

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

I

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, a military hospital or something of the kind, 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 distaste 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 rushed up to me and removed my sabots to warm them with hot cinders, a local courtesy in Bordeaux. Then, going to a cupboard, he took out a nice little white loaf and made me a present of it, calling me 'charmante nourrice' (charming wet-nurse). 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 swansdown, who had been waiting for perhaps two hours without any breakfast. She was certainly cursing the young hussy with her gay 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 citizenness 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 Sorèze.' I thanked him with a slight inclination of the head, but thought as I went away that if I was so well known in Bordeaux, it would be necessary to move from there.

II

I was driven to the limit. 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 Association 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 Brouquens, 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 *Diana* of Boston, 150 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 mouldering in the port, unable to get permission to sail. Without a word, I rose immediately and was about to leave when M. de Brouquens 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 he 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 myself.' He assured me that he would succeed and I put my trust in his zeal and intelligence. He was risking 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 *Diana* 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 a sea journey in the bad season, for we were then in the last days of February, would be fatal to her. In any case, how would she manage in a country where she did not understand the language, for she was already fairly advanced in years and even more accustomed than I to all the comforts of civilised living. I decided, therefore, to leave her behind. When I returned to M. de Brouquens' house with everything already arranged, he was amazed. He told me that an order had just arrived from 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 'section'. She slept with my small daughter, then nearly six months old, in a long room lined with cupboards in which I had stored 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 doubtful 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 with me the following morning and that during our absence he would empty all the cupboards, carry the contents down the small stair to the cellar and pack them in the 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 Chambeau to lunch with M. de Brouquens at Canoles. While 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 she had not told me they were coming. Brouquens 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 Brouquens 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 haughtiness 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, Alexander, Tallien's secretary, brought me the order enjoining the municipality of Bordeaux to issue a passport to Citizen Latour, 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, Bonie did not hesitate for a moment. He left for Blaye as soon as the tide was on the ebb. He had previously obtained 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 Gironde. Once in the Gironde, a simple identity card, without any details, was sufficient for travel anywhere. Bonie, 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, its real owner would have gone with him to the guillotine. Bonie'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 Bonie 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 so 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 pretence? I tried to push these terrible doubts away from me, but the more I reminded myself of the dangers Bonie 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 Chartrons, 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 risked 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 Bonie 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 Bonie 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. Bonie 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. Bonie 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 the 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.

I wanted to know every detail of their dangerous journey and this is the story my husband told me:

When Bonie arrived at Tesson, his sans-culotte dress, his red bonnet and enormous sabre 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 ripped 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 prisoner. 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 saviour, 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 disrepair, 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. Reassured by Bonie's patriotic dress, he agreed to let the two travellers 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 suspicion 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, unreasonableness 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 reasonings, 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.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

I

Two months previously, I had obtained the certificate of residence in the name of Dillon Gouvernet, 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 Lichfield,¹ 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 Bonie and I followed with a friend of Bonie'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 or 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. Bonie leapt over the counter saying: 'If you're tired, citizen, I'll do the writing for you.' The clerk agreed to this and Bonie 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,

¹ Robert Lee, 4th and last Earl of Lichfield.

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 his 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 Chartrons. 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 him 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,¹ 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 for, 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 magnificent parures of diamonds of the finest quality and, after showing them to me, tumbled them pell mell 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 thought: '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 du Pin is mistaken in saying that Julien de Toulouse of the National Convention—who at this time would have been 34 years old—succeeded Tallien in Bordeaux as the emissary of the Convention. Robespierre himself sent to this town, to replace Tallien and act as a check on Ysabeau, a young man of very advanced ideas, a member of the Jacobin club, aged only 18—Jullien de Paris, eldest son of Jullien de la Drôme, of the National Convention.

concern me, except for the fact that when I was in Madrid two years later, I heard that M. de Fontenay, when wishing to dispose of some of the diamonds there, had been suspected of complicity in a diamond theft from the Paris repositories. My story shows definitely that this suspicion was unjust. But M. de Fontenay, ashamed, it seemed, of his wife's marriage with Tallien, refused to admit that she had given him the diamonds or to say when it was that he accepted them, most willingly and without any false pride, in my presence.

I spent the last night packing some belongings and Zamore took them away very early the next morning. I had pretended to undress and was careful not to waken the maid. As soon as we were alone, my son, who slept in a bed beside mine, sat up and called me. I was terrified, fearing he might be ill, and went hurriedly over to him. Throwing his little arms about my neck and pressing his lips to my ear, he whispered: 'I saw Papa, you know, but I didn't say anything because of those wicked people!' The terror in the passport office had touched even a small child of less than four.

II

Our luggage had been aboard for three days and my spy was unaware that the cupboards and drawers were empty. I bade a tender farewell to my good Marguerite, who thought only of me and was glad to see me escaping from the threatening dangers. I left her under the protection of M. de Brouquens, who was well aware of my affection for her. At last, on the 10th of March, carrying my daughter Séraphine, and holding my son, Humbert, by the hand, I told the nurse that I was taking them to the Allées de Tourny, where the children were usually taken for their walk, and that I would be back in an hour or two.

I set off, instead, in the direction of the slopes of the Château-Trompette, where I joined M. de Chambeau whom I had appointed to meet me there. He also had obtained a passage in our boat. News had just reached him that his father, a good Gascon country gentleman living on his estate near Auch, had been denounced by a servant who had been thirty years in his service, and had been arrested and put into prison. They had learned from

papers seized at the time of the arrest that his son, after being captured during the fighting of 1792, had later emigrated, but had since returned to France and was in hiding in Bordeaux.

So M. de Chambeau had to leave Bordeaux at once. But for where? During the morning of the day on which we were to go and fetch our passport, I happened to be at M. de Brouquens' house at the same time as M. de Chambeau. Hearing of his predicament, I said jokingly to him: 'If I were to give you a power of attorney to manage my house in Martinique, you could get a passport to leave on the *Diana*. The idea had more success than I foresaw. M. de Brouquens went to his lawyer. The power of attorney was drawn up. I signed it with my true name, and an hour later, M. de Chambeau was in possession of a good passport, visaed probably—in fact, certainly—by Representative Ysabeau. This passport did not reach him until eleven o'clock in the morning. By midday, he was ready to leave, his entire baggage consisting of a dozen shirts, and a purse with twenty-five louis which M. de Brouquens had given him. He was delighted to be escaping, and being only twenty-five, was in the highest spirits, turning his hand to whatever needed to be done. He was a charming and most pleasant companion in misfortune. His friendship for my husband grew into a devotion which never once wavered.

I found him, then, as we had planned, at the Château-Trompette, accompanied by a small boy carrying his portmanteau, which weighed very little. He took Humbert's hand and when we arrived at the end of the Quai des Chartrons and saw the dinghy from the *Diana* we each of us felt such joy as is not often experienced in a lifetime.

M. Meyer, at whose house my husband had spent the night, was waiting for us. We found, already at lunch, M. de Brouquens, Mme de Fontenay and three or four other people, including a Councillor of the Parlement de Paris whom Brouquens had hidden among the staff of his commissariat and whose real names I never knew. He was greatly teased because, charged with finding provisions for our journey, all he had been able to get in the space of three days was one lamb, which he had brought bleating along. The famine was indeed so bad that we ourselves

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 contributed our entire store. It is true that Captain Pease had some barrels of biscuits, but they were a year and a half old 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 heave of the oar 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'Ambez, where we were to join her. We were compelled by the authorities to stop alongside a warship stationed on sentinel 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 to 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 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 Pauillac. There we had to submit to still another visit from two more guardships. 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 Pauillac, where the sea was less rough.

III

Our small ship was a vessel of only 150 tons. Its solitary mast was very tall, as in all American-built ships, and as there was no cargo 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 Nantucket and an old sailor called Harper, well salted 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 Chambeau. 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 weariness 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 Courdouan,¹ he headed due north declaring 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 Pauillac that a French frigate, the *Atalante*, 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 route.

One day, when the seas were so high that we had 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. (T)

dreaded: 'French man o' war ahead.' In one bound, the Captain was on deck, having first ordered us to remain out of sight. We heard 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 *Atalante* replied, 'Come aboard.' The Captain said the seas were too high. It was indeed very rough and as we hove 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 hurry 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 from there 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'Hervilly and M. de Kergaradec, 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. If He has taken back to Himself the children I had then, and the later 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 *Atalante*, I decided to dress my hair while my daughter was asleep. It was very long hair and I found it so

¹ Frédéric-Claude-Aymar.

² The children of Florent-Charles-Auguste, Comte de Liedekerke Beaufort and of Alix, known as Charlotte, de La Tour du Pin de Gouvernet:

- (a) Hadelin-Stanislas-Humbert, Comte de Liedekerke Beaufort, born in Brussels on the 11th March 1816, died in Brussels on the 3rd of January 1890;
- (b) Cécile-Claire-SérAPHINE de Liedekerke Beaufort, born at The Hague on the 24th of August 1818, died in Paris on the 19th of August 1893. Married in Brussels on the 28th of December 1841 to Ferdinand-Joseph-Ghislain, Baron de Beeckman.

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 'Titus' 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 instal me there beside him to spend an hour or two cooking those haricot 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 weevils 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

potatoes, 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 bowsprit. The Captain had no idea where he was. In vain did old Harper declare that he felt land breezes: 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 have passed 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 defeated 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 to the Boston Roads, where I left your poor brother Humbert joyfully gazing once again on cows, fields, 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 Aymar 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 Boston.

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 wept 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 dare 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 inns, 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.

III

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 he 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 Pauillac 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'Hénin, 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.

The house in which our Captain had found us a lodging was inhabited by three generations of women: Mrs Pierce, her mother and her daughter. It stood on the Market Square, the busiest and most lively part of the town. Our apartment consisted of, on one side, a small drawing-room with two windows looking out over the Square, and on the other side, beyond a very small staircase, a good bedroom intended for my husband, my children and me. This room, being on the other side of the house, looked out over an isolated shipyard where the builders were busily engaged. Beyond, stretched the countryside. You will realise later why I give you these details.

We boarded with these good ladies, who fed us very well, in the English style. Sally, the young daughter, was passionately fond of children and she took my small daughter and wanted to look after her. The grandmother took charge of Humbert, already very tall for his age and most unusually intelligent. We could not have had a more fortunate start. By the evening of the first day, we felt as settled there as if no grief or anxiety had ever troubled our lives.

Towards the middle of the night, I was awakened by the barking of a dog and his whimpers as he scratched at the kitchen door, which opened on the shipyard side. The bark sounded familiar. I got up and opened the window and there, in the moonlight, saw Black. I went straight down to open the door for her and when I got her back to our room, found that the poor creature was so soaked that she must have spent a very long time in the water. I learned next day that she had been kept tied up on board all day but that at ten o'clock in the evening, the sailor had thought it safe to unfasten her. No sooner had he done so than she took a mighty leap over the side. Now, the *Diana* was anchored more than a mile from the quay, so the good animal had probably swum all that distance and having searched for us through that strange town, had eventually discovered the very door of the house which was closest to the room where we were sleeping. The Captain was almost superstitious in his determination not to cross such a well-proved attachment. Black never left us again and returned eventually with us to Europe.

During the morning of the following day, Mr Geyer came to call

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 dangers 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 there, 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'Hénin, 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.¹ 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 Renslaer 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 had to empty all the cases and re-pack them. In his haste, Zamore 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

¹ According to historians of the American war, it was General Schuyler's successor, General Gates, who forced 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 presentiment 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 Créoles¹ 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 there 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,

¹ French settlers in the West Indies were known as Créoles. (T)

where William's battalion was to disembark, and to arrange the wedding there.

Both father and daughter were happy as the boat carried them to Providence. But as they set foot ashore, they found themselves amid stretchers and carts filled with wounded. Suddenly afraid, Sally asked a soldier for news of William. He told her, without any attempt to soften the news, that he had been killed in the retreat, but that they had not found his body. On hearing this, the poor girl lost her reason and never recovered. An attempt was made to shut her away, but she became violent, throwing her head against the walls and refusing food. After several fruitless efforts, it was decided to allow her to go free. She immediately became quiet and gentle, and driven by her one fixed idea, started out on foot for Boston. Her family arranged that at different places along the road she would be taken in and cared for, given food and clothing, but always without letting her see that it had been planned. When I saw her, she was walking slowly along the road, a staff in her hand, still haunted by the idea that, under the leaves, in the tall grass, behind some bush, she would find William. When she reached Boston, she always went to the same point on the quayside and then, after watching the sea for a while in the hope that he would come ashore, she would set out again on her return to Providence.

For twenty years the poor woman had made this journey every week. When I saw her, she looked about forty. She was tall, beautiful and very pale, cleanly dressed, with a warm overcoat. In France, children would have mocked her, or teased her. In America, they respected her, offered her flowers and fruit and took her hand to lead her to shelter when it rained. But even in winter she refused to sleep indoors. She preferred a barn or a stable, provided the door was left open. I think I remember hearing that she was eventually found dead on the road. Poor Sally, she had rejoined her William at last!

V

We all three¹ left Boston during the early days of June, taking the children with us. A fortnight later, we arrived in Albany, having

¹ Mme de La Tour du Pin, her husband and M. de Chambeau.

travelled right across the State of Connecticut¹ and greatly admired its fertility and air of prosperity. But some very sad news made me so unhappy that I was unable to enjoy any of it: Before we left Boston, M. de La Tour du Pin had received news of my father's death.² He did not tell me until we had started out, hoping that the journey itself and the movement would be a distraction and help to dull my grief. It was at Northampton, where we spent a night, that he decided to tell me, fearing I might read it in some gazette. Indeed, all the news from France was printed in the American papers as soon as it arrived, no matter at which port of the Union it was received.

My father's death distressed me very deeply, despite the fact that I had been expecting it for a long time. For many years I had seen him only on rare occasions, but nonetheless I had a most tender affection for him. I wrote to my step-mother, who was living in Martinique, and to my twelve-year-old step-sister, Fanny. Long afterwards, I had a reply from Mme Dillon in which she told me that she was leaving for England with Fanny and Mlle de La Touche, her daughter by her first marriage. It was a very cold letter and my stepmother showed not the slightest concern for the condition in which I was living in America.

Despite my grief, I did find distraction in the beauty of the forests we crossed on our way to Lebanon, the last stage where we were to spend the night before arriving in Albany. Unbroken forest, fifty miles wide, separated the State of Connecticut² from that of, I think, New York, though doubtless by now it has disappeared. It offered a spectacle which I had never before seen: a forest in every stage of growth, from the tree which was a mere shoot, just showing above ground, to the tree which had fallen from age. The road through these magnificent forests was only wide enough for two carriages. It was no more than a cutting where the tree trunks had been felled at ground level, the mass of the tree falling to right and left to clear a path. But, what jolting we endured when those trunks had not been cut properly level with the ground! The remarkable fertility of this virgin land had

¹ It was, in fact, the State of Massachusetts.

² Arthur Dillon was executed on the 13th of April 1794.

³ Read Massachusetts.

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 parts which were furrowed, and watered by small streams or creeks, as they are called, every kind of water plant was in full flower. This unspoiled 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 forests, 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, as 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 Chambeau 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 gentleman who was sliding, without so much as a 'by your leave' into the empty half of his double bed. Furious at this invasion, he promptly leaped out at the other 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 Chambeau'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 that consoled 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 imaginings. The fire caught hold in twenty places at once and despite the 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 negress 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 débris 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 Renslaer¹ 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,² 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 on³ the flats at the confluence of the Hudson and the Mohawk, a fine plain stretching from Albany to Half Moon Point.

¹ Mme 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 1625, before the birth of William III.

One of William's young pages, a member of a noble Guelder family named Renslaer, had been able to secure his master's goodwill 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 Renslaer'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.

Renslaer crossed over to America with his unchallengeably 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 considerably increasing his fortune, which the Revolution still further enlarged.

When we landed in America, the Renslaer 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 Patroon', 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 Patroon's house.' I told him I did not know who the Patroon

was, and he lifted his arms to heaven exclaiming: 'You don't know? You don't know who the Patroon 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 Patroon.

Two days later, we were received in this same house with a kindness, an attentiveness and a friendliness which were never to change. Mrs Renslaer 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.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

I

As we did not want to stay in Albany itself, General Schuyler undertook to find a nearby farm for us to buy. Meantime, he advised us to board for three months with a farmer of his acquaintance who had a farm not far from that on which his brother, Colonel Schuyler, lived with his twelve children. We therefore spent only a few days in Albany, and then went to stay with this Mr van Buren to learn American ways, for we had made it a condition that we should live with the family and that they should not change the smallest detail of their ordinary routine. It was also agreed that Mrs van Buren would let me help her in the house as a daughter would have done. At the same time, M. de Chambeau apprenticed himself to a carpenter in the small new town of Troy, a quarter of a mile from the van Buren's farm. He travelled there on Monday mornings and returned on Saturday evenings to spend Sunday with us. The news of my father-in-law's tragic death¹ had just reached us, and at the same time M. de Chambeau learned of his own father's death. As I was a very good dress-maker, I made my own mourning clothes and my good hostess, seeing my skill with the needle, found it very convenient to have an unpaid sewing woman at her disposal. To engage one from Albany would have cost her a piastre² a day, as well as food, including two lots of tea.

My husband went to look at a number of farms, but we waited for the arrival of our money from Holland before deciding which to buy. General Schuyler and Mr Renslaer advised M. de La Tour du Pin to divide these funds into three equal parts: one third for the purchase of the farm itself, another third for its furnishings, the purchase of negroes, cows, agricultural implements and furniture, and the remaining third to be added to what was left

¹ He was executed on the 28th of April 1794.

² Probably the Spanish piastre, worth a little over 5 N. Francs today. (T)

to us of the 12,000 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 fathoms¹ away by a mountain 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 An old measure—a 'toise'—equalling the length of the arms outstretched, i.e., six feet. (T).

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. It dipped 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 a 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 crops, a similar area of woodland and pasture, a small kitchen garden of a quarter of an acre filled with vegetables, and a fine orchard sown 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.

Betsey, 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 townfolk 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, chopper 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 of 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 way, 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 Elisabeth¹ 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

¹ 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 Archambault de Périgord, 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,¹ and in that list he found her name. He was grievously stricken 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 more 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 Duchesse de Poix, and two sons—Louis, who died with the Army under Napoleon, and Edmond, who married the youngest daughter of the Duchesse 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, ardent 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 7th of May, he had secured from the Convention a decree recognising Rousseau's 'Supreme Being' and on the 25th of July he made a long speech in the Convention aimed at establishing a more concentrated form of Government—perhaps even Rousseau's dictatorship. But the Convention mustered the courage to protest, and when he tried 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)

Beaumetz, might well be considered the most eccentric of Englishmen, though they are 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 grappling 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 lunched with our fatherly General before returning to Troy. I had returned earlier in the morning, having to prepare dinner for our guest. A little negro boy driving a carriage, a carriage rather like the horse-drawn chairs—the 'baroccini'—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 unvaryingly 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 kindness 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 Beaumetz 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 Patna, 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,¹ and had translated a Hindu poem written by the last ruler,² 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 Renslaer's house with all the Schuylers. M. de Talleyrand had been extremely impressed by Mrs Renslaer'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 Mongols, in Hindustan.

² Chah-Alem II, 1759-1806.

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 louis. 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 unbearable . . . 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 Mogol 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 1843—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 decked 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 moccasins, which are like shoes. They are made by the savages in buffalo-hide. Sometimes, as for instance, when they are embroidered with dyed bark 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 marking 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 Mme de La Tour du Pin a legacy of three hundred guineas for the purpose, as her will states, of 'going into mourning for her'.

ordinary planks. Buffalo skins and sheepskins kept our feet warm. Two horses drew this sledge and it could travel very fast.

When this equipage was complete, we moved into the farm, although the people from whom we were buying it had not yet moved out. They showed little regard for our wishes or convenience and as they were in no hurry to leave, we found ourselves obliged literally to push them out.

During this time, we also bought a negro and this purchase, which seemed so very simple, gave me such a strange sensation that I shall always remember the smallest circumstance connected with it.

As I have said, the Government had decided that negroes born in 1794 would be set free on reaching the age of twenty. But there were some who had already been freed, either by their masters as a reward, or for some other reason. A custom had also been established which no master would have dared to disregard for fear of public displeasure: a negro who was dissatisfied with his situation could go to a Justice of the Peace and send his master an official request to be sold. By common usage, the owner was then compelled to allow him to seek another master willing to pay a certain sum for him. The master could enforce a delay of three months or six, but rarely did so, not usually wishing to keep a worker or servant known to be anxious to leave him. That is what happened to us. Betsey, who was very well thought of, had sung our praises and was very sad at leaving us. A few pieces of ribbon and some old gowns that I had given her had secured me, at very little expense, a surprising reputation for generosity, a reputation which had reached even the farmers in the old Dutch colony. There was a young negro there named Minck, who wished to leave the master on whose property he had been born. He was trying to escape from the severity of his father, a negro like himself, and of his mother. He brought us written permission to find another situation and when we made enquiries, we learned that he had indeed been treated with extreme harshness and as the boy's father himself asked us to buy his son, we agreed to do so.

We climbed into our red and yellow sledge, drawn by our two excellent black horses and drove about four miles to a part of the

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, since we knew the baptismal name of our negro—always supposing that he had been baptised—we reached the pretty house of Mr Henry Lansing, a brick house, a sign of prosperity that we ourselves had not yet aspired to. There we asked Mrs Lansing for Minck. True to her Dutch traditions, she was anxious to discover, in her rather 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 home-spun grey cloth. He called Minck in, and taking his hand, put it into my 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 unneighbourly. 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 Emmenthal 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 were 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 masters 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 Renslaer, both of whom knew this negro by reputation. They congratulated us on his wishing to belong to us and made us 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 settled 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 negress, 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 Renslaer'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 beaten her 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 to a chair. Then Wilbeck, who knew of our friendship with Mr Renslaer, 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 Genetz, 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 Genetz himself was a thorough black-guard at heart and secretly supported the Revolution. However, his small lodging was rented from a French Créole who was a friend of ours, so we were careful to treat him as a compatriot.

This Créole 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.¹ 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 uncles 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.

¹ 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.

M. Bonamy usually came on Saturday and stayed at the farm until Monday. Once, at the beginning of Spring, he made a longer stay; a fall from his horse kept him with us more than a fortnight.

The second of the two French families I mentioned was staying in Albany until it would be possible for them to settle in Black-river, near Lake Erie. The head of the family, M. Desjardin, represented a company that owned immense tracts of land, and it was his job to re-sell parcels of it to poor Irish, Scottish or even French colonists sent to him by agents in New York.

Let us follow one such group of colonists, people whom I knew, so that you can see how the system worked.

The household consisted of the husband, the wife, a son of fifteen or seventeen, and two daughters. I saw them set off on foot, across the snow, the first three carrying shoulder packs. The husband was leading a poor horse harnessed to a small sledge on which he had packed two casks, one containing flour and the other salted pork, several axes, gardening and other tools, some bundles and the two small girls.

Arriving in Kentucky, a State which is flourishing today but where there were then few settlers, they would seek out the person who had sold or rented them the land on which they intended to live. First, they cut down trees in order to build a log house. Meantime, neighbours would give them lodging. Then they would clear the ground of brushwood by burning it off—inevitably scorching the lower branches of trees in the process. When the snows melted, they would rake off the charred pieces with a harrow and sow the corn. Nothing more was needed to ensure a good crop. They would use the big trees for building fences to divide the property into sections, and the best watered of these sections would be turned into a meadow or pasture. And here you had a family on the road to prosperity. Any passing traveller would see seven or eight children of all ages about the house, all fresh-looking and healthy, fed on maize flour and butter and trained from the age of four to some useful task.

Usually there would be a small rent to pay on the property, either in wheat or in money. Our farm paid Patroon Renslaer a rent of fifteen bushels of corn, or an equivalent in money, and a

similar rent was payable on all the other farms on his immense property which was eighteen miles wide and forty-two miles long.

M. Desjardin had brought all his household of furniture from Europe, including a good library of 1,000 to 1,500 books. He used to lend them to us and my husband or 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 own 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 every bit as good as those of a manège-trained horse. She had a very easy movement and followed me around like a dog whenever she could. The other mare was a little demon 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—43°—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 woods 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 five 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 fitting 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 negress 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. Try to imagine this 'Old Squaw', a woman of seventy, with a 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 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 cows, 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.

III

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 bush 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 leaned 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, realised 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 negress 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 quinquina which M. de Talleyrand sent me from Philadelphia, nor the mixtures 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 30°. 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 dress-maker 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

¹ Centigrade.

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 inconsolable 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,¹ 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 in the States 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 sect 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 bounded 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 knew 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 tilling 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 room, 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 150 to 200 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.

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 waggon 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 waggon 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.

V

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 woollen skirt, the little bodice 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 Renslaers, for more often than not we dined and spent the entire evening with them, especially when there was a good moon and, above all, during the snow season. While the snow lasted, the road, once marked, formed a track a foot or two deep and the horses were in no danger of straying from it.

Many of our neighbours made a habit of passing through our yard on the way to Albany. As we knew them, we never objected. Besides, in talking to them, I always learned some fresh piece of news. As for them, they enjoyed talking of the old country. They also liked to admire our small improvements. What excited most

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 pompous 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 *Voyages en Amérique*. He was on his way from the new settlements that had been formed on the banks of the Mohawk after the War of Independence, in the territory ceded by the Oneidas. M. de Talleyrand had given him letters to the Schuylers and the Renslaers 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 woollen 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, bringing round the smart waggon 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 Renslaer 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 Bedchamber! We made a bargain: I agreed to take him to visit Mrs Renslaer 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. Dupetit-Thouars.

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

Liancourt visited the neighbouring country. M. Dupetit-Thouars, a very amiable man, was on his way from Asilum, that French settlement in Carolina which had proved such a failure.¹ The settlers had disagreed among themselves and had not put their money to the best uses, so that at the end of a year everything had had to be sold at a loss and they had all gone their separate ways. M. Dupetit-Thouars, who was very witty and gay, gave us the most amusing descriptions of the breaking up of this settlement, and the three or four days he spent at the farm left us with very pleasant and agreeable memories. He died gloriously some years later at Aboukir.²

As for M. de Liancourt, I never saw him again. The double tertian fever from which I suffered continuously, made it impossible for me to ride or to go visiting. In any case, that philanthropic nobleman, always so ready to point out their shortcomings to the people of a country but never ready to learn from them, had displeased me greatly. The friends we visited together had liked him no better. Intelligent Mrs Renslaer had at first sight declared him to be a very mediocre man. I shall be thought ungrateful to speak so badly of him, for in his book³ he has spoken of me most flatteringly, but I must admit, to my shame, that the only part of the book that I remember is the passage I inspired.

A few days after M. de Liancourt's visit, sometime about June, we received a letter from M. de Talleyrand telling us of something which might have had serious consequences for us, and of the very great service he had rendered us in that connection. The balance of the funds we had received from Holland, some twenty to twenty-five thousand francs, had been consigned to the firm of Morris in Philadelphia. M. de Talleyrand had undertaken to withdraw this sum and was waiting for the necessary authorisation from my husband. By a truly providential piece of luck, he

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 centred 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. (T)

² M. Dupetit-Thouars, one of the leading settlers in Asilum, was by profession a naval officer. Nelson destroyed Napoleon's fleet in Aboukir Bay in 1802. (T)

³ *Voyages dans les Etats Unis d'Amérique fait de 1795-1798*, by the Duc de la Rochefoucauld-Liancourt. Published in 8 vols. in 1800.

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 admittance 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 Talleyrand 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 would not be ready for a month at least. M. de Chambeau knew every detail of the farm routine. There was nothing to prevent such a journey. Susy, 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 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 plied. 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 across 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 realised 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 saloon. The journey down to New York took about twenty-six hours, but a part of that time, the period when the tide was rising, was spent at anchor. Boats always tried to leave Albany at day-break, 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,¹ 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 1763.² 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 re-embark. 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.

¹ West 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)

² The Peace Treaty of Paris of the 10th 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 André, 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 *grandeurs* 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 clearing 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, curtsying 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 Emmery,¹ 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 Patna where he had been governor, of his elephants and his palanquins, 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 around 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 Emmery, Comte de Grozyeulx, President of the Constituent Assembly of the 4th of January 1790.

from the Caribbean in the same ship that had carried the fever, my husband and I were terribly ill. Fearing to be kept in New York by quarantine measures, I decided to leave immediately. We packed our trunk and went at daybreak to reserve places on a sloop which was ready to sail. We then went to say goodbye to Mr Law. He decided to leave too, on the pretext of visiting certain properties he had bought in the new town of Washington, where building had just begun. He had invested the greater part of his fortune in these purchases. Our departure was so hurried that I did not even see M. de Talleyrand: by the time he had begun to think of getting up, we were already far from New York.

We saw again the fine scenery near West Point, this time from the opposite direction, but with quite as much appreciation.

We had crossed the wide part of the river beyond the mountains when our progress was suddenly halted by one of those accidents which are fairly frequent in summer when the water is low. The tide was almost at its highest point when the sloop went aground on a sandbank, and although it suffered no damage, it lay there in midstream unable to move. The Captain thought that the next tide might not be high enough to refloat it and that it would probably be necessary to wait for another boat travelling downstream to tow us off, re-float us, and set us back into the channel from which a false turn of the wheel had diverted us.

The prospect of lying for several days in the middle of that great river did not appeal to us. I remembered that some Créoles from San Domingo, friends of M. Bonamy, were living on the banks of a small river near by, not far from a town we had just passed. The Captain told us we were exactly opposite the point where this stream joined the main river and offered us his boat to take us to these French people, whom we knew as they had visited us. We accepted this offer and were soon in the boat, with the one trunk which constituted all our luggage. We entered the smaller river and rowed for three or four miles between steep, rocky banks, the channel being so narrow that climbing plants and wild vines threw their branches across the water in garlands. It was delightful. Our journey ended at a small farm where we were given a cart to take us to our destination. Our two compatriots, still fairly young men, were as delighted as they were

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 boredom 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 disorder of their establishment, where the only woman was an old negress. 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 unmatching porcelain cups, so chipped that I would have preferred an honest set of matching earthenware crockery like our own. Afterwards, we rode in their waggon 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 fresh 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 Séraphine 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 convulsions. She died within a few hours, and was conscious until the very end. The Albany doctor whom M. de Chambeau had ridden to fetch as soon as the illness began, told us immediately he saw her 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 Séraphine in heaven. His mother adored him, and called him my dear child's little husband. This cruel loss threw us all into the deepest sadness and despondency. We brought 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 summoned, 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 went to prostrate 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 bided 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 behaviour 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 hour had come when I was to be forced to recognise 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 Aymar, 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 knowing 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 Bordeaux 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 blossom, they began to think it must be due to some kind of magic.

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

We were lent 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 apples 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 Bouilh.

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 negress 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 250-acre farm and I lived as did all owners of such farms, neither better nor worse. This simplicity and renunciation of the past earned 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 Montfermeil and there, as if by a presentiment, 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 toilet took very little time. Before the negroes went to their work, they helped the negress 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 days 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 much other tiring work which still remained to be done, fell to me. I had a remarkable collection of bowls, ladles and wooden spatulae, 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 casket you¹ 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—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.

without any preamble the casket and the watch which the banker at The Hague had given him at the same time as the portrait. The young man was frightened and ended by returning everything. M. de Talleyrand sent these things to us at the farm.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

At Pisa, 14th of May 1843.

I

Towards the end of the winter of 1795–1796, I caught measles. It was a fairly severe attack, aggravated by the fact that I was in the first months of pregnancy. We were afraid Humbert would catch it, but he did not, although he slept in my room. I recovered quickly and was no sooner better than we received letters from Bonie in France telling us that he and M. de Brouquens had, by their combined efforts, succeeded in having the sequestration removed from Le Bouilh.

The property of those who had been condemned was being restored. My mother-in-law, with the assistance of her daughter's husband, the Marquis de Lameth, had acted on behalf of her children and again taken possession of the properties of Tesson and Ambleville, as well as of the house at Saintes which had been held by the Department of Charente-Inférieure. But when they asked for the removal of the seals on Le Bouilh, they were told that this could not be done in the owner's absence. They replied that he had gone to America *with a valid passport*, and that neither M. de La Tour du Pin nor I, who owned a house in Paris, had been on the list of émigrés. After much discussion, the authorities agreed to allow us one year's grace in which to present ourselves. If we did not do so within that period, Le Bouilh would be offered for sale as national property, unless M. de Lameth was able to prove his own children's rights as the grandchildren of the former owner. We were urged, therefore, to return as soon as possible. However, as the stability of the French government of the day inspired little confidence, we were also advised to take passage to a Spanish port instead of a French one, for the Republic

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 setting the slightest obstacle in the way of a departure which terrified me and filled me with dismay. I had a presentiment 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?' I

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 Renslaer'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 in token of liberation, exactly as used to be done in ancient Rome.

We leased our 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 affectionate and grateful leave of all those who, for two years, had surrounded us with care, 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 Staël, who was back in Paris with Benjamin Constant, had urged him to

return and serve the Government of the Directoire¹ 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 might, 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 Barré. 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

¹ A government of 5 Directors who governed France from 1795-1799 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. 443. (T)

² Louis-Philippe, duc d'Orléans, 1725-1785, father of Philippe Egalité.

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 four¹ went on board on the 6th 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 wardrobe-mistress to all on board and sent out an appeal for work. Everyone brought me something. There were shirts to be made, cravats to be hemmed, linen 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 10th 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.

¹ M. and Mme de La Tour du Pin, Humbert and M. de Chambeau.