

The other men had shrunk back from him as she spoke. Jean quailed beneath her torrent of contemptuous words and from the fury in her eyes. There was no doubting the fact that her charges were true.

"Who drove me to it?" he said sullenly through his swollen lips.

"Who drove you! Drink and your evil temper drove you to it. You wanted to marry me—me who never gave you a word of encouragement; who knew you *au fond*, who knew that you were at the best an idle, worthless scamp, and would never have married you had there been no other living man in the universe. But enough. I have said what I came to say, and you had best take warning. Come, father, you have stood this fellow's friend, and you have been wrong, but you know him now."

Minette passed out through the door Arnold held open for her; her father and Arnold followed, and the four other men, without a word to Jean Diantre, went down the stairs after them, leaving him to himself.

CHAPTER IX.

"It is hardly worth while, Minette," Arnold said, when they reached the street, "the man has had his lesson."

"I could not help it, dear," she said, in a voice so changed from that in which she had spoken to Jean Diantre, that no one would have recognized it as the same; "he had tried to kill you, to take you from me. He thought it was you who had struck him and hated you worse than ever. It is not because he has failed once that he might fail another time. I should never have had a moment's peace when you were away from me, but I think now you will be safe; he will remove his quarters and go to Villette or to the South side; he will not dare to show his face in Montmartre again. You are sure you always carry your pistol, Arnold?"

"Yes, I promised you I would and I have done so. I have a small revolver in each pocket."

"Then in future, when you are out at night promise me always to walk with one hand in your pocket, holding the butt of your pistol, so that you can draw and fire instantly. He knows you have pistols and will not dare to attack you singly, and even should he find two or three villains as bad as himself you would be a match for them."

"I will take care of myself, Minette, but I do not think it likely that he will renew the attempt. I could see that the man was a coward. He was as pale as a sheet, partly with rage that he had been discovered and exposed, but partly, I am sure, from fear too. I know you meant well, dear, but I would rather that you had not done it. I love you best when you are gentle and womanly. You almost frighten me when you blaze out like that."

"I am sorry," she said, penitently; "but I felt for the time mad that your life should have been attempted. I scarcely knew what I was saying. Do you think that anyone could be gentle and mild when she had just heard that her lover, her all, had been almost taken from her by a cowardly blow. Still I know I am wrong. Do not be angry with me, Arnold."

"I am not angry, dear," he said, and truly, for no man can feel really angry with a woman for over-zeal in his own cause. "Do not let us say any more about it; the fellow is not worth a thought. We shall probably never hear of him again."

"I hope not, Arnold, but after what he tried to do I shall never feel quite free from anxiety so long as you are in Paris. I wish your English friend had handed him over to the police."

"I have no doubt he would have done so, but, as he told me, the idea that the fellow was anything else than a street-ruffian did not come to him till afterwards. You know what a business it is bringing a charge of any kind here, and Hartington having himself punished him pretty severely did not care for the trouble of carrying it further."

The news was rapidly spread in the cabarets by the men who had been present at Minette's denunciation that Jean Diantre had endeavored to assassinate the American, and much indig-

nation was excited. Had he drawn a knife upon a fellow-workman over their wine, the matter would have excited but slight reprobation, but that he should have crept up in the dark to attempt to assassinate one who was a denouncer of tyrants, a representative of the great Republic, was voted to be infamous.

Various punishments were suggested as appropriate for such a crime, but Jean did not appear at his accustomed haunts in the morning, and inquiry showed that he had paid his rent the evening before, had sold his furniture for a few francs to one of the other lodgers in the house, and had left the quarter altogether. Resolutions were passed at the next meeting denouncing him as a traitor to the sacred cause of humanity, and then the matter was forgotten altogether save by Minette.

As time went on, the luxuries of life altogether disappeared from the shop-windows, but there was still no lack of the absolute necessities. The stores of corn and rice turned out to be vastly larger than had been supposed. The herds of cattle gathered under shelter of the guns of the forts had disappeared, but horseflesh was still fairly abundant. Vegetables were not dear, for numbers of people went out every morning to the gardens and fields surrounding Paris and returned laden with them.

The animals in the public collection were all killed and the carcasses of all the eatable creatures sold at high prices, and for a time elephant steak, camel hump, venison, and other meats could be purchased at restaurants, although no doubt the horse furnished the foundation of the greater portion of these dishes.

The swans and other aquatic birds fetched fabulous prices, and their purchase was the occasion of many banquets in houses where such entertainments had become rare. Still there were no signs that the time when Paris was to make its attempt to burst its bonds was at hand. Among the National Guard complaints at the long inaction were incessant, but there was good reason for doubt whether the discontent was as general as it seemed.

It was one thing to talk of sweeping the Prussians before

them, quite another to take a part in the performance. Still the steady drilling that went on had its effect. If the National Guard did not learn discipline they at least gained the power to make a respectable appearance and to go through simple manœuvres fairly.

They walked more erect and even assumed a military swagger and spoke somewhat contemptuously of the line and mobiles, whose discipline was as lax as their own, and among whom drunkenness was rife, for whatever else failed, the supply of wine and spirits appeared inexhaustible. Cuthbert went not unfrequently to dine at the English restaurant of Phipson, where the utter and outspoken contempt of the proprietor for the French in general, and the Parisians in particular, amused him greatly.

"To see these fellows giving themselves military airs when they take care never to get within gunshot of the enemy, it is enough to make one's blood boil, Mr. Hartington. I believe that a couple of score of stable-boys with pitchforks would lick a battalion of them, and it is worse still when one goes out on the Boulevards and sees them sitting at the cafés drinking their absinthe as if there was no enemy within a hundred yards of the place. I have never liked them, sir, but I am downright sickened by them now. I shall sell out as soon as this is over."

"I don't think they are as bad as they seem, Phipson. If the Prussians ever do force a way into Paris, I think you will see that these fellows can fight and fight desperately."

"So will a rat, Mr. Hartington, if you corner him, but he will run as long as he gets the chance. I think it will do them a world of good, and take down some of their cockyness, if the Prussians did come in. I could not stand it, and as you see I have put my shutters up, and only let in English customers I know. I tell you I can't bring myself to serving horseflesh. I have got a few first-rate hams still hanging in the cellar. As long as they last and I can pick up anything fit for a human being to sit down to, I shall go on, but I ain't going to give my customers grub that is only fit for hounds. I have not come

down to be a cat's-meat man yet. As to drink, I have got as you know a goodish supply of as fine whisky as ever was brewed, but it won't be long before that will be the only thing I shall have to sell. I see you still stick to your soldiering, Mr. Hartington."

"Oh, yes, now I have begun, I shall go through with it, though it is not so pleasant as it was a month ago, for the nights are getting cold; still there is plenty of excitement about it, and we manage to keep the Prussians awake as well as ourselves. Whatever it may be with the National Guard there is plenty of pluck among the students. I could not wish to have better comrades."

"Well, there is one advantage, sir, in that uniform. You can go about without being suspected of, for being a foreigner is just the same in the eyes of these chaps as being a spy. It is rum now that while this place is pretty nigh kept up by the money the English and Americans spend here, they don't like us not one bit."

"How do you make that out, Phipson?"

"I don't know that I can make it out at all. I take it it is because we have always licked them, sir, and always shall do. There was the old days when the Black Prince thrashed them. I am a Canterbury boy and have seen his armor hanging up in the Cathedral many a time; that is how I came to know about him, and then I have heard that Marlborough used to crumple them up whenever he met them; and then there was Wellington again. Why, they have never had so much as a chance with us, and on sea we have licked them worse than on land. Well, it ain't in nature men should like that."

"Those are old stories, Phipson, and I don't think they have much to do with the dislike the French have of us. I think it is more because they cannot help seeing for themselves that they are no longer the first power in the world, and that England has passed them in the race."

"That may have something to do with it, sir, but from what I have heard them say and from what I have seen myself, I think it is partly because Frenchmen find themselves but poor

sort of creatures by the side of most Englishmen. I have heard them say that Englishmen walked about the streets of Paris just as if the place belonged to them, and there ain't no doubt that an Englishman does somehow or other put his foot down and square his shoulders in a way you never see a Frenchman do. I have noticed it myself many a time, and then, if he does get into a row with a Frenchman, the fellow hasn't a chance with him. I expect that galls him a bit. Anyhow they don't like it. They don't hate the Americans so much as they do us, though why they shouldn't is more than I can see, for there ain't much difference between us, except that there are very few of them who know how to use their hands. Well, anyhow, I shall be glad to have done with the French, though I will say for them that the lot that uses my place is a good deal better than the generality. For the most part they dress as English; that is to say they get their clothes made by English tailors, but lor' bless you, it ain't no use. They can't wear them when they have got them, not to look easy and comfortable in them. I have scores of times wondered what the difference is and I could not tell you to save my life, but for all that I can tell a Frenchman the moment he comes in, no matter how he's got up. There ain't no occasion for them to open their mouths. I can spot them as easy as one could tell the difference between a thorough-bred and a common roadster."

As a rule the Franc-tireurs des Écoles went out on the southern or western sides of Paris, but one morning they marched out to St. Denis.

"There has been some pretty hot skirmishing on that side," the colonel said to his officers before starting, "and I have been asked to march you out in that direction, and to take up the outpost duties on a portion of the line there. The troops have been having a pretty hard time of it, and have been pushed backward once or twice, though they have always ended by winning back the ground they had lost. We have a reputation of keeping our eyes open, and the General told me this morning that I might consider it as a compliment we were sent there."

They were marched to a small cluster of houses and relieved two companies of the line who had been on duty there during the night. It was the first time a specific post had been assigned to them, and the men were in high spirits at what they considered an honor. The authorities treated the Franc-tireurs as being valueless for any real fighting: as being useful to a certain extent for harassing the enemies' outposts, but not to be counted upon for any regular work, and so omitted them altogether in the orders assigning the positions to be occupied. The corps therefore considered it a feather in their caps to be assigned a position by the side of the regulars. The fires of the troops were still burning, and the men were soon at work cooking their breakfast, one company being thrown out in the front of the village.

The houses all bore signs of the strife. Some were almost unroofed, others had yawning holes in the walls, the work of shell from the Prussian field-guns, while all were pitted with scars of bullets on the side facing the enemy. Scarce a pane of glass remained intact. The floors had been torn up for firing and the furniture had shared the same fate. A breast-work had been thrown up some fifty yards in front of the village and the houses had been connected by earthen walls, so that if the outwork were taken the place could be defended until reinforcements came up.

A hundred yards to the left there was a battery of six guns, and another on a mound four or five hundred yards to the right. In the daytime their fire covered the village, and there was little chance of the Germans attempting an attack until after nightfall. The enemy occupied in force a village of some size five hundred yards away, and had covered it with strong earthworks. Their outposts faced those of the French with an interval of some two hundred yards between them. The sentries on duty were stationed at distances varying from ten to twenty paces apart, behind walls or banks of earth. The enemies' outposts were similarly protected.

Shots were exchanged at intervals throughout the day between French batteries on the right and left and a redoubt the

Germans had thrown up on a rise four or five hundred yards behind their village; the gunners on both sides occasionally directing their fire upon the houses; the outposts were for the most part silent, as it was seldom indeed that even a momentary glimpse was obtained of helmet or kepi, and the orders were that there was to be no useless firing.

During the day the companies took turn at outpost duty, but when night fell the line was strengthened, half the men being under rifles, while the rest lay down with their arms by their side, ready to fall in at a moment's notice. A dropping fire was kept up on both sides, but this was rather for the purpose of showing that they were on the alert than with any idea of harming the invisible foe.

At ten o'clock Cuthbert went out with the half-company to which he belonged, to relieve their comrades who had been for the last three hours in the front line. They had been some little time on duty when Pierre Leroux, who was in charge of the half-company, said to Des Valles, who commanded the whole of the outposts—

"It seems to me that I can hear a deep sound; it comes in pulsations, and I think it is a considerable body of men marching."

The captain listened with bent head for a short time.

"You are right, Pierre, there is certainly a movement of some sort going on in front, but I fancy it is some distance away; if they were marching on the village in front we should hear it more plainly. You had better send out three or four men from your right—let them go some distance along before they attempt to creep forward. The Prussian sentries are too thick along there facing us, but the men might possibly crawl pretty close up to their outposts farther along, they won't be so thick there. Pick four good men, it is a dangerous service. Tell them to get as near as they can to their sentries without being observed, and then to lie and listen attentively. They will have a better chance of hearing there than we have. There is no getting the men to lie perfectly quiet here."

"Can I take three men and go myself with them, Des Valles?"

"Yes, if you like. I will stop with the company until you return."

The lieutenant went along the line, stopping at each man to ask his name. He chose Cuthbert and two men, one from each of the principal art schools, as he thought it might look like favoritism if he took all from among his own comrades. The sentries became more and more scattered as he went along, the main body being posted in front of the village. The last few men were warned that he was going forward, and that they were not to fire until he returned. He sent the last man on the line to communicate with the outposts, furnished by the corps occupying the ground farther to the right, that some men were going out to reconnoitre. Then he and his companions cautiously crawled forward.

They were rather more than half-way across the ground, when Cuthbert uttered an exclamation as he came in sudden contact with a figure advancing with similar caution in the opposite direction. It needed not a guttural oath in German to inform him that it was an enemy. Touching as they were, neither could use their arms, and instinctively they grappled with each other as they lay on the ground.

"Look out, Leroux, I have got hold of a German," Cuthbert said in a low voice, while at the same moment his antagonist said something to the same effect in German.

The lieutenant and the other two men leapt to their feet, and as they did so, four or five men sprang up close in front of them.

"Fire!" Leroux exclaimed, and the two men discharged their pieces! Some shots flashed out in front of them but in the darkness none were hit, and in a moment they were engaged in a hand-to-hand fight with their foes.

In the meantime Cuthbert and his antagonist were rolling over and over, locked closely in each other's arms. Seizing a moment when he came uppermost, Cuthbert steadied himself, relaxed his hold of his opponent, and, half-kneeling, managed

to free himself from his embrace, and gripped him by the throat.

The fight between the others was a short one. The lieutenant had run one of his opponents through the body, but a German had equalized matters by bringing the butt of his musket down on the head of one of the Franc-tireurs, and being now but two against four, Pierre called to the other to retreat. The Germans followed a few yards and then halted. As they passed him Cuthbert gave a final squeeze to his antagonist's throat, and, feeling sure that he would not be able to speak for some time, he crept away for a few yards and lay still among the cabbages that covered the field.

"Where is the sergeant?" one of the Germans said, in a low voice, as they retraced their steps; "he must have been somewhere here when he called."

After two or three minutes' search they came upon him.

"He is alive," one of them said, stooping over him, "he is gasping for breath. I think he is dying, but, anyhow, we may as well carry him in."

They lifted the man, and as they did so several shots rang out from the French outposts. As soon as they had gone on Cuthbert sat up to listen. He could hear now the heavy tread of men who were, it seemed to him, crossing from the right towards the German village. He listened for a minute or two to assure himself that he was not mistaken, and then crawled back towards his own outposts.

"Don't fire," he said, when he knew that he must be near to them, "I am one of those who went out just now."

"Don't fire," he heard a voice he knew to be the lieutenant's repeat, "It is Hartington. I was afraid he was done for." A minute later he joined him.

At this moment a sharp fire broke out from the German lines, showing that their party had also returned to their outposts.

"You will find Des Valles farther along, Hartington; if you have anything to report you had better go to him at once, you can tell me afterwards how you escaped. I had quite given you up."

"I suppose I had better go to him," Cuthbert said, "but I have not much to report except that there is no doubt the noise we heard was caused by a heavy column of men marching into the village over there."

Cuthbert found the captain and made his report.

"Thank you, Hartington. We were pretty well convinced it was so, for even before the firing between your party and the Germans began, the sound was loud enough to be clearly distinguished. I suppose you can give no guess at their numbers?"

"They were a strong body, but how strong I could not tell. A hundred Prussians marching will make as much noise as five hundred Frenchmen, but even allowing for that I should think there will be at least one strong battalion, perhaps more."

"If that is the case we must be on the lookout. Of course they may fancy we mean to attack them, but on the other hand they may intend to push forward. I will go with you to the colonel; he ought to know what you think about it. He was along here a few minutes ago, but the noise was not so plain then, and we did not estimate the force to be anything like as strong as it is in your opinion."

Cuthbert made his report to the colonel, and the latter at once went forward with Des Valles to the outposts, after giving orders for the men in the houses to fall in at once and be ready either to advance to support the front line, or to man the barricades and houses and cover their retreat. Reaching the outposts the sound of marching was no longer heard, but there was a faint continuous murmur which could be plainly made out in the intervals of the fire kept up by the enemy.

"What do you think it is, Des Valles?" the colonel asked, after listening some time.

"I should say, sir, that the column has broken up in the village, and the men are making their way to the front in open order. If I were to suggest, Colonel, I should say it would be as well to send off men to the two batteries to tell them that the enemy are mustering in force in the village opposite to us and that we expect to be attacked, and also to the officers commanding the troops on either side of us."

Four men were at once despatched, and ten minutes later the batteries almost simultaneously opened fire on the village. As if it had been a signal a crashing volley was fired from the line held by the German outposts.

"Here they come!" the colonel shouted, "steady, men, wait till you see them; then open fire upon them as quickly as you can load, but aim steadily. Captain Des Valles, will you warn the line to the left that they are, when the word is given, to retreat at the double, bearing away first to the left so as to clear the ground for the fire from the houses. As soon as they are abreast of them they are to enter at the rear and aid in the defence. Captain Rainault, will you take similar orders away to the right? Ah, here they are."

As he spoke a storm of musketry broke out all along the line as a dark mass could be seen approaching. But the enemy were too strong to be resisted, and in a few seconds the colonel shouted the orders to retreat. Then at the top of their speed the Franc-tireurs ran back, and the instant they cleared off from the front of the houses the colonel shouted to the officer in command there to open fire.

In half a minute the Franc-tireurs were in the enclosure. Each company had already had its position in case of attack assigned to it. For a short time only those on the side facing the enemy were engaged, but the Prussians speedily overlapped the position and attacked it on all sides. Several times they rushed up close to the barricades, but the fire was so hot that they were compelled to fall back again. The circle of fire afforded the gunners in the battery sufficient indication as to the position of the defenders, and their shell fell rapidly both in front and behind it.

The fight had lasted but a few minutes when a crashing volley was fired from the left. The attack on the houses at once slackened, as the Prussians turned to oppose the reinforcements that had come up; but when, shortly afterwards, the regiment from the other side also reached the scene of action their commander felt the surprise had failed, and the Prussians retired to their former position, and the affair was over. Four

companies of the line were left to strengthen the position should the enemy try another attack before daybreak, and then, after congratulating the colonel of the Franc-tireurs on the vigilance that had prevented his being taken by surprise, and the sturdy defence he had made, the officers of the line withdrew their men to the positions they had before occupied.

The loss of the Franc-tireurs was small. The volley that had preceded the attack had done no execution whatever, and as they had fought in shelter they had lost but eight men killed and a score wounded. It was the sharpest affair in which they had as yet been engaged, and the old colonel was highly pleased with the result. After the outpost had resumed their former position Cuthbert related to his comrades the particulars of his struggle with the Prussian sergeant.

"We were pretty well matched," he said, "and I suppose were equally surprised when we found each other grappling in the dark. Of course neither of us knew how many supporters the other had close at hand, but the first thought that struck me was that I must silence him if possible before his comrades came to his assistance. I was only afraid that I should not be able to shake myself free from his grip so as to get to his throat, but fortunately he relaxed his hold the moment he felt that I had loosened mine, and as I was on the top of him the rest was easy."

"Well, you got well out of it anyhow, Hartington," Pierre said. "You did not see anything of the man who was knocked down by a musket, did you?"

"No, it did not occur to me to look for him, but if you like I will go out with you and bring him in."

"That is a very good idea, Hartington, probably he was only stunned. I will go and get leave for us to do so."

However, just as he turned to go a call was heard in front, and a minute later the man came in.

"He had," he said, when he recovered consciousness, "heard a tremendous fire going on, and as soon as he could collect his thoughts became assured that the enemy must be attacking the village. He therefore concluded that the best thing was to lie

still, which he did until the fire ceased and he could hear the Prussians retreating. Then he had crawled in until close to the line of outposts."

"I am heartily glad to see you back again," Pierre said, shaking him by the hand. "It would always have been a subject of regret to me if the expedition that I proposed had lost you your life. As to those who fell in defence of the village I have no personal responsibility, but I should certainly have felt that your death always lay at my door."

CHAPTER X.

ANOTHER month and a great change had come over Paris. The spirit of empty gasconnade had been succeeded by one more befitting the time and circumstances. As the hopes of assistance from without lessened, the spirit of resistance grew stronger and firmer. There was no longer any talk of sweeping the Prussians out of France, no longer was it an article of faith that Paris would be saved; but the thought of surrender was farther than ever from men's minds. Paris would resist to the last. She would give time to France to reorganize herself, and would set such an example of devotion and patience under suffering, that when at last famine forced her to surrender, the world should at least say that Paris had proved herself worthy of her reputation.

The defences had been strengthened to an enormous extent; the outlying forts which, when the siege began, could have been carried without much difficulty by a resolute attack, had now been rendered practically impregnable, their approaches had been thickly mined, obstacles of all sorts erected round them, and the casements, barracks, and magazines protected by coverings of trunks of trees and so great a depth of earth as to be able to defy the heaviest shell.

The walls of the *enciente* had been repaired and greatly strengthened, and covered by bastions and other works, so that even were one of the forts taken the work of the enemy