M. de Chambeau arranged so that they should have a room in the granary entirely to themselves, a comfort they had not dared to hope for even in their wildest dreams.

I remember these good people with pleasure. After serving me well, they gave me, as you will see later, what I have rightly called the finest day in my life.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

I

Two French families with whom we had become acquainted lived in Albany. They were quite different from one another. The first was the family of a small shopkeeper named Genet, a very ordinary man, who had arrived in the district with a certain
amount of money and a great variety of drapery goods. They were pleasant people, but Genets himself was a thorough blackguard at heart and secretly supported the Revolution. However, his small lodging was rented from a French Creole who was a friend of ours, so we were careful to treat him as a companion. This Creole friend was from San Domingo and had known my father well. I had met him myself at my father's house in Paris. His name was Bonamy and he had been completely ruined by the fire which destroyed the Cape. All that remained to him was a small sum of money invested in France, where his wife, who came from Nantes, had taken refuge with her two daughters. She had since died and the daughters, still children, had gone to live with uncle who were bringing them up. Since M. Bonamy had been officially declared an émigré, he could return neither to San Domingo nor to France and was therefore looking for some way of earning his living when the ten or twelve thousand francs he had saved from the Cape were exhausted. He was a very well-bred man, knowledgeable, even learned, witty, charming and adaptable. He often came to our house. Prime fetched him in the sledge on his way back from market, where he went nearly every day to sell a load of wood, as well as butter and cream for breakfast.

My butter was much in demand. I cut it carefully into small pieces, stamped them with our monogram and arranged them daintily in a very clean basket on a fine cloth. We sold it to whoever was willing to buy. We had eight well-fed cows and our butter did not taste of winter feeding. My cream was always fresh. Every day, the butter and cream brought me in a not inconsiderable sum and the sledge-load of wood earned us at least two piastres.

Prime could neither read nor write, but he kept his accounts so accurately that there was never the smallest error. He often brought fresh meat back from Albany and on his return, my husband would write down receipts and expenditures according to what Prime told him.

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The town of Cap-Français, burnt down in 1793, and at that time the capital of the French colony of San Domingo. The town is today in the Republic of Haiti, and known as Cap-Haïtien.
similar rent was payable on all the other farms on his immense property which was eighteen miles wide and forty-two miles long. M. Desjardins had brought all his household of furniture from Europe, including a good library of 1,000 to 1,300 books. He used to lend them to us and my husband and M. de Chambeau would read to me in the evening while I worked.

We breakfasted at eight o'clock and dined at one. In the evening we had tea at nine o'clock, with slices of bread spread with our excellent butter and the good Stilton cheese M. de Talleyrand had sent us. With this gift he had sent another which gave me the greatest pleasure: a beautiful and very handsome lady's saddle, complete with bridle, saddle-cloth and all the other accessories. Never had a gift been more timely, for when we bought the farm we had also bought two pretty mares with similar markings and of the same height, though vastly different in temperament.

One was lamb-like and although she had never before had a bit in her mouth, I was able to ride her the very first day she was saddled. It took only a few days to teach her manners that were very good as those of a manege-trained horse. She had a very easy movement and followed me around like a dog whenever she could. The other mare was a little demen and not all the skill of M. de Chambeau, who had once been a cavalry officer, could tame her. We did not master her until the spring, and then we did it by making her work between two powerful horses, all three fastened by the nostrils to a wooden bar. The first few times, she was so furious at this treatment that she was in a lather after less than ten minutes. But gradually we were able to quieten her. She was a fine mare, worth at least twenty-five to thirty louis.

II

Speaking of the spring, it is interesting to note the suddenness of its arrival in those regions. The latitude—45°—then came into its own and took entire charge of the climate. During the first days of March the north-westerly wind which had been blowing throughout the winter, dropped suddenly and was succeeded by a southerly one. The snow melted so fast that for two days the roads were raging torrents. As our house stood on a hillside, our white blanket disappeared very quickly. The winter snow had been two or three feet deep, protecting the grass and plants from the ice, and as a result, in less than a week after it had melted, the meadows were green and carpeted with flowers, and the fields were filled with countless varieties of plants unknown in Europe.

The savages, whom we had not seen during the winter, began to call again at the farms. At the beginning of the cold weather, one of them had asked me if he might cut branches from a kind of willow which has shoots to six feet long and as thick as a finger, promising to weave baskets for me during the winter. I had put no trust in this promise, being very doubtful if savages were accustomed to keeping their word to such an extent, though I had been assured that they did. I was wrong to doubt, for scarcely a week after the snow had disappeared, the Indian was there with his load of baskets. He gave me six, all fringed into one another. The first, round and very large, was so closely woven that it held water as well as any earthenware bowl. I wanted to pay for them, but he firmly refused and would only accept a jar of buttermilk, which the Indians, like very much indeed. I had been warned never to give them rum, for which they have an immoderate passion. I was therefore careful not to do so, but in an old box I had put away some old artificial flowers, feathers, ends of ribbon of all colours, balls of blown glass which once upon a time had been very fashionable and these I distributed among the women, who were delighted. One of these Indian women, who was very old and very repulsive looking, was called the 'Old Squaw', and whenever she appeared, my neglect was terribly worried, for she had a reputation for being a witch and casting spells. If she appeared when chickens were about to hatch, cows about to calve, sows about to produce a litter, or when one was about to start some important household task, it was essential to make sure of her goodwill by offering her something for her personal adornment.

An old woman, even in a civilised setting, is always very ugly. To try to imagine this 'Old Squaw', a woman of about eighty with black, leathery skin, who had spent her entire life with her body naked and exposed to all weathers, her head covered with grey hair that had never known a comb, whose only clothing was a
sort of apron of coarse blue cloth and a small woollen covering thrown over her shoulders and fastened at the two corners under her chin with a wooden brooch, a nail or an acacia thorn—garments which were never renewed until they had fallen away in shreds. Well, this woman, who spoke English quite well, had a mad passion for adornment. She would like anything to this end: the tip of an old pink feather, a knot of ribbon, an old flower and any gift of this kind put in her in a good humour. If, in addition, she were allowed to take a look at herself in the mirror, you could be certain that she would be favourable to your clutch of eggs and to your nose, that your cream would not turn and that your butter would be of the finest yellow.

But these savages, who knew only a word or two of English and spent all their time wandering from farm to farm, were as sensitive to good manners and a friendly reception as any Court gentleman. They soon realised that we did not belong to the same class as the other farmers living near us, and when they spoke of me, would say: 'Mrs Latour from the old country ... great lady ... very good to poor squaw.'

This word 'squaw' means savage. It is used for each and every creature or object from countries where European civilisation has not yet penetrated. Thus, birds of passage would be called 'squaw pigeons', 'squaw turkeys' and objects brought in by the savages would be 'squaw baskets' and so on.

One day we received a visit from a Frenchman who had been an officer in my husband's regiment, M. de Novion. Having come straight from Europe, he was very glad to learn that his former colonel had become a farmer. He had brought some funds with him and would have liked to use them to buy a small farm near us. But as he had no knowledge of agriculture, spoke not a single word of English, and had neither wife nor children, he lacked all the essential qualifications for running a reasonable establishment of that kind. M. de La Tour du Pin explained this to him. But he still wanted to see something of the country, so we went riding together. After a few miles, I realised that I had forgotten my whip. As M. de Novion had no knife with which to cut me a stick, he could not help. The undergrowth in the wood was fairly thick and at that moment, seeing one of my Indian friends sitting behind a bush, I called to him: 'Squaw John.'

It is impossible to describe the surprise, almost the horror, of M. de Novion at the apparition which emerged from the wood and came towards us with his hand held out to me: a very tall man wearing only a strip of blue cloth passed between his legs and fixed to a cord about his waist. His astonishment increased when he saw how well we knew one another and the calm way in which we engaged in a conversation of which he could not understand a single word. As we walked our horses on, and before I had had time to explain how I knew such an odd person in such extraordinary garments, Squaw John leaped lightly from the top of a hillock which dominated the road and politely offered me a stick which he had stripped of its bark with his tomahawk.

I am sure that in that moment M. de Novion resolved, deep in his heart, never to live in a country where one was exposed to such encounters. 'And if you had been alone, Madame?' he asked. 'I should have been just as little alarmed,' I told him, 'and, you know, if I had had to defend myself from you and had told him to throw his tomahawk at you, he would have done so without hesitation.' Such a manner of life did not seem to please him. On our return, he told my husband that I had odd friends and that he, for his part, had decided to go and live in New York, where civilisation seemed slightly more advanced.

Our ride was rather too long and tired me, with the result that I had a recurrence of the double tertian fever from which I had been suffering intermittently for two months. It had been brought on by a severe fright about which I will tell you.

One day that spring, I had had to go to Troy to fetch things that I needed for my work. The negroes were working in the fields with my husband and M. de Chambeau was busy in his carpenter's shop, so I went to the stable, saddled my mare, as I often did, and set out at a canter. On the way back, I crossed in the ferry, taking the mare with me, and went to call on a friend who lived in a mill about a mile from the town. She kept me to tea and as it was late I rode back to the ferry at a good pace, which made me very hot. As we were about to leave the bank,
four large oxen and their driver insisted on coming too, despite the protests of Mat the boatman, who had noticed that the oxen were making my mare nervous. My first impulse was to get out, but it was late and I was afraid my husband would be worried, so I stayed. In midstream, these four enormous beasts, naturally unyoked, all leaped over the same side of the ferry to drink. It heeled over, and seemed likely to capsize. Mat told me to let go of my horse and hold on to his belt. I had not, until then, realized the imminence of the danger, but Mat's words made the blood freeze in my veins. Fortunately, just at that critical moment, one of the passengers drew his knife and plunged it into the rump of one of the oxen. The pain made the animal jump overboard. The other three followed and the ferry returned to an even keel, though not before it had shipped so much water that we were standing in it up to our ankles.

Mat urged me to drink a small glass of rum. I refused, which was a big mistake. Being in a hurry, I mounted and rode back to the farm at a fast gallop. As soon as I arrived, my negroes forced me to take a hot drink, but in spite of it, I had a fever the next day. It returned daily after that, always at the same hour and for the same length of time. Nothing cured it, neither the excellent quinqua which M. de Talleyrand sent me from Philadelphia, nor the medicines of a French surgeon, named Rousseau. He may have been no more a physician than I was myself but he was French and had rendered us several services, so that I had confidence in him.

These attacks of fever lasted between five and six hours, and hampered me greatly in my daily work. They weakened me, took away my appetite, and although I never remained in bed, set me shivering even when the temperature was at 39°. In short, they rendered me quite incapable of work. When this happened, the daughter of some neighbours who lived in the woods not far from us used to come to my rescue. She was a good girl, a dressmaker by trade, and her work was perfect. She arrived at the farm in the morning and stayed all day, asking no wages, only her food.

My son, Humbert, was then five, but so tall that he looked at

least seven. He spoke English perfectly, much better than French. A lady living in Albany, a friend of the Renslaers and of the Anglican minister's wife, had become very attached to him. He spent many afternoons at her house and one day she suggested taking charge of him for the whole summer, promising to teach him to read and write. She pointed out that in the country I had not sufficient time to devote to him, that he might catch my fever and gave a number of other reasons in her endeavour to persuade me to agree to her request.

This lady was a Mrs Ellison. She was forty years of age and had never had any children, which was an inconceivable grief to her. I ended by agreeing to let her have Humbert, and he was very happy with her and very well cared for. This decision removed much of my anxiety. At the farm, I was always afraid of some accident befalling him, for he dearly loved to be among the horses. Also it was impossible to prevent him from going out into the fields with the negroes and, above all, from mixing with the savages, with whom he always wanted to wander off. I had been told that the Indians did sometimes carry off children, so that when I saw them sitting for hours motionless at my door, I used to imagine that they were watching for an opportunity to steal my son.

IV

A pretty cart laden with fine vegetables often passed our house. It belonged to the Quaker Shakers, who had a settlement about six or seven miles from us. The driver always stopped at our house and I seized every opportunity of talking to him about their way of life, their customs and their beliefs. He invited us to visit their settlement, and one day we decided to go. They belonged to a reformed branch of the original Quakers who had come to America with Penn.

After the war of 1763, an Englishwoman proclaimed herself the apostle of reform. She made a number of converts to the Swiss of Vermont and Massachusetts and many of these families pooled their belongings and bought land in the still uninhabited parts of the country. However, the clearing of neighbouring

1 A sort of Quakers.
land continued and whenever it reached one of their settlements, they sold it and retreated still further inland. But they never moved until the land immediately next to theirs had been acquired by someone not of their sect.

The Quakers of whom I am writing were at that time protected by several miles of thick forest and had therefore nothing yet to fear from neighbours. Their settlement was on one side by twenty thousand acres of forest belonging to the town of Albany and on the other by a river, the Mohawk. No doubt by now they have moved and withdrawn beyond the lakes. The settlement was an offshoot from their main settlement at Lebanon, in the great forest we crossed when travelling from Boston to Albany.

Our Negro, Prime, who knew all the roads in those parts, acted as guide. For the first three hours, we travelled through the forest, along a path which was nothing but a vague track. Then, after passing a barrier which marked the boundary of the Quakers’ property, the path became clearer and even well kept. But we still had to cross a great stretch of forest interspersed here and there with meadows where cows and horses had been turned loose to graze. Finally, we came to a vast clearing surrounded on all sides by forest, with a fine stream running through it. In the middle of this clearing stood the settlement, consisting of a large number of fine wooden houses, a church, schools and the community house, the latter being built of brick.

The Quaker we gave us a kindly but reserved welcome. Prime was directed to a stable where he could put up the horses, for there was no inn. We had been warned that no one would offer us anything and that only our guide would speak to us. He took us first to a magnificent kitchen garden, perfectly cultivated; everything in it was as flourishing as was possible, yet the garden was entirely devoid of charm. Many men and women were busy tillling and weeding, for the sale of vegetables was the community’s main source of income.

We visited the boys’ school and the girls’ school, the immense communal stables and the dairies where butter and cheese were made. Everywhere there was perfect order and total silence. All the children, both boys and girls, were dressed alike in clothes of the same shape and colour. The women, whatever their age, were dressed exactly alike in grey woollen cloth, very well cared for and very clean. Through the windows could be seen the cloth looms, the lengths of newly-dyed cloth and the workrooms of the tailors and dressmakers. But not one word, not one song broke the silence.

Eventually, a bell rang. Our guide told us it was for prayers and asked if we would like to attend. We gladly agreed and he took us to the largest of the houses. Outwardly, it looked just like all the others. At the door, I was separated from my husband and M. de Chambeau, and we were put at opposite ends of an immense table, separated from one another by a chimney in which burned a magnificent fire. It was early spring, and in those great forests, still very cold. This room might have been 170 to 100 feet long and about 50 feet wide, and it was entered by two lateral doors. It was a very light room, bare of decoration, its smooth walls painted light blue. At each end was a small platform on which stood a wooden armchair.

I was given a seat in the chimney corner and my guide asked me to remain silent, a request which was easy to obey, since I was alone. While sitting absolutely still, I had time to admire the floor, which was of pine, free from knots, of a remarkable whiteness and beautifully made. In it, running in various directions, were lines of copper nails, shining with polish, their heads so well buried in the wood that they were level with it. I was trying to guess what these lines might mean, for they seemed to have no connection with one another, when, at the last peal of the bell, the two doors opened and through the one on my side of the room there came fifty to sixty young girls and women, led by a woman of considerable age, who seated herself in one of the armchairs. There were no children.

The men came in in similar order through the door on the opposite side, where M. de La Tour du Pin and M. de Chambeau were waiting. I noticed then that the women stood on the lines of nails, taking care not to let even the tips of their toes pass beyond them. They remained motionless until the woman seated in the armchair gave a sort of groan or shout which was neither speech nor chant. Then they all changed places, so I concluded that that rather stifled cry must have been some form of command.
admiration was an elegant small pigsty made out of wood by M. de Chambeau and my husband. It was a masterpiece of carpentering, but the admiration was couched in such euphemistic terms that it always amused us: 'Such a noble hog sty.'

At the beginning of the summer of 1795, we received a visit from the Duc de Liancourt. He makes a very kind reference to it in his book *Voyage en Amérique*. He was on his way to the new settlements that had been formed on the banks of the Mohawk after the War of Independence, in the territory ceded by the Onondagas. M. de Tadayrand had given him letters to the Schuylers and the Renselaers and after he had spent a day with us, I suggested taking him into Albany to introduce him to these two families. Had he really been seriously upset by my woolen skirt and calico bodice? I do not know, but the fact remains that it was only when he saw me appear in a pretty gown and a very well made hat, though the milliner had had no hand in it, and when he saw my negro, Minck, bringiing round the smart wagon drawn by two excellent horses in a harness which shone with polish that he seemed to realise that we had not yet been reduced to beggary.

At that point, it was I who had to say that nothing would persuade me to take him to call on Mrs Renselaer and Mrs Schuyler unless he did something to improve his appearance. His clothes were covered in mud and dust, and torn in a number of places. He looked like some shipwrecked sailor who had just escaped from pirates. No one would have guessed that such an odd collection of garments clothed a First Gentleman of the Bedehaus! We made a bargain: I agreed to take him to visit Mrs Renselaer and Mrs Schuyler and he agreed to open his trunk, which he had left at the inn at Albany, and dress more suitably. While he changed, I went to pay a call in the town. The transformation was not to be so complete as M. de Liancourt had led me to hope. I reproached him bitterly, especially for the patch on the knee of a pair of nankeen breeches, which must have come all the way from Europe, so worn were they from laundering.

When we had paid our calls, he promised to visit the farm again on the following day and I left him in Albany and took back with me his travelling companion, M. Duperré-Trouard.

The latter remained a number of days with us while M. de 

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Memoirs of Madame de La Tour du Pin

After several manoeuvres, they again stood still and the old woman muttered a fairly long passage in a language which was quite unintelligible to me, but in which I thought I caught a few English words. After this, they left in the same order in which they had entered. Having visited every corner of the settlement, we took leave of our kindly guide and climbed back into our wagon to return home, little impressed with Quaker hospitality. Whenever the Quaker who took the community's vegetables and fruit to market passed our farm, I always bought something. He would never take money from my hand. If I said that the price was too high, he would say 'Just as you please', and I would put at the corner of the table the sum I thought sufficient. If this suited him, he took it, if not, he climbed back on to his wagon and went off without a word. He was a respectable looking man, always impeccably dressed in a coat, waistcoat, and trousers of grey homespun made at the settlement.

One action of mine had won me immediate popularity: on the day I moved into the farm, I adopted the dress worn by the women on the neighbouring farms—the blue and black striped woolen skirt, the little bodices of dark calico and a coloured handkerchief, and I parted my hair in the style fashionable today, piling it up and holding it in place with a comb. In summer, I wore cotton stockings and shoes. I only wore a gown or stays when I was going into town. Among the things I had brought to America were two or three riding habits. I used these to transform myself into a lady of fashion when I was going to visit the Schuylers or the Renselaers, for more often than not we dined and spent the entire evening with them. Among the items that had brought to America were two or three riding habits. I used these to transform myself into a lady of fashion when I was going to visit the Schuylers or the Renselaers, for more often than not we dined and spent the entire evening with them. Among the items that had brought to America were two or three riding habits. I used these to transform myself into a lady of fashion when I was going to visit the Schuylers or the Renselaers, for more often than not we dined and spent the entire evening with them. Among the items that had brought to America were two or three riding habits. I used these to transform myself into a lady of fashion when I was going to visit the Schuylers or the Renselaers, for more often than not we dined and spent the entire evening with them. Among the items that had brought to America were two or three riding habits. I used these to transform myself into a lady of fashion when I was going to visit the Schuylers or the Renselaers, for more often than not we dined and spent the entire evening with them. Among the items that had brought to America were two or three riding habits. I used these to transform myself into a lady of fashion when I was going to visit the Schuylers or the Renselaers, for more often than not we dined and spent the entire evening with them.
learned one evening from an indiscreet conversation, that Mr Morris was to be declared bankrupt the following day. Not losing a minute, he went round to see the banker, forced an 
entrance when admission was denied him, and reached his office. 
He told Mr Morris that he knew of his position and obliged him 
to hand over certain Dutch bills of exchange which he held only 
in trust. Mr Morris allowed himself to be persuaded, for he 
greatly feared the dishonour into which he would have fallen if 
this breach of trust had become known—a course M. de Talley- 
rand would not have hesitated to take. He made only one 
condition, that M. de La Tour du Pin should sign a statement that 
the funds had been paid fully. M. de Talleyrand undertook that my 
husband would go to Philadelphia to settle the matter. He also 
advised me to accompany him for, he said, having consulted 
a number of doctors on the persistent nature of my fever, they had 
all said that, in their opinion, only a change of air would rid 
me of it.

Mr Law had a charming house in New York and had several 
times suggested that we should visit him there. The harvest was 
not be ready for a month at least. M. de Chambes knew every 
detail of the farm routine. There was nothing to prevent such a 
journey. Sussy, the neighbour whom I mentioned earlier, agreed 
to come and look after my small daughter. As for my son, 
Humbert, he was still with Mrs Ellison in Albany and would not 
even notice our absence.

CHAPTER TWENTY

I

Steamships had not yet been invented, but steam was already 
being used to provide motive power in a number of factories. 
We ourselves even had a steam jack1 which worked perfectly 
and which we used every week for our Sunday roast: either a sirloin 
of beef or one of those very large brown and white turkeys which

1 Tradition has it that there were royalist plans to bring Queen Marie-Antoinette 
to this settlement. A house was prepared. After her execution, the plot cen- 
tral around the Dauphin, and one of the legends is that he did actually come, but 
was almost immediately kidnapped by revolutionary agents and not heard of again. (7)
2 M. Dupetit-Thomas, one of the leading settlers in Asilum, was by profession a 
naval officer. Nelson destroyed Neapolitan's fleet at Aboukir Bay in 1801. (7)
3 Voyages dans les États-Unis d'Amérique fait de 1791-1793, by the Duc de la Roche- 
foeuville-Liancourt. Published in 8 vols. in 1806.
4 A contrivance for turning a spit.
are so infinitely superior to the European varieties. Since I am writing about steam, I will tell you here what first gave Fulton the idea of applying steam power to ships.

Between Long Island and New York there is a channel about a mile or so wide across, which, when the weather permitted, small boats continually pled. As it is not a river, there is no current and the only movement is the rise and fall of the tide, which presents no difficulty to navigation.

There was a certain sailor who, poor man, had lost both legs in battle. Being still young, he enjoyed excellent health and had retained considerable strength in his arms. This man had the idea of fixing his bark canoe a round bar fitted at each end with wings. These wings projected beyond the sides of the canoe and could be controlled from his seat in the stern. One day, when he was taking Fulton across to Brooklyn on Long Island, Fulton watched him operate this ingenious contrivance and realized for the first time that it might be possible to use steam power for ships.

The town of Albany did a considerable trade, the merchandise being carried in large sloops or brigs. Nearly all these boats were equipped to carry passengers and had good cabins and a pretty salon. The journey down to New York took about twenty-six hours, but at a part of that time, the period when the tide was rising, was spent at anchor. Boats always tried to leave Albany at daybreak, so we went on board the night before we were due to sail and before sunrise were already well on our way. The North River, or Hudson, is very beautiful. Along the banks are a number of houses and pretty little towns, and the river widens into a stretch of water several miles broad before narrowing to enter the gorge through that chain of very high, steeply rising mountains which run the whole length of the continent of North America and are called by different names in different regions: the Black Mountains, the Appalachians, the Alleghanies. The wide reach is very like that part of Lake Geneva known as 'le fond du lac', but with this difference: the mountains rise only at the very far end, and the point where the river flows between two sharp rocks into the gorge itself cannot be seen until one is almost upon it. The water in this wonderful gorge is so deep that a large frigate could tie up to the bank without any danger of running aground. We sailed through these beautiful mountains during all the morning of the following day and when the tide was against us, went ashore to visit West Point, famous in history for the treason of General Arnold and the execution of Major André.

This incident is well known, but I will tell you about it briefly. There had been no reason previously to doubt the loyalty of the American general, Arnold, to the cause of the independence of the United States, and it was with every confidence that he was entrusted with the defence of the Hudson at the point where it traversed the mountains. It was when trying to break through this same gorge that General Burgoyne had been defeated by General Schuyler at Saratoga.

The English general, Clinton, was cut off in New York, surrounded by the American army commanded by General Gates. The capture and occupation of West Point was essential to the English in order to re-establish communications with Canada, which had belonged to them since the shameful peace of 1763. Its capture meant salvation for the English army, and there was apparently reason to think that Arnold's greed would prove stronger than his patriotism. Negotiations with him had already been started and were to be concluded by young André, a major in the English army, who had visited Arnold several times at West Point. When General Gates discovered the plot, he sent an armed boat to the place on the bank where André would reembark. The crew of André's small boat warned him of the presence of the American craft and persuaded him—not foreseeing the sad consequences of their advice—to put on a sailor's suit. Their small boat had not covered a quarter of a mile when it was seized by the Americans and Major André was taken prisoner. As he was in disguise, he was treated as a spy and, as such, condemned to be hanged.

1West Point is a strategic keypoint in the Hudson Valley. In the War of Independence, General Washington established a headquarters there. It is famous today as the site of the U.S. Military Academy. (T)

2The Peace Treaty of Paris of the 14th of February 1763, which ended the Seven Years' War. At the time it was concluded, it was known in France as the 'shameful peace'. (T)
General Gates offered to exchange him for the traitor, Arnold, who escaped through the mountains. The English refused: their need of Arnold's help was too great for them to hand him back. Instead, they sacrificed Andret, whose execution became the subject of many laments in prose and in verse. This young man was only twenty, very distinguished in appearance and outstandingly well-bred. His death provided the motive, or the pretext, for cruel reprisals by the English.

Although I have travelled in many lands and seen many of the grandeur of nature, I have never seen anything to compare with that stretch of river at West Point. Probably it has today lost much of its beauty, particularly if the fine trees leaning their centuries-old branches down to the river have been cut. However, since the steep mountain sides are not suitable for cultivation, my love of nature makes me hope that the soulless, frenzied cleaving of land may have spared them.

II
We reached New York on the morning of the third day and found that M. de Talleyrand was staying with Mr Law. They gave us a most friendly welcome, but were shocked by my thinness and changed appearance. I had planned to travel by the stage coach to Philadelphia with my husband, spending two nights on the way, but this they absolutely refused to allow. My husband therefore went alone and I was given into the care of Mrs Foster, Mr Law's housekeeper. This excellent lady tried every restorative she knew in her effort to help me. Four or five times a day she would arrive with a small cup of broth and, curtseying in the English fashion, say 'Pray, ma'am, you had better take this'. I submitted very willingly to her care, so tired was I of listening to M. de Talleyrand's lamentations about my wasting away.

The three weeks that we spent in New York are among my happiest memories. My husband was away only four days, but had an opportunity to admire the fine city of Philadelphia and, what I envied still more, to see my hero, the great Washington. Even today, I still regret not having looked on the face of that great man of whom I had heard so much from his close friend, Mr Hamilton.

In New York, I met all the Hamilton family again. I had been in Albany when they arrived there in a waggon driven by Mr Hamilton himself. He had just retired from the Ministry of Finance to resume his legal practice, a profession more likely to enable him to leave some kind of fortune to his children. Mr Hamilton was then between thirty-six and forty years of age. Although he had never been in Europe, he spoke our language like a Frenchman and his distinguished mind and the clarity of his thought mingled very agreeably with the originality of M. de Talleyrand and the vivacity of M. de La Tour du Pin. Every evening, these three distinguished men, in company with Monsieur Emmeray, a member of the Constituent Assembly, Mr Law and two or three other persons of note, met after tea and sat on the verandah conversing together until midnight, or even later, under a beautiful starry sky and in a temperature of forty degrees.

Whether it was Mr Hamilton telling of the beginnings of the War of Independence, the details of which have since been blurred by the insipid memoirs of that simpleton, La Fayette, or whether it was Mr Law talking to us of his years in India, of the administration of Pataw where he had been governor, of his depliants and his palaquins, or whether it was my husband raising some argument over the absurd theories of the Constituent Assembly which M. de Talleyrand readily accepted, the talk never ran dry. Mr Law so enjoyed these evenings that when we spoke of leaving, he became deeply dejected and would say to his butler: 'Foster, if they leave me, I am a dead man.' We also became acquainted with a very interesting French merchant family, M. and Mme Olive, who had eight charming children, of whom the eldest was less than ten years old. I went often to see them in the country where they had bought a pretty house in which to spend their summers.

After three weeks of all this, the rumour went on one evening that yellow fever had broken out in a street very close to Broadway, where we were staying. That very night, either because we had the first symptoms of the illness or because we had eaten too many bananas, pineapples and other fruit brought

1 Emmeray, Comte de Grasseville, President of the Constituent Assembly of the 4th of January 1790.
surprised by our unexpected arrival. They understood nothing at all about the life they had adopted. They knew very little English and, being unable to use any of the agricultural methods they had employed in San Domingo, had almost died of cold and exposure during the winter. From the fire at the Cape they had been able to save a number of very fine trifles whose luxury contrasted strangely with the poverty and discomfort of their establishment, where the only woman was an old Negro. We slept at their house, but before going to bed talked for a long time with them about their farm and household arrangements. The following day, we were given our breakfast in wonderful, but unmatchable porcelain cups, so chipped that I would have preferred an honest set of matching earthenware crockery like our own. Afterwards, we rode in their wagon to the highway, and from there regained our house. At our invitation, these two friends accompanied us to Albany and from there to the farm, where they were very astonished to find us able to sell them several bags of oats and a dozen bushels of potatoes.

III

I found my house in perfect order, although M. de Chambeau was not expecting us. My small daughter was in excellent health. We had been away a month, and it had seemed long to me, despite the amiability of the people among whom we had spent it. Yellow fever caused terrible ravages in New York that year so I was very glad I had decided to leave in such a hurry.

I returned to my country tasks with swift ardour, for the change of air had cured my fever and I had recovered all my strength. I resumed my dairy work and the pretty patterns stamped on my butter told my customers that I was back. Our orchard promised a magnificent crop of apples and our loft held enough grain for the entire year. Our negroes, spurred on by our example, worked with a will. They were better clothed and better fed than any of those belonging to our neighbours.

I was very happy in this life when, suddenly, God dealt me the most unexpected and what seemed to me then the most cruel blow that any mortal could endure. Alas, I have since suffered others far more severe. My small Sréphine was taken from us by
a short illness very common in that part of the continent: a sudden paralysis of the stomach and intestines without any accompanying fever or convolution. She died within a few hours, and was conscious until the very end. The Albany doctor whom M. de Chatenay had ridden to fetch as soon as the illness began, told us immediately he saw that there was no hope. He said that the illness was very widespread in the country just then and that there was no known remedy for it. The Schuyler's small son, who had played with my daughter throughout the afternoon of the previous day, also died a few hours later from the same illness and joined her in heaven. His mother adored him, and called him her dear child's little husband. This cruel loss threw us all into the deepest sadness and despondency. We bought Humbert home to live with us and I tried to find distraction from my grief in teaching him myself. He was then five and a half years old. His intelligence was very well developed and he spoke English perfectly and read it fluently.

There was no Catholic priest in Albany or anywhere else in the neighbourhood, and as my husband did not want a Protestant minister he himself performed the last rites for our child and buried her in a small enclosure intended as a cemetery for the people of the farm. It was in the middle of a wood. Nearly every day I would go to pronounce myself on that earth which was the last home of a child I had so dearly cherished, and it was there, my beloved son,1 that God bid His time to work a change of heart in me.

Until then, although far from irreligious, I had not been much concerned with religion. During my childhood, no one had ever talked to me about it. During my early youth, I had been constantly surrounded by the worst possible examples. In the highest circles of Paris society I had seen the same scandalous behavior repeated so often that it had become familiar and no longer distressed me. It was as if all concern with morality had been stifled in my heart. But the loss had come when I was so forced to recognize the hand that had stricken me.

I could not describe exactly the change which took place in me. It was as if a voice cried out to me to change my whole

1 Aymer, only surviving son.

nature. Kneeling on my child's grave, I implored her to obtain forgiveness for me from God, who had taken her back to be with Him, and to give me a little comfort in my distress. My prayer was heard. God granted me the grace of facing Him and serving Him. He gave me the courage to bow very humbly beneath the blow I had received and to prepare myself to endure without complaint those future griefs, which in his justice, He was to send to try me. Since that day, the divine will has found me submissive and resigned.

IV

Although all the joy had gone from our home, we still had to go about our daily tasks and we encouraged one another, my husband and I, to seek distraction in the need in which we found ourselves to find employment for every single minute. It was almost apple-picking time. The crop promised to be plentiful, for the trees were heavily laden. There were almost as many apples as leaves. The previous autumn we had followed an old Boroiaux custom and hoed a patch four to five feet square around each tree. It was the first time this had been done to them. Indeed, Americans were ignorant of the benefit which this practice has on growth and when we told them that we had owned vines where this operation was repeated three times a year, they thought we were exaggerating. But when spring came and they saw our trees covered in blossoms, they began to think it must be due to some kind of magic.

Another idea was also widely remarked upon. Instead of buying new harneses of very porous wood for our carts, we hunted in Albany for a number of Boroiaux casks and for some masked 'Cognac,' of a type well known to us. Then we arranged out cellar with as much care as if it had been going to house the wines of Mâcon.

We were less a mill for pressing the apples and to it we harnessed an ancient, twenty-three-year-old horse which General Schuyler had given me. The mill was exceedingly primitive: there were two interlocking, grooved pieces of wood, like ratchets, and these were turned by the horse, which was harnessed to a wooden bar. The apple fell from a hopper into the interlocking pieces of
wood and when there was enough juice to fill a large basket, it was taken to the cellar and poured into the casks.

The whole operation was exceedingly simple and as the weather was very fine, this harvesting became a delightful recreation for us. My son, who spent the whole of every day astride the horse, was convinced that his presence was vital to the task!

When the work was finished, we found that, after putting aside enough for our own use, we had eight or ten casks to sell. Our reputation for honest dealing was a guarantee that not a drop of water had been added to the cider, so that it fetched more than twice the customary price. It was all sold immediately. As for that which we kept for ourselves, we treated it just as we would have done our white wine at Le Buill.

The apple picking was followed by the harvesting of the maize. We had an abundance of it, for it is indigenous to the United States and grows there better than any other plant. As the corn must not be left in the husk for more than two days, the neighbours collect to help, and they work without stopping until it is all done. This is called a 'frolic'. First, the floor of the barn is swept with as much care as for a ball. Then, when darkness comes, candles are lit and the people assemble, about thirty of them, both black and white, and they set to work. All night long someone sings or tells stories and in the middle of the night everyone is given a bowl of boiling milk, previously turned with cider, to which have been added cloves, cinnamon, nutmeg and other spices, and five or six pounds of brown sugar, if one is being very grand, or a similar quantity of molasses if one feels less grand.

We prepared a kitchen boiler full of this mixture and our workers paid us the compliment of drinking it all, eating toast which accompanied it. These good people left us at five o'clock in the morning, going out into the sharp cold, saying ‘Famous good people, those from the old country!’ Our negroes were often asked to similar frolics, but my negroes never went.

When all the harvests had been gathered in and stored, we began the ploughing and all the other tasks which had to be finished before winter. The wood which we intended to sell was stacked under a shelter. The sledges were repaired and repainted. I bought a length of coarse blue and white checked flannel to make two shirts each for my negroes. A journeyman tailor installed himself at the farm to make good waistcoats and well-lined cloaks. Being white, this man took his meals with us. He would certainly have refused, had we suggested it, to eat with the ‘slaves’, though they were incomparably better dressed and far better mannered than he. But I was very careful to avoid even the slightest reference to this custom. My neighbours acted thus and I followed their example, never making in any of our dealings the slightest allusion to my former station. I was the owner of a 310-acre farm and I lived as did all owners of such farms, neither better nor worse. This simplicity and truncation of the past caused me far more respect and consideration than I would have had if I had tried to ‘play the lady’.

The work which tired me most was the laundering. Judith and I did it all between us. Every fortnight, Judith washed the negroes’ clothes, her own and the kitchen linen. I washed my own clothes, my husband’s and those of M. de Chambeau, and I did all the ironing. This latter task I greatly enjoyed; I excelled at it and could compete with the best. In my early girlhood, before my marriage, I often went to the linen-room at Nonfermeau and there, as if by a prescience, I learned to iron. Being naturally dexterous, I was soon as skilful at it as the girls who taught me. I never wasted a minute. Every day, winter and summer, I was up at dawn and my coals took very little time. Before the negroes went to their work, they helped the negroes to milk the cows, of which we had at one time as many as eight. While they were doing that, I busied myself in the dairy, skimming the milk. On the day when there was butter to be made, which was twice a week, Minck stayed behind to turn the handle of the churn, a task too heavy for a woman. All the remainder of the butter-making, and most other tiring work which still remained to be done, fell to me. I had a remarkable collection of bowls, ladles and wooden spatulas, all made by my good friends the savages. My dairy was reputed the cleanest and even the most elegant in the country.

V

Winter came early that year. In the first days of November, the
black clouds which heralded the snow began to gather in the west. Everything happened in the proper order: eight days of extreme cold, the river frozen within twenty-four hours to a depth of three feet, and then the first falls of snow. Once the snow started, it fell so fast that it was impossible to see a man at ten paces. Prudent folk took good care it was not they who harnessed up their sledges to mark out the road: that was left to the people in a hurry, to those compelled by business affairs to go into town or to the river. Before venturing on to the river, it was necessary to wait until the places where it was safe to cross the ice had been marked out with pine branches for, without this precaution, there was great danger. Every year there were accidents through lack of care. Indeed, since the tidal rise and fall at Albany, and as far up as the junction of the Mohawk, was some seven or eight feet, the ice was often unsupported by water.

It has therefore sometimes happened that careless people have driven their sledges down the bank at a trot or a gallop and been engulfed under the ice instead of gliding over it, and have perished thus as there was no possible means of rescuing them.

The winter passed in the same way as the previous one. We often went to dine with the Schuylers and Renslaers, whose friendship was very faithful. M. de Talleyrand, who was again living in Philadelphia, had managed under strange circumstances, to find certain objects belonging to me: a cameo of the Queen, the basket you still have and a watch which had belonged to my mother. He knew from me that my banker at The Hague had told me he had entrusted these objects to a young American diplomat—for fortunately for him, I have forgotten his name—asking him to deliver them to me. Despite numerous enquiries, M. de Talleyrand had never managed to discover this man. Eventually, one evening in Philadelphia, on a visit to a lady of his acquaintance, he was told by her of a portrait of the Queen which Mr X. had obtained in Paris, and which he had lent her to show to some of her friends. She asked M. de Talleyrand if the likeness was good. As soon as he saw it, he recognised it as mine. He took possession of it, telling the lady that it did not belong to the young diplomat. Then, going straight to see him, he demanded

1 Aymar.
had just signed a treaty of peace with Spain which seemed likely to last for a while.

The arrival of these letters at our peaceful farm had somewhat the effect of a firebrand, for in the hearts of all about me they suddenly set aflame thoughts of a return to our homeland, glimpses of a better life, hopes of achieving our ambitions, in short, they armed all those sentiments which animate the life of man. My own feelings were quite different. France had left me only memories of horror. It was there that I had lost my youth, crushed out of being by numberless, unforgettable terrors. Only two sentiments had remained alive in me, and to this day they are the only ones that remain with me: love of my husband and love of my children. However, religion, which from that time forward was my only guide in all my problems, prevented me from seeing the slightest obstacle in the way of a departure which terrified me and filled me with dismay. I had a presentation that I was embarking on a fresh series of troubles and anxieties. M. de la Tour du Pin never realised the intensity of my regret when I knew that the day on which we would leave the farm had been fixed. I set only one condition to our departure: that our negroes should be given their freedom. My husband agreed, and reserved the joy of telling them to me alone.

When these poor people saw the letters arriving from Europe, they feared there would be changes in our way of life. They were anxious and frightened, so that it was in trembling that they came, all four of them, to the drawing-room in answer to my summons.

Judith was holding her small daughter, three-year-old Maria, in her arms: she was soon to give birth to her second child. They found me alone in the drawing-room and I said to them with much emotion: 'My friends, we are returning to Europe. What are we to do with you?' The poor things were stricken. Judith sank on to a chair, sobbing, and the three men hid their faces in their hands. All four remained motionless. I went on: 'We have been so pleased with you that it is right that you should be rewarded. My husband has charged me to tell you that he gives you your freedom.' Hearing this, our good servants were so amazed that they remained silent for some seconds. Then, falling at my feet, they cried: 'Is it possible? Do you mean that we are free?'

answered: 'Yes, upon my honour. From this moment you are as free as I am myself.'

The poignancy of such a scene cannot be described. Never in my life have I known a happier moment. These people whom I had just freed, surrounded me and wept. They kissed my hands, my feet, my gown; and then, suddenly, their joy vanished and they said: 'We would prefer to remain slaves all our lives and for you to stay here.'

The following day, my husband took them before the Justice in Albany, for the ceremony of manumission, which had to take place in public. All the negroes of the town gathered to watch. The Justice of the Peace, who was also the manager of Mr. Renslair's properties, was very displeased. He tried to object that since Prime was fifty years of age, he could not, under the law, be given his freedom unless he had an assured pension of one hundred dollars. But Prime had foreseen this difficulty, and produced his certificate of baptism, which showed that he was only forty-nine. They were told to kneel in front of my husband who laid his hand on the head of each in turn. It token of liberation, exactly as used to be done in ancient Rome.

We leased out house and land to the man from whom we had bought it, and sold most of the furnishings and stock. The horses fetched quite good prices. I distributed many small pieces of porcelain that I had brought with me from Europe as souvenirs. To my poor Judith, I left some of my old silk gowns, which will doubtless have been handed down to her descendants.

II

About the middle of April, we boarded the boat at Albany for New York, having first taken affectation and grateful leave of all those who, for two years, had surrounded us with cares, friendship and attentions of every kind. 'Two years later, when we had to go once more into exile, I was often to regret my farm and those good neighbours.

In New York we stayed with Mr. and Mrs. Olive, at their pretty little country house. There we also found M. de Talleyrand who, like us, had decided to go back to Europe. Mme de Staal, who was back in Paris with Benjamin Constant, had urged him to
return and serve the Government of the Directors1 which was anxious to make use of his ability. At one time we thought we would all be able to sail in the same ship, but when M. de Talleyrand learned of our intention to land at a Spanish port and travel from there to Bordeaux, he changed his plans. He had no wish to expose himself, even for such a short time, to the power of His Most Catholic Majesty who, with some reason, consider he was not a sufficiently edifying Bishop. He decided, therefore, to take a ship sailing for Hamburg. We had hoped to find one leaving for Corunna or Bilbao, but there was none, only a superb English vessel of four hundred tons, which was sailing for Cadiz and due to raise anchor at any moment. For lack of anything else, and despite the long journey it would mean through Spain, we decided to book our passages in her. She was sailing under the Spanish flag, though she belonged, as did her cargo, to an Englishman. I believe the cargo was corn. The owner, a Mr. Ensdel, was on board travelling as a passenger. He had formerly owned whaling vessels. He knew not one word of French, but the Captain, who came from Jamaica, spoke English. In any case, he immediately found a very intelligent interpreter in my son who, although only six, was of great service to him. We were able to stay a further three weeks with Mrs. Olive, in company with M. de Talleyrand, and we spent this time making our arrangements and settling ourselves on board.

Anchored in the roadstead was a French sloop of war commanded by a Captain Barre. His father had been in the Household of the previous Duc d'Orléans2 and my husband had known him there. He was a very pleasant man, though a true sea dog, and he came every day in his barge to take us out to various points of the roadstead. He took great care, however, not to go anywhere near Sandy Hook where Captain Cochrane, later Admiral Cochrane, had been lying in wait for two months to seize him if he should attempt to leave. We visited his sloop, which was armed with fifteen guns. It was a gem of order, cleanliness and care. I would have dearly liked to return to Europe in that lovely ship.

But the Maria-Josepha was waiting for us. We all four went on board on the 5th of May 1796, and set sail the same day. There were a number of other passengers, including a French merchant, M. Tisserandot, whose wife, like me, was expecting a baby. I did not suffer from seasickness and, as the weather was excellent, was busy all day long. This meant that I had soon exhausted the work I had brought for my husband and myself, so I set up as a dressmaker to all on board and sent out an appeal for work. Everyone brought me something. There were shirts to be made, cravats to be turned, linens to be marked. The crossing lasted forty days because the Captain, refusing to accept Mr. Ensdel's advice, had sailed southwards with the currents. As a result, I had time to put the crew's entire wardrobe in order.

Eventually, towards the roth of June, we saw Cape St Vincent and the next day entered the Cadiz roads. The Captain's ignorance and lack of skill had lengthened our crossing by at least fifteen days, for he had allowed himself to drift towards the coast of Africa and from there it was very difficult to strike northwards. He thought himself so far from land that he had not even bothered to post a watch in the crow's nest and when Cape St Vincent was sighted at dawn, he was much disconcerted.

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1 A government of 9 Directors who governed France from 1793-1795 with the help of two Chambers: the Council of the Elders (Conseil des Anciens) and the Council of the Five Hundred (Conseil des Cinq-Cents). See Translator's Note in Appendix, p. 361 (67)

2 Louis-Philippe, duc d'Orléans, 1773-1781, father of Philippe Egalite.