Chapter 5

ROLAND

The return was silent and mournful; it seemed that with the hopes of death Roland's gayety had disappeared.

The catastrophe of which he had been the author played perhaps a part in his taciturnity. But let us hasten to say that in battle, and more especially during the last campaign against the Arabs, Roland had been too frequently obliged to jump his horse over the bodies of his victims to be so deeply impressed by the death of an unknown man.

His sadness was, due to some other cause; probably that which he confided to Sir John. Disappointment over his own lost chance of death, rather than that other's decease, occasioned this regret.

On their return to the Hotel du Palais-Royal, Sir John mounted to his room with his pistols, the sight of which might have excited something like remorse in Roland's breast. Then he rejoined the young officer and returned the three letters which had been intrusted to him.

He found Roland leaning pensively on a table. Without saying a word the Englishman laid the three letters before him. The young man cast his eyes over the addresses, took the one destined for his mother, unsealed it and read it over. As he read, great tears rolled down his cheeks. Sir John gazed wonderingly at this new phase of Roland's character. He had thought everything possible to this many-sided nature except those tears which fell silently from his eyes.

Shaking his head and paying not the least attention to Sir John's presence, Roland murmured:

"Poor mother! she would have wept. Perhaps it is better so. Mothers were not made to weep for their children!"

He tore up the letters he had written to his mother, his sister, and General Bonaparte, mechanically burning the fragments with the utmost care. Then ringing for the chambermaid, he asked:

"When must my letters be in the post?"

"Half-past six," replied she. "You have only a few minutes more."

"Just wait then."

And taking a pen he wrote:

My DEAR GENERAL--It is as I told you; I am living and he is

dead. You must admit that this seems like a wager. Devotion

to death. Your Paladin ROLAND.

Then he sealed the letter, addressed it to General Bonaparte, Rue de la Victoire, Paris, and handed it to the chambermaid, bidding her lose no time in posting it. Then only did he seem to notice Sir John, and held out his hand to him.

"You have just rendered me a great service, my lord," he said. "One of those services which bind men for all eternity. I am already your friend; will you do me the honor to become mine?"

Sir John pressed the hand that Roland offered him.

"Oh!" said he, "I thank you heartily. I should never have dared ask this honor; but you offer it and I accept."

Even the impassible Englishman felt his heart soften as he brushed away the tear that trembled on his lashes. Then looking at Roland, he said: "It is unfortunate that you are so hurried; I should have been pleased and delighted to spend a day or two with you."

"Where were you going, my lord, when I met you?"

"Oh, I? Nowhere. I am travelling to get over being bored. I am unfortunately often bored."

"So that you were going nowhere?"

"I was going everywhere."

"That is exactly the same thing," said the young officer, smiling. "Well, will you do something for me?"

"Oh! very willingly, if it is possible."

"Perfectly possible; it depends only on you."

"What is it?"

"Had I been killed you were going to take me to my mother or throw me into the Rhone."

"I should have taken you to your mother and not thrown you into the Rhone."

"Well, instead of accompanying me dead, take me living. You will be all the better received."

"Oh!"

"We will remain a fortnight at Bourg. It is my natal city, and one of the dullest towns in France; but as your compatriots are pre-eminent for originality, perhaps you will find amusement where others are bored. Are we agreed?"

"I should like nothing better," exclaimed the Englishman; "but it seems to me that it is hardly proper on my part."

"Oh! we are not in England, my lord, where etiquette holds absolute sway. We have no longer king nor queen. We didn't cut off that poor creature's head whom they called Marie Antoinette to install Her Majesty, Etiquette, in her stead."

"I should like to go," said Sir John.

"You'll see, my mother is an excellent woman, and very distinguished besides. My sister was sixteen when I left; she must be eighteen now. She was pretty, and she ought to be beautiful. Then there is my brother Edouard, a delightful youngster of twelve, who will let off fireworks between your legs and chatter a gibberish of English with you. At the end of the fortnight we will go to Paris together."

"I have just come from Paris," said the Englishman.

"But listen. You were willing to go to Egypt to see General Bonaparte. Paris is not so far from here as Cairo. I'll present you, and, introduced by me, you may rest assured that you will be well received. You were speaking of Shakespeare just now--"

"Oh! I am always quoting him."

"Which proves that you like comedies and dramas."

"I do like them very much, that's true."

"Well, then, General Bonaparte is going to produce one in his own style which will not be wanting in interest, I answer for it!"

"So that," said Sir John, still hesitating, "I may accept your offer without seeming intrusive?"

"I should think so. You will delight us all, especially me."

"Then I accept."

"Bravo! Now, let's see, when will you start?"

"As soon as you wish. My coach was harnessed when you threw that unfortunate plate at Barjols' head. However, as I should never have known you but for that plate, I am glad you did throw it at him!"

"Shall we start this evening?"

"Instantly. I'll give orders for the postilion to send other horses, and once they are here we will start."

Roland nodded acquiescence. Sir John went out to give his orders, and returned presently, saying they had served two cutlets and a cold fowl for them below. Roland took his valise and went down. The Englishman placed his pistols in the coach box again. Both ate enough to enable them to travel all night, and as nine o'clock was striking from the Church of the Cordeliers they settled themselves in the carriage and quitted Avignon, where their passage left a fresh trail of blood, Roland with the careless indifference of his nature, Sir John Tanlay with the impassibility of his nation. A quarter of an hour later both were sleeping, or at least the silence which obtained induced the belief that both had yielded to slumber.

We shall profit by this instant of repose to give our readers some indispensable information concerning Roland and his family.

Roland was born the first of July, 1773, four years and a few days later than Bonaparte, at whose side, or rather following him, he made his appearance in this book. He was the son of M. Charles de Montrevel, colonel of a regiment long garrisoned at Martinique, where he had married a creole named Clotilde de la Clémencière. Three children were born of this marriage, two boys and a girl: Louis, whose acquaintance we have made under the name of Roland, Amélie, whose beauty he had praised to Sir John, and Edouard.

Recalled to France in 1782, M. de Montrevel obtained admission for young Louis de Montrevel (we shall see later how the name of Louis was changed to Roland) to the Ecole Militaire in Paris.

It was there that Bonaparte knew the child, when, on M. de Keralio's report, he was judged worthy of promotion from the Ecole de Brienne to the Ecole

Militaire. Louis was the youngest pupil. Though he was only thirteen, he had already made himself remarked for that ungovernable and quarrelsome nature of which we have seen him seventeen years later give an example at the table d'hôte at Avignon.

Bonaparte, a child himself, had the good side of this character; that is to say, without being quarrelsome, he was firm, obstinate, and unconquerable. He recognized in the child some of his own qualities, and this similarity of sentiments led him to pardon the boy's defects, and attached him to him. On the other hand the child, conscious of a supporter in the Corsican, relied upon him.

One day the child went to find his great friend, as he called Napoleon, when the latter was absorbed in the solution of a mathematical problem. He knew the importance the future artillery officer attached to this science, which so far had won him his greatest, or rather his only successes.

He stood beside him without speaking or moving. The young mathematician felt the child's presence, and plunged deeper and deeper into his mathematical calculations, whence he emerged victorious ten minutes later. Then he turned to his young comrade with that inward satisfaction of a man who issues victorious from any struggle, be it with science or things material.

The child stood erect, pale, his teeth clinched, his arms rigid and his fists closed.

"Oh! oh!" said young Bonaparte, "what is the matter now?"

"Valence, the governor's nephew, struck me."

"Ah!" said Bonaparte, laughing, "and you have come to me to strike him back?"

The child shook his head.

"No," said he, "I have come to you because I want to fight him--"

"Fight Valence?"

"Yes."

"But Valence will beat you, child; he is four times as strong as you."

"Therefore I don't want to fight him as children do, but like men fight."

"Pooh!"

"Does that surprise you?" asked the child.

"No," said Bonaparte; "what do you want to fight with?"

"With swords."

"But only the sergeants have swords, and they won't lend you one."

"Then we will do without swords."

"But what will you fight with?"

The child pointed to the compass with which the young mathematician had made his equations.

"Oh! my child," said Bonaparte, "a compass makes a very bad wound."

"So much the better," replied Louis; "I can kill him."

"But suppose he kills you?"

"I'd rather that than bear his blow."

Bonaparte made no further objections; he loved courage, instinctively, and his young comrade's pleased him.

"Well, so be it!" he replied; "I will tell Valence that you wish to fight him, but not till to-morrow."

"Why to-morrow?"

"You will have the night to reflect."

"And from now till to-morrow," replied the child, "Valence will think me a coward." Then shaking his head, "It is too long till to-morrow." And he walked away.

"Where are you going?" Bonaparte asked him.

"To ask some one else to be my friend."

"So I am no longer your friend?"

"No, since you think I am a coward."

"Very well," said the young man rising.

"You will go?"

"I am going."

"At once?"

"At once."

"Ah!" exclaimed the child, "I beg your pardon; you are indeed my friend." And he fell upon his neck weeping. They were the first tears he had shed since he had received the blow.

Bonaparte went in search of Valence and gravely explained his mission to him. Valence was a tall lad of seventeen, having already, like certain precocious natures, a beard and mustache; he appeared at least twenty. He was, moreover, a head taller than the boy he had insulted.

Valence replied that Louis had pulled his queue as if it were a bell-cord (queues were then in vogue)--that he had warned him twice to desist, but that Louis had repeated the prank the third time, whereupon, considering him a mischievous youngster, he had treated him as such.

Valence's answer was reported to Louis, who retorted that pulling a comrade's queue was only teasing him, whereas a blow was an insult. Obstinacy endowed this child of thirteen with the logic of a man of thirty.

The modern Popilius to Valence returned with his declaration of war. The youth was greatly embarrassed; he could not fight with a child without being ridiculous. If he fought and wounded him, it would be a horrible thing; if he himself were wounded, he would never get over it so long as he lived.

But Louis's unyielding obstinacy made the matter a serious one. A council of the Grands (elder scholars) was called, as was usual in serious cases. The Grands decided that one of their number could not fight a child; but since this child persisted in considering himself a young man, Valence must tell him before all his schoolmates that he regretted having treated him as a child, and would henceforth regard him as a young man.

Louis, who was waiting in his friend's room, was sent for. He was introduced into the conclave assembled in the playground of the younger pupils.

There Valence, to whom his comrades had dictated a speech carefully debated among themselves to safeguard the honor of the Grands toward the Petits, assured Louis that he deeply deplored the occurrence; that he had treated him according to his age and not according to his intelligence and courage, and begged him to excuse his impatience and to shake hands in sign that all was forgotten.

But Louis shook his head.

"I heard my father, who is a colonel, say once," he replied, "that he who receives a blow and does not fight is a coward. The first time I see my father I shall ask him if he who strikes the blow and then apologizes to avoid fighting is not more of a coward than he who received it."

The young fellows looked at each other. Still the general opinion was against a duel which would resemble murder, and all, Bonaparte included, were unanimously agreed that the child must be satisfied with what Valence had said, for it represented their common opinion. Louis retired, pale with anger, and sulked with his great friend, who, said he, with imperturbable gravity, had sacrificed his honor.

The morrow, while the Grands were receiving their lesson in mathematics, Louis slipped into the recitation-room, and while Valence was making a demonstration on the blackboard, he approached him unperceived, climbed on a stool to reach his face, and returned the slap he had received the preceding day.

"There," said he, "now we are quits, and I have your apologies to boot; as for me, I shan't make any, you may be quite sure of that."

The scandal was great. The act occurring in the professor's presence, he was obliged to report it to the governor of the school, the Marquis Tiburce Valence. The latter, knowing nothing of the events leading up to the blow his nephew had received, sent for the delinquent and after a terrible lecture informed him that he was no longer a member of the school, and must be ready to return to his mother at Bourg that very day. Louis replied that his things would be packed in ten minutes, and he out of the school in fifteen. Of the blow he himself had received he said not a word.

The reply seemed more than disrespectful to the Marquis Tiburce Valence. He was much inclined to send the insolent boy to the dungeon for a week, but reflected that he could not confine him and expel him at the same time.

The child was placed in charge of an attendant, who was not to leave him until he had put him in the coach for Mâcon; Madame de Montrevel was to be notified to meet him at the end of the journey.

Bonaparte meeting the boy, followed by his keeper, asked an explanation of the sort of constabulary guard attached to him.

"I'd tell you if you were still my friend," replied the child; "but you are not. Why do you bother about what happens to me, whether good or bad?"

Bonaparte made a sign to the attendant, who came to the door while Louis was packing his little trunk. He learned then that the child had been expelled. The step was serious; it would distress the entire family, and perhaps ruin his young comrade's future.

With that rapidity of decision which was one of the distinctive characteristics of his organization, he resolved to ask an audience of the governor, meantime requesting the keeper not to hasten Louis's departure.

Bonaparte was an excellent pupil, beloved in the school, and highly esteemed by the Marquis Tiburce Valence. His request was immediately complied with. Ushered into the governor's presence, he related everything, and, without blaming Valence in the least, he sought to exculpate Louis.

"Are you sure of what you are telling me, sir?" asked the governor.

"Question your nephew himself. I will abide by what he says."

Valence was sent for. He had already heard of Louis's expulsion, and was on his way to tell his uncle what had happened. His account tallied perfectly with what you Bonaparte had said.

"Very well," said the governor, "Louis shall not go, but you will. You are old enough to leave school." Then ringing, "Bring me the list of the vacant sub-lieutenancies," he said.

That same day an urgent request for a sub-lieutenancy was made to the Ministry, and that same night Valence left to join his regiment. He went to bid Louis farewell, embracing him half willingly, half unwillingly, while Bonaparte held his hand. The child received the embrace reluctantly.

"It's all right now," said he, "but if ever we meet with swords by our sides--" A threatening gesture ended the sentence.

Valence left. Bonaparte received his own appointment as sub-lieutenant October 10, 1785. His was one of fifty-eight commissions which Louis XVI. signed for the Ecole Militaire. Eleven years later, November 15, 1796, Bonaparte, commander-in-chief of the army of Italy, at the Bridge of Arcola, which was defended by two regiments of Croats and two pieces of cannon, seeing his ranks disseminated by grapeshot and musket balls, feeling that victory was slipping through his fingers, alarmed by the hesitation of his bravest followers, wrenched the tri-color from the rigid fingers of a dead color-bearer, and dashed toward the bridge, shouting: "Soldiers! are you no longer the men of Lodi?" As he did so he saw a young lieutenant spring past him who covered him with his body.

This was far from what Bonaparte wanted. He wished to cross first. Had it been possible he would have gone alone.

Seizing the young man by the flap of his coat, he drew him back, saying: "Citizen, you are only a lieutenant, I a commander-in-chief! The precedence belongs to me."

"Too true," replied the other; and he followed Bonaparte instead of preceding him.

That evening, learning that two Austrian divisions had been cut to pieces, and seeing the two thousand prisoners he had taken, together with the

captured cannons and flags, Bonaparte recalled the young man who had sprung in front of him when death alone seemed before him.

"Berthier," said he, "tell my aide-de-camp, Valence, to find that young lieutenant of grenadiers with whom I had a controversy this morning at the Bridge of Arcola."

"General," stammered Berthier, "Valence is wounded."

"Ah! I remember I have not seen him to-day. Wounded? Where? How? On the battlefield?"

"No, general," said he, "he was dragged into a quarrel yesterday, and received a sword thrust through his body."

Bonaparte frowned. "And yet they know very well I do not approve of duels; a soldier's blood belongs not to himself, but to France. Give Muiron the order then."

"He is killed, general."

"To Elliot, in that case."

"Killed also."

Bonaparte drew his handkerchief from his pocket and passed it over his brow, which was bathed with sweat.

"To whom you will, then; but I want to see that lieutenant."

He dared not name any others, fearing to hear again that fatal "Killed!"

A quarter of an hour later the young lieutenant was ushered into his tent, which was lighted faintly by a single lamp.

"Come nearer, lieutenant," said Bonaparte.

The young man made three steps and came within the circle of light.

"So you are the man who wished to cross the bridge before me?" continued Bonaparte.

"It was done on a wager, general," gayly answered the young lieutenant, whose voice made the general start.

"Did I make you lose it?"

"Maybe, yes; maybe, no."

"What was the wager?"

"That I should be promoted captain to-day."

"You have won it."

"Thank you, general."

The young man moved hastily forward as if to press Bonaparte's hand, but checked himself almost immediately. The light had fallen full on his face for an instant; that instant sufficed to make the general notice the face as he had the voice. Neither the one nor the other was unknown to him. He searched his memory for an instant, but finding it rebellious, said: "I know you!"

"Possibly, general."

"I am certain; only I cannot recall your name."

"You managed that yours should not be forgotten, general."

"Who are you?"

"Ask Valence, general."

Bonaparte gave a cry of joy.

"Louis de Montrevel," he exclaimed, opening wide his arms. This time the young lieutenant did not hesitate to fling himself into them.

"Very good," said Bonaparte; "you will serve eight days with the regiment in your new rank, that they may accustom themselves to your captain's epaulets, and then you will take my poor Muiron's place as aide-de-camp. Go!"

"Once more!" cried the young man, opening his arms.

"Faith, yes!" said Bonaparte, joyfully. Then holding him close after kissing him twice, "And so it was you who gave Valence that sword thrust?"

"My word!" said the new captain and future aide-de-camp, "you were there when I promised it to him. A soldier keeps his word."

Eight days later Captain Montrevel was doing duty as staff-officer to the commander-in-chief, who changed his name of Louis, then in ill-repute, to that of Roland. And the young man consoled himself for ceasing to be a descendant of St. Louis by becoming the nephew of Charlemagne.

Roland--no one would have dared to call Captain Montrevel Louis after Bonaparte had baptized him Roland--made the campaign of Italy with his general, and returned with him to Paris after the peace of Campo Formio.

When the Egyptian expedition was decided upon, Roland, who had been summoned to his mother's side by the death of the Brigadier-General de Montrevel, killed on the Rhine while his son was fighting on the Adige and the Mincio, was among the first appointed by the commander-in-chief to accompany him in the useless but poetical crusade which he was planning. He left his mother, his sister Amélie, and his young brother Edouard at Bourg, General de Montrevel's native town. They resided some three-quarters of a mile out of the city, at Noires-Fontaines, a charming house, called a château, which, together with the farm and several hundred acres of land surrounding it, yielded an income of six or eight thousand livres a year, and constituted the general's entire fortune. Roland's departure on this adventurous expedition deeply afflicted the poor widow. The death of the father seemed to presage that of the son, and Madame de Montrevel, a sweet, gentle Creole, was far from possessing the stern virtues of a Spartan or Lacedemonian mother.

Bonaparte, who loved his old comrade of the Ecole Militaire with all his heart, granted him permission to rejoin him at the very last moment at Toulon. But the fear of arriving too late prevented Roland from profiting by

this permission to its full extent. He left his mother, promising her--a promise he was careful not to keep--that he would not expose himself unnecessarily, and arrived at Marseilles eight days before the fleet set sail.

Our intention is no more to give the history of the campaign of Egypt than we did that of Italy. We shall only mention that which is absolutely necessary to understand this story and the subsequent development of Roland's character. The 19th of May, 1798, Bonaparte and his entire staff set sail for the Orient; the 15th of June the Knights of Malta gave up the keys of their citadel. The 2d of July the army disembarked at Marabout, and the same day took Alexandria; the 25th, Bonaparte entered Cairo, after defeating the Mamelukes at Chebreïss and the Pyramids.

During this succession of marches and battles, Roland had been the officer we know him, gay, courageous and witty, defying the scorching heat of the day, the icy dew of the nights, dashing like a hero or a fool among the Turkish sabres or the Bedouin bullets. During the forty days of the voyage he had never left the interpreter Ventura; so that with his admirable facility he had learned, if not to speak Arabic fluently, at least to make himself understood in that language. Therefore it often happened that, when the general did not wish to use the native interpreter, Roland was charged with certain communications to the Muftis, the Ulemas, and the Sheiks.

During the night of October 20th and 21st Cairo revolted. At five in the morning the death of General Dupey, killed by a lance, was made known. At eight, just as the revolt was supposedly quelled, an aide-de-camp of the dead general rode up, announcing that the Bedouins from the plains were attacking Bab-el-Nasr, or the Gate of Victory.

Bonaparte was breakfasting with his aide-de-camp Sulkowsky, so severely wounded at Salahieh that he left his pallet of suffering with the greatest difficulty only. Bonaparte, in his preoccupation forgetting the young Pole's condition, said to him: "Sulkowsky, take fifteen Guides and go see what that rabble wants."

Sulkowsky rose.

"General," interposed Roland, "give me the commission. Don't you see my comrade can hardly stand?"

"True," said Bonaparte; "do you go!"

Roland went out and took the fifteen Guides and started. But the order had been given to Sulkowsky, and Sulkowsky was determined to execute it. He set forth with five or six men whom he found ready.

Whether by chance, or because he knew the streets of Cairo better than Roland, he reached the Gate of Victory a few seconds before him. When Roland arrived, he saw five or six dead men, and an officer being led away by the Arabs, who, while massacring the soldiers mercilessly, will sometimes spare the officers in hope of a ransom. Roland recognized Sulkowsky; pointing him out with his sabre to his fifteen men, he charged at a gallop.

Half an hour later, a Guide, returning alone to head-quarters, announced the deaths of Sulkowsky, Roland and his twenty-one companions.

Bonaparte, as we have said, loved Roland as a brother, as a son, as he loved Eugene. He wished to know all the details of the catastrophe, and questioned the Guide. The man had seen an Arab cut off Sulkowsky's head and fasten it to his saddle-bow. As for Roland, his horse had been killed. He had disengaged himself from the stirrups and was seen fighting for a moment on foot; but he had soon disappeared in a general volley at close quarters.

Bonaparte sighed, shed a tear and murmured: "Another!" and apparently thought no more about it. But he did inquire to what tribe belonged these Bedouins, who had just killed two of the men he loved best. He was told that they were an independent tribe whose village was situated some thirty miles off. Bonaparte left them a month, that they might become convinced of their impunity; then, the month elapsed, he ordered one of his aides-de-camp,

named Crosier, to surround the village, destroy the huts, behead the men, put them in sacks, and bring the rest of the population, that is to say, the women and children, to Cairo.

Crosier executed the order punctually; all the women and children who could be captured were brought to Cairo, and also with them one living Arab, gagged and bound to his horse's back.

"Why is this man still alive?" asked Bonaparte. "I ordered you to behead every man who was able to bear arms."

"General," said Crosier, who also possessed a smattering of Arabian words, "just as I was about to order his head cut off, I understood him to offer to exchange a prisoner for his life. I thought there would be time enough to cut off his head, and so brought him with me. If I am mistaken, the ceremony can take place here as well as there; what is postponed is not abandoned."

The interpreter Ventura was summoned to question the Bedouin. He replied that he had saved the life of a French officer who had been grievously wounded at the Gate of Victory, and that this officer, who spoke a little Arabic, claimed to be one of General Bonaparte's aides-de-camp. He had sent him to his brother who was a physician in a neighboring tribe, of which this officer was a captive; and if they would promise to spare his life, he would write to his brother to send the prisoner to Cairo.

Perhaps this was a tale invented to gain time, but it might also be true; nothing was lost by waiting.

The Arab was placed in safe keeping, a scribe was brought to write at his dictation. He sealed the letter with his own seal, and an Arab from Cairo was despatched to negotiate the exchange. If the emissary succeeded, it meant the Bedouin's life and five hundred piastres to the messenger.

Three days later he returned bringing Roland. Bonaparte had hoped for but had not dared to expect this return.

This heart of iron, which had seemed insensible to grief, was now melted with joy. He opened his arms to Roland, as on the day when he had found him, and two tears, two pearls--the tears of Bonaparte were rare--fell from his eyes.

But Roland, strange as it may seem, was sombre in the midst of the joy caused by his return. He confirmed the Arab's tale, insisted upon his liberation, but refused all personal details about his capture by the Bedouins and the treatment he had received at the hands of the doctor. As for Sulkowsky, he had been killed and beheaded before his eyes, so it was useless to think more of him. Roland resumed his duties, but it was noticeable his native courage had become temerity, and his longing for glory, desire for death.

On the other hand, as often happens with those who brave fire and sword, fire and sword miraculously spared him. Before, behind and around Roland men fell; he remained erect, invulnerable as the demon of war. During the campaign in Syria two emissaries were sent to demand the surrender of Saint Jean d'Acre of Djezzar Pasha. Neither of the two returned; they had been beheaded. It was necessary to send a third. Roland applied for the duty, and so insistent was he, that he eventually obtained the general's permission and returned in safety. He took part in each of the nineteen assaults made upon the fortress; at each assault he was seen entering the breach. He was one of the ten men who forced their way into the Accursèd Tower; nine remained, but he returned without a scratch. During the retreat, Bonaparte commanded his cavalry to lend their horses to the wounded and sick. All endeavored to avoid the contagion of the pest-ridden sick. To them Roland gave his horse from preference. Three fell dead from the saddle; he mounted his horse after them, and reached Cairo safe and sound. At Aboukir he flung himself into the mélée, reached the Pasha by forcing his way through the guard of blacks who surrounded him; seized him by the beard and received the fire of his two pistols. One burned the wadding only, the other ball passed under his arm, killing a guard behind him.

When Bonaparte resolved to return to France, Roland was the first to whom the general announced his intention. Another had been overjoyed; but he remained sombre and melancholy, saying: "I should prefer to remain here, general. There is more chance of my being killed here."

But as it would have appeared ungrateful on his part to refuse to follow the general, he returned with him. During the voyage he remained sad and impenetrable, until the English fleet was sighted near Corsica. Then only did he regain his wonted animation. Bonaparte told Admiral Gantheaume that he would fight to the death, and gave orders to sink the frigate sooner than haul down the flag. He passed, however, unseen through the British fleet, and disembarked at Frejus, October 8, 1799.

All were impatient to be the first to set foot on French soil. Roland was the last. Although the general paid no apparent attention to these details, none escaped him. He sent Eugène, Berthier, Bourrienne, his aides-de-camp and his suite by way of Gap and Draguignan, while he took the road to Aix strictly incognito, accompanied only by Roland, to judge for himself of the state of the Midi. Hoping that the joy of seeing his family again would revive the love of life in his heart crushed by its hidden sorrow, he informed Roland at Aix that they would part at Lyons, and gave him three weeks' furlough to visit his mother and sister.

Roland replied: "Thank you, general. My sister and my mother will be very happy to see me." Whereas formerly his words would have been: "Thank you, general. I shall be very happy to see my mother and sister again."

We know what occurred at Avignon; we have seen with what profound contempt for danger, bitter disgust of life, Roland had provoked that terrible duel. We heard the reason he gave Sir John for this indifference to death. Was it true or false? Sir John at all events was obliged to content himself with it, since Roland was evidently not disposed to furnish any other.

And now, as we have said, they were sleeping or pretending to sleep as they were drawn by two horses at full speed along the road of Avignon to Orange.