

THE FLIGHT OF THE GEESSE.

I hear the low wind wash the softening snow, The low tide loiter down the shore. The night Full filled with April forecast, hath no light. The salt wave on the edge fast pulses slow. Through the hid furrows slip in murmurous flow The thaw's shy ministers; and hark! the light Of heaven grows weird and loud with unseen flight Of strong hosts prophesying as they go.

High through the drenched and hollow night their wings Beat northward hard on Winter's trail. The sound Of their confused and hollow voices, borne Athwart the night to their long Arctic morn, Comes with a sanction and an awe profound; A boding of unknown, feshadowed things.

—Charles G. D. Roberts, in N. Y. Independent.

A MIDNIGHT ESCAPE.

At the Castle of R—, about three leagues from Bordeaux, at 6 in the evening of the 29th of October, 1792, a gentleman of about 30 years of age, a young lady and a child 8 years old, were assembled in a low room, lighted by small and barred windows. The elder persons were full of painful thoughts; but the child made his shouts heard, which were repeated by the echoes through the corridors of the castle. Trunks and packages were strewn about the room. Count R— frequently showed movements of impatience and anxiety as he turned his eyes upon his wife and son. His agitation betrayed the fears of his heart.

"William is a long time before he returns," he said, rising from his seat; "has the scheme failed? Has he betrayed me? Oh God! save my wife and child!" "My dear," said the lady, gently, "cease to worry yourself; Jacques, the footman, is an honest fellow."

"Yes; he is a Republican," replied the count. "Still, he is an honest man," replied the lady. "But William ought to remember that we are impatient to see him back again. I feel very much inclined to go as far as the village."

"Do not go out!" exclaimed Mme. de R— throwing herself on her husband's neck; "do not go out, I implore you."

"I am armed," said the Count. "Wait only a few minutes. William cannot be long."

The Count sat down again. His son Edward, who had been playing about the room, now climbed up on his knees. He took him in his arms, kissed his forehead, and then appeared calmer.

Half an hour had passed away in a sad silence, when two gentle knocks at the door announced William's return. He was followed by a man who carried a bulky packet under his arm.

"Monsieur le Comte," said William, "here is Jacques. All is arranged; we must start."

"You are very late, my friend," replied the Count. "Because I could not get out of that wretched public house until I had drunk to the health of the republic, for I must pass as a patriot, as a citizen, and I don't know what else beside."

"It is true, M. le Comte," said Jacques; "but here we are at last. I bring you the clothes, which you must put on at once. You must disguise yourself as a sailor—it is the safest thing to do. And for you, Madame, here are caps and petticoats of my wife's, and a cabin boy's dress for M. Edward. All this is necessary, otherwise there are no means of saving you."

"Brave man!" said the Count, pressing his hand with an emotion which he could not conceal. "Listen, M. le Comte: I am only a simple sailor, owner of the boat which my late father left me. It is three years since that terrible north-west gale stripped me of all I possessed, but it was you who set me afloat again. Do you think that we are fools who don't remember all that? No, no, by the faith of a sailor; and it is with all our hearts that we are going to brave the sentinels and coast guards for you, and put you on board an English ship, or land you in Spain or Jersey. My boat is provisioned for a fortnight."

"Here is my purse," said the Count; "take it."

"I have no need of it," said Jacques. "Keep it, you will want it in a foreign land. Before long it will be midnight; then it will be high tide; then you must go, one by one, to the shore at Martinet. If you wait altogether it would arouse suspicion; and we have a bad lot in the village who can't sleep. I know very well why—the wicked never sleep."

The Count R— had given proofs of his courage and his love for the royal family, both at Paris and at Versailles. He was one of those brave men who exposed themselves to death on the 10th of August rather than to allow the Queen's apartments to be profaned by a furious mob.

The Count had retired to his castle, with the hope of living there unnoticed among the peasants who loved him.

One morning he saw a stranger, mounted on a fine horse, covered with dust and foam, enter the castle courtyard; the man gave him a note and at once departed. Count R—, astonished, opened the note and read these words: "Fly, Monsieur le Comte, your life is threatened. The Representative has just ordered your arrest; it is a friend who implores you to do so. This evening it will be too late." When he read this note the Count thought it might be a snare which was laid for him; he resolved to remain at home rather than separate himself from his wife and son. However, he informed the Countess of the message, who, less confident than her husband, with tears in her eyes, implored him to go. It was then decided that they should all start together. But how were they to fly? They were still deliberating when William, the Count's man of business, was announced. This man was young; he had been brought up at the castle. He was a peasant who had received the usual education of his class, but who concealed under a coarse exterior and common clothes a quick penetration.

Count R—, therefore, at once told him his fears, and informed him of the letter which he had just received from Bordeaux. William perceived the necessity for a prompt departure.

He prepared a plan which was accepted. "Do not trouble yourself, Monsieur le Comte," he said. "I will entrust you to the hands of a man who will know how to

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lead you to safety, so you have nothing to be anxious about."

William went to see his cousin Jacques, the owner of a boat. All was soon arranged between them. The Count and his family were to be landed in Spain or Jersey, or taken on board the English fleet, which for some days had been in sight of Corduan. Jacques was one of those old sea wolves of which many are to be found at mouths of rivers. Entirely occupied by his arduous calling, he troubled himself very little about the various forms of government which for the last three years had succeeded each other. All he cared for was to be able to govern his own barque; and if he had any difficulty it was only when the sea was rough, and the winds prevented him from affording help to vessels in danger. Formerly he had distinguished himself by his courage on board the squadron of the Comte de Grasse. He was honest, upright and kind-hearted.

When his cousin proposed to him the perilous mission of rescuing the Count from the plots of his enemies, it was with the greatest enthusiasm that he accepted it. A squeeze of William's hand was the pledge of his determination.

Midnight had just sounded from the castle clock. The Count started. William's presence prevented a scene which might have deprived the fugitives of that strength and energy of which they then stood so greatly in need.

After a debate, full of the most devoted love, it was decided that Mme. R— and her son should go on first, and that the Count should follow them in a few minutes.

Rather more than five minutes had elapsed since Mme. R— had left under the escort of Jacques and one of his men, when the bell of the outer gate of the castle rang violently. William left the Count, and went out by a secret door to examine who their late visitors might be. It was not long before he perceived that they were men armed with sticks, swords and guns, who ordered the porter in the name of the law to open the gate, and to deliver up to them the keys of the castle. The porter, who was in William's confidence, parleyed with them as long as he could, and did not yield up the keys till he saw that all resistance was impossible. The haste which the chief of the band made to reach the Count's apartments, counting, as he said, in a loud voice, to find the hare in his hole, proved that he was well acquainted with the castle.

During this time M. de R— and William were on their way to the shore at Martinet by cross roads. Twenty times they risked their lives, but what was the despair of M. de R— when at last they arrived to find neither the boat nor his wife nor Jacques!

"You have betrayed me, William?" he said, seizing his arm. "No, Monsieur le Comte," replied William, firmly.

At the same instant a man came out of the ditch and approached them slowly. Count R— advanced to meet him, a pistol in his hand; and when he was near enough to recognize him, he saw that it was Jacques.

"What have you done with my wife and child?" he said, in a voice trembling with emotion. "Silence!" said Jacques, putting his finger to his mouth. "Silence, Monsieur le Comte! or you are lost. They are in safety. You must follow me." After an hour's walk they arrived at the banks of the river, at the foot of a very high rock. Jacques, making a trumpet with his hands, hailed a barque, which the morning fog prevented them from perceiving. They did not wait long for an answer.

"William," said Jacques, "return to the castle and watch over the corn and stores. Those rogues have come as far as Martinet, and we've narrowly escaped being caught by them; they have gone on further, and they may find us here yet."

"Farewell, Monsieur le Comte! courage and confidence," said William; "we will take good care of all in the castle."

The Count pressed his hand affectionately. "Farewell!" he said to him in a choking voice.

Three minutes had not elapsed since William had left the Count and Jacques when he returned, running and making signs which were only too well understood by the fugitives. "Embark!" cried William, "here they are!" But the boat had not yet touched the shore; they heard the oars beating the water with hurried strokes; on the other side they perceived armed men, who were pursuing them, running, who evidently saw them. It was all over with them. "There is only one means of safety," said Jacques, "follow me." Both rushed into the water, the sailors in the boat redoubled their efforts, and in less than a minute they arrived to the aid of the fugitives. The wretches who pursued them,

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