

Chapter 8

HOW THE MONEY OF THE DIRECTORY WAS USED

Every one hastened to obey. The monks lowered the hoods of their long robes over their faces, Morgan replaced his mask.

"Enter!" said the superior.

The door opened and the serving-brother appeared.

"An emissary from General Georges Cadoudal asks to be admitted," said he.

"Did he reply to the three passwords?"

"Perfectly."

"Then let him in."

The lay brother retired to the subterranean passage, and reappeared a couple of minutes later leading a man easily recognized by his costume as a peasant, and by his square head with its shock of red hair for a Breton. He advanced in the centre of the circle without appearing in the least intimidated, fixing his eyes on each of the monks in turn, and waiting until one of these twelve granite statues should break silence. The president was the first to speak to him.

"From whom do you come?" he asked him.

"He who sent me," replied the peasant, "ordered me to answer, if I were asked that question, that I was sent by Jehu."

"Are you the bearer of a verbal or written message?"

"I am to reply to the questions which you ask me, and exchange a slip of paper for some money."

"Very good; we will begin with the questions. What are our brothers in the Vendée doing?"

"They have laid down their arms and are awaiting only a word from you to take them up again."

"And why did they lay down their arms?"

"They received the order to do so from his Majesty Louis XVIII."

"There is talk of a proclamation written by the King's own hand. Have they received it?"

"Here is a copy."

The peasant gave a paper to the person who was interrogating him. The latter opened it and read:

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The war has absolutely no result save that of making the monarchy odious and threatening. Monarchs who return to their own through its bloody succor are never loved; these sanguinary measures must therefore be abandoned; confide in the empire of opinion which returns of itself to its saving principles. "God and the King," will soon be the rallying cry of all Frenchmen. The scattered elements of royalism must be gathered into one formidable sheaf; militant Vendée must be abandoned to its unhappy fate and marched within a more pacific and less erratic path. The royalists of the West have fulfilled their duty; those of Paris, who have prepared everything for the approaching Restoration, must now be relied upon---

The president raised his head, and, seeking Morgan with a flash of the eye which his hood could not entirely conceal, said: "Well, brother, I think this is the fulfilment of your wish of a few moments ago. The royalists of the Vendée and the Midi will have the merit of pure devotion." Then, lowering his eyes to the proclamation, of which there still remained a few lines to read, he continued:

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The Jews crucified their King, and since that time they have wandered over the face of the earth. The French guillotined theirs, and they shall be dispersed throughout the land. Given at Blankenbourg, this 25th of August, 1799, on the day of St. Louis and the sixth year of our reign. (Signed) LOUIS.-

The young men looked at each other.

"Quos vult perdere Jupiter dementat!" said Morgan.

"Yes," said the president; "but when those whom Jupiter wishes to destroy represent a principle, they must be sustained not only against Jupiter but against themselves. Ajax, in the midst of the bolts and lightning, clung to a rock, and, threatening Heaven with his clinched hand, he cried, 'I will escape in spite of the gods!'" Then turning toward Cadoudal's envoy, "And what answer did he who sent you make to this proclamation?"

"About what you yourself have just answered. He told me to come and inform myself whether you had decided to hold firm in spite of all, in spite of the King himself."

"By Heavens! yes," said Morgan.

"We are determined," said the President.

"In that case," replied the peasant, "all is well. Here are the real names of our new chiefs, and their assumed names. The general recommends that you use only the latter as far as is possible in your despatches. He observes that precaution when he, on his side, speaks of you."

"Have you the list?" asked the President.

"No; I might have been stopped, and the list taken. Write yourself; I will dictate them to you."

The president seated himself at the table, took a pen, and wrote the following names under the dictation of the Breton peasant:

"Georges Cadoudal, Jehu or Roundhead; Joseph Cadoudal, Judas Maccabeus; Lahaye Saint-Hilaire, David; Burban-Malabry, Brave-la-Mort; Poulpiquez, Royal-Carnage; Bonfils, Brise-Barrière; Dampherné, Piquevers; Duchayla, La Couronne; Duparc, Le Terrible; La Roche, Mithridates; Puisaye, Jean le Blond."

"And these are the successors of Charette, Stoffiet, Cathelineau, Bonchamp, d'Elbée, la Rochejaquelin, and Lescure!" cried a voice.

The Breton turned toward him who had just spoken.

"If they get themselves killed like their predecessors," said he, "what more can you ask of them?"

"Well answered," said Morgan, "so that--"

"So that, as soon as our general has your reply," answered the peasant, "he will take up arms again."

"And suppose our reply had been in the negative?" asked another voice.

"So much the worse for you," replied the peasant; "in any case the insurrection is fixed for October 20."

"Well," said the president, "thanks to us, the general will have the wherewithal for his first month's pay. Where is your receipt?"

"Here," said the peasant, drawing a paper from his pocket on which were written these words:

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Received from our brothers of the Midi and the East, to be employed for the good of the cause, the sum of... GEORGES CADOU DAL, General commanding the Royalist army of Brittany.-

The sum was left blank.

"Do you know how to write?" asked the president.

"Enough to fill in the three or four missing words."

"Very well. Then write, 'one hundred thousand francs.'"

The Breton wrote; then extending the paper to the president, he said: "Here is your receipt; where is the money?"

"Stoop and pick up the bag at your feet; it contains sixty thousand francs." Then addressing one of the monks, he asked: "Montbard, where are the remaining forty thousand?"

The monk thus interpellated opened a closet and brought forth a bag somewhat smaller than the one Morgan had brought, but which, nevertheless, contained the good round sum of forty thousand francs.

"Here is the full amount," said the monk.

"Now, my friend," said the president, "get something to eat and some rest; to-morrow you will start."

"They are waiting for me yonder," said the Breton. "I will eat and sleep on horseback. Farewell, gentlemen. Heaven keep you!" And he went toward the door by which he had entered.

"Wait," said Morgan.

The messenger paused.

"News for news," said Morgan; "tell General Cadoudal that General Bonaparte has left the army in Egypt, that he landed at Fréjus, day before yesterday, and will be in Paris in three days. My news is fully worth yours, don't you think so? What do you think of it?"

"Impossible!" exclaimed all the monks with one accord.

"Nevertheless nothing is more true, gentlemen. I have it from our friend the Priest (Leprêtre), [Footnote: The name Leprêtre is a contraction of the two words "le prêtre," meaning the priest; hence the name under which this man died.] who saw him relay at Lyons one hour before me, and recognized him."

"What has he come to France for?" demanded several voices.

"Faith," said Morgan, "we shall know some day. It is probable that he has not returned to Paris to remain there incognito."

"Don't lose an instant in carrying this news to our brothers in the West," said the president to the peasant. "A moment ago I wished to detain you; now I say to you: 'Go!'"

The peasant bowed and withdrew. The president waited until the door was closed.

"Gentlemen," said he, "the news which our brother Morgan has just imparted to us is so grave that I wish to propose a special measure."

"What is it?" asked the Companions of Jehu with one voice.

"It is that one of us, chosen by lot, shall go to Paris and keep the rest informed, with the cipher agreed upon, of all that happens there."

"Agreed!" they replied.

"In that case," resumed the president, "let us write our thirteen names, each on a slip of paper. We put them in a hat. He whose name is first drawn shall start immediately."

The young men, one and all, approached the table, and wrote their names on squares of paper which they rolled and dropped into a hat. The youngest was told to draw the lots. He drew one of the little rolls of paper and handed it to the president, who unfolded it.

"Morgan!" said he.

"What are my instructions?" asked the young man.

"Remember," replied the president, with a solemnity to which the cloistral arches lent a supreme grandeur, "that you bear the name and title of Baron de Sainte-Hermine, that your father was guillotined on the Place de la

Révolution and that your brother was killed in Condé's army. Noblesse oblige! Those are your instructions."

"And what else?" asked the young man.

"As to the rest," said the president, "we rely on your royalist principles and your loyalty."

"Then, my friends, permit me to bid you farewell at once. I would like to be on the road to Paris before dawn, and I must pay a visit before my departure."

"Go!" said the president, opening his arms to Morgan. "I embrace you in the name of the Brotherhood. To another I should say, 'Be brave, persevering and active'; to you I say, 'Be prudent.'"

The young man received the fraternal embrace, smiled to his other friends, shook hands with two or three of them, wrapped himself in his mantle, pulled his hat over his eyes and departed.