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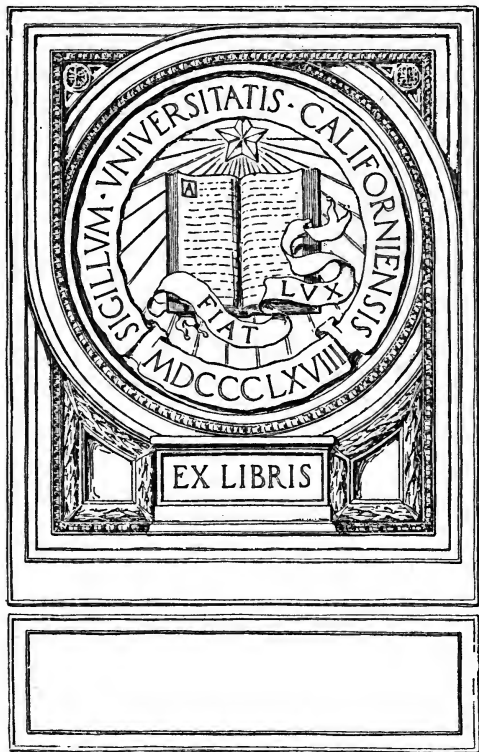


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SOLDIERS AND SAILORS OF  
FRANCE IN THE AMERICAN  
WAR FOR INDEPENDENCE  
1776-1783

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SOLDIERS AND SAILORS OF FRANCE  
IN THE  
AMERICAN WAR FOR INDEPENDENCE  
(1776-1783)

From Yorktown's ruins, ranked and still,  
Two lines stretch far o'er vale and hill:  
Who curbs his steed at head of one?  
Hark! the low murmur: WASHINGTON!  
Who bends his keen approving glance  
Where down the gorgeous line of France  
Shine knightly star and plume of snow?  
Thou too art victor, ROCHAMBEAU!

—*Whittier.*





GENERAL COUNT DE ROCHAMBEAU.

After the painting by Trumbull, in the picture of "The Surrender of Yorktown." This portrait was posed for in 1787, in Paris, at the home of Jefferson, then Minister of the United States to France.

# Soldiers and Sailors of France in the American War for Independence (1776-1783)

BY  
CAPTAIN JOACHIM MERLANT

ASSISTANT PROFESSOR OF THE FACULTY OF LETTERS  
UNIVERSITY OF MONTPELLIER

AUTHORIZED EDITION

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH BY  
MARY BUSHNELL COLEMAN

"Without good faith, in politics as in morals, there is  
no sure foundation, and he who ignores it is a blunderer."

—COUNT DE VERGENNES.



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NOTE

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TO THE  
LIBRARY OF



D. J. S.

TO  
MONSIEUR J. J. JUSSERAND  
AMBASSADOR OF FRANCE TO THE UNITED STATES  
AS A TRIBUTE  
OF RESPECT AND GRATITUDE  
AND SOUVENIR  
OF DAYS PASSED IN WASHINGTON  
IN 1916

JOACHIM MERLANT

415448





## AUTHOR'S PREFACE

From January 6th to May 13th, 1916, in about fifty American cities where I was welcomed by the Alliance Française aux Etats-Unis et au Canada, from New York to San Francisco, from Chicago to New Orleans, I felt the heart-beat of a great nation. At that time the republic of Washington had already begun to recognize the fact that our cause was the same as its cause; its work peaceful, ours hard and bloody: namely, to fill the world with more compassion, justice, and dignity. I have seen this country restless, tormented with the thought of its present happy condition, while France and her allies were suffering heroically. From sympathetic admiration among the most generous, who are usually the most far-seeing, there were growing signs of impatience, and a strong desire to come over and suffer with us.

This is a book of truth and friendship; needless to say, it lays no claim to erudition. I have simply had recourse to memoirs, campaign journals, and correspondence; and as often as possible to original documents. For the diplomatic part I owe much to the voluminous work of Henri Doniol: *Histoire de la Participation de la France à l'Etablissement de l'Indépendance des Etats-Unis*. In a book of noble inspiration, *With Americans of Past and Present Days*, by M. Jusserand, I have found some hitherto unedited data; I have found some also in the vivid descriptions of the Viscount de Noailles: *Marins et Soldats Français en Amérique*.

At the mere mention of the name "United States," M. Alfred Rebelliau, of the *Académie des Sciences Morales et Politiques*, curator of the *Bibliothèque de l'Institut de France*, gave me all the privileges of these institutions. To him as well as to M. Dehérain, assistant curator, nothing appeared too difficult when rendering me assistance in my various researches.

JOACHIM MERLANT.

MONTPELLIER, FRANCE,  
December, 1917.

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE.—Thanks are due Captain Baldensperger for his helpful criticism of the translation and to Mr. Stephen A. Hurlbut for rendering the French rhymes into English verse.

## CONTENTS

	PAGE
AUTHOR'S PREFACE, CAPTAIN JOACHIM MERLANT. . .	vii
INTRODUCTION, CAPTAIN FERNAND BALDENSPERGER .	xiii
CHAPTER	
I. WHY FRANCE SYMPATHIZED WITH AMERICA— OPINION—MINISTRY . . . . .	I
II. FRANKLIN IN PARIS—THE EQUIPMENT OF LA FAYETTE'S SHIP—EVENTS OF THE WAR IN 1777—SARATOGA . . . . .	18
III. TREATY OF COMMERCE AND FRIENDSHIP— EVENTS OF THE WINTER AND SPRING OF 1778 . . . . .	38
IV. D'ESTAING IN AMERICA—GÉRARD, MINISTER PLENIPOTENTIARY TO CONGRESS—DIFFICULTY AND IMPORTANCE OF HIS ROLE—HIS SUCCESS	58
V. WAR IN 1779 . . . . .	84
VI. ACTIVITY OF LA FAYETTE IN FRANCE—POLITI- CAL CRISIS IN THE UNITED STATES—WASH- INGTON'S DETERMINATION . . . . .	96
VII. THE EXPEDITIONARY CORPS OF ROCHAMBEAU— THE DEFENSIVE—CO-OPERATION OF THE FRENCH WITH THE AMERICANS . . . . .	III
VIII. WINTER QUARTERS—CHEVALIER DE CHASTEL- LUX MAKES A TOUR—CAMPAIGN OF WAR— IN THE CAROLINAS—EXPEDITION IN THE CHESAPEAKE—EMBARRASSMENT OF THE PO- LITICAL SITUATION IN EUROPE—FIDELITY OF FRANCE . . . . .	133

IX.	THE OFFENSIVE—THE MARCH UPON YORKTOWN —CAMPAIGN OF LA FAYETTE IN VIRGINIA— YORKTOWN ATTACKED BY SEA AND LAND— CAPITULATION . . . . .	150
X.	THE ARMY OF ROCHAMBEAU AFTER YORKTOWN —THE WAR CEASES—THE SQUADRON OF VAUDREUIL AT BOSTON—FRANCO-AMERICAN FRIENDSHIP . . . . .	184
XI.	A PEACE OF RECONCILIATION—CONCLUSION .	199
	APPENDIX . . . . .	209

## ILLUSTRATIONS

General Count de Rochambeau . . . . .	<i>Frontispiece</i>
Captain Joachim Merlant . . . . .	FACING PAGE xiii
The Marquis de Lafayette, Son-in-Law of the Duke d'Ayen . . . . .	22
Peace—An Allegory . . . . .	196





CAPTAIN JOACHIM MERLANT.

# To Vind Abraham



## INTRODUCTION

When the war called him to the colors, early in August, 1914, Joachim Merlant, professor of French literature at the University of Montpellier, a former pupil of the Ecole Normale Supérieure, was the author of several valuable books dealing mainly with problems of "interior life." Works like his doctor dissertation, *Le Roman personnel de Rousseau à Fromentin* (1905), or like a collection of essays on introspective moralists, *De Montaigne à Vauvenargues* (1914), subtle studies of the main apostles of intuition and of self-culture, had made him, more or less, an intellectual inhabitant of the so-called "Ivory Tower." Of a rather frail constitution, moreover, Merlant seemed less fitted for action than for contemplation, and even for a kind of *rêverie* which, aloof from daily interests, is more concerned with the events of the inner individual than with external issues.

But here is the wonderful fact: this "intellectual," this devoted reader of Senancour and of many others who, fohir-like, had taken a supreme interest in the delicate shades of their interior life, found in the very trend of his studies the best reason for an admirable firmness of decision, simplicity of purpose, frankness of attitude—all the virtues, in fact, which an easy shortsightedness often attributes to so-called "temperaments of action." A devoted father, a man with strong religious feelings, Merlant had, of course, other resources on which to rely for his attitude of heroism and sacrifice.

But it must be pointed out that his very familiarity with the intricacies of the *self*, his painstaking method of analysis, his perception of the essentials of man as a moral power, were the main support of his wonderful bravery. How out of place it would be, considering such an example of activity, to draw any strict line between two fields where a man with a clear head and a strong will, like this Frenchman, proved to be equally at home!

After some months spent with a territorial regiment in the south of France, "along the water-front," as they humorously said, Merlant joined an active unit, as an infantry officer, in the Argonne Forest of future American renown. Optimistic, serene, an immense moral force to his companions, he showed the best spirit—a spirit which revives in the sketches he gave of those days. Severely wounded in 1915, he was decorated with the Legion of Honor and mentioned in dispatches. His recovery was never complete. And, being unable to fight, he resolved to help with speech and written word the cause to which he had already devoted so much of himself.

\* \* \*

Following an invitation from the "Alliance Française in the United States and Canada," Merlant came, as he said, for his "furlough of convalescence," to the New World. From the 6th of January to the 12th of May, 1916, from Quebec to New Orleans and from Boston to San Diego, he delivered seventy-nine lectures, greeted everywhere as a perfect embodiment of those virtues of sacrifice and enlightened devotion which he traced and emphasized in French literature. He did not comment upon the war, upon the present spirit of

France: he mainly spoke of the past, of Corneille and Balzac, of Lamennais and Vauvenargues and Vigny. But he seemed to continue himself, in such a vivid manner, the great examples of a beautiful tradition, that the underlying lesson was easy to follow: all those who have, in those months of doubt and anguish, listened to his words have testified to the deep impression they left in every soul. Here was, really, a mind which forced a disabled body and an enfeebled constitution to obey and to carry on. At the same time, there was so much distinction and delicacy in the literary and orational performances of that man, fresh from the front, that many of Merlant's hearers understood through him that no coarseness and brutality was attached, in the best fighters of France, to the frankest adoption of a state of war. Columbia University was ready to ask the Montpellier professor to make a longer stay in its Romance Department. Unfortunately, the death of his wife called him back to his family and to his country. But here, too, he was too energetic to rest or wait for other days to come. Out of his thankfulness for hospitable America and of his new interest in war affairs, he decided to inquire into the Franco-American military co-operation of 1778-1783, and to tell the story of Lafayette and Rochambeau with a spirit refreshed by the events of the present moment.

\* \* \*

Merlant had felt that the real inspiration of the Franco-American friendship had been in those days—as it was to be in the Great War—something which transcended distinctly the mere material conditions, and even political combinations, of the age. Of course an

element of "realism" was present in both cases, and "interests" found to a certain extent their advantage in the struggle. It was, nevertheless, a sort of national "oversoul" which, in both cases, carried with it majorities of peoples who, otherwise, would have felt little real concern for each other. A common belief in human dignity and in progressive political emancipation brought the French disciples of Montesquieu to the side of the Insurgents. All the optimism of the eighteenth century lived again in the enthusiasm of those young noblemen who devoted their swords to a cause which needed foreign help, if self-determination was not to disappear early in the struggle. "Listening only to the words of Justice and Humanity, France loved the nation who dared to pledge herself to Sincerity, and France's old honor came to shield the new citizens of the world." In the same way, Merlant felt, the United States of 1917 discovered the necessity of a new reverence for some old truths which had to be fought for in the Ancient World. And so it is not only by a conflict of men, materials, or political doctrines, but by a clash between ideals where America and France, however apart, had found much in common, that those two episodes of Franco-American relations had been signalled.

Dedicated to the French Ambassador, J. J. Jusserand, a pioneer in the same fields, the book which was to be Merlant's last work appeared in the fall, 1918. The author was, when he was writing it, struggling with a smile against his impaired health; he had been very active, at the same time, in the camps of southern France, in the towns and villages, explaining war issues and bringing closer together his American friends and his French countrymen. One of his wishes had been to see his book translated, and he was glad to know

that the work, now concluded so happily by Mrs. Mary Bushnell Coleman, was being undertaken. He would have been gratified to hear that his last effort was to be made known to the American public.

CAPITAINE F. BALDENSPERGER,  
*Professeur à la Sorbonne.*

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY,  
June, 1919.





# SOLDIERS AND SAILORS OF FRANCE IN THE AMERICAN WAR FOR INDEPENDENCE

(1776-1783)

## CHAPTER I

### WHY FRANCE SYMPATHIZED WITH AMERICA—OPINION —MINISTRY

On December 10th, 1776, Doctor Franklin, American Commissioner to the Court of France, disembarked in the Bay of Quiberon, whence through Auray he arrived at Nantes; an event which was anything but pleasing to the English Ambassador. Imagination ran riot; tongues began to wag faster than the swiftest post could go. "The emissary from Congress was still on the banks of the Loire," remarked Lord Stormont in a sarcastic tone, "while many loudly proclaimed they had already seen him in Paris." He reached there on the 18th, and his friends, at the suggestion of Beaumarchais, kept him for a while in seclusion.

The presence within the confines of this venerable monarchy "of the wise and famous rebel" was paradoxical in the extreme. "What an astonishing spectacle," says the pamphleteer, "to see at the Court of a monarch by divine right, a proud insurgent who tells him that there is a contract between a sovereign and his people, and when the sovereign breaks this contract, he necessarily releases his people from their allegiance."

And Condorcet, some time afterward, recalled the happy days when under the eyes of Benjamin Franklin a people "contented with their yoke of ages, were drunk with joy at the idea of breaking the chains of another people in a different hemisphere."

Intoxicating really in its effect was this idea of American liberty which had taken France by storm. The Count de Ségur, who ardently desired when he was twenty years old to enroll himself as its defender, recalled in his old age the reasons for this enthusiasm which seemed to inspire all hearts alike. For more than two centuries the youths of France were taught in college to admire the Republicans of ancient cities and dream of the fabulous days of liberty; and behold this sleeping liberty now awakens in the American forests, "to struggle gloriously against an ancient domination." Washington, President Hancock, Jefferson, Franklin appear to be sages contemporary with Plato, or Republicans of the days of Cato or Fabius; Congress the living representation of the old Roman Senate; and so in this way the new philosophy attributes magic to the influence of classic legend.

Into the mind is insinuated a love of democracy; that is to say, of that state which in promoting man to the dignity of citizen demands of him all the more courage, vigilance, and power. Already influenced by the great Geneva preacher, Jean Jacques Rousseau, emotional souls are still exalted by the reading of those passages from Raynal and Mably which develop the theme: "Even though enlightened and beneficent, despotism throws a nation into general lethargy." The best of princes who does good, "but without the consent of his subjects," is the most dangerous of masters; for you can extricate yourself from a slavery into which



you have been thrown "by violence," but not from a slavery into which you allow yourself to be led "by time and justice."

Aristocracy hastened to admire this people animated by an acute, uneasy sentiment of its responsibility; who persisted in running the risks of liberty; who would have considered honor lost had it not been continually alert in a civic way. In the *Observateur Anglais* was published a prognostication of a philosopher of the *Gazette de Clèves*, in which he said, in response to caricatures circulated by the English about the soldiers of liberty, "that their resistance would astonish our petty souls, and that they would go far beyond all brilliant deeds, which have heretofore been considered great, in their defense of the rights and privileges natural to man."

"History, after the manner of the *Essai sur les Mœurs*, shows in our sad annals," said Ségur, "so many civil wars and inhuman massacres, so much persecution, so many peoples oppressed by the Feudal system, and the expulsion and spoliation of a million Frenchmen for a cause of heresy being so recent, and of such revolting absurdity, that the youths of today more favored and liberal-minded look forward with eagerness to a near future where 'reason, humanity and tolerance will reign.'" There was also a wide-spread literature, principally from travelers and missionaries, who presented to the French imagination an entrancing picture of America, inhabited by good savages; a place of abundance, of salvation, where the sons of the old civilized races could, without any difficulty whatever, return to the primitive days of innocence and joy.

To his brothers still heavily chained to European sorcery, Hector Saint John Crèveœur, *the American*

#### 4 SOLDIERS AND SAILORS OF FRANCE

*Farmer*, in the voice of a proselyte says: "What a deep flow of energy and happiness must regenerate them as soon as they plunge into the vast bosom 'of the great alma mater.' No more unfruitful labor; consequently, dark passions will no longer afflict and embitter men who are oppressed; women and children will not have to ask for their daily bread, but will now be well-fed and strong, ready to aid the father to plow and enrich the field; the harvest will be plentiful enough for all without having to pay a heavy tax to a despotic prince, a rich abbot, or a powerful noble."

Although fascinated with America, we still continued in our admiration of long standing for the political status of England. At first we were satisfied just to lend an ear (and who did not listen?) to the eloquent but vain appeals of a Burke, or a Lord Chatham, endeavoring to bring Parliament and the English people to their senses; but they seemed to be seized with a sort of "vertigo." "America is almost in open rebellion," said Pitt. "I rejoice that America offers resistance. Three millions of people so dead to all the feelings of liberty as voluntarily to submit to be slaves, would have been fit instruments to make slaves of all the rest. It is asked when were the colonies freed? I desire to know when they became enslaved?" Thus spoke this English statesman in a tragic meeting when he was ill unto death. Behold now these great English ideas of economic and political autonomy, with which France for thirty years had been infatuated upon reading Montesquieu! Behold old England wounded in her pride as parent state of the colonies, and through her "delirious conduct toward the Bostonians" giving the lie to her philosophy! France hears it still proclaimed by the more foresighted Britons, who were

hoping by their supreme persuasive powers to hold back their country tottering over "an abyss"!

To quote from Ségur: "The gay, brilliant life of the Court no longer attracts us; even when we think of the dignity, independence, useful and important position of a Lord of England, of a member of the House of Commons, and of the proud peaceful freedom of the inhabitants of Great Britain, it does not satisfy our *amour-propre*." And this is how it came to pass that the principles of liberty crept into the hearts of the French nobles, and in the unison of aristocratic and civic honor both were exalted. The nobles of France, weary of a monotonous life, wished to play a rôle, to have a mission. It was this vague and powerful aspiration toward the strong moral qualities of liberty, under the generous tutelage of the aristocracy, that brought to the New World the young lords of the Queen's circle: Ségur, Noailles, the Dillons, La Fayette. They had grown tired of "the gilded servitude" of the court.

Their new ideas were mingled with some very ancient ones. These philosophers, these anglomaniacs, dreamed of chivalry. All that there was of brilliant adventure, disinterested idealism, in the heroes of old France, from the time of the Crusades to the epics of Henry IV, and even beyond, was glorified in novels and dramas. For some it was only a fashion; they amused themselves with a pretty appearance of secrecy, in order to create orders of chivalry, which were no more than exclusive social circles; they restored the ceremonial of the ancient customs of chivalry: tournaments, oaths, and ribbons; this, however, led to no consequence. But for others, the ardent admirers of Voltaire, the chivalric traditions still lived. As Ségur says: "Like Paladins we became philosophers . . . and this was according

## 6 SOLDIERS AND SAILORS OF FRANCE

to the authority of long usage, and through the remembrance of our ancestors. When our Kings were at peace their officers often sought war and adventure elsewhere, and made brilliant records of bravery; sometimes in the Spanish or Italian camps, other times fighting the Saracens, again with the Austrian armies repulsing the invasions of the Turks: in like manner we sought the means of crossing the ocean, individually, and ranging ourselves under the flag of American liberty. The sword in the service of the ideal! The example of Pulaski, and that of Kosciusko, spoke eloquently. And it happened quite simply that our youth, 'who first declared themselves through a purely bellicose humor the partisans and champions of liberty,' ended in as good faith as they had begun, and fervently loved this liberty."

But ideas alone do not move the world. It is certain that France loved American liberty because it was liberty; neither was she displeased that England did not meet it with good grace. The more England struggled against it, the more our honor was interested in winning for her maltreated sons that gift which she was reluctant to surrender. Besides, England and France did not love each other at that time. The humiliations of the treaties of 1763 were insupportable to us. And since 1713 the presence at Dunkerque of an English commissioner, kept there at the expense of the King, to prevent us from rebuilding our torn-down fortifications, was a continual insult to our national dignity. And the people were irritated against the Ministry for not having remedied the matter. On the day of Saint Louis (a fête day), in 1777, the Parisians tore down an *Elogium* upon the Chancellor de l'Hôpital composed by

Guibert, and put up in its place the following resentful lines: "Like that Roman ambassador who traced a circle of sand around Antiochus, speaking these threatening words: 'You do not leave this circle until you have answered me!' . . . every day they say to us: 'We shall punish you if you raise a stone upon this stone.' Oh, L'Hôpital! Oh, L'Hôpital! thou wert magistrate and philosopher, and thou wouldst have raised all the forces of the Kingdom against such intolerable affront. It is before thy Manes that I denounce these guilty Ministers! They call themselves pacifists, and they are nothing but weaklings."

So much for the Ministry. And the partisans of a national war found the public not worth any more than the Ministry. They liked to agitate the question, but they did not act upon it. The intrepid Du Couëdic told them so in verse:

"Well done, Insurgent rebels ye,  
 Winning your war for liberty!  
 Your ideas bring to birth  
 One more nation on the earth.  
 Firm, courageous, patient, bold,  
 Of lofty mien and noble mold,  
 And really free, the men for me!  
 And yet, be it said in confidence,  
 How could you offer such defense  
 And fight with such philosophy,  
 Unblessed by an Academy?  
 But we, philosophers, alas!  
 Scarce bring our actions to the pass;  
 Our minds alone are full of life,  
 Our arms are useless in the strife.  
 With satisfaction we see in action  
 Our Piccinists and our Gluckists,  
 (Say nothing of the Economists)

## 8 SOLDIERS AND SAILORS OF FRANCE

Who with pamphlets bravely fight,  
With diatribes defend the right:  
These brochures, we must confess,  
Ill console for your success."\*

But if the truth were told, the nation really wanted war. For two years mutual grievances between France and England increased. It was occasioned by the continual trading between our islands in the West Indies and our Atlantic ports with the insurgents. Not only did the English cruise on the open sea but approached our coasts to intercept the commerce of our ships. They even came under the very cannon of our forts. For example: March 26th, 1776, Count d'Argoult, then Governor of Martinique, complained that Captain Keeler, commander of the English frigate *The Lynx*, anchored at the mouth of the harbor of Saint-Pierre, and caught a brigantine coming from the Carolinas freighted with rice and honey just as she was about to cast an-

\* "Bravo, Messieurs les Insurgents!  
Vainqueurs dans une juste guerre,  
Vous donnez par vos sentiments  
Un peuple de plus à la terre.  
Fermes, courageux, patients  
Doués d'une franchise altière,  
Libres surtout! voilà mes gens.  
Cependant, soit dit entre nous,  
Avec tant de philosophie  
Comment diable vous battez-vous  
N'ayant pas une Académie?  
Nous qui pensons, à peine hélas!  
Conservons-nous quelque énergie.  
Nos esprits seuls font du fracas,  
Nos armes sont en léthargie.  
Heureusement, on voit sur pieds,  
Sans compter les Economistes,  
Des Piccinistes, des Gluckistes,  
Qui se battent par des pamphlets,  
S'escarmouchent par des injures;  
Et nos valeureuses brochures  
Nous consolent de vos succès."

chor. There were stories continually told; some tragic, others amusing, like that of *La Rosière d'Artois*, for instance, whose crew the English retained prisoners at St. Augustine, Florida. The sailors were told they could roam wherever they pleased; even go out of the town if they liked; but the English had promised 120 pounds to the Indians for each Frenchman's scalp. On January 24th, 1777, the *Correspondance Secrète*\* gives this story, which shows very clearly, if not the exact truth, our attitude toward the colonists and toward Great Britain: "Two vessels, one English, the other Philadelphian, met in sight of Port Royal, Martinique, and fought from early morning until night. Then, the English ship started for the port; its adversary followed. The French commander of the place welcomed both captains, and required them to keep the peace according to the laws of the King of France, and invited them to sup with him. The two vessels remained in port eight days for repairs, the captains always eating and playing cards together. On the ninth day, after supper the Englishman said to the Philadelphian: 'Tomorrow, put out to sea. . . .' 'I'll be there,' was the brief response. But the combat never took place. The English captain learned, upon returning to his ship, that a great number of Frenchmen in the village were arranging to go aboard the Philadelphia ship to give assistance. Before day-break the English decided to sail away; the next morning they had disappeared."

There was a large party of traders and negotiators who regarded the war as a fine business; this party was intimately connected with the Economists, men of ideas

\* *Correspondance Secrète inédite sur Louis XVI, Marie Antoinette, la Cour et la Ville*, published from the manuscripts of the Imperial Library at St. Petersburg by M. de Lescure, Paris, 1866.

whose influence was valuable. At the house of Madame Helvetius, in Franklin's circle, a Le Ray de Chaumont met Morellet, Mably, Raynal, Condorcet, De Gebelin, Turgot, who undoubtedly did not desire the war; but it was sufficient that he should want the freedom of the seas, so that from their relations with him these men of large business interests could derive advantage. In November, 1776, a ship coming from Rhode Island, carrying a cargo of 200,000 pounds of sugar and rice, had brought to the merchants of Nantes a letter signed by some members of Congress, "inviting the French to trade regularly and unite in a common interest." Thereupon, according to the memorandum of the Nantes merchants who asked permission to do this, M. de Sartine made them a verbal reply to the effect that he would close his eyes to their negotiations, but could not grant them any authorized relations with the insurgents. Trade, however, was bolder than the government. The officials tried in vain to hold down trade and public opinion; speculation spread, opinion was freely expressed; everything was interpreted in the sense of war. In January, 1777, "for fear we would come to grief with our rivals, we spread the report that the English had blocked Belle-Isle." The *Correspondance Secrète* noted a little later: "The American cause has so many partisans and enthusiasts in Paris and our maritime provinces, that if we abandon the insurgents to the mercy of the English, there will be a terrible fermentation in the heads of many Frenchmen." Why then did Beaumarchais court the favor of M. de Vergennes by urging the friends of Doctor Franklin to keep him well in the background (*tenir sous clef*)?

The Count de Vergennes, Minister of Foreign Affairs, was a man of surpassing ability, and one of the greatest



Ministers that ever served France. His constant care, from 1774, date of the accession of Louis XVI, the twenty-year-old King of France, was to make the monarchy strong enough to stop "brigandage" in Europe, and to restore a "magnanimous" political state founded on the "sacred rights of justice and propriety." Was the time ripe for this restoration? A thoughtful man in charge of the government had reasons for hope and doubt: the destiny of France depended upon the party.

In the point of view of a statesman and the King's Minister, the Bostonians were regarded as rebels. The American colonies had given an example to all the colonies of the old countries of Europe of establishing within their own boundary manufactures of all kinds; of doing without their mother countries; of refusing taxes when they had no votes; of objecting to draw upon Europe for what they could obtain from their own soil, so as to enrich her and ruin themselves. But there was nothing in this movement that could frighten the economical liberalism of a Vergennes; however, politically, through a spirit of monarchical solidarity, Vergennes had to mistrust the insurgents: "There are moral as well as physical ills in this condition of things; both can become contagious." In presence of "so terrible an explosion" which was brought out by the spirit of independence in North America, the Minister was looking "at the excesses that enthusiasm could encourage and fanaticism operate."

And, besides, these colonists were English; the French were idolizing American liberty; but Vergennes knew (and we will have many occasions to prove it) that the Americans had all the English prejudices against France. It is dangerous to interfere in family affairs, and a wise man hesitates to do so. To Vergennes this quarrel between England and her rebellious sons looked like a

family affair, and he was not mistaken. If France, therefore, should intervene, would it not lead, as if by magic, to a reconciliation of the brother-enemies against an old adversary "who was trying to increase the coolness between them"?

Lieutenant-Colonel Kalb, German officer in the service of France, on a commission from Choiseul to America, well said in 1768: "It would not be a sane policy for any power whatsoever to meddle in this quarrel, even at the requests of the Colonists (which is not probable) unless there were acts of hostilities between America and Great Britain; unless the Colonists published their independence everywhere; or united themselves under a general federation, armed themselves, and invited, by a unanimous and public declaration, all nations to come into their ports and deal commercially with them." No doubt since 1768 the irreparable had already taken place. But Vergennes wished to be doubly sure. An old monarchy upon the point of uniting itself with a new government without any tradition must not cede to a burst of enthusiasm, nor trust implicitly to the future. And the principal scruple of Vergennes was that the colonists, once they had gained their liberty, might separate and the pledges of Congress come to naught. He knew what a strong tendency there was among the Americans for state independence.

On the other hand, there was fear of English aggression. England armed and desperate at the loss of America could avenge herself upon the French for her deception; her Ministers, responsible to the nation for a political disaster, could be tempted ("in order to save themselves from the scaffold") to offer a glorious diversion, for which France would have to defray the expenses. Vergennes then prepared for war; he mobilized the army.

He did not conclude that it was necessary at the time to make any decided engagement with America. Why not let England destroy herself? His policy was very circumspect; he assumed an attitude of expectancy.

Beaumarchais, the most stirring and active of the men of affairs, whose post was at London, kept the French Ministry continually harassed with his information. On September 22d, 1775, he dared to write to the King: "The Colonists will triumph over England. . . . The end of the crisis will lead to a war with France. . . . Our Ministry seems to have a stagnant, passive air in regard to these events which so vitally concern us." Vergennes let this red-hot enthusiast say what he would, and then he calmly took his pen and wrote these words: "All sleep is not lethargic." His manner of suppressing these questions made them all the more persistent. So thought Lord Stormont as he came each week to notify the Minister of Foreign Affairs (who knew well what was transpiring) of the Boston ships ready to leave our ports laden with guns and cannon from our arsenals; or of the negotiations for supplies going on between them and the French merchants. In August, 1775, nearly a year before the Declaration of Independence, Vergennes was about to decide to treat America as a sovereign nation: "At the first hostile act of England, all her vessels at sea and in our ports were to be seized with the exception of those belonging to North America with cargoes to be sent there. And perhaps it would be more convenient to make a reciprocal declaration, thereby making them equal to a free and independent people, so that they could be invited to come to our respective ports, and be assured of the freedom and advantages of our commerce."

About this time De Vergennes sent to America M. de

Bonvouloir, a gentleman well versed in the affairs of the colonies, with a mission to speak of France to the Americans, as a friendly nation who admired "the grandeur and nobility of their efforts," and would be glad to have them frequent our ports. He also wanted to reassure them upon *the jealous point*: "France has no ambition for conquests; she has no desire to recover Canada." Vergennes was very careful about this question; to reinstate the power of the King of France in the immediate neighborhood of the Bostonians would have awakened their uneasiness and stirred up their antipathy to us. It would be much better to leave the English there, so that the Americans, always feeling their independence threatened, would turn instinctively toward France. He never changed his theory and line of conduct, in spite of the suggestions of the dreamers of conquest or the many expressions of public opinion. M. de Bonvouloir, who passed for a merchant of Antwerp, played his role well. He was welcomed by the Committee of Secret Correspondence over which Franklin presided. And now we have the result of his visit. On March 3d, 1776, a few days before the English, under pressure of Washington's troops, had to evacuate Boston, the committee gave instructions to an insurgent of Connecticut by the name of Silas Deane to depart as a delegate to France.

Deane received a courteous but cold reception, to which he quietly submitted; he remembered the recommendations of modesty which Franklin cautioned him to have; he did not present himself as an emissary of the colonies to the French Government; he allowed Le Ray de Chaumont and *le bon ami* Barbeau-Dubourg to regulate his conduct; he learned how to become a "Frenchman of Paris." He only spoke of commerce

with the West Indies; upon everything else silence. Deane managed, however, to transmit the message to Vergennes that the monarchy could depend upon promises made to it by Congress. But it was the Declaration of Independence more than the discreet eloquence of Silas Deane and his "republican ingenuity" that brought about the decision of the Minister.

Vergennes was apprised of this act August 17th, 1776, through a report of our Chargé d'Affaires at London. We are not surprised that the diplomats, whatever may have been their inward thoughts, read with avidity the following great considerations of political philosophy which gave to that fine exposition of American grievances such a noble background: "We hold these truths to be self evident; that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable Rights; that among these are Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness. That to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed; that whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the Right of the People to alter or abolish it." At these words public opinion was swayed by admiration and hope; naturally, they did not sound well to the cabinets and courts of Europe. Vergennes took note of but one thing: "it had been pronounced solemnly between two armies and before a formidable fleet." Where, then, was "that immediate submission that the English expected as the instantaneous effect of their threats"? Was there something unconquerable in this new nation? Was it true, then, that England had pushed them to desperation? And when before the Assembly of Virginia, at Richmond, March 20th, 1775, Patrick Henry spoke these

words: "In vain after these things may we indulge the fond hope of reconciliation. There is no longer any room for hope. We must fight. There is a just God who presides over the destinies of nations, and who will raise up friends to fight our battles for us. . . ." This courageous speech, full of divine inspiration, was not just the appeal of one hero, but the cry of the soul of the whole American nation.

Vergennes now declares himself. His decision was resumed in his famous *Mémoire* read to the King before a meeting of the King's Cabinet on August 31st, 1775: "Adhering to the principles of the King whose cherished wish is to found the glory of his reign upon justice and peace, it is certain that if His Majesty should seize this unique opportunity, which perhaps will never recur again in centuries, he would succeed in giving a blow to England that would be strong enough to make her withdraw her power into just bounds, and control the peace of nations for many years to come; he would have the glory, so near to his heart, of being, not only the benefactor of his people, but of all mankind." And here follow words of warning: "Shall we leave our Islands exposed to the discretion of the English, who will be in a position to take possession of them when despair will force them to abandon the continent of America? . . . This would be placing ourselves before the Kingdom and the entire world as betrayers of our national interests." Henceforth we will see that American independence is found to be closely allied to the great design of a French Restoration.

But August 27th, 1776, the American army suffered great reverses at Long Island. Soon after, New York was evacuated. Not by any means in despair, however, at their change of fortune, the Committee of

Secret Correspondence appointed commissioners on September 26th to go to the court of France: Silas Deane, who was already there; Arthur Lee, then in London, and Benjamin Franklin. But again the French Ministry fell back in an attitude of scrupulous precaution. Beaumarchais could repress himself no longer. "Poor France," he said, "a thousand years will not give back to thee the one moment that thou hast lost!" On October 28th the Americans were again defeated at Chatterton's Hill. But on the 27th Franklin had already sailed on the sloop of war *Reprisal*. This courageous old man had left in Paris, in his sojourn there in 1767-1769, the remembrance of a great mind and of a charming Epicurean. His book *The Science of Good-man Richard* was full of deep and artful thoughts. His friend Barbeu-Dubourg edited, in an elegant quarto binding, a choice selection of the works of this illustrious insurgent. This Phocion, notwithstanding the personal risk that he ran, permitted his ship en route to take two prizes. What a contrast to the timidity of the Ministry! Vergennes had to tell Doctor Franklin that on account of our treaty of navigation with England we could not authorize the sale of these vessels, and that they would have to be taken to a port of his own nation. Upon hearing this, all doors were open to him—at least they were half open.

## CHAPTER II

### FRANKLIN IN PARIS—THE EQUIPMENT OF LA FAYETTE'S SHIP—EVENTS OF THE WAR IN 1777—SARATOGA

Franklin was very wise; he did not announce himself as an ambassador, but "as a philosopher," according to the author of *English and American Anecdotes*. "Distressed at the troubles in his own country, and turning his eyes from so many objects of desolation, he came to make a peaceful sojourn in France." He stayed at Passy with his friend Le Ray de Chaumont, merchant and philosopher—"at the gates of Paris, on the road to Versailles."

"In this retreat he saw very few people and was on his guard. It was whispered abroad that the enmity of the English Ministers could make it very dangerous for him." This idea alone rendered his cause most interesting. And now for his physical appearance: "Everything about him announced the simplicity and innocence of old fashioned manners. He had taken off the borrowed wig which covered his bare head and forehead while in England. He showed to the astonished multitude a head worthy of the brush of a Guido, set upon a body erect and vigorous, covered with the plainest clothes; his eyes were shaded with large spectacles, and in his hand he carried a white stick." He seldom spoke; he could be impolite without rudeness; his pride seemed natural. Such a person was made to excite the curiosity of the Parisians who crowded around him. They would ask: "Who is this old peasant with such a noble air?"



Three months after his arrival his portrait was everywhere; even upon canes and snuff-boxes, with this inscription by Turgot: *Eripuit cælo fulmen, sceptrumque tyrannis.*

Franklin's discretion and his pretended lack of interest proved to be infinitely useful. The *Correspondance Secrète* knew the value of it: "Although Doctor Franklin may say that he no longer pays attention to American affairs, nevertheless, as an honest citizen of his country, he cannot help, through respect for the truth, but make the following statement: 'In regard to the recent important victory, about which the Court of England is making such a stir, saying that "the Army of Washington was forced to leave its intrenchments, and all the posts and forts destroyed" . . . the real facts are that the American General wished to draw the English Army one hundred leagues farther inland, so as to finish the destruction of it without striking a blow; for it was already decimated by all kinds of sickness and lack of food; that it did not cost Washington one hundred men to execute the abandonment of the intrenchments; that they did not leave a sack of grain or food of any kind; all of which proves that the Americans were not forced to do this.'" Thus Franklin commented on the fine retreat of the Americans at Trenton, Princeton, and all that campaign where, on each side of the Delaware, Washington, while retreating, sought for, and often succeeded in gaining, the mastery. Every time they spoke to the doctor about some repulse the insurgents suffered, he would say: "That is all right; the English will be caught in the end."

Franklin's moderation, the *modesty* of his demands, awakened distrust in the mind of Vergennes. He proposed, after all, only the signing of a pledge, or

rather of a treaty of commerce and friendship, that the Assembly of the colonies offered to France first, because of the consideration that this power had shown to their ships. The English had given the doctor the reputation of being a Machiavelli, and Lord Stormont was careful to see that this idea was circulated at the court of Versailles; it might have been that Vergennes allowed himself to be influenced somewhat by these reports. But he was much relieved—almost reassured—when the American Commissioners, January 5th, 1777, made so bold as to ask for ships, bayonets, and immediate aid of an army that would make a strong diversion; otherwise, forced by a harassing course of conduct on the part of the English, the Americans would be obliged to make a settlement with the mother country.

Vergennes did not go so far as that; he refused; but he softened the refusal with 2,000,000 (*livres*) francs. Franklin knew how to play his part admirably; faithful to his discipline in regard to older powers, "while preserving the dignity of character of a young nation, he accommodated himself to the temperament of the others." In his words of gratitude, in a dignified, clever way, he praised the royal magnanimity, and begged his Majesty to believe that America was far from desiring to lead him into taking measures that his sovereign wisdom and justice would disapprove.

Franklin knew that munitions were passed over the seas continually; while the King, to all appearances, seemed not to interfere. The orders from the arsenals were often suspended; they had to take into account the humor of Lord Stormont. Artillery was put on board a ship at Havre; they had to take it off at Lorient; but they took it off on the starboard side and put it back on the larboard; and the *Amphitrite* arrived just

the same in Boston harbor. In March, 1777, ten vessels of the firm of Hortales & Co.—in reality Beaumarchais—sailed toward America. On one of them was the Chevalier du Coudray, several other officers of artillery, and materials of war. This was the *Amphitrite*. Another ship, which dared to bear the name of *Count de Vergennes*, had on board a military engineer, the future architect of Washington, the federal city, Lieutenant, later, Major L'Enfant. Now engineers and artillerymen were the specialists of which America stood most in need; "they had courage enough, but lacked science." The choice was difficult to make, for all kinds of adventurers and malcontents "began to frequent the public places in Paris and the ports, and spent their time bragging and beseeching to be employed." In the cafés they would speak openly of having their passports in their pockets; from time to time a police agent would go around and tell them to keep quiet. They besieged Deane, "who was tired to death with their petitions." After a treaty had been duly signed with Deane, *La Seine*, which had on board Colonel Kalb and the Viscount de Mauroy as major-generals, the Senneville, Chevalier du Buyssons, Du Bois-Martin, and Amaryton as majors—and a dozen other fine officers—received orders *not* to sail just as it was about to leave the port of Havre, in December, 1776. Several of these officers, in March, 1777, succeeded in escaping to the *Victoire*, the famous ship that was fitted out by the Marquis de La Fayette, which finally took them to the other side of the ocean.

The Marquis de La Fayette, son-in-law of the Duke d'Ayen, had barely returned from a trip to London when he equipped a small frigate at his own expense,

and set sail from Port Royan with some young men of his age. "The desire to visit our Colonies (French) and learn a little of the art of navigation are reasons enough that he left a charming wife and a family that adored him; but without these it might be necessary to ascribe other views to him." These were the guarded terms used by the humorous correspondent in Paris of the *Courier de l'Europe*, when he told the story that caused so much gossip at the court and in the city. Not the least discontented of the family was M. de Noailles, our Ambassador at London. The marquis had played quite a nice little trick on his uncle: "I must say," wrote the uncle to Vergennes, "that if he had not taken it into his head to come to London to prolong his carnival, I would not now be in this awkward position of having presented him to the King of England just before he proceeded to carry out this very strange escapade. But I do not doubt that His Majesty knows the profound respect I bear him, and will render to me the justice that I crave." M. de Noailles was at a loss what to say later when Lord Suffolk, on April 11th, quietly made the remark to him "that the winds had been very favorable, for some days, for the English transports going to America."

His Britannic Majesty had his brother much to blame for this "escapade" of the marquis, for the Duke of Gloucester, at a dinner given him by the Count de Broglie, at Metz, in August, 1775, had taken sides a little too ardently with the insurgents. La Fayette was there and heard all he said on the subject; he was eighteen years old and was deeply moved; and while to all appearances he remained cool and indifferent, his heart was on fire. As an act of heroism this descendant of an old family of Auvergne would have to do an un-



LE MARQUIS DE LA FAYETTE

*Maréchal de Camp.*

THE MARQUIS DE LAFAYETTE, SON-IN-LAW OF THE DUKE D'AYEN.



usually brave deed, for dating from his ancestor Jean Motier de La Fayette, the glorious marshal, killed at the battle of Poitiers, he counted among his sires "so many killed from father to son on the field of battle, that it became an old saying in the province." As colonel of the grenadiers of France at twenty-five, his father was killed "at the bloody little victory of Hastembeck" the day he was born, September 6th, 1757, on the confines of Velay and Gevaudan. "As a child," he said, "the hope of meeting the beast of Gevaudan enlivened many of my promenades." At twenty the marquis wished to kill the hydra of despotism.

How he fled with Colonel Kalb, an older and more experienced man; with what emotion his father-in-law heard it; how upon the eve of sailing a *lettre de cachet* reached him ordering as a remedy for his taste for adventure a trip to Italy; and the scruples he had to overcome when he feigned submission, and finally other ideas which soon obtained the mastery and kept him from missing the call of liberty; how his father-in-law was noisily angry, while the court applauded his generous folly; and how the marquis, in order to make conventionality and the impulse of his heart agree, persuaded himself that the order for him not to depart was but a form of diplomacy; how the formal disavowal of the Ministry, feebly sustained by the other officials of the King, ended at last in silent approbation—all this one reads or divines in his *Mémoires*.

Meanwhile, on the 20th of April, the *Victoire* turned straight in the direction of America, and he wrote this consoling letter to his wife while at sea: "Defender of that liberty which I adore, *more liberal in my own opinions than anyone else* [of what is he thinking?] in going to offer my services to this interesting republic,

I only carry with me frankness and good-will. . . . I hope for my sake that you will become a good American; it is a sentiment worthy of virtuous hearts. The happiness of America is bound to that of all humanity. It is going to become the respectable, safe asylum of virtue, tolerance, equality, and peaceful liberty." Franklin admired La Fayette, but he was not insensible to the tears of the marquise; he assured Congress "that the considerate attention and respect paid to La Fayette would give pleasure not only to his powerful relatives at the Court, but to the whole French Nation"; and then he added: "He has left a very pretty young wife, and out of consideration for her, we hope that his courage and ardent desire to distinguish himself will be somewhat restrained by the discretion of the General, so that he will not be allowed to run into too much danger."

The *Victoire* cast anchor June 15th, 1777, before Georgetown, South Carolina. In spite of their letters and regulations (*capitulations*) signed by Deane, the President of Congress did not receive them. An interpreter met them in the street and made them the following discouraging speech: "Gentlemen, we charged Mr. Deane to send us four engineers. Instead of that, he has sent us Mr. du Coudray, who brought with him some so-called engineers, but they do not know anything about it; and artillerymen who have never served. . . . The Frenchmen have come without our asking them. Last year, it is true we needed officers; but this year we have many, and some of them very experienced ones." It was quite evident that the interpreter thought he had before him some of those troublesome French officers whom the governors of our colonies had been in the habit of recommending to the Americans when



they themselves wanted to be rid of them. Du Coudray was ill qualified and an intriguer; he claimed that they were to remove General Knox, commander of artillery, and put him in his place. Soon after he lost his life by drowning, and La Fayette, under the guise of a eulogy, gave you to infer that the loss of this blunderer (*brouillon*) was a happy accident.

Many of these Frenchmen were dismissed with thanks. Kalb only received his commission at the end of a year; La Fayette's services were accepted "on account of his illustrious family and connections." His commission, however, as major-general was purely honorary at first; Washington, who had urged Franklin to deter the French officers from coming to America, did not know, for a while, exactly what to do with him.

At this time the commander-in-chief of the American army was having untold difficulties in the reorganization and maintenance of a military force; any one else would have deemed it hopeless. In the beginning of the war the soldiers had been enlisted, not by a central government which did not then exist, but by the respective governments of each colony for a certain length of time and for a limited object. It was a contract in which each individual considered himself an interested party. When, in 1775, they presented to the militia rules prescribed by Congress for the Continental army, many refused to subscribe to them. "They had left their fire-sides," said Jared Sparks, "to fight for liberty, and they desired, first of all, to procure it for themselves." These local considerations formed a considerable disturbance. It was necessary to see that each colony had its just proportion of officers, according to the number of men it had to furnish. This discontentment and the intrigues of the officers, and the exacting

disposition and undisciplined habits of the soldiers, caused no end of embarrassment.

After the repulse on Long Island, August 27th, 1776, Washington gave this report: "The militia, desperate, unmanageable, impatient, have returned to their homes; they have deserted by whole regiments." They were reduced to offering to these precarious contingents prizes which they had to increase in value continually; and the inequality of these advantages caused "grumbling and jealousy." Washington only rendered himself justice when, on December 20th, he recalled to Congress that he had "always endeavored to suppress the sentiment of locality, and the distinction of regions,—giving to all the glorious name of Americans." He spoke of national honor, of civic virtue, of deliverance for all, to men who were little accustomed to looking beyond their own fields. Washington was the most zealous of the noble-minded men who from that time forth were conceiving American nationality. If the indomitable idea of a common country had not existed in the hearts of a chosen few, who persisted in transforming it into an act, America would never have existed. It is necessary to have men of superior intelligence and will-power to direct popular activity into the accomplishment of great designs which exact tenacity of purpose and heroic patience in making sacrifices.

The day when La Fayette was presented to Washington, at a dinner-party in Philadelphia, where there were several members of Congress present, the general was very much troubled. He felt too weak to give battle to Sir William Howe; during the month of June he had manœuvred successfully to avoid a general engagement. The English had evacuated the Jerseys; but Washington knew that Burgoyne, with a strong

army, was approaching Fort Ticonderoga, at the southern end of Lake Champlain, which touched Canada on the north. On July 1st the position was taken by the English. If they became masters of the course of the Hudson, and the communication with Canada, their main object would be attained: the colonies of the East would be separated from those of the South. The movements of the English fleet were such that it was impossible to know whether they would decide to go up the Hudson in order to act in concert with Burgoyne, or whether they would aid the designs upon Philadelphia by Sir William Howe. If the latter case, then the fleet was to be seen off the Delaware Capes. Washington had left the army at Germantown, and had just come to pass a few days with Congress.

"It was at this moment," says Balch, "that his heart was plunged into the deepest despair; and, according to his own words, 'La Fayette came to dispel his sombre thoughts, as the dawn dispels the darkness of night.'" It is very probable that the marquis pleased him at once. An intuitive sympathy sprang up immediately between these two men so different in race, condition, and age. But needless to say that the first combat had to take place before Washington could judge the value of this young enthusiast and the quality of his courage.

On September 11th the unfortunate encounter at the Brandywine occurred. In a letter to the Duke d'Ayen, La Fayette notes the event as follows: "It was learned that the English were at the mouth of the Elk River. General Washington went forward to meet them, and determined to await their coming on the heights above Brandywine Creek. On September 11th,

the English came to attack us, and while they were entertaining us with their cannon and much movement in front, the larger number of their troops made a detour in order to pass a ford four miles to our right. The General detached his whole right wing so as to meet them there." As the marquis was writing to his father-in-law, who would show the letter to the marquise, he did not disclose here an action on his part which would have shown him too prompt to expose himself to danger; happily for us, the *Mémoires*, which he wrote in later years, are not so discreet. His place was near Washington, but since the hardest fighting was to be at the right, he asked and obtained permission to go there. We should be thankful to Washington for not being as careful as Franklin would have him for the safety of La Fayette. When the right wing had reached the ford the enemy had passed over it; then it became necessary to fight in the open plain. According to the *Mémoires* of Chastellux, "The enemy's left advanced, with as much order as swiftness and courage. (La Fayette took decidedly too small a part.) The Americans kept up a rapid firing, but the English came straight on; it was not until they were within twenty paces of them, however, that the Americans gave way and rushed to the woods. It was there that La Fayette was wounded in the left leg while he was engaged in trying to rally the troops that were beginning to disperse." A lucky wound, for it thereby created so much envy in France that it decided the vocation of more than one Frenchman. The Moravian Brothers of Bethlehem gave him excellent care.

On the evening of September 22d Congress left Philadelphia. The American army retreated in great disorder through a blinding storm of rain. General

Howe took possession of the city; then established his army near Germantown. Washington attacked him there on the 4th of October. Meanwhile the marquis writes pretty letters to his wife; he taught her to sustain the morals of France against malicious tongues that would predict worse things from this defeat of the Americans. "They will say to you: 'Philadelphia is taken, the Capital of America, the bulwark of liberty.' You must answer politely: 'Oh, it is only a poor little town, exposed on all sides, noted because the Congress was held there; it will soon be taken back again.'" In the same spirit Franklin said to the Parisians: "The English have taken Philadelphia? I think it is just the other way, Philadelphia has taken the English." By this same letter to his wife, we can see that La Fayette has won the heart of Washington, when he adds: "We live like two brothers—closely united in intimacy and mutual confidences."

If La Fayette was not at Germantown, the Chevalier Duplessis-Mauduit was there; and Chastellux, who made a pilgrimage to all these sacred places, relates with what daring and gallantry he behaved: "The American troops advanced up to the English camp; then, they passed through it under the command of General Sullivan, without one soldier stopping to pillage; and finally, they entered Germantown. Washington at the head of his reserves, had started up the principal street, when a volley of musketry came from a large mansion which was within easy gun-range of the street; this made the advance guard come to a sudden halt. Cannon was necessary; unluckily they had only six pounders. Chevalier Duplessis-Mauduit had two pieces placed near another house a few hundred yards from the first one. This cannon had little or no effect; it pierced the

walls but did not bring down the house. The Chevalier then decided to attack this house, that could not be destroyed by cannon, at closer range. He proposed to Colonel Lawrens to take with him some trustworthy men, and go to a barn near by where he would find a pile of straw, and he was to have that taken to the door of the mansion and set it on fire. . . . De Mauduit, supposing, of course, that they were following him with all the straw in the barn, went to a window on the ground floor, broke it and entered a room. He was received a little like the lover who mounted a ladder to see his mistress, and found her husband waiting for him on the balcony. I do not know if they asked him, also, what he was doing there, and he innocently answered: 'Oh, I am just taking a walk'; but what I do know is that while a gallant soldier with a pistol in his hand was ordering Mauduit to surrender, another less gallant, entered the room brusquely and fired off his gun, and it struck, not De Mauduit, but the man who wanted to take him prisoner. After these slight mistakes in this little skirmish, De Mauduit was embarrassed about retiring from the scene. On one side of the house he would have to expose himself to a murderous fire from the first and second story windows; on the other side, was a part of the American Army, and he would be liable to be ridiculed if he ran back. De Mauduit, like a true Frenchman, preferred to expose himself to death rather than to ridicule; the bullets, however, respected our prejudices, and he returned safe and sound; while Lawrens, who was in no greater hurry, escaped with a slight wound in his shoulder."

This Mauduit was a droll fellow. Ségur relates: "In his youth he had a dispute, and made the bet of a crown (*écu*) upon the true position of the Athenian

Army, and that of the Persians, in the Battle of Plataea. As he was both poor and stubborn, and wished to verify the fact without too heavy expense, he undertook and accomplished a trip on foot to Greece." This was the kind of man to go alone into the night to reconnoiter, and take the stockades and the enemy trenches. He carried to excess his love of liberty and equality; he would become angry when they called him "*Monsieur*," and wished to be known simply as Thomas Duplessis-Mauduit. We will return to him later.

The battle of Germantown was a serious defeat for the Americans: 1,000 men killed, wounded, or dispersed; General Nash, of South Carolina, mortally wounded; a most unfortunate and bloody day. But the country was reassured by this demonstration of the ardor of the troops "and of the energy and confidence of the commander which never wavered." The Count de Vergennes, the day he received the American Commissioners to talk about a treaty of alliance, declared "that nothing was more impressive to him, than to see General Washington attack the army of General Howe, and give him battle; and that to have accomplished so much with an army, raised within the year, promised everything for the future." Chastellux notes "that the English army found itself in peculiar position; it had bought and maintained the possession of Philadelphia at the price of two hard fought battles; but it remained enclosed between the Schuylkill and the Delaware Rivers, with the army of Washington holding it in abeyance in front, and behind it were several forts occupied by Americans, which blocked its passage to the Delaware in this direction."

But it was far from there, on the banks of the upper Hudson, in a country desolate and almost impossible

of access, cut with deep ravines and covered with thick woods, that now occurs the great and brilliant event which alone, in the judgment of public opinion, decided the situation of the royal government. Gates, the American general, had chosen his position well upon the highlands called Bemis Heights. Burgoyne tried in vain to take his intrenchments. The militia of New Hampshire, Vermont, and Massachusetts, under the command of General Stark, overcame the Germans under Riedesel. In vain Burgoyne, on October 2d, without news of Clinton, tried to turn the American left by his advance-guard. Arnold and Lincoln raised the enemy trenches; Chastellux saw the place where Arnold "jumped the intrenchment on horseback. This was a kind of parapet made with the trunks of trees piled upon one another. It was a fierce combat; as the pine-trees torn by the bullets and cannon bear witness." On the 17th of October Burgoyne surrendered at Saratoga; he had no bread. Gates had already taken two thousand prisoners. Six thousand men were disarmed. This troop of gilt-trimmed uniforms defiled before Gates and his officers who were clad in gray, and crossed the rebel country to go and take up their winter quarters at Boston. Gates, undisciplined soldier that he was, rendered an account of his victory, not to the commander-in-chief, but to Congress. "If our cause triumphs," said Washington, "it matters not to me where or how we gain it."

While this glorious news is carried to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in France, arriving there on the 5th of December, 1777, let us remain with the combatants. It was upon October 22d that occurred the heroic defense of Red Bank upon the Delaware by



Duplessis-Mauduit. He took Chastellux to see the place in December, 1780. There, still, within a short distance of the guns of the fort, lived a Quaker a little inclined to Toryism; Mauduit had been obliged "to tear down his barn and cut his fruit trees." He flattered himself, however, that he would be made welcome on account of La Fayette. The Quaker, seated near the fire cleaning some herbs, never deigned to raise his eyes to his visitors; neither compliments nor jokes persuaded him to talk. Mauduit consoled himself by telling Chastellux how, with 300 men and 14 pieces of cannon, he had held 2,500 Hessians at bay. First, he had to reduce the earth-works, which the Americans, with but little knowledge in the art of making fortifications, had extended too far. The Hessians summoned him to surrender, warning him at the same time that if he persisted in fighting, that there would be no quarter given either to him or his men; Mauduit refused, willing to take the consequences. "When the enemy troops reached the abatis, where they had to tear away and cut the branches, they were welcomed by a hail of bullets which caught them on the front and sides." There chanced to be a part of the old wall of intrenchment that had escaped destruction, and it formed a salient where it was cut off; Mauduit had the idea of using this for a shelter, and he put a number of men in it, who fired at the left flank of the enemy at close range. "The officers were seen to rally their soldiers, return to the abatis, and fall into the midst of the branches and underbrush which they were forced to cut away. Colonel Donop could be distinguished by his fine face and courage, and the order he wore; he was seen to fall with the rest." Finally, the Hessians stopped fighting and "fled to the woods in disorder." Mauduit made a sortie, with a

detachment of troops, to reconstruct the fortifications; it was then that he saw, "as well as the darkness of the night would permit," first, twenty Hessians "standing on the *berme* (a narrow place between a parapet and a ditch) clinging to the talus or slope of the parapet," who had had the courage to go this far, but dared not retreat; then, he came upon "the deplorable spectacle of the dead and dying heaped upon one another." From this death pile came a voice and it spoke in English: "Whoever you are drag me out of this." It was Colonel Donop, and his hip was broken. "Very well," muttered the Americans, "is it decided that there will be no quarter?" "I am in your hands, you can take your revenge," answered the colonel. De Mauduit did not have much trouble in imposing silence on his men, and concerned himself only with the care of the wounded man, who, perceiving that he did not speak English well, said: "Sir, you seem to be a stranger, who are you?" "A French officer," replied De Mauduit. "Then I am satisfied," answered Donop, "for I am dying in the arms of honor itself." Mauduit conducted, in person, fifteen wounded officers to Philadelphia, where they were well received by General Howe. The news of the battle of Saratoga had just reached them. "Speak frankly," said the English officers, "you who are a Frenchman, is it possible?" "I know that it is true," responded Mauduit, "you can explain it as you like."

One month afterward, on November 26th, La Fayette, who had not waited to be cured of his wound before rejoining the army, reported to Washington his little "success" of the evening before at Gloucester. The forts of the Delaware, in spite of the splendid defense of Mauduit and another Frenchman, Colonel Fleury of the regiment of Rouergue, had to be evacuated.

Lord Cornwallis with 5,000 men had passed into the Jerseys, held by as many Americans under General Greene. La Fayette, who could not remain inactive, after having passed part of the day watching the enemy, at nightfall decided to take a little "ride" (*se promener*) on the road to Gloucester. He started out with "ten cavalymen, about one hundred and fifty riflemen under Colonel Butler, and two piquets of militia commanded by Colonels Hite and Ellis: all told there were hardly three hundred men."

We find La Fayette in good company, for he had with him Mauduit, Gimat, Colonel Lamoy, and Colonel Armand. The latter was the famous Marquis de la Rouërie, who had taken the name of Armand after his duel with the Count de Dreux-Brézé, that had cost him his rank in the French Guards. Since May 10th, 1777, Congress had conferred upon him the rank of colonel, with the commission to raise a force of 200 French sympathizers. Chastellux met him later, at Monticello, Jefferson's home, with his wolf—a young wolf with glossy fur, almost black, and as gentle and playful as a puppy—which he amused himself training, and which even had the privilege of sleeping in bed with him; then there was Chateaubriand, who rivalled Lauzun in conquests and unfortunate love-affairs, and Moré de Pontgibaud, who asserted that he would join the Trappists because of his despair at his non-success in winning the heart of Mlle. de Beaumont of the Opera.

About two and a half miles from Gloucester, the marquis, with his goodly company of French companions and his American escort, suddenly ran into a troop of 350 Hessians with cannon. The marquis and his company attacked them so vigorously that they were forced to retreat, in spite of being reinforced by the

English who came up and joined in the fight. Result: twenty of the enemy killed or wounded and fourteen taken prisoners. A small engagement of not much importance, but La Fayette had never seen men "as gay and eager to get at the enemy, no matter what his strength, as were our soldiers in this little clash of arms." The American militia was much pleased with this exploit.

Upon the same day that the report of the marquis about the skirmish was received, Washington requested Congress to give him the command of a division, and immediately La Fayette was made commander of the division of the Continental army, "which had been previously commanded by General Stephen, who had been dismissed. . . ." The campaign was ended and the British plan had failed: the colonies of the East remained in communication with those of the South, while Burgoyne's army was imprisoned and maintained at the expense of the republic. And now we find Clinton calmly holding the garrison at New York, and General Howe paying court to the belles of Philadelphia, while the American army, with its forces much weakened, nearly naked, living in huts made of branches of trees, its only shelter against the cold, hard winter of Pennsylvania, was trying to re-form, recruit, and find clothing. The misery that was endured in the camp at Valley Forge can never be forgotten. The soldiers, unshod, left bloody traces in the snow, and barely escaped dying of hunger. Washington, their heroic commander, a man of tender heart, gave the following account to Congress of these troops: "Their extreme patience and fidelity cannot be too much admired; it is astonishing that their sufferings have not made them all rebels and deserters."

France had her eyes fixed on the victorious Americans of the battle of Saratoga; and she was also watching the man whom La Fayette says now, "is worthy of the adoration of his country."

## CHAPTER III

### TREATY OF COMMERCE AND FRIENDSHIP—EVENTS OF THE WINTER AND SPRING OF 1778

Let us pass over many incidents and pause only at this one: that at the end of October, 1777, Vergennes realized the necessity of declaring his intentions. No more concessions to Lord Stormont. Against the insinuations of English diplomacy he had to raise *a wall of steel and keep himself strictly behind it*. In order that attention should be drawn to the requisitions of the English Ambassador, who again presented, on November 3d, at Versailles, an enormous list of ships that were being freighted for America clandestinely, it was not necessary that Lord Sandwich should go before the English Parliament and threaten the near approach of the time when England would exact reparations for all the *insults* she had received from France and Spain. "Let us engrave this fatal oracle in indelible characters," said Vergennes. "Let us try not to be taken unawares, . . . not to be surprised."

On the other hand, Vergennes began to feel the impatience of the Americans; he knew that the *moderators*—those that governed this new nation—had need of "much art and even artifice" to uphold its enthusiasm, and that the most effective means had been to represent France and Spain as engaged in aiding its cause. Now this means was about worn out. To tell the truth, Spain was indifferent to the fate of America. If France did not dare (restrained by the Family Com-

pact) to take sides with her first, and alone, America would think that the house of Bourbon had no other interest in this war but the ruin of Great Britain; and America would therefore fall back in despair into the arms of the mother country. All these considerations appeared more important when it was learned that Saratoga had capitulated. Would not England concede independence to such robust sons? And then France would not have the glory, before any other power, of recognizing this new nation, of introducing American sovereignty into the league of nations. There was not a moment to lose..

On December 18th Gérard, Chief Secretary of Foreign Affairs, carried to Franklin, Deane, and Arthur Lee, in their house in Passy, a royal message: "It must be recalled to Franklin, this monument of wisdom, of unostentatious generosity, that, united to the sentiment of Royal and National dignity, there was a sense of justice about the present state of affairs, and a strong feeling of sincerity." His Majesty "did not intend to take advantage of the present condition of the Americans to obtain from them covenants that it would not be agreeable for them to make with any other country. . . . Consequently, he intended to have the terms such as we [the Americans] would consent to voluntarily, as if we had been established a long time, and were in the full possession of our power." France had resolved to sustain American independence by every possible means, the only condition being "that America could not, in concluding any peace with England, renounce her independence and return to the domination of the English." The commissioners replied that his Majesty would find true allies in the New World; and as they observed that republics were generally

faithful to their engagements, Gérard remarked that the King was accustomed, also, to keep his treaties with republics: witness the Swiss cantons, with whom he had just renewed an alliance two centuries old.

Negotiations were proceeding marvellously well, when the Elector of Bavaria died. Was France now going to be *engulfed* in the affairs of Germany? No, for Vergennes took good care to keep away from them. Of course France could not see without displeasure "her dear ally," Joseph II, take a menacing position, and seize the course of the Danube and the better part of Bavaria. But it was necessary to make a choice. Vergennes refused to grant the wish of the King of Prussia, who would have liked to form an alliance with us (*se combiner avec nous*). At Teschen, Vergennes reconciled Austria and Prussia. He had eyes only for America. Frederick II gained what he wanted; and afterward he was greatly praised by Bancroft, an American historian, strangely inspired and better metaphysician than historian. Bancroft's idea was "that there was a *pre-established harmony* between the greatness of Prussia and that of the United States; and Frederick was quite right not to subordinate to the 'conveniences of another hemisphere' the immediate interests of Prussia. The United States would win at last." Happily for America, Vergennes did not reason like Doctor Pangloss, whom Bancroft was emulating.

Of the harmony that France applied herself to establish in this discordant world, she had a more positive, and at the same time a more disinterested, notion. The fundamental principle of the *Treaty of Alliance and Friendship* signed February 6th, 1778, was, according to the preliminary articles, "that of the most perfect equality and reciprocity. The commercial and other



privileges are mutual, *and not one of them is accorded to France that we [the Americans] would not be at liberty to grant to any other nation.*" The American Commissioners were authorized by Congress to make exclusive concessions to France. But Vergennes said "that the King wished to make a substantial treaty that would last for all time, . . . pass on to posterity." As Doniol well expresses it: "This was an open compact wherein all nations could join," even England herself. The attitude of France ruled that of Europe. And this attitude was demanded by her for a people of a government born but yesterday, "temporary, without rules, and much more besides." Louis XVI knew what he was doing. Vergennes does not lead us to believe that he yielded to his ministers. "The evidence of the facts, his own convictions were the sole reasons that prompted him to do it: the King gave courage to all of us," said the Minister. "In the future, by our making closer alliances with the King of Prussia, and by so doing, opening "relations with such countries as Russia, England would soon be surrounded by a league of neutrals against her maritime domination, and France would be giving to her allies the support of those governments that were the most capable of taking care of the cause and serving in its success."

On February 14th, 1778, for the first time in French waters, in the harbor of Quiberon, the flag of the fleur-de-lis received the salute from the starry banner. It was Paul Jones, the commodore, who saluted La Motte-Piquet. To his thirteen salutes, according to the usage established in regard to the admirals of Holland, the royal squadron returned nine. "The French officers," writes Paul Jones, "are extremely kind and polite; they have visited my ship and say that she is a perfect

jewel. They themselves received us on board their ship with every mark of pleasure and consideration, and welcomed us with illuminations. Their attentions were carried to such an extent that if they were not sincere, then they surely knew well how to dissemble."

On Thursday, March 19th, the American deputies were presented to the King by Vergennes, with a certain amount of etiquette, but not with the same pompous ceremonial of accredited Ambassadors. "Doctor Franklin," as the *Anecdotes* state, "appeared at Versailles before the King. He was accompanied and followed by a number of Americans, and all kinds of persons who were attracted by curiosity." Madame du Deffand wrote to Walpole: "There were about twenty insurgents, two or three were in uniform." The doctor's age, simplicity of his costume, his whole appearance, as Madame du Deffand describes it—"a coat of reddish brown velvet, white stockings, hair flowing, spectacles upon his nose, and his hat under his arm"—all that was unusual and peculiar in the life of this American, attracted the attention of the public more and more. He was continually applauded, and everything done in connection with him showed that enthusiastic imagination that the French have more than any other people, and that politeness and kindness which magnify the charms of the person who is the object of their adulation. His Majesty said to him: "Assure the United States of America of my friendship; I am particularly well satisfied with the way that you have conducted yourself in my kingdom." The deputies dined at the table with Vergennes. In the evening, at cards, Marie Antoinette asked Franklin to be seated near her, and was very gracious to him.

The King desired the terms of the treaty, if not the

treaty itself, to be published, and to reach America as speedily as possible. The last of February the text of the treaty became known in Boston; and one of our most ardent and clever friends, Pastor Samuel Cooper, read the preliminaries from his pulpit. Congress received it, officially, at York, Pennsylvania, on the other side of the Susquehanna, where it had retired after Philadelphia was taken by the British. We quote the memorable words here used upon the occasion of its reception by the Committee on Foreign Affairs and addressed to Franklin and Deane:

"We admire the wisdom and true dignity of the Court of France, on their part of the construction and ratification of the treaties between us. They have a powerful tendency *to dissolve effectually that narrowness of mind, which mankind have been too unhappily bred up in.* Those treaties discover the politician founded on the philosopher, and a harmony of affections make the groundwork of mutual interest. *France has won us more powerfully than any reserved treaties could possibly bind us, and by one generous and noble act has sown the seeds of an eternal friendship.*"

Washington could not be informed except through Congress. It is on May 6th that he refers to it in his order of the day: "The all-powerful Sovereign of the Universe having desired to protect the cause of the United States of America, and to procure for us a formidable ally among the sovereigns of the earth, so as to found our liberty and independence upon a durable basis, it is our duty to set aside a day to render thanks to Divine Providence, and celebrate the important event that we owe to heavenly intervention. . . ." Joy was intense at the camp of Valley Forge: bonfires, firing of musketry, salvoes of artillery, concerts

and toasts, hurrahs and cheerings in honor of the King of France. The rejoicing was as great as it possibly could be in the spring, and with an army ready to go on a campaign. And the white scarf of La Fayette could be seen passing from bonfire to bonfire.

With La Fayette at Valley Forge we perceive Chevalier Moré de Pontgibaud, who at nineteen had just escaped from the donjon-tower of Pierre-en-Cise, a most perilous exploit. His family had incarcerated him there because he had "a violent and ferocious temper, and would not apply himself to any vocation." He was really incorrigible; and tired of contending with him, they put him on board a ship—the *Arc-en-ciel*—at Nantes which was bound for America. This was his dream; he could not have been better pleased. The ship ran into a frightful storm off the Bermudas; then she was chased by an English corsair, and finally ended in running aground at the mouth of the James River, near the *Isis*, an English ship, which pillaged her completely. Pontgibaud saved ten louis d'or, and set out in the direction of Williamsburg, the capital of Virginia, feeling sure that with the army, at least, he would not starve. "My path led me through forests; I did not know what I would find there, whether bear, panthers or rattle-snakes. I had this perspective in view from the travels I had read while I was in prison." (*Did Pontgibaud know that the flag of the Union had borne, for some time, the emblem of a snake with thirteen rattles?*)

At Williamsburg he learned that La Fayette was at Valley Forge. He had to walk eighty miles, "with a sort of passport" given him by Jefferson, then Governor of Virginia, in which he was "recommended to the kindness of the persons he would meet on his way." He did

not know a word of English; but the forest was alive with little beings with whom he soon made friends; there were no wild beasts, but birds whose shining plumage he admired; and especially thousands and thousands of little squirrels (those lively little squirrels, who are so familiar, like the swallows in Paris; they abound in the public gardens of Richmond, Little Rock, and many other Southern cities). And here is a last touch to Pontgibaud's character. He adds: "They seemed as though they were accompanying the triumphal progress of a young warrior marching to glory. I imagined I saw the entrance of the Ballet at the Opera." This shows a foolish imagination, still childlike, but beneath it all there is a deep courage and a flow of spirits that is going to end in heroism and win the hearts of the Americans.

Our handsome chevalier is also going to discover to what extent we were unknown and misunderstood. One day, at the home of a farmer, he had this peculiar dialogue: "I am very glad that I have a Frenchman in the house," said the farmer. Pontgibaud pleasantly asked him the reason for this preference. He replied: "Well, the barber lives a long distance from here, and you can shave me." "Eh! I do not know how to shave myself. My servant does that for me; but he can shave you too, if you like." "That is strange," said the farmer again, "we have been told that all Frenchmen are either barbers or fiddlers." Thereupon the man noticed that with the chevalier's rations there was a large piece of beef. "How glad you must be, Monsieur, to come over and eat beef in America!" "I assure you we have just as good in France; in fact, most excellent meat." "That is impossible, sir," he continued; "if that were true, then you would not be

so thin." Admiral d'Estaing also claimed that it was difficult to convince the Puritans of New England that we were not "a thin people always dancing."

La Fayette graciously welcomed this charming adventurer. He did well, in spite of Washington, who rather reproached him, at the time, for not being able to refuse the way to his heart to any of his compatriots. While Pontgibaud is waiting to be admitted, with the brevet of major, to the rank of Washington's aides-de-camp, he observes this astonishing army, with its bizarre equipment. However, he has not yet suffered with it. "How strange they look, these soldiers, who wear, instead of cloaks or overcoats, blankets of coarse wool which actually resemble those for the sick in the hospitals of France, and I notice some who put under their hats a night-cap." A little later he will recognize these men as officers.

All of these officers are pointed out to him, and he learns their names. "They surround Washington, a man of tall stature, superb figure, kind language, benevolent expression. These are the officers: Gates, the victor at Saratoga, a simple, quiet man who already belonged to history; the farmer who had become a soldier, and with his wool cap upon his head, surmounted by a farmer's hat, had recently received the sword of the brilliant General Burgoyne in full dress uniform, and coat decorated with English Orders:—Arnold, who remained lame for the rest of his life from a wound he received at the Battle of Saratoga:—Sullivan, lawyer before the war:—Colonel Hamilton, Washington's friend, who, when the war was over, opened an office in Philadelphia and practised law,—the strong and intelligent mind [Pontgibaud forgets to add] who put into execution and maintained the salutary doctrine of Federal-

ism:—General Stark, a free-holder who distinguished himself:—The brave General Knox, a man who had had a book store before he became a general of artillery. He passed, suddenly, from a simple citizen to the difficult duties of a military chief and fills this position equally as well." Chastellux, a wiser man, judges more justly: "These generals certainly have been improvised, but they are not 'the workmen and shop-keepers' that far-away Europe imagines: Knox was prepared for his position through the importance of the negotiations that he had organized and directed for some years; he was not 'a Boston bookseller'; books were a small part, perhaps, of his vast business." Those whom Pontgibaud called "farmers" were gentlemen free-holders, and through their previous education they were able to read with profit (the experience of war aiding them) the best works on tactics; notably, the famous treatise by Guibert, dedicated to the nation, of which General Heath made particular use.

Again, the good Pontgibaud deceives himself, unfortunately, in regard to the simplicity or the greatness of certain of these men. Arnold was much more than a "horse-dealer" (*maquignon*); but in two years he betrayed his country. And Gates had such a high opinion of his own merits, he made so bold as to try and usurp the place of Washington. And Lee could not be trusted.

La Fayette knew it well. Loyal and devoted to Washington, he followed the intrigues of the cabal Gates-Mifflin-Conway. "I wish," he writes to the commander-in-chief with tender admiration, "that you could be able to judge, as I do, the difference between you and all other men; you would then see clearly that if you were lost to America, no one could hold the army and maintain the Revolution for six months." Washing-

ton's last campaign had not been successful. But Gates, on the contrary, infatuated with his success, impressed Congress "by his manner and promises, and his European acquaintances." And then there was Lee (still held prisoner by the English, but was going to be exchanged with General Prescott), who had the prestige of his service in Europe—"an English colonel, a Polish general, companion in arms of the Portuguese and Russians, Lee knew all the countries, had seen all service, and could speak several languages." "Ugly, sarcastic, ambitious and mercenary," is La Fayette's report of him; "he hates the General." Mifflin, the quartermaster-general, had joined the Gates party. Among the deputies who adhered to this party, and distinguished themselves for their bitter persecution of Washington, were such persons as the Lees, like himself Virginians, and the two Adamses of Massachusetts. They had to have an agitator, so Conway, an Irishman, formerly in the service of France, was selected.

This same Conway, who later left the army, but still continued to do all in his power to injure the character of Washington, was provoked to a duel by General Cadwalader, and so seriously wounded that he thought he was going to die. It was then that he wrote to the great man: "I am about to die. Through justice and truth I am forced to declare my last sentiments. In my eyes you are a great and excellent man. May you enjoy for a long time the love, esteem and veneration of those States whose liberty you have won by your virtues." But he survived; we like to believe that he did not change his opinion.

La Fayette felt that honor obliged him to remain in America at his post; and there cannot be too much said of the beneficent and conciliatory influence that he exer-



cised, together with a scruple of modesty, about making himself "ridiculously important" not only in the army but in Congress. Now, in January, 1778, it was decided to invade Canada, and La Fayette was appointed commander of the expedition, with Conway and Stark under his orders. The War Office, without consulting Washington, "ordered him to await his instructions at Albany." In this proceeding he felt that there was an underhand attempt "to elate him" (*l'enivrer*), so as to render him manageable, and worse than all, to offend his commander-in-chief. He rushed to York and told them he would accept only on condition that he would be still under the command of Washington, even though at a distance. Then, notwithstanding the snow and ice, from the 3d to the 17th of February, he quickly moved from York to Albany. He had started full of hope, but he was doomed to disappointment. Nothing had been prepared. Out of 3,000 men promised, he found only 1,200; and most of them were "poorly clad even for a summer campaign." From General Stark, who was to have joined him there with a considerable body of troops, he received but one letter, in which he asked: "How large a number, for what place, at what time, and what rendezvous am I to make recruits?" Generals Schuyler, Lincoln, and Arnold had persuaded Conway that the enterprise was foolish; and so it was, without provisions, magazines, sleds, or snow-shoes. The resources, however, were not lacking; for General Schuyler said later to Chastellux, that in a month's time, between the Hudson and the Connecticut, they could easily have brought together 1,500 sleds, 2,000 horses, and an equal number of cattle. But no order was given. Save a few Canadians, under Colonel Hazen, more accustomed to sleep in the woods by a

big fire than in a tent, even in the most intense cold, the troops were "little disposed to undertake an incursion into such a cold country." An extreme discontentment reigned among the officers and soldiers who had not received their pay "for a great length of time."

La Fayette had the good sense not to make this venture, as enthusiastic as he was about running after a mirage of glory; and also on account of "what was expected of him both in America and Europe." But the failure of this expedition was not entirely useless. One fine day, while the snow still covered that dark earth that resembled "iron ore," where grew the cypress and pine, he left the sheltered hospitality of Albany. It was comfortable there in winter on the banks of the frozen Hudson; and not *défigurée* by the cold as Chastellux saw it, but, vigilant and peaceful, on the confines of the country of the savages. La Fayette went to see these savages on the Mohawk River. He was just the person to awaken their old love for France. He was present at their councils, or powwows, and was much amused "at their five hundred faces painted in various colors; and their feathers; and their ears cut, and their noses adorned with jewelry." Upon their request, he sent Colonel Gouvion, as far as the Oneidas, to construct a fort for them. Henceforth, to all these savages (*Messieurs les Sauvages*) the marquis was known by the name of one of their dead warriors, *Kayewla*.

Kayewla's only desire was to return to Washington, and he finally reached him on April 11th. In his absence the commander-in-chief had had a tiff with Congress. This did not affect the marquis, because of his youth and inexperience, which sometimes proves useful: La Fayette had the advantage of his twenty years. Even with the anti-French parties he nearly always gained his point, and it was by reason of his personality; as

soon as they saw him they would grant him everything that he wanted. But the rude work of maturity hung heavy upon the shoulders of Washington, though it did not bend them. He knew what it cost to be encumbered with humble and heavy burdens, and with the innumerable cares of a commander; and to have to realize an ideal, with the imperfect and rebellious matter that men are made of, in spite of their selfish demands, in face of their ingratitude, and cruel reproaches for having abandoned this ideal, while they themselves were passionately determined to destroy it. He had to contend with carping critics, who, seated in their comfortable homes, were scandalized because his army, without clothes or munitions, in midwinter, felt that they could not blockade the English in Philadelphia. The distrust of Congress of the military power, and particularly the distrust of the legislatures of each colony, became most offensive to Washington, for he had to submit to having committees of these agitators and fault-finders in his camp. Officers were constantly giving in their resignations, and the general had infinite difficulty in obtaining from Congress, in their favor, the *compensations* necessary to retain them in the service. The President of Congress said: "Suppose that love of country alone influenced some men to give up the comforts of life, while their friends were peaceably amassing great fortunes; now this is not what human nature is, but is it not what it should be?" The deputy, John Banister, answered: "You can have all the theories you want . . . you can also cite some examples of ancient history; but, whoever fights with this ideal alone in mind in order to sustain a long, bloody war, is going to find deception for himself in the end. Patriotism can influence men to act, and to endure much; but this will not last long if interest is not its object."

About the middle of April, conciliatory bills, which had been presented by Lord Northcote to Parliament on the 17th of February, reached America: the taxations were to be revoked, the King of England was sending plenipotentiaries to Congress to offer peace. Although the Treaty of Alliance with France was not yet certain, Washington did not hesitate an instant. He saw clearly that a peace established on any other basis than that of absolute independence would be "a peace of war"; that is, if America accepted a treaty with England upon any other condition than that of a sovereign or free nation, she would be at the mercy of the mother country; she would be dishonored and would forfeit the sympathy of the world: "France, in coming to our aid, has helped to remove us from this yoke of slavery; it is now our duty, through a wise and meritorious perseverance, to free ourselves entirely from it."

Later we will understand better what he meant by that, and how he clung to the thought that America herself should win this liberty. He urged a union in his distracted country; he wished each state to be represented in Congress by clever, honest men. "All the wisdom of America," he said, "with its magnificent simplicity, is necessary to us. Whether members of Congress or soldiers we are one people, engaged in a single cause for a single object, acting on the same principle and with the same purpose in view." The time is now drawing near when France, in the midst of dissensions, injurious to the cause of American liberty, will make this solid, *constructive* truth prevail.

We can imagine the satisfaction of Washington when the text of the treaty, signed with France by the commissioners, reached him. Operations became active again. The British thought of evacuating Philadelphia.

In order to have news of their movements, the general confided 2,400 picked men to La Fayette, with the mission to watch them and cut off all communication from Philadelphia. "Any mistake or precipitation would have the most disastrous consequences."

The marquis passed over the Schuylkill, and on May 18th stationed himself on the heights called Barren Hill. As ill-luck would have it, in spite of all his precautions, and perhaps through the fault of certain militia, who neglected to guard one of the three roads through which La Fayette could have outflanked the enemy, he was not able to prevent the English—7,000 men and 14 pieces of cannon—from forcing a night sortie, and on the morning of the 20th La Fayette discovered that they had escaped him. In his turn, General Howe was sure that he had caught La Fayette "and had boasted of inviting women to sup with him the following night." But La Fayette, also, gave him the slip. Let us have the account from Chastellux: "General Howe was not long in marching to the advance-posts of La Fayette: the result was rather a comical adventure. The fifty Indians that had been given to the marquis had been stationed in a woods; and, as was their custom, they had formed an ambuscade; that is to say, they were lying close together, flat on the ground like rabbits. Fifty English dragoons, who had never seen savages, entered the woods where they, who likewise had never seen dragoons, were hidden. Suddenly the Indians arose with a terrific yell, threw down their arms, fled to the Schuylkill and swam across; while the dragoons frightened out of their wits turned and ran with such speed, that they could not be stopped until they reached Philadelphia." La Fayette, finding himself outflanked, "judged that the column marching toward him would not attack him

first, but would wait until he was in line." He therefore changed his position; but he had hardly done so when he discovered that General Grant was marching toward the ford of the Schuylkill, and was already nearer than he was to it. He had to retreat or run the risk of being attacked in front by Grant and in the rear by Howe and Grey. La Fayette knew that "you lose more men than you gain time if a retreat is turned to a flight." He, therefore, beat a retreat so quietly and in such an orderly manner that General Grant did not doubt but that he was supported, at the end of the defile, through which he was making his retreat, by all of Washington's army. Finally, he retired, "as if by enchantment, and crossed the river with all his artillery, without losing a single man." The English had been tricked.

On the 18th of June the British abandoned Philadelphia and started toward New York. The American army went after them; but when they had passed the Delaware, General Lee said that it would be necessary to let them have great advantage, for he had never seen an army with the troops so well disciplined; that the best thing to do was to let the English cross the Jerseys unmolested, while they remained at White Plains. La Fayette replied that such a proceeding would be a disgrace to the commanders and a humiliation to the soldiers; and so the attack was decided. At Monmouth Court House, on the 28th of June, the English held a strong position; their right flank was on the edge of a little thicket, their left protected by a dense forest, and the rear-guard by a marsh. General Lee, whose whole attitude was suspicious, was giving way; and Washington who had come to his aid with his troops of assault, relieved of their blankets and knapsacks, had the mortification of meeting his advance-guard beating a retreat without having opposed the

least resistance. He gathered the fugitives together and arrayed them again for battle. La Fayette declared that Washington was never so great in war as in this action; his fine appearance on horseback, his bravery, his coolness, soon restored confidence to the troops. He re-assembled about 700 or 800 of the men and some cannon, with which the marquis, himself, endeavored to retard the enemy; and the American army was then re-formed on a second line. They cannonaded all day long, the English giving way a little. The heat was overpowering; some of the men, worn out by the long march through a sandy soil, and without water, died before they could go into battle. Night came, and General Clinton took advantage of this to retreat. He did it in such perfect silence that the advance-guard of the Americans, commanded by General Poor, did not perceive his movements. Resting under the same cover, surrounded by the sleeping soldiers, Washington and La Fayette talked of Lee. Court-martialled and suspended, Lee quit the service, "and was not regretted." Once more fortune favored them. They marched toward White Plains, leaving Clinton to extricate himself from the defiles of the hills near the Shrewsbury River. Monmouth Church was full of wounded Englishmen; everything possible was done for them; and Chevalier de Pontgibaud could not see, "without being deeply moved to compassion, the amputation of the limbs of the young officers of the Guard; their colonel, sixty years of age," a man of distinction with a noble face, died of his wounds after suffering twenty-four hours.

On July 8th a squadron appeared at the mouth of the Delaware. Admiral d'Estaing had arrived.

He would have arrived sooner had it not been for Spain. The Family Compact bound the court of Ver-

sailles to that of Madrid. However, Louis XVI, tired of controversy on the subject, had acted without the consent of his Catholic Majesty. Although Charles III was advised of the intentions of France as early as January, 1778, in forms of the utmost respect, nevertheless, he resented this action. His Prime Minister, Florida-Blanca, was furious; his policy would have been to keep the United States, a dangerous neighbor to the Spanish colonies, in a state of anarchy. He was a strange character: sometimes keeping a constrained, bitter silence; at others, breaking out into extraordinary vehemence. When he was in one of these moods, Vergennes would exhort De Montmorin to employ all the resources of his ingenuity upon him so as to draw him out of it. On the 10th of April he compared the American deputies, before our unmovable Ambassador, "to the Kings of the Orient who came to beg assistance of the Roman Consul"; he treated the declaration of our alliance with them as Don Quixot-ism.

"Do they take the King of Spain for a Governor of a Province, from whom they ask advice, only to send their orders to him afterwards!" And then he secretly paid court to England, without taking into account, however, that it was due to our vigorous conduct that Spain retained the "precarious regards" of the court of Saint James. In a vague and indifferent sort of way he attempted to become the mediator between France and Great Britain. But this haughty Minister, although he still continued to express himself violently, let it be known upon what conditions Spain would follow France.

War was not yet declared; but Lord Stormont had left Paris the end of March, 1778. On the 19th of that month De Chaulieu, commandant at Dunkerque, had notified the English Commissioner that the salary



paid him from the funds of the Department of Foreign Affairs would be withdrawn from the 1st of April. This was a dismissal. Our fleet was made ready for war, our arsenals filled. In our ports there was a feverish anxiety to equip the ships with the hope of reaping fabulous profits. April 13th, D'Estaing appeared at Toulon.

## CHAPTER IV

### D'ESTAING IN AMERICA—GÉRARD, MINISTER PLENI- POTENTIARY TO CONGRESS—DIFFICULTY AND IMPORTANCE OF HIS ROLE—HIS SUCCESS

The admiral's destination was a secret; but every one knew that he had on board the *Languedoc* Gérard, the Chargé d'Affaires of the King to Congress. It was not until the night of the 17th of May that the squadron cleared Gibraltar. Many of the vessels sailed slowly. The *Languedoc*, the *César*, and the *Tonnant* were obliged to regulate their speed to the *Guerrier* and the *Valliant*. The object of their voyage was not revealed until the morning of the 20th of May. Then the admiral signalled to each captain to open the sealed letter containing his mission. Two frigates were to set full sail and chase any ship carrying the English flag. A solemn mass was celebrated on board the admiral's vessel; the great flag was hoisted; the admiral read in a loud voice the instructions declaring the opening of the war and the order to run down any ships belonging to Great Britain. And for the first time for many years a powerful French squadron spread out upon the ocean.

D'Estaing lost time on the way hunting for prey. Certain pamphlets pretended that this old musketeer who had entered late in the navy, a former governor-general of San Domingo, vice-admiral of the seas of Asia and America, had acquired a taste for filibustering in the West Indies; that like a cat, metamorphosed into a woman, who returns to her old nature upon seeing a mouse, so he, metamorphosed into the commander of a great naval force, could not sight a corsair-enemy without pouncing upon her.

Like La Fayette, he was a Franc-Auvergnat. A tradition says that his ancestor, Déodat, saved Philippe Auguste at Bouvines, "and took from the enemy the shield fallen from the royal hands." The Chamber of Agriculture of San Domingo passed good judgment upon his qualities and his faults: "Wide-awake mind, full of activity; less judgment. The heart of an Auvergnat, good and honest. Subject to violent spells of anger; impenetrable secrecy; peculiarly fitted for office work which was a recreation for him." Instinctively he felt that his force lay in a sudden blow; and putting his conviction to the test, he believed that all depended "upon the first moment of arrival, when you take your adversary by surprise"—as he wrote De Sartine—"and where in most cases nothing resists you." Now he is going to lose this first moment. When he arrived at the Delaware, on July 8th, 1778, Clinton, whom he counted upon surprising in Philadelphia, was no longer there; and Admiral Howe, whom he wished to strike, like a *thunderbolt*, at the mouth of the Delaware, was waiting at Sandy Hook to transport Clinton's troops to New York. In Europe, also, the face of things was changing. The brave Chaudeau de la Clochetterie, commander of the *Belle Poule*, after his victorious combat of the 17th of June with the English frigate *Arethuse*, was triumphantly received at Brest. The nation welcomed with enthusiasm the commander and crew which, before an enemy squadron, had just given proof of the resurrection of the French navy. On July 10th the fleet of Admiral d'Orvillers set out to sea; war was declared. But France\* remembered that Cook, the Eng-

\* AUTHOR'S NOTE.—M. André Beaunier has kindly assured me that this pretty page from the *Anecdotes*, of which he has the original copy, is from the hand of Joubert.

lish navigator, who had left Plymouth two years before, must be upon the point of returning; she gave orders to spare him wherever they should meet him. Cook was never to know of the unusual honor that France was the first to show him. He was massacred at Owyhee, in the seas of another hemisphere, on February 12th, 1779; and when De Sartine expedited from Versailles, on the 19th of the same month, orders to all of our naval officers to put no difficulties in the way of this great man wherever they met him upon the high seas, and to let him go in peace, alas! the celebrated explorer had been killed seven days before. France loved him. "*Because he had lived, from that moment and henceforth, death and suffering would be more rare.*" Rodney, the English admiral, was detained in France for debts; Maréchal de Biron paid his debts for him so that he could go and fight. Those were the fine old days of courteous manners!

While a smaller boat, the *Chimère*—a name which was not symbolic—bore the Minister Plenipotentiary to Philadelphia, D'Estaing offered to the "sublime liberator of America"—to Washington—"the frank, warm homage of his friendship and entire devotion." "It has been prescribed in my orders," he said, "but my heart also inspires me to say these words." Then, without delay, on July 11th, he appeared off Sandy Hook with his twelve ships, which were much superior to the nine of Admiral Howe.

But the majestic French ships drew too much water to pass the bar. D'Estaing offered 150,000 *livres* to the American pilots if they would steer his fleet safely into the harbor, but they refused. Then he cast anchor some few miles from there off the coast of New Jersey, near the mouth of the Shrewsbury River. The admiral had the pleasure of taking on some fresh water,

of which he was in great need, right before the eyes of a group of English cavalry. A corvette, 30 merchant ships, 1,600 recruits were the booty of eleven days of blockade. It was costing D'Estaing too much to renounce destroying the English fleet in the bay of New York. For the second time, on the 22d, he appeared off Sandy Hook; he feared to undertake it, however—he scented an obstacle and withdrew. If he had only remained! The ships of Admiral Byron that were being brought from Plymouth to reinforce the English fleet were scattered by a heavy storm and came in one by one, up to the 30th; he lost an easy prey.

Washington sent to him at once his aide-de-camp, Colonel Laurens, son of the President of Congress; and, a little later, on this same day, July 17th, when Major Chouin, the admiral's emissary, arrived at the General Headquarters on Haverstraw Bay, Colonel Hamilton, with Colonel Fleury, was despatched to D'Estaing to concert with him about an attack by sea and land upon Newport, the capital of Rhode Island. La Fayette, most eager to distinguish himself, dreamed of the great happiness of fighting with the soldiers of his King, and D'Estaing gave him credit for having "influenced public opinion and gained assistance." Skirting the Sound, passing through a pretty expanse of country covered with villages, from White Plains to Providence, a distance of 240 miles, the marquis rode joyfully along, escorted by 2,000 troops of the Union; he rushed into the arms of D'Estaing, who, in his turn, was delighted to see him, and overwhelmed him with attentions. On July 20th, in fact, while France was celebrating the battle of Ouessant, our fleet arrived off Rhode Island. Sullivan, under whom La Fayette had orders, not being so quick as the marquis, failed to appear at the appointed

place. Three frigates, at the first onset, forced the east passage; with two vessels Suffren occupied the west channel and reduced to silence the batteries of the island of Conanticut. Four English frigates, two corvettes, two galleys that carried cannon along their sides were burned. D'Estaing reserved for himself the task of forcing the third passage (that of Newport) with eight ships. He forced it, passing under fire of the batteries to which he could not respond; the English had sunk the ships which were defending the approaches to it. This was August 8th.

The night following, General Sullivan landed on the north of the island with 10,000 men and field-artillery. On the 9th, in the morning, D'Estaing had landed 4,000 men on Conanticut. It was then that Sullivan made it known that the English, frightened at the sharp attack of the French, had fallen back en masse on the American army; he asked for aid. D'Estaing would have joined him immediately, and the order had been given, when suddenly, with the addition of several ships from Admiral Byron, Howe's fleet was discovered on the horizon.

The French admiral had to save his vessels. He could not remain at anchor under fire of the land batteries while having to fight against a naval force now superior to his own. The wind filled his sails; D'Estaing cut his cables, and with the same boldness that he had forced his entrance, he escaped from the harbor of Newport, and hurried in the direction of the English fleet, which was awaiting him. It would have been a magnificent combat had it not been for a terrific wind-storm which suddenly dispersed the two fleets. On the 12th, at three o'clock in the morning, the admiral's ship, the *Languedoc*, had her jib broken and her foresail and mizzenmast

"came down at the same time." In its turn the mainmast fell, and finally the rudder broke. "After forty hours of stormy weather," on the 13th the *Languedoc* found herself separated from the rest of her fleet, when she met the *Renown*, a vessel of fifty cannon perfectly intact. The *Renown* manœuvred so that her cannon would "enter at the back of the *Languedoc*, run the length of her batteries and finally lodge in the front of the vessel." The French admiral, with his rudder broken, was not able to use but six of his cannon. Nevertheless, his resistance was so energetic and skilful that the *Renown* soon became disabled herself, and hardly had fired three volleys before she set sail and fled. On the 14th the fleet came together again, and D'Estaing anchored to repair his damages. On the 17th she again set sail, and anchored on the 20th off Rhode Island. The first part of the encounter was lost. Sullivan was waiting for us so as to begin the attack on Newport, but our fleet was in such ill condition that immediate naval co-operation was impossible. On the 21st all the captains and their general staff of officers were of the opinion that it would be necessary to go to Boston for repairs. We went there on the 27th, and when Admiral Howe came on the 30th to reconnoiter our forces, he found the defense already so complete that he retired.

Unhappily, General Sullivan had to beat a retreat, painfully disengage himself from the Hessians and English, and regain a place of safety during the night of August 30th. His rage knew no bounds; but his bitter feeling against D'Estaing was unjust. On August 22d he yielded to a bad impulse and sent to the admiral (whom his messenger found no longer at anchor) a solemn and abusive protestation, wherein he treated his

actions as derogatory to the honor of France, "pernicious to the utmost degree to the prosperity of the United States of America, and an eternal outrage to the alliance which then existed between the two nations." This protest was signed by twenty American officers, among whom was the former President of Congress, Hancock, then major-general, commanding the militia of Massachusetts. La Fayette was distressed and indignant. His wounded honor caused him to lose his temper; he loudly proclaimed "that what France did was always right." "At each word that I spoke," he wrote D'Estaing, "I thought I saw before me the one whom I had to avenge." On the 25th he wrote to Washington: "I, the friend of America, the friend of General Washington, am upon a footing of hostility within our lines." His heart was wounded to the quick "by the very people he had come so far to love."

He alone could make such a complaint; he alone could say to Washington that the true reason for this bitter disappointment was that "the commanders of the expedition were a little ashamed of going back to their families and friends and secret enemies after having boasted in such grandiose terms of their success at Rhode Island"; he alone, the confidant of Washington, could dare to recall to him the weakness, hardly a secret, of several American officers, "who would not sacrifice a little time and money, nor the fatigue of remaining a few days longer in camp, when they were only a short distance from their homes." He alone could do this, because he only had the right to say that all these quarrels grieved him "both as an American and as a Frenchman."

The heart of Washington understood the heart of La Fayette. The same day that he received the mes-



sage from La Fayette he answered it and reproved Sullivan. To the latter he pointed out the influence of first impressions, which would fix the opinion of France upon the national character of America: "In our conduct toward the Frenchmen we must remember that they are a people experienced in the art of war, that they are strict in the observance of military duties, and are quick to fight where others would be barely getting ready." He soothed La Fayette's feelings by saying that he himself felt "personally distressed at the light, imprudent reflexions made upon the French fleet in the first heat of excitement over their blighted hopes." Finally, D'Estaing offered to put himself in the field at the head of a regiment, as he had done under the orders of Maréchal de Saxe, he, an admiral of France, and fight under Sullivan—formerly a lawyer, as he confided to De Sartine two months later, and no doubt *fort incommode* to his best clients. Washington gently spoke to him in this manner: "It will be a consolation for you to remember that enlightened minds do not form their opinion upon results, and that their justice will attach as much glory to actions worthy of success, as to those that success has crowned." In its turn, Congress, after having conferred with Gérard, rendered homage to the zeal of D'Estaing and the bravery of the French.

As great battles were not being fought, the marquis dreamed of combats single-handed. At this time English Commissioners were trying to induce Congress to listen to propositions of peace. They spoke of the "*un-generous*" motives of French policy. When La Fayette read this word he felt his national honor outraged: "Lord Carlisle is acting as the head of this party; he has been well appointed; he is clever, and his fortune, rank and birth give him a high position in England;

I am going to write to him, and propose an exemplary correction before the English and American Armies. I flatter myself that General Washington will not disapprove of this proposition. . . . I must admit that I am most eager to shed some drops of blood for my country. . . . It is a good fortune that my war compatriots will grant to me, and I shall use all the accomplishments of a *petit-maitre*." Thus wrote the marquis to D'Estaing, on the 13th of September, on a day when he was weary and annoyed. The note was sent; we have the answer; and although it comes from a diplomat, we must acknowledge that it is none the less good; it is not a thrust, it is simply a parry. Lord Carlisle declined the challenge, and no one blamed him.

A fever of unrest and dissatisfaction was spreading among the American people. At Boston there was still great prejudice against the French. On the 8th of September an unfortunate thing happened: there was a quarrel with the French soldiers. De Pléville and De Saint-Sauveur tried to act as mediators; the result was that both were wounded; De Sauveur died. But these same people who were distrusting the French in September, welcomed us with loud cheers in November. The Bostonians were grateful to our squadron, not only for having put their city in a state of defense—a work that was done by Bougainville—but for having cleared their coasts of English corsairs. Commander de Senneville rendered account of it to the Minister of Marine at a banquet, given on the 5th, to the French who were then present in Boston. The frankest cordiality seemed to reign there. The host of the occasion expressed his regret, in advance, for not being able to conform to good usage—"for the lack of ceremony, but begged them to excuse it as the ignorance of a poor farmer."

Another person fell upon the neck of De Senneville, congratulating him "that his vessel was the first to be seen at Boston (but in this he was mistaken; he had come from the country), telling him that such an event was an epoch in the life of any man." The action of this farmer who embraced the French nobleman teaches us more about the real condition of things than the mis-conceived analysis of others. In a more formal manner Gérard and Congress embraced each other. Let us join them while D'Estaing, on November 4th, leaves Nantucket harbor and sails toward the West Indies, "in cloudy weather, with a heavy sea."

"First of all, on July 18th, Congress offered to Gérard a welcome, preparing a banquet 'with the choice provisions that the English commissioners sent as a present to the members to bribe them': turtles and excellent French wine. Gérard had felt that three-fourths of the Philadelphians (reduced, it is true, to a third of the normal population) were opposed, 'with insolence,' to French intervention. But several members came to him and expressed their admiration for the royal magnanimity and protested that the objectors were already silenced: nearly all assured me that the people of the different colonies showed a most favorable disposition toward us. In fact, the inhabitants on the banks of the Delaware gave evidence of great joy when they learned that we were French. Officers and civilians alike said to us: '*You have come to help us, and we will go to help you when you want us.*'" How significant these words are to-day!

On August 6th the Plenipotentiary was received by Congress in solemn session. The formulary, discussed at length, finally adjusted the customs of monarchy

to that of republican simplicity. Then "the Honorable Richard Henry Lee, Esquire, member from Virginia, and the Honorable Samuel Adams, Esquire, member from Massachusetts Bay, went to the house of the French Minister in a carriage drawn by six horses, furnished by Congress. Upon arriving at the State House, the two members of Congress, placing themselves on the left of the Minister, conducted him to his chair in the Hall of Congress, all the members being in their places. The Minister seated, gave his letters of credit into the hands of his secretary, who advanced and presented them to the President. After which the Secretary of Congress read and interpreted them; the reading concluded, Mr. Lee presented the French Minister to the President and to Congress. At the same time, the President, Congress, and the Minister arose; the Minister bowed to the President and to Congress, and they returned his salutation; then, they were all seated again. A moment later, the Minister arose and addressed a discourse to Congress seated; the speech being finished . . ." But let us pass on: "inside of the railing of the room, Congress formed a half circle, on each side of the President and the Minister: the President was seated in the midst of the circle in a chair placed upon a platform raised two steps; the Minister was seated in an arm-chair on the other side of him on a level with the members. . . . Such was the new and noble spectacle that took place in this New World." The two godfathers (*parrains*) who had escorted our Minister Plenipotentiary on August 6th were typical of the difficulties that were going to cross his path. Samuel Adams and Richard Lee were not the least among the disturbers in the hostile faction against Washington and France. It was in

this circle that credence was given to the "information" that Arthur Lee expedited from Paris against Franklin. Upon what terms these two commissioners will stand henceforth, and what opinion the doctor had of his colleague, is clearly put forth in the letter that he wrote to him, April 4th, 1778. Notwithstanding the jealous, suspicious, malevolent, quarrelsome character of Arthur Lee, Franklin managed to get along with him very well, "while their important business was in suspense." He received his "insults in silence," and contented himself "with burning his furious letters." Franklin was not judged guilty by Congress, since Lee was finally appointed Commissioner to the court of Spain, where, however, he did not go, and Franklin was given the position of the Minister Plenipotentiary to the court of France. It was a lucky thing for Franklin that this compromising person was no longer his assistant. Thanks to Lee, the English court was not left long in ignorance of the negotiations between the American Commissioners and the French Minister. In America the intrigues of the anti-French party became more and more noticeable. Silas Deane, however, created quite a sensation when, in the *Gazette of Philadelphia*, December 5th, 1778, he published, under the title of "Address to the Citizens of America," a denunciation of Berkenhout and Temple, citizens of Massachusetts and agents of England.

In nearly all of the colonies, people of prominence, "those accustomed to the distinction of authority, rank, honor, birth, and riches," although favorably inclined to the Revolution, were repulsed "by the vulgarity of a democratic state," and gradually retired, or remained away from Congress altogether. There was more interest taken in personal questions and ambitions

than in the general welfare. Duels were frequent. "The obsession to fight mounted to a scandalous and unbelievable height. . . . 'They made a senator leave his seat,' said Gérard, who was astounded at such manners, 'where he exercised sovereign right, to force him to sustain at the peril of his life, the vote that his duty dictated to him.'" Antagonism between the Americans of the South and those of the North was plainly perceptible; the former already conforming themselves to a public life, the latter still imbued with extreme Presbyterian individualism. A provincial spirit, incapable of submitting itself to general interest; a constant susceptibility in regard to the spectre of the central power, always suspected of aristocracy; an extreme fear that the authority, hardly organized, would usurp the prerogatives in its assemblies which belonged, according to the pure democratic dogma, to the people alone; a defiant mistrust of the commanders of the army—all these causes tended to destroy and disarm the Union. And, to crown it all, the new members of Congress, "ignorant of that which had been done previous to their arrival, unacquainted with the sentiments that had inclined the former members toward France," were ready to take the opposite side from all anterior decisions.

However, in spite of the traditional English prejudice against us; the remembrance, kept constantly in mind by the Puritan sect; the Catholic persecutions; the Quakers, who represented as "unnatural" an alliance formed with "the enemies of all civil and religious liberty," our connection with the American Government still continued to remain "honest and faithful." The effect produced by the treaty was excellent: the proof was made public that we would not impose on the United

States any burdensome conditions, that we had no hostile feelings toward England, no desire for conquests, and no pretensions to any commercial privileges. And all Americans learned that they need not make either peace or truce without our aid. Cleverly, Gérard dwelt upon the happy impression produced in America by the renewal of our alliance with the Swiss cantons. He had some medals distributed which were struck off for this occasion, and he transmitted to Versailles the desire expressed in Philadelphia, that the King of France would celebrate his treaty with the United States by a medal of a similar order. But that which quieted our timid friends, and spoiled the objections of the Presbyterians, was the financial assistance that came from France. American finances were in a ruined condition; waste, monopoly—all kinds of fraud had accelerated the fall of the public credit. Paper money was worthless. Washington, in a letter to Gouverneur Morris, October 4th, 1778, tells us "that a horse, and such a horse! costs not less than 200 lbs. sterling, and a saddle from 30 to 40 lbs.; that flour was from 5 to 15 lbs. sterling a barrel, according to where you bought it; hay from 10 to 20 lbs., beef in proportion." In December, in order to raise the value of American paper money, Vergennes announced to Gérard that the King "favored the establishment of a private firm of bankers, who would have in charge the acquitment, for a stated sum, of the interests that Congress had to pay for those of its notes upon which it had borrowed money, and for which it had drawn upon its Commissioners residing in Paris." Congress owed 42,000,000 pounds, Tours currency, at six per cent. The service was infinitely more valuable than a subsidy.

America had not yet been informed of it that day of De-

ember when Gérard was solemnly honored at a banquet given for the elections of the Assembly of Pennsylvania; it was that much more impressive because in this colony the popular committees were all powerful. "Monseigneur," wrote Gérard to Vergennes, "there could not have been shown more joy and appreciation than in this assembly, composed of two hundred and fifty-six persons, every time there was a question of France and the Alliance. When they drank to the health of the King, the whole place resounded with their acclamations. The new President having shown one of his neighbors the portrait of the King, with which His Majesty had honored me before my departure, it made the tour of all the tables; all those in their places at table, and all those present capable of thinking, felt, in spite of their national prejudices, the value of the friendship and proceedings of His Majesty." President Laurens, irritated by the public denunciations of Deane, had failed, however, to convince Congress that they were offensive to the honor of national representation, and he had to give in his resignation; Temple had been invited to leave Philadelphia; Congress, taken as a sovereign political body, felt more than ever its solid union with France. Under the new presidency of Jay, at the request of Gérard, he offered the following resolutions, January 14th, 1779: "Whereas it has been represented in this chamber by the Honorable Mr. Gérard, the Minister Plenipotentiary of France, that it has been asserted that these United States have reserved the right to treat with Great Britain separately from their ally, be *it unanimously* resolved that, neither France nor these United States *have the right* to conclude, and these same United States *will not conclude*, either truce or peace with the common enemy, without having first obtained the formal consent of their ally, and that all



matters or things that will intimate or advance the contrary to the above, will tend to the detriment of these United States."

Before entering into a period of difficulties let us take farewell of La Fayette. He went away for a while; he returned to France, and Gérard knowing the hot-brained reputation he had had at the court when he fitted up his ship and escaped to America, gave a written testimony to Vergennes "that his conduct equally prudent, courageous and kind, had made him the idol of Congress, the army and the American people." But before this, on the 21st of October, there was a more brilliant testimony given to him; Congress had decided to charge the Minister Plenipotentiary of the United States at the court of Versailles to offer in their name to the Marquis de La Fayette, as an acknowledgment of services rendered, "a sword of high value ornamented with emblems recalling his fine actions"; and on the 22d, Congress had written a letter to the King of France, recommending "this noble young man to him," for having seen him "wise in counsel, brave on the field of battle, and patient in the midst of fatigues of war." And then was added: "The devotion to his sovereign has always guided his conduct, which conformed as well to all the duties of an American." This expression of their sentiments consecrated in La Fayette the living figure of the Alliance.

He carried with him to France a regret and a hope; he would have liked to organize, for the following summer, an attack upon Canada. A committee from Congress had examined a plan with him about the co-operation of three American divisions (which would be directed toward Detroit, Niagara, and the Connecticut

River) and the French fleet, which would carry an expeditionary corps up the Saint Lawrence to Quebec. In the course of the conferences La Fayette conducted himself both as an American and a Frenchman: when they asked him if he thought that France had the design of transferring to America the theatre of war with England, and of conquering Canada, he answered that he did not believe it, that the war could be carried on in Europe with much less risk and expense; he pretended not to understand that the committee had ascribed to France a mental reservation, entirely personal, of recovering her Canadian possessions; he would have been very unskilful and undignified to have entered into contention and controversy; he preferred to say that the best attitude for America would be not to disguise from a friend as loyal as France "either her actions or her views, and to make the effective resolution of helping herself, and not to allow the whole burden of the war to fall upon her ally."

We touch again upon a *jealous point*. America desired our aid but she feared it. She did not wish to owe us too much. Washington demanded that American blood be the price of American liberty. President Laurens dreaded the *humiliating state* to which "the growing independence" would be reduced if its fate was to be put "into the hands of a powerful creditor." He was opposed to the decision that they had reached, to borrow from France so as to pay the interest on the public debt. "Each million of pounds sterling that you borrow is a new lien upon your property." And to whom did he say this? To Washington, who, confining himself in an official letter to considering under a military point of view the projected expedition against Canada, in a confidential letter of November 14th, 1778,

he developed at length his political reasons for his disapproval; they were dominated by the fear that France would establish herself in Canada and that, already possessing New Orleans "over the right" of the United States, she would become a tyrannical neighbor. "Even though France welcomed this project with the purest intentions, there would be a fear that, in the course of affairs, influenced by circumstances, and also, perhaps, by the solicitations and wishes of the Canadians themselves, she would not change her mind." And so before his departure, La Fayette was not able to receive the letter from Congress, of the 29th of December, which declared that the expedition was too difficult for American resources, but if France would take the initiative, America would second her; this meant nothing.

How Washington was deceived! The sentiment and resolution of the French Ministry never changed: no conquests; above all, no conquest of Canada. As such it maintained its doctrine and its conduct; as such it was outlined in a letter from Vergennes to the Ambassador of Spain, on April 6th, 1777: "If France has felt the loss of Canada, she ought to regret it that much less, since, because she was forced to give it up, it has become the signal for the revolt of the English Colonies in America. If we should try to get it back again, we should awaken the old uneasiness and jealousy which made these same Colonies pledge fidelity and submission to England. . . . They would not try to throw off the yoke of the mother-country in order to throw themselves into that of another power. And besides, France has enough Colonies in proportion to her industries and population."

Spain did not have the same scruples. And on this account the difficulties of France were not simplified;

we were obliged, while waiting for the court of Spain to declare itself with us, to sustain her pretensions before Congress. The Americans desired an alliance with Spain; they considered it certain that if France and Spain united, their naval superiority over England would make them the arbiters of the situation. But, as we have seen, it was not easy to make Spain take a position. Her manœuvre, ever since July, 1778, was to negotiate, with very little result, a reconciliation between London and the court of Versailles; but this office of mediator only served her as a pretext to remain on the expectative. Montmorin saw clearly that Charles III had become timid through the remembrance of his past misfortunes. "It would be necessary, in order to make him come to a decision, to present to him some brilliant success, which would flatter his vanity. . . . Although a religious fanatic, the love of glory was near to his heart, and he wished to make his reign illustrious." If he made war, he need no longer fear that England would put a heavy hand upon the treasures of India: in August, 1778, the naval division of Admiral Casa-Tilly had brought to Cadiz 1,500,000 piastres. But while his own scruples were paralyzing him, the impetuous and choleric Florida-Blanca was holding him too, through fear which hurt his pride: he maintained that the house of Bourbon was not yet strong enough "for a great spectacular war." This Minister would not hear of mediocre results: "If we make war against the English it must be carried on like the Romans against the Carthaginians." To satisfy this gigantic appetite for glory, in December, 1778, he asked France to guarantee him, through an agreement with the United States, Jamaica, the two Floridas, which entered into the plan of the conquest of the Americans,

the two sides of the Mississippi, from which the English and Americans would be driven, the coast of Honduras and Gibraltar. And he further asked for an assault upon England. To which Vergennes replied by a plan of war much more practical: "Let the two fleets unite and simply enclose the English fleet in the Channel and destroy it." The excited imagination of the Spanish Minister could not be contented with such an insignificant operation.

Meanwhile, so as not to displease Spain, on August 20th, it was necessary to give the order to Admiral d'Orvillers, who had gone out to sea, to return to Brest. Public opinion became violent, and Vergennes attempted to cope with it, declaring that if the Family Compact was broken it would be harmful to the prestige and the true power of France. Against the monarchical prejudices of the court of Spain, against the fear of the old King of giving birth in the United States to a race of conquerors, he held to this idea and constantly returned to it: that the condition necessary to an agreement between London and Versailles was the acknowledgment of American sovereignty. Our honor was at stake; and it was all the more urgent that we should not allow the allusions of Spain upon the subject, since the English Commissioners were representing us to Congress as seeking a secret treaty of peace.

While Gérard is bargaining for large benefices for Spain, he does not give up the hope absolutely of an understanding with England. France wished to get back her rank in the world, but refused to view with complacency the humiliation of England. It was sufficient that her power should be recognized and her dignity restored by the accomplishment of a great act

of human justice. This was to be seen when Charles III proposed a medium term, which was nothing but an expedient, the way he conceived it: "To obtain for the Americans a truce which they could keep on prolonging, until they could put themselves in a situation to arrange things alone with the mother-country, and gradually acquire independence under the auspices of the two Crowns." The good sense and justice of Vergennes immediately discerned the danger: they would run the risk of authorizing the suspicion that the King of France was disposed to abandon his allies; but his generous heart intelligently perceived at the same time what a noble thing it would be to attempt this way of proceeding. "The King," wrote Vergennes to De Montmorin, December 24th, 1778, "conceives the idea that it would cost too much to England's pride for France to force her to recognition of this independence. . . . He knows what great powers owe to themselves and to each other." On the 19th of February Vergennes recommended to Gérard the plan of a truce: "In view of the almost unconquerable repugnance" that England would feel toward recognizing, under pressure of French arms, American independence, "it is a prudent and wise policy to moderate the bitterness by proposing a happy medium . . . *mezzo termine*." Franklin entered into these views. Attention, however, was turned away from such suggestions by the events that followed.

When Gérard read these lines of Vergennes, he was playing a difficult part before Congress, whence he was going—I mean to say, whence the young American Union was going, to come out victorious. We must repeat the words here, full of justice, which were pronounced in June, 1779; there is a fine feeling of truth that lies in them.

Gérard had then become the counselor, almost the guide, of the Federal Assembly, and his *salon* seemed to be a sort "of ante-chamber to it." One day the delegates from Maryland and those from Virginia came to expose their differences to him; they said that they had not one thought in common, no rallying-point. The French Plenipotentiary simply observed "*that since the two States were federated with the King of France, they were necessarily federated with each other.*" "My remark," he added, "was seized upon and approved by all present."

In fact, Gérard seemed in Congress to win the victory of good sense from the month of March to October, 1779. The faction of agitators were recruited mainly from the Eastern States. Completely forgetful or indifferent as to the conditions of the Alliance, they tried hard to obtain the consent of the representative of France to some annexations and American claims which had never been heard of at Versailles. And these same agitators, these "petulant" fault-finders, that Gérard found in his path, obeying a secret thought of making the rules of war impossible, of prolonging the duration of it by their unreasonable ambitions, of spreading among the people (by challenging the representations and the energetic opposition of our Plenipotentiary) the suspicion that France was not going to do very much, and that she undertook war through a spirit of domination, suzerainty, and of demonstrating, at last, in creating embarrassments without end, that their only resource was to throw themselves back into the arms of England.

During the first days of May Gérard went to pay a visit to Washington at his General Headquarters, at Middlebrook, to discuss the conditions of an operation in Georgia, combined with the fleet of D'Estaing, which

is soon going to appear on the scene again. "The moderation and patriotism of the General, the power of his intellect and his virtues" were a great consolation to the Ambassador. "General Washington and several officers of his staff assured me that if the army received information that Congress wished to do anything against the Alliance, that they would be disposed to revolt. . . . The principal officers of all the Colonies hastened to give me the most positive and satisfactory assurance of the opinions of the people in their States." Gérard in his diplomatic relations never expressed himself in flowery language, but he addressed to his court an exact account of all things with which he was connected. "A cavalry company of Philadelphia composed of distinguished citizens" conducted him to the frontier about thirty miles distant; two officers of high rank awaited him at Trenton to conduct him to the camp; Washington had had a guard of honor, equal to those of major-generals, placed at the door of the house reserved for him, the Minister Plenipotentiary, near his own; and Gérard, having asked that they withdraw the guard, "the captain who commanded them showed so much disappointment" that he decided to accept the honor; finally 1,600 soldiers also showed themselves *jealous* to manœuvre in perfect unison before the Minister of the King of France.

Upon his return to Philadelphia, he had the chance to observe the excellent indications of the loyal attachment of the United States, in accord with the assertions of the officers at Middlebrook, of the faithful spirit of the colonies. In the sitting of Congress, May 16th, 1779, Mr. Penn, of South Carolina, arose and thanked the King for the splendid proofs of his friendship, to which was added another and new demonstration in the projected return of D'Estaing: "I have always been the



guardian of my honor," he continued, "my compatriots have confided theirs to me, and I will, equally, guard the honor of our ally; I declare enemy to my country any one who dares to attack the honor of the King in this room, and I will protect it in my position as senator, citizen and man." Nearly all the other members, "with more or less emphasis according to their characters," manifested the same sentiments. Those who were opposed kept silent. Gérard authorized different members of Congress to represent to the governments of their respective States the nature of the attacks and the convincing force of his answers. He knew that a desire for peace, but not a peace that should be an act of ingratitude was general: through the opinions of the political bodies in each State, based upon the manœuvres of the opposing parties, influence was brought to bear upon the Federal Assembly. Samuel Adams was obliged to defend himself in Boston; and Richard Henry Lee, in full Assembly of Virginia, was accused of having sacrificed the interests of America and the Alliance. Let us recall the admirable words of Gérard: "You are federated among yourselves (bound to be united) because you are federated with the King." The enthusiasm for France was again awakened in the spring of 1779; and at the same time, and by this means, the national unity, the sentiment of a common destiny, where antagonisms and enmities melted away, triumphed over the narrow, egotistical tendencies of a destructive idea of independent States.

We can understand that in such a situation Gérard saw clearly the danger of a truce; he did not receive, until July 6th, the dispatch from Vergennes relative to this subject. Like Washington, he thought that an armistice would be fatal to the federation. Once the peo-

ple would feel the joy of peace, "nothing could plunge them again into a situation of war, whence they believed themselves free." "It seemed as though the military spirit of the nation was extinct." Gérard wrote on July 18th: "The Americans often seem to wish to be only spectators of the quarrel between France and England. Far from favoring this indolence, this lassitude so natural to men's hearts who do not think clearly and strongly enough to keep up their enthusiasm, strenuous efforts must be made to push on the war. It could be done by supporting a few men of indefatigable energy and intelligent foresight. In Virginia, 'where the credit of Lee is entirely lost,' are they not forming the project of having arms and munitions come from France, and of holding an army themselves capable of repulsing the incursions of the enemy? The surging of this volition caused by the great public danger must be directed into the right channel under the guidance of France, around the object, kept always steady and bright, of national deliverance."

On July 4th, 1779, the anniversary of their declaration of independence, Congress, the magistrates, the military commanders were present at a religious service—a *Te Deum*—requested by the Minister Plenipotentiary. Congress expressed the wish that in the Assembly Hall would be placed the portraits of the King and Queen of France. In August the news was circulated that France and Spain had finally come to terms; this report was true. In September they learned of the taking of St. Vincent and Grenada by Admiral d'Estaing. The enemies of the Alliance were obliged to hide themselves. "There is general rejoicing among the Whigs," wrote Washington to La Fayette, "while

the poor Tories are withering like flowers that fade in the glow of the sunset."

Gérard, exhausted by his duties, had asked for his recall; De la Luzerne, his successor, landed in Boston on September 3d, 1779. The portrait of Gérard by Peale, made by the request of Congress, has always remained in this Assembly Hall, where, at one time, many of the members, rising from their seats and drawing nearer in order to hear better this great servitor of France and America, surrounded him, familiarly leaning on his table, their eyes fixed upon his eyes, which hid no secret thoughts.

## CHAPTER V

### WAR IN 1779

During the winter and spring of 1779 the American army remained upon the defensive. Up to the month of June there had only been incursions to *punish or to plunder*, unconnected with their operations. Events of greater importance came to pass on the banks of the Hudson. The disputed post of King's Ferry protected the principal road of communication between the east and the centre. Formerly, in 1777, as Chastellux recalls it, the strongest place was Fort Clinton, built upon a rock believed to be inaccessible and "defended besides by a small creek which flowed into the large river." Nevertheless, Sir Henry Clinton had taken it. Raising on high the British flag, "he climbed to the top of the rock, while the greater number of his troops descended the decline, passed over the creek and took the post." After the defeat of Burgoyne, Fort Clinton had been abandoned. When Washington, in the spring of 1779, wished to make sure of his position upon the Hudson, he preferred "to place his communication and concentrate his forces at West Point, because there the Hudson made a bend and prevented vessels from going up stream with the wind behind them; and the Island of Constitution, right at this turn in the river, in the direction north-south, was perfectly situated to protect the chain which closed this passage to the ships of war."

Over the immense extent of the United States in its wonderful diversity of landscape there is no grander or

more impressive scenery than the banks of the Hudson between New York and New Windsor, a few miles above West Point, where, in June, Washington had his General Headquarters. Newburgh is one of the places where the beauty of the river can be seen best, three or four times wider than the finest streams of France. The flow of water from the tides of the distant sea takes the great sailing-vessels (*voiliers*) as far as Troy, into the heart of the continent. Nearly always in this vigorous and salubrious climate a resplendent light spreads over the water into which great basaltic rocks have plunged. The pine-trees with their dark, soft shadows cover the banks which sometimes rise to over 200 feet, while again they fall into long, low valleys, whose charm, as a whole, reminds one of the lakes of the North. Chastellux, in 1780, is full of enthusiasm over "the magnificent picture of the North River, flowing between the deep ravines of the mountains through which in ages past it came to force its passage." At ten miles to the northwest, the highest summits of the Appalachians are blue against a sky almost white in the strong light. And when the stream has passed the Island of Constitution, how fine it is to see its majestic flow as it goes straight to meet the ocean without a detour! Upon this panorama, that military memories alone render sublime, Washington gazed as general-in-chief. "The Fort of West Point, and the formidable batteries which defend it," says Chastellux, who was upon the east side of the river, "fix the attention upon the west bank; but if you raise your eyes, you can see on all sides of the peaks the batteries and redoubts jutting out. . . . From the Fort of West Point proper, which is on the bank of the river, up to the top of the mountain at the foot of which it has been constructed, you can count six different forts,

formed in amphitheatre, and protected by one another." In 1779, favorably disposed and intelligent Frenchmen modeled on the slopes of this hill the defenses which were its salvation. "The prodigious amount of work that was necessary to bring and pile upon these steep rocks trunks of trees and huge pieces of stone, impresses upon the mind a very different idea of the Americans than that which the English Ministry tried to enforce upon Parliament. A Frenchman would be surprised that a nation, barely born, could spend in two years more than twelve million dollars in this desert; he would be more surprised did he know that these fortifications cost nothing to the State, having been constructed by the soldiers (2,500 men worked there during the spring of 1779), to whom no gratuities were given, and who did not even receive their pay; and no doubt he would also feel proud to learn that these works, so fine and extensive, were conceived and executed by two French engineers, Du Portail and De Gouvion." The work upon West Point was far from being finished, when Washington decided to attack the enemy. The English took possession on June 1st of the posts of Stony Point and Verplanck's Point upon either side of the Hudson. Upon a length of fifty miles they were masters of the course of the river, "and thus pushed back toward the north the very important communication of the Jerseys with Connecticut."

Washington, according to his own words, felt "the necessity of doing something to satisfy the expectation of the people, and reconcile them with the apparent inactivity that the situation imposed." On the night of July 15th, after having reconnoitered the post himself, he ordered General Wayne to take Stony Point with 1,599 men. Again Chastellux is our good chronicler:

"The fort consisted of an intrenchment surrounded by an abattis which crowned a steep rock, of which the reduct formed a good redoubt well fraised. During the night General Wayne marched out in three columns; the principal one was commanded by De Fleury who, without firing a single shot, forced the abattis and intrenchments, and entered among the fugitives in the redoubt. The attack by the Americans was so fierce and the English so terrified, that De Fleury who had entered first, found himself instantaneously charged with eleven swords, that were handed to him asking for quarter. We must add to the honor of our allies, that from that moment, there was not a drop of blood shed." This display of bravery passed for one of the most brilliant of the war; they took 543 prisoners; their booty in cannon, mortars, bombs, balls, tents, and provisions was considerable. Three emblematic medals were struck off, and one was offered to Colonel Fleury. Unfortunately the attack on Verplanck's Point on the opposite side was not successful. It would have been necessary, in order to hold Stony Point, to put a strong garrison there, and Washington was too weakly supported to do it. He had all of the cannon taken away and the works of the fort destroyed; and the Americans evacuated the post which the English had to rebuild. On July 12th, fearing an attack upon West Point, the general went there and took up his position. The situation had not changed when the fleet of Admiral d'Estaing came to anchor at the mouth of the Savannah River.

D'Estaing had just finished his brilliant campaign in the West Indies; he had cast anchor on July 31st at Cape François, San Domingo, and found an order there to return to France with the squadron of Toulon.

Why did he not obey? Because De Brétigny, French consul at Charleston, and General Lincoln, governor of Georgia, begged him to come to America. His refusal would have been misunderstood: "I would certainly have been declared a coward had I not attacked Savannah. . . . When one is far away one must accustom one's self to this kind of punishment; but London, America, and even Paris would have done worse than dishonor me; they would have supposed that I had secret orders not to go to the aid of the Americans. The result would have been an inexhaustible source of complaints and suspicions between the two nations; perhaps a dissolution of friendship would have been the consequence." This motive was powerful enough, but the real, the true, decisive one was the appearance of success.

He gathered together, then, at Martinique, Guadeloupe, and San Domingo, 3,750 men from the regiments of Viennois, Champagne, Auxerrois, Armagnac, Cambrésis, Gâtinais, Agenais; and on September 1st, 1779, after sixteen days at sea, he anchored off the river St. John. From there he wrote to the governor of Charleston: "I hope that the prompt success of the enterprise will justify my proceedings at the court of Versailles. I am daring to neglect for a short time the care of our own possessions, to occupy myself with those of our allies; but I should become personally criminal, and I should injure the general welfare of both nations, if the troops, that I land in a place agreed upon, remain more than eight days. . . . All will depend upon the activity of your troops, the promptness of your orders, the uniformity of the movements of your army, of the good understanding between your troops and ours, and the helpful, quick, and secret information that you are going to send to me. . . ." It is quite evident that he is



uneasy, restless; at the moment of acting he wonders if he is right; he wishes to put all the chances on his side, to be sure to foresee and surmount all difficulties, and at the same time to improvise a rapid, overwhelming victory. By his minute details and prompt resolution did he hope to persuade or to force the Goddess of Fate? She resisted his efforts.

In the first place, on September 2d, there was a terrible wind-storm; anchors lost, rudders broken, keels damaged. Then from the insurgents but little news and food-supply. But the principal trouble, the damage to the ships which would take forty-eight hours to repair, put D'Estaing "into the sad necessity of acting where he ought not, and where he did not wish to." Instead of attacking Georgia from the north, he turned around and made an attack upon Savannah. And again while his advance-guard went up the river, a stream without any depth, where they had to sail with sounding-line in hand continually, and before they could land 300 "half-drowned" men on the Island of Thybée, "separated from Savannah by marshes and several creeks," Prevost had had the time to withdraw the garrison and spike the cannon; and when, on September 6th, supported on his left by 1,800 Americans under General Lincoln, at the price of extreme difficulties, he taking up his position a mile from the place, General Prevost was ready to withstand him. Six hundred men of the old English Guard, "crossing the deepest of the marshes, overcoming the greatest obstacles," from Bedford and Port Royal, came to bring to 6,000 men aid for the defense. The English general rejected the summons of Count d'Estaing: the struggle was going to be hard.

"I must admit that in deciding to attack by main force, I saw a multitude of obstacles, but extreme

bravery can conquer everything, and I thought that the time was ripe to prove to the Americans by a brilliant action, although it might be a bloody one, that the King's troops knew how to dare everything for them."

*To undertake everything rather than retreat.* Personally, he dared everything. During the night of the 23d and 24th of September, "at the head of 300 men he opened a trench at a stone's throw from the cannon of the English intrenchment." In ten days the siege battery was ready for operations: eighteen of twelve-pound and four of six-pound cannon, and nine mortars. The enemy's artillery, which from the beginning had not ceased to shell our works, was soon reduced to only two cannon that were in a state to be used; "but the English intrenchments, constructed of abattis and sand, were not damaged; and the balls from the cannon buried themselves in the earth-works without forming any openings or forcing it to cave in." Making a sudden final attack, D'Estaing ordered the assault. The principal objective, the redoubt of Spring Hill, was at the English right. It was expressly forbidden to shoot, under penalty of death, before having taken the redoubt and closed on the intrenchments. There were officers on the flanks of the columns, who were ready to arrest every soldier who would shoot before receiving the order. All soldiers who would disband to pillage without having received permission would be punished by death without mercy. The Viscount de Béthisy commanded the advance-guard, the Count de Dillon the column of the right, the Baron de Steding the column of the left. The Viscount de Noailles was in reserve. D'Estaing, with Fontanges, remained wherever his presence was necessary. Immediately after the French column, the élite of the American infantry

was to march, under the orders of Colonel Laurens, preceded by the cavalry under General Pulaski.

At half past three on the morning of October 9th the English, on the alert, received the assailants with such force "that they were literally cut to pieces." During the day the grape-shot decimated the columns that converged from the same point of attack. We must note here the brave act of "friend Linch," which is reported from hearsay by the Count de Ségur. D'Estaing tried to bring his men together again. "In the most critical moment of this bloody affair, he, being at the head of the column of the right, told Linch to carry an order to the column of the left." They were in range of a terrible fire. Linch, "instead of passing through the centre or behind the columns, coolly advanced into the midst of this hail of balls, bullets, and grape-shot that the French and English were firing at each other. D'Estaing called to him to take another direction; but he went and returned under this 'arch of fire,' 'because,' he said, 'it was the shortest way.'" D'Estaing was wounded twice; he remained at his post; and three times the French soldiers were brought back to the charge under the eyes of their wounded general: three times they were hurled back. Twice the American flag was planted upon the English intrenchments. Many officers were missing; the troops were worn out; then came the retreat.

Fontanges was seriously wounded in the hip; Pulaski was mortally wounded. D'Estaing shut himself up in his tent and refused to speak for three days. When the surgeon questioned him about his condition, the only answer he could draw from him was: "I have a deep wound which is not in your power to cure." From the 10th the order was given to re-embark baggage and

cannon. It was only by the 28th, after unavoidable delays, that the order to raise anchor was given. The Count de Grasse and La Motte-Piquet had already departed for the West Indies; a furious tempest arose; "half the fleet was driven from its moorings, and the vessels not anchored were forced to go far from the coast; finally, the *Languedoc*, the Admiral's ship, disappeared." Left alone, not being able to rally his squadron, he set sail for Brest. "On December 11th," says the *Correspondance Secrète*, "armed with his glorious crutches, he left Brest to go by short journeys to Versailles. The King ordered an apartment to be made ready for him, and prepared to embrace him. The brave Breton people covered his carriage with crowns of laurel." D'Estaing was very bitter, but his friends tried to console him, in a delicate way, for the misfortunes of destiny; public opinion, so hard on many others, was kind and faithful enough to him. One day, when present at a representation of *Gaston and Bayard*, at the verses which evoked the virtues of his ancestor, so like his own: "D'Estaing the hope of the country, *with heart all aflame* . . . the entire audience applauded the victor, the conqueror of Grenada; Savannah was pardoned."

In his report to Congress, General Lincoln gave him full credit: "He proved that he had had at heart the interests of America, when he resolved to carry the town by storm, despairing of success any other way." In truth, with wonderful bravery, D'Estaing had exposed his life and shed his blood for the American cause. Savannah is a small town of old Southern homes surrounded by magnolias, oleanders, and palmettos. Amid its gardens, where the primitive trees of the forests survive in their splendor, stands a monument to Pulaski and one to Sergeant Jasper. The brave action of the French

Admiral, who fought there like an ordinary soldier, deserves also to be remembered.

We did not give back Savannah to the Americans; but the appearance of the French fleet off the coast of Georgia had suspended the progress of the English offensive in the Southern colonies. Better than that, General Clinton in New York was so greatly alarmed that he ordered, on the 27th of October, the evacuation of Rhode Island. Thus, while D'Estaing failed in the South, simply by the false report of his going North, he gave back Newport to the Americans, where he had no intention of going, but where he would like to have gone the year before. Such are the accidental causes which occur to humiliate the pride of men of action. D'Estaing, convalescent, should have read Montaigne again (II, 20): “. . . For the customs of life, and the service of the public, we can have excess of purity and perspicacity in our minds. . . . This punctilious activity of spirit, this restless, changeable volubility is a hindrance to our negotiations. . . . There is no need of such profound and subtle enlightenment: we lose ourselves in so many different forms and contradictions. . . .”

Now, while D'Estaing was betrayed by evil fortune, far away from him, in the English Channel, Du Couëdic was fighting a brilliant battle. On October 6th, 1779, the *Surveillante* met the *Quebec*, commanded by the brave Farmer. The greatest thing to be admired, was not the heroic tenacity of the crews of the two ships and their officers; it was not that for four hours, first at pistol range, then from deck to deck, while balls, grape-shot, and musketry tore the two decks that Du Couëdic, without relaxing courage, with his face streaming with blood,

his abdomen pierced by a ball, still had the energy to throw his men into the fight on deck; nor Labentinnaye, after having his arm cut off, returned to his post; or that Feuquières, mortally wounded upon the galley at the head of the fleet, sought until the supreme moment to execute the orders of his commander; that two frigates, under their broken masts, encumbered with the dead and dying, armed for the last assault; and that Captain Farmer, suffering from his death-wound, with sublime coolness kept up the fight upon his ship—not all of these brave exploits, but Couëdic's last action was the most worthy of admiration. Upon seeing that the *Quebec* had taken fire, he suddenly turned his attention to but one thing: to save the English sailors, "whose frigate was burning and sinking with its flag flowing from the mast." "He treated them, not like prisoners, but like brothers saved from a shipwreck." Du Couëdic survived his wounds but three months. The English engraver Carter designed, in order to do him honor, the engraving which represents the end of this famous engagement, and had it given to the widow of the great naval hero through our Minister of Marine, De Castries, with the following letter: "Permit me, in recalling to you the sad memory of your illustrious husband most worthy to be cherished, to represent him in the greatest moment of his life. If, on one hand, I bring back your sorrow, on the other, I believe that I offer to you the sweetest consolation, in seeking to perpetuate an action which alone renders his name immortal: it is an honor justly due to you, and when posterity shall know that this tribute was paid him by a stranger and an enemy, the glory of the heroism of Du Couëdic will appear the more perfect. Such is

my intention; and, I believe that I will have been fully repaid, if you deign to accept this poor drawing of the great and noble picture that this hero has given to the whole of Europe, in fighting an enemy worthy of him."

## CHAPTER VI

### ACTIVITY OF LA FAYETTE IN FRANCE—POLITICAL CRISIS IN THE UNITED STATES—WASHINGTON'S DETERMINATION

La Fayette had left Boston on January 14th, 1779, upon a frigate of thirty-six cannon, the *Alliance*, equipped at the expense of Congress, and commanded by a captain, native of St. Malo, in the service of the United States. Among the sailors on board there were twenty-five English deserters. Pontgibaud, with his usual ardor, tells how these unhappy wretches made up a plot to assassinate all of the French officers except La Fayette, whom they were going to take to London; how they were discovered, disarmed, and put in irons, and how finally, on February 6th, the *Alliance* cast anchor in the harbor of Brest. The marquis was at Versailles on the 12th. He had, for the mere form's sake, as a souvenir of his disobedience, to be put under arrest for eight days; then he entered into his glory. But he was to have other adventures.

He tried first to prevail upon the Ministry to make the conquest of Canada. But De Vergennes's opinions were not to be shaken. Then he suddenly proposed an expedition against England: the famous Captain Paul Jones commanding a vessel of fifty cannon, the *Bonhomme Richard*, and some frigates armed at the expense of the King under the American flag could transport a small army commanded by La Fayette upon the west coast of England. To the profit of American finances



they could ransom Bristol, Liverpool, and some other commercial towns. "In this way," said La Fayette, "these cities could be justly punished for the part they have taken in the vexatious imposts against the Colonies to which their prosperity is due"; and Necker, who held the purse-strings of the exchequer very tight, Necker, who in his official position as controller-general, opposed, to quote Franklin, "all the propositions to aid America in money," was notably pleased. But again with this proposition there was slowness, irresolution; the marquis, willing or not, had to content himself with the consolation that a small command and an expedition of this kind was not in keeping with his position.

An incursion on a more extensive scale was then planned. On June 13th, at Saint Jean-d'Angély, where he went to rejoin his command, he received word to go immediately to Versailles as quartermaster's aid, under the orders of Lieutenant-General Count de Vaux, commanding the troops assembled in several camps in Brittany and Normandy, in view of the descent on England that had been contemplated for some time, and which seemed about to be accomplished. His post was at Havre.

As agreed with Franklin, he continued to fill, by correspondence, his function, wherein he excelled, as mediator. Already on June 12th, from Saint Jean-d'Angély, he addressed a long letter to the President of Congress. After having spoken of the "ardent sympathy of his compatriots for America," after having rendered thanks to Congress for the royal favors that, through its high recommendation, had been shown to him, and also having spoken of the honorable welcome which all France gave him as defender of American liberty, he then comes to give advice as an American speak-

ing to Americans: "I must say with sincerity, that nothing is as prejudicial to our interests, to our importance, and to our reputation in Europe, as the stories about the disputes and divisions among the Whigs. Nothing would induce me to touch upon this delicate subject except for the disagreeable experiences that I have had every day, and the things that I have heard on this side of the Atlantic, and the arguments I have had to combat."

He spoke still more urgently to Washington: "For the love of God, stop these quarrels among yourselves, which when told over here, do more harm than anything else to the interests and reputation of America. On the other hand, [division, alas! which we will see grow worse] there are two American parties in France: Adams and Lee on one side, and Doctor Franklin and his friends on the other. These divisions distress me to such an extent that I dare not frequent the society of these gentlemen as much as I should like, for fear of occasioning discussions, and making matters worse." Here the mediator retires.

What they were saying "on this side of the Atlantic," we may have some idea by the following malicious lines that were circulated during the autumn of 1779. The *Mémoires Secrètes* tells the story of a man who, through the interest of Abbé Raynal, embarked for the New World and found there only anarchy and indolence: "I have seen the Quaker pacifist whose pride pierced his cloak. . . ."

"Yes, I have seen this upright folk,  
Whom honest men would fain extol,  
Set free the black man from his yoke  
And subjugate the white man's soul.  
A gloomy faith, a rugged land,

The thirst for gold, a cruel heart;  
 He only needs a Cromwell's hand  
 To guide his dark and sinister part."\*

Franklin, the worthy and respectable Franklin, must have been amused when he saw himself represented as an "octogenarian chameleon." Hancock, the former President of Congress, was not spared.

It is worthy to be noticed that Washington was also described in verse:

"O leader faithful, valorous, wise,  
 Thy very foes must reverence thee;  
 On every side true friends arise  
 And in thy life a model see.  
 Here frugal nature still doth hide  
 From jealous eyes her prodigal power,  
 To one great man she points with pride  
 And on one saviour pours her dower."†

These awkward rhymes were probably composed by a French officer who had served under Washington, and had seen him striving with the suspicious factions of Congress. Another person who claimed to be a sailor

\*"Moi, j'ai vu ces hommes intègres  
 Vantés par tant d'honnêtes gens  
 D'une main franchir des nègres  
 Et de l'autre achever des blancs.  
 Un culte austère, un sol agreste,  
 La soif de l'or . . . un cœur cruel;  
 Pour guider son penchant funeste,  
 Il n'attend qu'un nouveau Cromwell."

†"Sensible, valeureux, fidèle,  
 Et révééré de l'ennemi,  
 L'honnête homme en fait son modèle  
 Et l'homme aimable son ami.  
 Ici la nature économe  
 N'irrite point les yeux jaloux!  
 Elle n'a produit qu'un grand homme,  
 Mais il est le salut de tous."

connected with the West India Company and "entirely free from prejudices" showed his hand at once. He complained that in sending artisans to the Americans, and giving them the secrets of our trades and industries, we might put them in a way to do without the merchandise from Europe. It is reasonable to suppose that this discontented talk, wherein personal spitefulness is to be seen, may have found some credit among those who were ruined, or had been directly concerned in the immense losses of the French maritime commerce. "The Court of France," writes Franklin to Congress, June 2d, 1779, "continues to be our cordial friend, and the whole nation is strongly in favor of our cause, with exception of some creoles and other merchants of the West Indies whose losses have made them more or less indifferent."

There was scarcely any attention paid to this grumbling. In that fine letter that Franklin wrote to Washington a little later, March 5th, 1780, there is not a trace of diplomacy: "Some day you will come to France. On this side of the water you would enjoy the great reputation that you have acquired. It would be free from the reproaches made by the jealousy and envy of fellow citizens, the contemporaries of a great man who strive to cast a slur upon him while he is living. You would know here what posterity will say of Washington, and you would enjoy your glory, for a thousand miles have almost the same effect as a thousand years. The murmur of all these passions would not know how to cross either time or space. As to the present, I enjoy this pleasure in your place; for often the old generals of this martial country, who study the map of America and mark all of your operations, speak before me of your exploits with sincere approbation and

great enthusiasm; they agree in giving you the title of one of the greatest military leaders of the century."

At this time, Paris, as well as all France, was enthusiastic about Paul Jones. Before Fenimore Cooper and our Alexandre Dumas had related the exploits of the commodore, Mme. Vigée-Lebrun left us a fine *portrait à la plume* of this illustrious corsair: "a poet in his leisure hours, an ardent, modest soul who never spoke of his own actions, but talked very well and with much intelligence on all other subjects. A Scotchman by birth, and it is said, son of a gardener."—On September 23d, 1779, while cruising along the coast of Scotland, after a bloody combat, just at the moment that his vessel, the *Bonhomme Richard*, was about to sink under him, he jumped on board the *Serapis* and carried her off:

"Paul Jones in a battle manœuvred right well  
In outwitting the foes whom he fought;  
As a clever coquette outmanœuvres us all,  
When we think we have caught her, we're caught."\*

Maréchal de Biron had the regiment of the Gardes-Françaises on parade to show them to the commander of the *Bonhomme Richard*. Paris and Nantes were infatuated with him. All society rushed to the windows, or hurried to the opera, to see the commodore.

On October 17th the army of the Count de Vaux was disbanded. And now since the project of the attack upon England is given up, what will La Fayette do? From the month of August he had been urging an attack upon England in America; he had the idea in mind continually that of late, through political

\*"Jones, dans les combats, en ressources fertiles,  
Agit envers ses ennemis,  
Comme agit envers nous une coquette habile  
On croit la prendre, et l'on est pris."

fleet and an army corps to be disembarked at Rhode Island. With him was De Cornay, War Commissioner. Before making the acquaintance of Rochambeau, let us see what has been taking place in America since the departure of D'Estaing.

The preparations for war were resumed. At the same time that he evacuated Rhode Island in order to concentrate his forces on New York, Sir Henry Clinton had abandoned the posts of Stony Point and Verplanck's Point on the Hudson. By the end of September, reinforcements arrived for him from Europe. It is remarkable that the English general did not then think of taking back the positions that he had left to the Americans. It was toward the south that he wished to make the strongest resistance. Seven thousand men, under the escort of Admiral Arbuthnot, were conducted to South Carolina. Still the two parties (the English and the Americans) watched each other closely, both uneasy as to the consequences of a repulse. And the English did not seem very anxious to engage in uncertain operations since, in spite of their success at Savannah, they did not undertake immediately the siege of Charleston. The middle of September the Americans were able to reinforce their army in the South. Washington realized, not without apprehension, that the Virginia regiments, in order to reach South Carolina, where they would perhaps have to endure hard fighting, had to pass through their own State, whence they had been kept away a long time by the war. He recommended to General Woodford severe measures against desertion. He had faith in the honor of the troops, but he counted none the less upon strict discipline; he ordered the officers to hold their men well in hand,

to pay constant and rigorous attention to details of equipment and manœuvre. By these instructions we feel that a pupil of Frederick II, Baron Steuben, had gained some influence over him: "The troops," said Washington, "must move like a piece of clockwork."

During the winter the American general, Lord Stirling, invaded Staten Island, and to retaliate the English made a raid in New Jersey upon Elizabethtown: there was a skirmish near White Plains. Finally, in the spring, Charleston was besieged by water and land. The resistance lasted from the 1st of April until the 11th of May. As the general assault was about to be made, General Lincoln yielded to the supplications of the inhabitants and capitulated. South Carolina was rich; she thought too much of her plantations for her firmness of mind not to be easily shaken. Through fear of fire and pillage, the richest landowners not only affirmed that they were good Tories, but offered to fight for the King. The same parties a little later, at the approach of Gates, became Americans again; for in their hearts the Carolinians hated the yoke; and rather than submit to it any longer they began to emigrate. Lord Cornwallis, in July and September, had to forbid the sale of lands and cattle. It can be said that if the fall of Charleston led to some disloyalty, at the end of a few months of English occupation, it had restored the spirit of independence.\*

In June General Knyphausen gathered together all the forces in New York and marched across New Jersey. He had several encounters with the American troops, of which the most violent was at Springfield; and he had to retire to Staten Island. About this time Sir Henry Clinton was returning from Charleston; Wash-

\* See Le Boucher, *La Guerre de l'Indépendance des Etats-Unis*.

ington believed that he would try to force the passage of the Hudson; he then withdrew his army from the river so that he could rapidly face an attack, either in the mountainous region near the North River, or upon the New Jersey plains.

Such was the situation on July 7th when Rochambeau's fleet carrying the French expeditionary corps appeared off Rhode Island. Henceforth Washington had but one thought: to take New York. But we are going to see the fate of the war decided in the South.

The indomitable will of Washington and his clear mind, aided by a number of men full of energetic spirit, continued to hold up the faltering destiny of America. By an effort, constantly threatened, he averted the consequences of a ruinous anarchy. The young republic suffered a serious crisis of authority. According to the words of Joseph Jones, member of the Federal Assembly, the Congress "had by degrees given back or given up, to the different States, the exercise of their rights, and the powers that they had claimed and used to the fullest extent, so that there barely remained one duty to Congress—the direction of foreign affairs. The resources in wheat and cattle were not wanting; but Washington noted in the people an extreme avarice and indolence," a dogged hostility against all measures which would interfere with their present interest, so that a more general and far-reaching good would ensue. He had seen enough of it during this terrible winter of 1780, when his soldiers were dying with hunger. In order to feed this army upon which depended the salvation of the country, Washington had to establish requisition. But, aside from the fact that the state of the roads rendered transportation often impracticable, the owners



showed very little haste to furnish their cattle and wheat. In vain the estimation would be made in concert with the magistrate of the colony and the commissary officer, all the precautions taken so as not to hurt the feelings of these friends of independence, or their extreme susceptible sense of ownership . . . but nothing could destroy this distrust. We can imagine what the army must have suffered for Washington to have written the following words to the civil authorities of New Jersey, in January, 1780: "The soldiers cannot bear much longer the extremities to which they are reduced. Pressed by hunger, they have gone so far as to commit depredations upon the property of the inhabitants, which at any other time would be suppressed with exemplary punishment. But to-day, it can only be deplored as the result of a cruel necessity." Thus, the soldiers of Washington pillaged in order to live. In May two regiments of the line revolted with their arms in their hands, and "without the efforts of some officers," wrote the general to Congress, "the rest of the army would have followed their example, each one quitting the ranks and returning home, seeking to procure food at the point of the bayonet."

There was hardly anything that Congress could do for the army: "As far as it is concerned," quoting again from Joseph Jones, "it is only the channel through which the needs of the army are transmitted to the States. Besides, the army has to have prompt decisions: no action is possible, if all depends upon the slow deliberations of a body as large as Congress." Washington obtained the privilege of creating a small committee of war, residing permanently at General Headquarters and provided "with unlimited authority to levy men, reinforcements of all kinds, and to sanction military operations."

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Washington knew that a crisis demanded determination—decision. La Fayette gave him the assurance that his most Christian Majesty was sending a fleet with troops, and so he constantly recalled to Congress, to the Colonial Assembly of Pennsylvania, to James Duane, Philip Schuyler, John Matthews, Nathaniel Peabody, Joseph Jones, Reed, this important truth with which it was necessary to flagellate the weakening courage of the people: "That if the Americans, by extraordinary efforts do not second the good will of the King of France, the expected aid will only precipitate the ruin of America: If we fail, the resources of the States will be so exhausted in the enterprise, that a condition of complete debility and inertia will result; so we must at any price awaken the public to the danger: That the actual crisis is so grave that, if it does not inspire sacrifices in proportion to the circumstances, it will be a proof that our ideas of honor, public welfare, even of salvation have lost their influence upon our minds. . . . The Court of France is making a glorious effort for our freedom; if, through our inactivity we deceive her hopes we shall be worthy of contempt in the eyes of the whole human race, and we cannot hope that our allies will persist in their project, when they find us devoid of capacity, and even of the desire to aid them." Washington thought, moreover, that France imposed upon herself "a great and super-human effort" to save America: neither in money nor in the navy could her resources compare with those of inexhaustible England. As to Spain, he only recognized in her a failure to act; he knew, at last, that the two courts would never arrive at a complete understanding about the war. It was necessary then to seize the precarious and supreme chance that destiny offered to America: if all her power

did not rise up and blend with the French energy, her liberty was lost.

How Washington forced the public into a resolution to act, there is no keener testimony than his letter of July 4th, 1780, to Reed, President of the Assembly of Pennsylvania. He demands responsible heads of affairs who will exercise rigorously the plenitude of their powers: "When the aim is high," he said, "the attention of the people is awakened; they will be more disposed to sacrifice their property and welfare. If those to whom is confided the direction of their affairs do not urge them to make these sacrifices, the object is not attained. Then the people will be reproached for not having done their duty; they will be sensitive to this reproach, and their resentment will turn against those who, invested with sufficient authority, have not done what their interest and honor required."

Washington dared to call the faults that were being committed by the name of dishonor. There was one of them for which the States had a surprising indulgence; at least, the repression of it was very lax. The commerce with the enemy was called felony; but those who were occupied in this business were not declared traitors to their country. The traffic with New York was *immense*. "We see persons," wrote the general to John Sullivan, February 4th, 1781, "who, three years ago, would have trembled at the very idea of such intercourse, seek it now with avidity . . . knowing that all they have to fear is confiscation, to the profit of the informer, and he easily evades this danger by both parties coming to an understanding with each other, no one is accused and they act without any risk." For such persons Washington demanded the death penalty. In this manner the United States was not only undergoing

a crisis of authority but a crisis of national conscience as well. A few men felt this weakness deeply; they became ashamed of it; they resolved to fight, and the country was saved. Washington perceived the bond between the straightening out and raising up of the public conscience on the one side and the establishment of strong authority on the other. Who could have been able like him to have urged Congress *to take possession*, as a right that belonged to it, of all power, "in harmony with the plan of campaign" that was going to be put into operation; to have summoned them to get out of the old rut; to tolerate no longer "that one State disobey its orders while another obeyed, or a third put false meaning on its measures, or adopted only a part of them; or that sacrifices would be made only on condition that some other State would make them"; and finally to say that jealousy and distrust among the States paralyzed the central authority? Undoubtedly order was necessary for the government of moral forces; and Washington saw clearly to what extent they depended upon political regulations. They should *prescribe* instead of *recommend*. In the difficult days, when it would seem that the American people were going to fail in their duty to their leaders, or that the leaders would fail the people, Washington would recall to some the belief in their destiny, to others that of their mission.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE EXPEDITIONARY CORPS OF ROCHAMBEAU—THE DEFENSIVE—CO-OPERATION OF THE FRENCH WITH THE AMERICANS

Lieutenant-General Count de Rochambeau, like Ron-sard, came from a very ancient family of Vendôme, and in the year 1780 was fifty years old. Since he first took up arms, forty years had passed: it was in Germany under Maréchal de Saxe. At Lawfeld he received his first two wounds, from which he nearly lost his life. He was in all the wars and always in the most exposed positions; in the advance-guard if they were attacked, in the rear-guard if they were beating a retreat. During the Seven Years' War he commanded the noted regiment of Auvergne, which paid for its victory at Clostercamp with 58 officers and 800 soldiers killed and wounded. Upon that day, wounded himself, he remained upon the field of battle until the victory was torn from the hands of the enemy. M. Jusserand states that Chevalier d'Assas died heroically while executing an order given by Rochambeau; he also notes that in the second battle of Minden, in 1759, where La Fayette's father fell, Rochambeau covered the retreat of the French, and that in the British ranks Lord Cornwallis fought.—Twenty-two years later we see these two veterans face to face at Yorktown.

It is by his work that Rochambeau has to be known. Without being exactly in disfavor at court, he never sought for any honors, and they never came to him.

He was field-marshal twenty years before he was promoted to lieutenant-general in 1780. He had the confirmed reputation of being exact and prudent; an energetic commander, beloved by his men and careful of their lives; but a very strict disciplinarian. He had lost his father and had left his home in the *rue du Cherche-Midi* in Paris to go and regulate his affairs of succession in Vendôme, suffering at the time from rheumatism. Just at this moment a courier arrived from the King in the middle of the night and "brought him an order to go to Versailles and receive other orders from His Majesty." He was to put himself at the head of an expeditionary corps that the King, by a decision which was kept secret, was sending to his allies. He forgot his own interests and his rheumatism: "I swear to serve His Majesty in this commission with all the zeal I possess to my dying hour." This was about the first of March, 1780.

Everything was promptly regulated. And yet, how many questions to be decided! One of the principal things to be considered was the number of soldiers. Through discretion, for fear of awakening the dark suspicions of Congress, the Ministry dared not give more than 4,000 men. The relative modesty of this aid was a guarantee that France did not pretend to abrogate to herself the privilege of conquest, that she had no idea of making conquests at all; that her aid was not that of usurpation. But Rochambeau protested that "for the glory of the arms of the King," even with the greatest vigilance, 4,000 men was too small a number and soon depleted; it was easy to lose a third of them in one action of the infantry. At Lawfeld, Creveld, and Clostercamp he had lost two-thirds of his men. He, therefore, asked for 6,000, sure "that this increase in the number would



still be too small to make the Americans uneasy." This many were given him, and even a few more.

Then came the question of provisions. We can hardly realize to-day what difficulties they had to overcome. Rochambeau had the time to get information from La Fayette about the domestic situation of our allies. "Much flour and sea-biscuit had to be taken with them," he noted. "Put in brick for ovens, as ballast. Try to take everything with you and not to depend upon the Americans who are in great need. . . . Flint stones, harness, leather, shoes; all kinds of goods for clothes, hats, thread, needles, bed-clothing, tents, water flasks, canteens, tools of all kinds; . . . and besides, have the soldier's knapsack well filled, have big supplies for each regiment."

"Not only is it necessary," said the Minister of War, then the Prince de Montbarrey, "to provide abundantly for all the needs of the body for the troops, but it is in the wisdom and magnanimity of the King, who wishes to give material aid to his Allies, to take into consideration the means to remedy the evils that circumstances have forced upon them, and to have them feel the effects of his beneficence, at the same time that he aids them with his army to sustain the justice of their cause." Consequently a part of the funds destined for the expedition were converted into merchandise; they took with them the food that the Americans lacked the most, so as to exchange it, when necessary, for things that would be needed by their own troops. And they also carried money with them. "We will pay our Allies for everything, even the straw for the soldier. . . . The King, in spending his money, will find the opportunity of doing a great good to the country of his Allies; for in using his silver he will give more active circula-

tion to their paper money." "The more ready money we shall have," said Rochambeau again to the Minister, "the better will we be able to do the King's business ceremoniously." Necker was finally persuaded; Rochambeau received a first installment in *piastres* of 2,625,000 francs; he was to receive 1,575,000 francs more. The annual expense foreseen, for maintaining six regiments of infantry in the United States, was more than 6,000,000 francs.

Indeed it was no small enterprise in those days to gather enough ships together to transport to the other side of the ocean the weight, relatively enormous, of the siege and field equipment. They did not take any horses; De Corny had been ordered to buy them, over there, in the United States; 750 for the artillery, food and supply, and hospital service; 350 for the hussars of the legion of Lauzun, and 140 for the staff officers. De Tarlé, ordnance officer, doing the duties of quartermaster, had already much work to do to see that "all the goods and food supply of the King" were "well packed and distributed." From Saint Malo, Nantes, Port Louis near Lorient, and from Havre, artillery munitions were transported to Brest; the field-hospitals, folding cots, cotton and straw mattresses, surgical instruments, coming from Saint Malo, where preparations had been made in 1779, when there was thought of landing in England. The regiments were billeted as follows: Bourbonnais at Lamballe, Neustrie and Anhalt at Quimper, Soissonnais at Hennebont, Saintonge at Crozon and Camaret, Royal-Deux-Ponts at Landerneau and Saint Pol-de-Léon. And lastly, Rochambeau himself was at Brest from the 26th of March. They were in need of ships; finally 100 sails arrived from Bordeaux: these were coast trading vessels. Now

it was necessary to depart, so Rochambeau gathered together all the shipping that was in the port of Brest, 32 ships, a total of 12,800 tons, embarked 5,000 men, and left in their cantonment the regiments of Anhalt and Neustrie, which made Count de Wittgenstein, their commander, weep "tears of blood"; he also left behind a third of the artillery and a third of the legion of Lauzun. This second division was to rejoin him as soon as they could get the necessary ships; but they were never able to procure them.

It was forbidden to take officers "who were volunteers, or who had never seen action." As to the soldiers, "their eagerness to go made them dissemble everything that could be an obstacle to their departure." Rochambeau was determined that they were not to take any but the most robust. Everybody wanted to go. The Brigadier de Choisy, his aide-de-camp De Queissat, Brentano, Angelis went on board the admiral's vessel and pleaded with Rochambeau to take them with him; the order was positive; they must remain with Wittgenstein. Although the ranks were all filled, others received from the Minister of War the permission to take passage: such was the case of the two Berthiers, of which one was the future Prince de Wagram. On May 3d, as the fleet was going out to sea, they joined the cutter of the rear-guard, "in short jackets and linen breeches," said Rochambeau, "offering to go as common sailors." But there was no place for them on any of the boats; the Chevalier de Ternay, who commanded the squadron, "having no place to cram them," sent "these poor young men back in despair." A little later, these youthful enthusiasts and the Marquis de Choisy, the Viscount de Melfort, and some others, left France upon the *Cybèle* for Martinique, where the frigate *Gentille*

took them on board and landed them, on the 30th of September, at Newport.

At the head of the troops which bore the names of our provinces, the most brilliant part of the French nobility departed on this glorious adventure. The destination of the fleet remained a secret. Rochambeau had three field-m Marshals with him: the Baron and the Viscount de Viomesnil and the Chevalier de Chastellux; the quartermaster-general was Brigadier de Bévillè. His aides-de-camp were, respectively, De Fersen, De Damas, De Lameth, De Closen, Mathieu Dumas, De Lauberdière, Vauban, De Montesquieu. The Marquis de Laval-Montmorency commanded the Bourbonnais regiment, with the son of the general, the Viscount de Rochambeau, as *second*; the Soissonnais regiment had the Count de Saint Maime for colonel and the Viscount de Noailles for *colonel in second*; Saintonge had the Count de Custine and the Count de Charlus, son of the Marquis de Castries, who will soon be called to the Ministry of War; Royal-Deux-Ponts had the Counts Christian and Guillaume; the Lauzun Legion was led by the Duke de Lauzun; Colonel d'Aboville was in high command of the artillery, Colonel Desandrouin of the engineers. Among the captains of the ten vessels of convoy were La Pérouse and La Clocheterie.

The embarkation was completed by April 11th, but the winds did not permit them to sail until May 2d. And what a delay, causing accidents! One day it was the *Comtesse de Noailles* who broke her bowsprit in running against the *Conquérant*; and the young Baron de Closen observed with much distress that at the same time, the "charming countess," who ornamented in effigy the prow of the boat, had been broken in pieces; it was repaired, but "the countess" remained without

a head, "like many other countesses." Another time they looked for De Dillon, so courageous the past year at Savannah and in the West Indies, now *colonel in second* of the Lauzun regiment: he had disappeared. Impatient and restless, he had gone to seek distraction at Nantes, and had a quarrel: he finally returned with two sword wounds, and Rochambeau had to put him "under arrest on his own ship so as to care for his wounds and punish his misconduct." Chevalier de Ternay was a wise old sailor, much more concerned about leading his convoy safely into port than to acquire glory on the high seas. It was sufficient for him to get there in advance of Graves's fleet. He avoided opportunities for fighting. The young officers blamed him but Rochambeau rendered him full justice. After missing some fine adventures, and seventy days at sea, plus the twenty-seven passed in the harbor at Brest, the French squadron arrived safely at last, on July 7th, 1780, off the coast of Rhode Island.

Their first welcome in Newport seemed to the Frenchmen a little cold. Count Guillaume de Deux-Ponts, issue of a morganatic marriage between a German baron and a Frenchwoman, who had not disdained at one time to be a *danseuse*, was easily put out of humor. He noted: "Upon disembarking we have not received the welcome that is due to us. Coldness and reserve seem, up to this moment, the distinctive characteristic of the American nation; they are very little given to that enthusiasm which one would suppose that a people would have who were fighting for their liberty, and they do not inspire it in others." Rochambeau says about the same thing: "The streets are deserted, and there are sad, dismayed glances from the windows." The good

Abbé Robin, whose subsequent testimony is already a little legend, says: "The arrival of the Count de Rochambeau spread terror everywhere; the country was deserted, and those whom curiosity led to Newport did not meet any one in the streets." We have learned since, and the abbé recalls it also to our mind, that the French were generally "regarded as slaves to despotism; full of prejudices and superstition; nearly idolaters in their religion, and like kinds of lightweight machines, not well formed, incapable of firmness, or of consistency, occupied only with the care of curling their hair, and painting their faces; without faith and not respecting the most sacred duties." There are some Quakers who would not find this exaggerated.

But opinion was very quickly changed. Rochambeau "spoke to the important men of the city" and in "twenty-four hours," he reports to the Ministry, "their spirits began to reach a high pitch; in the evening of July 12th, the streets and all the houses and the belfries were illuminated; and there were fireworks." The president of Yale University, Ezra Stiles, tells us: "The Whigs put thirteen lanterns in their windows, the Tories, or those who were undecided, four or six. As to the Quakers, they preferred not to show the light of their candles, and had their windows smashed."

To brighten their spirits, Rochambeau circulated the report that his 5,000 men were but "the advance guard of a much larger force, and that the King had decided to sustain the Americans with all the power he possessed." But that which really cheered their hearts more than anything else was their contact with the French character; they did everything they could to dissipate the American prejudices. The abbé did not stint his praises of these fine young noblemen, who adapted them-

selves with such perfect ease to other habits and customs, winning their way by their kindliness, setting examples of simplicity of manners and frugality, and above all, "knowing how to make themselves agreeable and popular, as if they were living among equals." They wondered at it more than was necessary, for doleful faces had long since passed out of fashion in Paris; that is, if they ever had been in vogue. The Tories were completely won over; and we find that Lauzun did not have need to complain of the people of Newport; he acknowledges his indebtedness to them very gracefully in his *Mémoires*: "Madame Hunter, a widow of thirty-six, had two charming daughters whom she had educated with great care; she lived a very retired life, hardly seeing any one. By chance, I made her acquaintance when I arrived at Rhode Island. She was exceedingly friendly toward me, and I was soon regarded as a member of the family, where I passed most of my time. I fell sick and she had me taken to her home, where I received the tenderest care. I was never in love with these young ladies (the Misses Hunter); but if they had been my sisters I could not have had more affection for them; above all, the eldest, who had one of the most amiable dispositions I ever observed." What would the Quakers of the neighborhood have said if they had known that this Don Juan, this corrupted fruit of the abominable Babylon, was admitted to the honest, tranquil fireside of this young widow, and found happiness there!

French discipline was another object of surprise and admiration. Count Jean Axel de Fersen, the charming Swede, who, with an ardent, chivalrous heart, was devoted to the Queen, Marie Antoinette, noted on September 8th that although they were not particularly

inclined to speak in favor of our soldiers, there had not been a complaint raised against them: "Nothing is taken from the inhabitants without paying them for it. They are astonished at this discipline . . . for they are accustomed to the pillage of the English and their own troops. The greatest confidence and the best understanding exists between the two nations." La Fayette's account has more zest to it and goes more into detail: "You would have been amused the other day," he writes on the 31st to Washington, "at seeing 250 recruits who came to Connecticut without provisions and tents, and who fraternized so well with our French troops, that each Frenchman—officer or soldier—took an American, and in a friendly way shared his bed and supper with him. The patience and the soberness of the American militia is so admired, that two days ago a French colonel called his officers together to induce them to follow the good example given by the American troops. And on the other hand, French discipline is so good, that chickens and pigs go around among the tents without being disturbed, and in the camp there is a field of corn, and not a stalk has been touched. The Tories do not know what to make of it."

This incident reminds me of another. I wonder if Rochambeau knew what Montaigne related about the "apple-tree within the enclosure of the camp of the Roman Army. It was found, the next day when they had gone, to be unmolested, leaving to the owner the entire count of his ripe and delicious fruit." The French army did as well; it is Rochambeau who verifies the story: "The different deputations of Indians who came to the camp showed no surprise at the view of the cannon, the troops and the manœuvres, but they could not get over their astonishment, at seeing the apple



trees hanging full of fruit above the tents that the soldiers occupied for three months."

Washington was not then too optimistic when he addressed, in this way, the American troops in his order of the day for July 20th: "The General does not hesitate to assure the army that the French soldiers come to our aid, animated with a zeal *founded upon their sympathy for us, as much as it is upon their submission to the will of the King*, and they will do all on their side to live in good faith and keep our friendship." Diplomatic words, no doubt, but there is justice in them. I would be willing to wager that Soissonnais, Agenais, Bourbonnais, and all the other regiments made it a point of honor to conduct themselves as true soldiers of liberty and sons of a noble race; for the discipline that was imposed upon them would not have been sufficient. The old virtues of France appeared to have more charm when they smilingly came to offer themselves to the service of a great ideal in danger.

However, their good comradeship did not cover the needs of the Americans. From July 6th Rochambeau began to implore the Ministry: "Send us troops, ships, money; but do not count upon these people nor upon their means; they are without a crown or credit. Their forces exist only for brief moments; that is, when they are attacked in their homes; they assemble, then, at the time of personal danger, and defend themselves. Washington commands sometimes 15,000, and again 3,000 men. We have brought only 2,600,000 *livres*, half in cash and the rest in letters of credit. We should have brought double this amount." An unyielding economy, where we should have had "magnificence and profusion," has ruined our credit. "Our letters of credit

are losing their value terribly, and we have to carry on our business with the greatest order; and for lack of money like profligate sons. And then the scurvy has ravaged our army." "I will have to admit," wrote Rochambeau to the Minister of War on July 25th, "that if the enemy had been quicker, he could have embarrassed us not a little: 1,500 of my men sick on the ships, 800 in the army."

Happily the enemy was slow. Graves had rejoined Arbuthnot on July 13th; against the six ships of the line of De Ternay the English had ten. But when they appeared at Newport on the 21st, Rochambeau, in twelve days' work, had rendered his position respectable. The big cannon had not been taken to the land; in twenty-four hours this was done. The blow was avoided. The French camp divided the island crosswise, its left on the sea, its right facing the squadron at anchor; Rochambeau could always get the line of attack the shortest way at the point where the enemy wished to land, "while in order to vary his points of attack the enemy had to make a great circle." "Day before yesterday," wrote Rochambeau on the 25th, "the whole day they were sniffing at us within reach of the cannon . . . just at the moment that we were eager for them to attack us; but they were careful not to do it, and they did well; for it would not have been very good for them."

Washington did not feel so reassured. He knew, and warned Rochambeau, that Clinton had embarked 8,000 men to go and make an assault upon Newport, so he sent 5,000 militia to aid the French. Rochambeau began to send them back, "for fear of ruining their crops," perhaps, also, because they arrived, as he told Luzerne, "with much courage, but without tents and munitions, badly armed and no food." But finally from advice

again received from the general-in-chief, and the governor of Connecticut, he resolved to keep 2,000 of them, until he could make sure of his safe communication with the mainland by a fort he was having constructed on the end of the island. In spite of Rochambeau's great desire, Clinton did not come: the sudden menace of Washington on the east bank of the Hudson made him decide to return as soon as possible to New York. This divergence did not please Rochambeau at all. "Misunderstandings began to take place" between the two commanders. The American general wanted to take New York first; the French general thought the enterprise impossible. La Luzerne began to take part in this argument, and Rochambeau demonstrated to him that, in order to force 15,000 Englishmen out of their intrenchments, it was necessary to have ships and equipment superior to theirs, and they were far from having that superiority. "We do not want to have a repetition of the Savannah affair here!" Then, on August 9th, La Fayette writes a long and urgent letter to Rochambeau, concluding with these words: "In the name of Washington come and join us immediately so as to make an attack on New York." "This was a kind of summons," said the general later, "and its principle was perfectly correct because it was based upon the politics of the country, and this campaign seemed to be the last effort of Washington's patriotism."

But Rochambeau felt hurt, for Washington's silence appeared to indicate that he was "using" the ardor and petulance of La Fayette in order "to express with more energy" his own sentiments. The marquis was mistaken if he thought he could move this veteran of many wars by the vehemence of his words: he was not one of those persons that could be led by force, and his

will—in which Fersen discovered a spark of defiance—was colder and more determined when they tried to seduce or excite him. He answered: “Firstly, that if Washington had allowed Clinton to go to Rhode Island, he [Rochambeau] would have had him *beaten*, and Washington, in the meantime, could have taken New York. Secondly, that the Americans were wrong to complain; while the English fleet was watching the French fleet, the coasts were unmolested, the corsairs of the Union were taking some fine prizes, and the maritime commerce had full liberty. Under such *easy conditions* they could afford to wait.”

La Fayette acknowledged that he was wrong. His real feelings on the subject he only expressed to his wife: “As I saw that I could not persuade him, and it was to the public interest that we should remain good friends, I announced everywhere that I was in the wrong; that I had made a mistake; and, in proper terms I asked for pardon.” And then Washington wrote to Rochambeau that he agreed with him, except in a few details; with much cleverness and dignity, he suggested a plan that he had in view “of *turning* the defensive to the offensive.” He gave Rochambeau satisfaction upon this essential point: that if the French troops had left Rhode Island immediately, unless timidity diverted their purpose, the English navy would have burned the squadron of De Ternay. Rochambeau felt appeased and he relented; his letter of the 27th of August to La Fayette shows him in a most amiable frame of mind: “Permit me, my dear Marquis, as an old father to a tenderly loved son, to one whom he loves and esteems infinitely well, to answer you. You know me well enough to believe that I have no need of being urged. . . . It is good to think that the French are invincible, but I am going to confide a secret

to you, after an experience of forty years: there are none more easy to conquer when they have lost confidence in their commanders; and they lose it immediately when they have been compromised by the consequences of a personal or a particular ambition." He could render this much justice to himself that, out of 15,000 men killed or wounded under his command "in the most bloody actions," he had not "killed one to gratify his own ambition." Let us praise the cavilling that obliged "old father Rochambeau" to produce such fine testimony!

This good, stern man had a pure conscience; on the 19th of October, after three months of inactivity, which was not inertia, he could send his balance-sheet to Montbarrey: "*The strong, firm offensive, where we have shown our teeth to the enemy upon the first rock of our Allies, upon which we have landed*, without his making us recoil one step; the good effect that it has produced on this continent, which was in a very precarious condition on our arrival; the commerce of the Americans, and the large number of prizes that they have taken during this campaign, all the forces of the enemy being united and directed against us; the re-establishment of the affairs of Gates, who has rallied and reorganized his army, for neither a ship nor a man from New York has been in condition to second the operations of Cornwallis, who has not had sufficient men to follow up his victory."

On August 16th Lord Cornwallis had defeated Gates at Camden, South Carolina; the Continental troops did their duty, but the distress was great when it was learned that suddenly the militia had given up. The following morning near the ford of the Catawba, Colonel Tarleton, who commanded a strong detachment of

English cavalry, surprised 700 Americans, "killing 150, taking 300 prisoners and dispersing the rest." But at this moment in the heart of the Americans there was one of those sudden rebounds which often recur after great losses. The English had been extremely hard upon those they had allowed to take up arms again, after having sworn to them the oath of fidelity when Charleston fell. At King's Mountain, on the 7th of October, the American troops in retaliation turned upon 1,200 men, "killing a large number of them, with their Commander, Colonel Ferguson, and taking the rest prisoners." Lord Cornwallis was reduced to the defensive, and Sir Henry Clinton diminished the forces in New York so as to send him assistance. Gates, nevertheless, was recalled, and was replaced by Greene, whom we will now see cover himself with glory. Baron de Kalb was killed at Camden, at the head of an American division, where he bore the brunt of the day's fighting. Rochambeau cites him in his *Mémoires* as "a French officer"; and so he was by vocation and adoption.

Elsewhere, in the West Indies, Admiral Count de Guichen had directed a brilliant crusade from March to July, 1780. First, he went through skilful evolutions and splendid combats, where his adversary was the famous Rodney, the gambler, delivered by Maréchal de Biron, who was at heart a sailor if he did have the spirit of gambling in his veins. Then, in June, the arrival of a Spanish squadron and the refusal of Admiral don Solano to attempt with Guichen a united action against the English fleet. And La Motte-Piquet, great protector, in the West Indies, of the French and Spanish commerce, met his cordial old enemy, Hyde Parker; or, rather, he is going to seek him soon, and, like Annibal, find him, and, wounded, remain at his post. Much glory but, on

account of the Spanish indecision, little result: Jamaica was not taken, nor did St. Lucia become again a French colony. There was certainly some spitefulness, and almost despair, that made Guichen gather the merchant ships together ready to go to sea from all ports of the West Indies and set sail for France on August 16th, leaving Monteil, the commander of the French squadron, there with only ten ships at San Domingo.

De la Luzerne, La Fayette, and Washington appealed to Guichen in vain. With the picture of Savannah before him, he also was afraid to run the risk, with his crews worn out and his ships in a bad state. He was nearly seventy years old; a naval officer of the first order, a man of honor, if ever there was one, who knew how to distinguish "the extraordinary from the impossible," which is the attribute of generous, noble hearts. We have the touching letter that Washington wrote to him on September 12th. Through him the general thought that the French fleet had acquired a maritime superiority sufficient, not to undertake anything in regard to New York, but "to attempt something decisive in the extreme South." He told him that Gates was defeated; that he had lost his cannon and baggage; in fact, he told him everything: "To hide our embarrassment would be to betray each other." Guichen never received this letter.

We can understand why Washington appeared sad to Fersen, when on September 20th, 1780, Rochambeau met him at Hartford (forty miles from Newport) for the conference he had asked for so long, and from which no plan of action for the near future was arranged. "There were six of us," relates Fersen, who is the only one who gives these details: "the Admiral, the Chief Engineer (Desandrouin), the Viscount de Rochambeau

(the General's son), and two aides-de-camp, of whom I was one. General de Rochambeau sent me in advance to announce his arrival, and I had the opportunity of seeing this most illustrious, if not most *unique* man, of our century. His fine commanding face, kind and honest, answered perfectly to his moral qualities; he looked like a hero; he was very cold in manner, spoke but little (he did not know French; La Fayette was there with Gouvion, who was also *Chef du Génie*, and served as interpreter). It was unseemly that such a countenance should be veiled by so much sadness." The reason of Washington's sadness was that he judged that the affairs of his country were in an almost hopeless condition. A month before, telling the President of Congress the miserable state of his army, he said: "If there does not come a change in the mind and resources of this country, we can expect to be soon reduced to the humiliating position of seeing, in America, the American cause defended by foreign arms. The generosity of our Allies gives them the right to our entire confidence. . . . But it is neither for the honor of the Union nor to the interest of the common cause to let them do it all."

While the generals were in conference at Hartford, they received the news that the fleet of Admiral Rodney, arriving at New York, tripled the English forces. They hurried back to their posts. Here, let us relate a little story told by Rochambeau, which is a fine example of the character of the good Republicans of Connecticut: "In going to meet Washington with Admiral de Ternay who was quite infirm, our carriage broke down. I sent Fersen, my First Aide-de-camp, to find a wheelwright, who lived about a mile away. He returned, saying that the man was sick with the intermittent fever and suffering



very much, and had answered that he would not work at night for his hat full of guineas. I asked the Admiral to accompany me, and we went together to plead with him. We told him that General Washington was arriving that evening at Hartford, in order to confer with us the next day, and that we would miss this meeting if he did not repair our carriage. 'You are telling the truth,' he said; 'I have read in the Connecticut papers that Washington is to arrive this evening to have a talk with you; I see that this is public service, your carriage will be ready at six o'clock in the morning.' He kept his word and we went on our way at the hour indicated. On returning another wheel broke and we were obliged to go again and parley with the wheelwright. 'Well!' he said, 'you want to make me work, again, at night?'—'Alas! yes,' I answered, 'Admiral Rodney has arrived, and it is most important that we return at once to Rhode Island.'—'And pray what are you going to do with your six ships against his twenty?'—'It will be the finest day of our lives, if he takes a notion to attack us in our harbor.'—'All right!' he replied. 'You are brave men; you shall have your carriage by five o'clock in the morning. But before I go to work, will you tell me, without wishing to know your secrets, if you are contented with Washington? And if he is contented with you?'—We gave him the assurance he desired; his patriotism was satisfied, and he kept his word. I do not pretend to say that all the Americans resemble this good wheelwright, but all the farmers in the interior, and nearly all the landed proprietors of Connecticut had the same public spirit which could serve as a model for many others." What Rochambeau did not take the trouble to tell us, is that this is a very pretty example of the way the Americans and French learned to love each other.

Washington went from Hartford to West Point; he had hardly arrived when he discovered General Arnold's treason. But in spite of all these reverses, there was one man who was continually evolving new projects of immediate offensive, and who never ceased recommending them to Washington, with admirable tenacity and enthusiasm: this was the marquis. He had under his command a selected corps of 2,000 men, chosen from among the regiments of the line. "The mutual attachment of this corps and its commander," they tell us, "passed as a proverb in America." He had brought from France, "for a considerable sum, emblems for the soldiers, swords for the officers and sub-officers, and flags for the battalions." A troop well disciplined, badly uniformed, but of fine appearance; they were recognized by their tall red and black plumes. How was it possible not to fight with such men as these! The activities of La Fayette, from October, 1780, to January, 1781, are as follows: At the beginning of October, a plan of attack upon Staten Island, which failed for lack of obtaining supplies; that is to say, for want of boats; on October 30th, a plan of an expedition upon the north of the island of New York, which was abandoned after some reconnoitering of the ports. La Fayette held to the idea that any enterprise would please the public; "that even a defeat, provided it was not disastrous, would still have its good effects." Washington responded, that an attempt which would prove unsuccessful would make matters worse; and La Fayette, himself, once before the forts, had very different impressions from those his hope had raised; he could only curse the English guard, the "fatal sentinel," that Gouvion pointed out to him upon a certain high battery; and then, he turned back. But he still sought his revenge;

and from Philadelphia, December 5th, he proposed to Washington to concert immediately with the Spanish who were then in the Floridas. What would Rochambeau think? Happily, Washington asked himself this question, and concluded "that it would be impolitic and useless to propose a measure of co-operation with a third power, without the aid of the French troops." Now he knew that Rochambeau would not give in at once. Finally, tired of insisting, the marquis became resigned; but, on the 30th of January, 1781, he wrote to Vergennes, representing to him that the defensive position was "as dangerous as it was humiliating," that naval superiority must be given to us, and money sent as soon as possible. This letter could not remain without some result. La Fayette recommended to the Minister, Lieutenant-Colonel Laurens, who was charged by Congress with a mission to the court of Versailles. We will soon see what instructions Washington gave him and how he executed them.

But already the Viscount de Rochambeau, son of the general, was in France, bearer of a complete memorandum of our needs in men, ships, and money. He was also the bearer of all the dispatches of General Rochambeau, and had learned them by heart, "so that he could be able to render a verbal account to the Ministry, if he had the misfortune to be caught, after having thrown his papers overboard," and was sent back on parole. On October 28th, 1781, taking advantage of a violent wind-storm that had dispersed the English fleet, La Pérouse left Newport harbor upon the *Amazon*, carrying the messenger from Rochambeau to France. The frigate lost one of her masts, but she made her escape, and the viscount was not taken prisoner by the English. On the following 8th of May he returned upon

the *Concorde*. With him the new commander of the squadron, Count de Barras, disembarked upon American soil. He came to replace Admiral de Ternay, who died, perhaps of chagrin, at being reduced to inaction so long. On December 15th, 1780, Rochambeau had given well-merited praise to the *great probity* of this *excellent navigator* whom Pérouse mourned like a son for his father. This should be enough to avenge him for other judgments less kind. His body reposes in the cemetery at Newport; a marble slab was placed in a church of this town through the consideration of the Marquis de Noailles, Minister of France, which recalls the high qualities and noble service of this naval officer, who died upon a far-distant shore for his King and for American liberty.

## CHAPTER VIII

WINTER QUARTERS—CHEVALIER DE CHASTELLUX MAKES  
A TOUR—CAMPAIGN OF WAR—IN THE CAROLINAS—  
EXPEDITION IN THE CHESAPEAKE—EMBARRASSMENT  
OF THE POLITICAL SITUATION IN EUROPE—FIDELITY  
OF FRANCE

While the French Ministry is deliberating over the demands of the French and American generals, let us remain near them in America. In November the armies went into winter quarters: the Pennsylvania troops at Morristown, those of New Jersey at Pompton, those of the east in the mountains of the north; Washington at New Windsor; the French army, with the exception of Lauzun, never left Newport. It was with regret that Lauzun took leave of Mrs. Hunter and her charming daughters; there was no fodder in Rhode Island for his cavalry. He departed then, on November 10th, with all his horses for Lebanon, eighty miles distant, in the forests of Connecticut. He complained of having been chosen, because he knew English, "to regulate an infinite number of details mortally tiresome." Up to January 11th he remained in this *Siberia*. Rochambeau praised him for having pleased the Americans by his affable manners, and for having succeeded well in all the affairs that he had treated, whether with Trumbull, the aged governor, or the legislative body of the State. "A good American," adds the general, "asked Lauzun what his father's business was in France.—'My father does not do anything,' he replied, 'but I have an uncle who is a *maréchal*' (alluding, of course, to

Maréchal de Biron).—"Good!" said the American, who did not doubt but that he meant a farrier, knowing only the one meaning of *maréchal* himself; and giving Lauzun a hearty grasp of the hand, he continued: "That's a fine job."

Chevalier de Chastellux paid a visit to poor Lauzun, to help him pass away the weary hours. Lauzun entertained him with a squirrel hunt, and had him dine with General Huntington and old Governor Trumbull. We can imagine the life the duke led with the venerable Mr. Trumbull. He was a little old man of seventy years, a real burgomaster "of the days of the Heinsius' and the Barnevelts," with a passionate love for business, for either large or small affairs; "but indeed, there were none that were small in his eyes." He wore the costume of the first colonists. Chastellux saw him at Lebanon: he approached a table already surrounded by twenty officers of the hussars, and without being disconcerted in the least, nor losing anything of the stiffness of his dignity, he pronounced in a loud voice a long prayer in the form of a blessing. Do not think for an instant that he excited the risibility of his audience; it was too well-bred; on the contrary, there arose from under the twenty moustaches a full chorus of twenty *amens*. Trumbull and Lauzun, the first considerate and always referring, the second listening and deferring, agreed marvelously well. Trumbull and Mrs. Hunter were, after all, for Lauzun's serenity, better company for him than the court of Versailles.

Many of the officers employed the winter in visiting the country; no doubt they might have been pleased just to travel, but at the same time they learned to love the Americans and make the Americans love them; they made their tour as staff-officers over the battle-

fields of the past few years. In November, Washington received the Marquis de Laval-Montmorency, the Count de Charlus, the Viscount de Noailles, the Chevalier de Chastellux; others later, notably, the Count de Saint-Maime. La Fayette relates to his wife that "Laval and Custine disputed throughout the whole trip, and at each position on the battle-field protested that they could have done better than either the American or the English generals; but each one had his own idea, and never agreed upon the manner of doing it." Noailles and Damas made "a grand tour of the continent." Deux-Ponts, to whom La Fayette was devoted, appeared also at General Headquarters. All were *charmed* with Washington. Unhappily, their impressions have not been transmitted; or rather, they have not yet been edited. But Chastellux's book is rich enough to give us an idea of the welcome the French received from the Americans—their Allies—during the winter of 1780-1781.

On November 28th, near the great falls of the Passaic in New Jersey, the Chevalier de Chastellux was received by Washington. He gives us that fine portrait of him that reveals both the artist and the model, and all the traditional ideas that the cultivated minds of the century decreed, while in the liberator of America he extols his moral character and unites him with the great souls of the past. Montaigne did not speak differently of Epaminondas: "That which is most characteristic of this most honorable man, is the perfect accord of his physical and moral qualities. *By one alone you can judge all the others.* If you are presented with the medals of Cæsar, Trajan or Alexander, for example, upon looking at their features you still wonder what would be their size and the form of their bodies; but, if you dis-

cover among some ruins the head of an antique Apollo, there is no doubt in your mind about the rest of the statue, for you know that it has the form of a God. Let not this comparison be attributed to enthusiasm," continues the chevalier; "I do not wish to exaggerate anything; I only desire to express a perfect whole, which cannot be produced by enthusiasm, but which would rather repel it, since the property of perfect proportion is to diminish the idea of greatness. Brave without temerity, laborious without ambition, generous without prodigality, noble without pride, virtuous without severity, he seemed always to stop on that side of the barrier, where virtues clothing themselves in so many vivid colors, appear to be more changeable and doubtful and may be taken for defects. General of a Republic he does not have that imposing ostentation of a Marshal of France giving an order; hero of a Republic he excites another sort of respect, which seems to give birth to but one idea,—that the salvation of each individual is attached to *his* personality."

I cannot resist giving another sketch, by the chevalier, of Washington on horseback, which is possibly unique. Chastellux was mounted upon a horse loaned him by the general; the animal was "perfectly trained, well-formed, with a fine mouth and good traits, stopping short at full gallop without seizing and clinching the bit between its teeth. I enter into these details," says Chastellux, "because it is the General himself who trains all of his own horses; he is a fine, daring horseman, jumping the highest bars and going at a very fast gait, without hanging on the stirrups, pulling on the reins, or letting his horse go like wild, a thing that our young men regard as an essential part of English horsemanship, and would rather break their arms and legs than give it up."



What do we not find in Chastellux! If you wish to know what the Americans ate, how they made their toasts, how many toasts they made, which was a *despairing* and *barbarous* custom; if you wish to see the chevalier in the hands of some "cruelly charitable" persons who were incessantly pulling at him at table to call his attention to numerous and exhausting politenesses which each one addressed to him as he drank; if you are curious about the manner in which they took their tea, and kept on taking their tea, and he did the same thing, until a neighbor, who was better informed about the ceremony than he, told him the way of *stopping the hostilities* by putting his spoon across the top of his cup; if you wish to know this and much more besides, read the *Voyages dans l'Amérique septentrionale*. You will also find this pretty scene there. It is in Philadelphia; M. de la Luzerne entertains his guests, Damas, Noailles, Chastellux, possibly Lauzun, with an evening concert: "Miss Rutledge played on the harpsichord and played very well. Miss Shippen sang timidly but had a sweet voice. M. Ottaw, Secretary of the Chevalier de la Luzerne, brought his harp and accompanied Miss Shippen, and he also played a few solos. . . . The Viscount de Noailles found an old violin, mounted it with harp strings and had the young ladies dance, while their mothers and other graver personages were conversing in another room."

Those were gay, happy days! And after their pilgrimage to the Brandywine, Montesquieu, Noailles, the marquis, the chevalier would often talk "about many incidents in Paris of their own circle of friends." There was such a flow of spirits that the country people at the inn could not understand how they "could be so hilarious without being drunk, and thought they had gone crazy."

Can we guess what Chastellux considered his *good fortune*? Certainly it was not Miss V——, “celebrated for her coquetry, wit and malice, who wore red, white and blue, and being a good Whig in every way, she put no limit to her liberty”; assuredly not one of the pretty young girls who danced, under the guidance of a severe *master*, figures that they called the *Defeat of Burgoyne* or the *Retreat of Clinton*; still less the mothers of the families, “gowned magnificently enough” but did not have that light, gay spirit so attractive in the Frenchwomen. No, it is not any of these things—it is a meeting with Samuel Adams, of Massachusetts; we know for what superfluous purpose—it was to show to his *partenaire* the justice of the American cause. “I firmly believe,” said Chastellux, “that Parliament has no right to tax America without her consent, and I also believe that when a noble people say, ‘*We want to be free*,’ it is difficult to prove that they are in the wrong. . . . Nevertheless, Mr. Adams demonstrated to me in a very satisfactory way, that New England had not been settled with a view to commerce and aggrandizement; but by individuals who fled from persecution, and sought an asylum at the other end of the world where they would be free to live according to their opinions.” “I agree with you so far, but let us speak of the future,” said Chastellux. “The inequality of fortunes will increase, and your government is founded upon the complete equality of its citizens, upon the right of votes for all; will there not be in that a source of contradiction? A poor man by the side of a rich one will suddenly become a criminal. Which evil will win? Aristocracy or anarchy?” Mr. Adams was not to be convinced, but let us abandon Chastellux to his substantial good fortune.

Another time he met some Quakers. He found them

very tiresome; upon leaving their meetings he had to go and rejoice his soul in the Anglican services; sonatas played upon the organ, a fine minister singing in a most theatrical voice, melodious responses from a young woman; in fact, "it was more of a little paradise, than the road to paradise." On the whole, the Quakers have, "as a contrast to their uncouthness, a coaxing, smooth tongue, quite Jesuit-like." But some of them are so estimable! Benezet, for example, who had a "shabby, humble appearance," passionately benevolent, desirous of drawing from Chastellux information about the most recent methods invented in France for saving the shipwrecked. "My friend," said the Quaker, "will not the men of letters try to disgust the other men with war, and make them live together like brothers and friends?"—"Thou deceivest thyself, my friend," responded the chevalier, "when thou foundest thy hopes upon the progress of enlightenment through philosophy. There are some energetic hands working now on the great edifice of public happiness; but uselessly will they try to finish any part of it, while the foundation is lacking, and this foundation, as thou hast said, is general peace. As for intolerance and persecution . . . I will whisper a word in thy ear, of which perhaps thou wilt not seize the whole meaning, although thou knowest the French language very well; they are no longer in the fashion. . . ." Voltaire can sleep in peace. "I like thy nation because it is kind and sensible," continued the Quaker. Thereupon he gave the chevalier a long list of his brothers residing in Rhode Island, so as to put them under his protection, and according to the Quaker custom, presented him with several tracts. The French friend revenged himself by writing in his book: "Fortunately, the small amount of zeal the Quakers have shown

in the present crisis has made them lose their credit. This revolution comes at a propitious time where we have drawn out of them all that we can expect: the walls of the house are completed, it is time now to call the decorators."

Very active operations were in progress from January to June, 1781, in Carolina and on the borders of Virginia. It was the memorable duel between Lord Cornwallis and General Greene. When Greene came to take command of the American army, instead of Gates, who was recalled, General Morgan, on January 17th, at the Ford of the Broad, was inflicting a severe defeat on the English under Colonel Tarleton. But Cornwallis still pursued his design of transporting the seat of war into the rich and powerful country of Virginia. Greene was thwarting his purpose. The campaign, on both sides, was conducted with tenacity and admirable skill. In order to lighten the march, Lord Cornwallis had destroyed nearly all his train; in spite of the lack of food, and the long, circuitous routes they were compelled to take across a country cut by many streams, his men followed him without a murmur, contented with sometimes only two ears of corn for rations, because they had seen him at their head at Brandywine, Germantown, and Monmouth. He defeated Greene, March 15th, at Guilford Court House, or, at least, he held the field of battle; but he suffered such great losses that he could not pursue him. He marched 160 miles in order to gain, by April 7th, Wilmington, on Cape Fear, whence he thought he could make sure of his water communications with Charleston. Meanwhile, abandoning North Carolina, where the armies passing through it had left the country almost without resources, Greene rushed onward into

South Carolina; he arrived before the town of Camden on April 7th. It is true that Lord Rawdon obliged him to retire; but, nevertheless, Charleston on account of this movement remained cut off from Camden. On May 10th the taking of Fort Watson by the Americans rendered it impossible for the English to keep Camden. Greene recaptured Orangeburg, Forts Mott, Granby, and Augusta; finally, he invested Ninety-six, an important post, in the interior of South Carolina, and stormed it on June 19th. As in Camden, the English held it; but a month later Lord Rawdon retired, after having demolished the fort; his troops were not strong enough to guard positions so far from Charleston. And at this date Greene's strategy was to combine with another officer, of whom we will soon speak. Greene, of Quaker origin, who on account of his worldly propensities was forced to leave the sect, became one of the most inspired of the American commanders: "When the History of the United States will have become ancient, students will be taught to celebrate (as they did the heroes of Rome and Greece) those heroes of the campaign that began in the South against the English Army, after the unmerited defeat into which Gates threw his troops when Lincoln had lost Charleston. Rarely has there been seen such devotion and suffering, so much patriotic loyalty and ardent valor, in the soldier, added to a like display of intelligent resolution and improvised talent, and equal devotion on the part of the commanders. . . . And this glory belongs entirely to the United States." Who is speaking in this manner of the Americans? It is not the Chevalier de Chastellux this time, but Doniol, another enthusiast of a different order.—La Fayette is the one who will come to the aid of Greene.

By the French, up to March, there had been two at-

tempts at sea attacks. They still continued to have storms favorable to them, for in January the English fleet that blockaded Newport was seriously damaged. Swiftly, while their ships were being repaired, Des-touches sent De Tilly down to Chesapeake Bay with the ship *Eveill *, the frigates *Surveillante* and *Gentille*, and the cutter *Gu pe*. The State of Virginia had urged them to come by sea to her aid; Arnold had just landed with 1,500 men and was ravaging her coasts. The mission of this little squadron was to go up the James River, burn Arnold's transports and destroy his escorts, a vessel and two frigates that were bringing their broadsides to bear, so as to sustain him. But the *Eveill * drew too much water to be able to reach the English flotilla. De Tilly captured three corsairs, six brigs, and a few transports. As he was returning he met the *Romulus*, a vessel of forty-four cannon. The *Eveill * presented herself across the path of the *Romulus* at pistol range, the *Gentille* placed herself alongside; the *Romulus* hauled down her flag, then her pennant, and surrendered without firing a single cannon. De Tilly manned his prize; she carried 500 prisoners. On the 25th of February he returned to Newport.

Washington, on March 6th, arrived at the General Headquarters of Rochambeau. He was received with all the honors due a marshal of France. "This interview of the two Generals," says Mathieu Dumas, "was a veritable f te for us. We were impatient to see the hero of liberty. His noble greeting, his simple manners, his gentle gravity surpassed our expectations; he won all of our hearts." La Fayette enjoyed the honors paid to Washington; he had looked forward to them with great pleasure, which is proved by his letter to his wife on February 2d, when he was hoping for this inter-

view: "When you recall what they thought in France of *these poor rebels* when I came over to be hung with them, and when you think of my tender sentiment for General Washington, you will realize how enraptured I shall be to see him received there as Generalissimo of the combined armies of the two nations." Mathieu Dumas was also a close observer on this occasion; later on, he praises the fatherly affability of Washington, his serious conversation, and his gentle good humor. He watches him with tender veneration—he follows the general's glance, which rests so lovingly upon La Fayette, "his adopted son and pupil." But already, on the 13th of March, it was necessary for Washington to depart. He solicited, as a special favor, to be allowed to accompany him as far as Providence, a pleasant place which he had visited more than once, studying the customs, language, political parties; and being welcomed familiarly at the home of Doctor Bowne. And how he enjoyed the acclamations of the people for the hero of independence! It was night; a crowd of children rushed to the edge of the town of Providence to meet him, bearing torches and acting as escort. All of them wanted to touch him; the citizens called him their father: "General Washington, much moved, stopped an instant, and pressing my hand said: 'We may be beaten by the English, it is the chance of arms; but here is an army that they can never vanquish.'"

He had come to Newport to regulate with Rochambeau the details of a more serious expedition in Chesapeake Bay. Our fleet was to act in unison with La Fayette, who, with 1,200 light infantry, was to feign an attack upon Staten Island, march by Philadelphia to the Head-of-Elk, board some small boats, go to Annapolis, and then from there to Williamsburg, where he

was to assemble the militia of Virginia, blockade Portsmouth, and await the co-operation of the French. Thus did the marquis with his usual impetuosity. But it seems he did not have much confidence in the combined plan. He rather expected some *cavilling* again; he imagined—and he said to Washington the very day the French fleet set sail—that Rochambeau intended to reserve for the French troops alone the honor of shedding their blood and carrying off the victory. On the other hand, contrary to the views of Washington, who had desired that the French detachment should be under the command of Lauzun, Rochambeau chose the Baron de Vioménil, which La Fayette, evidently, did not consider good *diplomacy*. It was already a good deal to have to calm the impetuosity of the Baron de Steuben; what would it be when he should have to moderate “or correct the errors of two barons”! Fersen, much fascinated by Lauzun, whose “beautiful soul” he admired, noticed also that there was a little coolness between the two generals. In the end the expedition failed, without any one in particular being to blame. The French ships could not be at the appointed place, because the English fleet followed them at twenty-four hours’ distance; Destouches had among his ships four vessels not copper-lined; “for lack of speed” they remained several miles in the rear. The others were forced to go slow and wait for them; and finally, the two fleets, on the 16th of March, faced each other off Chesapeake Bay. The *Conquérant* and the *Ardent* were sorely tried; to continue the fight was impossible. Destouches led his ships back to Rhode Island.

Let us not deceive ourselves with the thought that this combat had not been glorious: courage and presence of mind of De la Grandière, “a poor, simple, little man



who hardly knew how to write," but who could give a few lessons in courage to the most learned; skilful manœuvres of De la Clocheterie; the bravery of Marnigny, who, "with the yardarm of his topsail broken," repaired another "in less than a quarter of an hour," nearly at the cannon's mouth; the land troops doing "prodigious work" and comporting themselves so bravely on board "that the sailors of the detachment came back as delighted with them as if they were their own brothers"; the high spirits of all the crews during the whole battle—all of this was reported to the King; and Chastellux begged De Castries to appoint Destouches as commander of a squadron, in order "to give solemnity to this combat," the first that was fought on the American coast between the two powerful fleets of France and Great Britain. Noailles, Damas, Laval, Lameth distinguished themselves. Nevertheless, France remained unjust to Destouches; but America was not. Washington wrote to Rochambeau on March 31st: "I admire the fine, valorous conduct of Chevalier Destouches and his squadron during the course of this action . . . Arnold's salvation was due only to the winds." Congress saw in this stubborn combat, sustained against a superior force, the happy forerunner of a victory. It was not deceived.

The *Concorde* arrived on the 8th of May at Boston; she brought back the Viscount de Rochambeau. This was the second time that news was received from France in 1781: at the end of February, La Pérouse had returned upon the *Astrée* bringing with him 1,053,000 *livres*, but also the sad assertion that France had now to aid Holland, attacked by England, and that the court of Versailles demanded time to resolve upon a

more energetic action in the United States. The *Concorde* was a more propitious messenger.

Almost alone France had to face everything. Spain was haunted with the idea of a prompt and advantageous peace, even if the interests of our American allies had to be sacrificed; this we would not admit. On April 25th, 1780, Louis XVI wrote an admirable letter to Charles III of Spain, recalling to him that he was not seeking either vainglory or conquests, but reparation for the insults to the French flag, and the salvation "of an oppressed people who had thrown themselves into his arms." While France was engaged heart and soul in a righteous war, Spain was "managing a retreat behind England"; it came to the point that the court of Madrid had refused to receive Gérard, on his return from America, on account of his qualification as representative of France to Congress. "Our ambassador endured the affront, although it passed all conception," said Vergennes. In response to our good faith, Charles III raised a corner of the mask. On April 22d, 1780, in an unabashed manner, he gave notice to his beloved brother and nephew, the King of France, of the presence at Aranjuez of the Scotchman Dalrymple. "An outrageous gossip and a passable liar," Doniol tells us, flattering himself upon his acquaintance with Necker, and coming to hint at peace. On May 16th a more qualified emissary arrived: Cumberland, Secretary of the Foreign Office, "attended by a certain Abbé Hussey, an Irishman who had been chaplain at the Spanish Embassy in London." Hussey arrived at Madrid alone; Cumberland passed for a person in his service, who was waiting in Portugal (where Vergennes had "a most arrant blockhead") the orders to join his master; six weeks later Charles III called Cumberland to court.

And now we are soon to find D'Estaing in this fine company. "They thought that they would place him in Cordova, as he had grown so old that he was nearly in his dotage." It was he, however, who fought this combined plotting of England and the court of Spain. "The whole Spanish nation," said De Florida-Blanca (who was always either stormy and cloudy, or clearing suddenly), "wants the conqueror of Grenada." The King welcomed him on August 3d, 1780, at Saint-Ildefonse. Flattered, questioned, consulted, the admiral, always supported upon his glorious crutches, promenaded in the gardens of Saint-Ildefonse, upon the same terrace as Cumberland. On the third day, August the 5th, the English papers published this notice coming from Madrid, the effect of which threatened to be deplorable in America: "According to all appearances, it will not be long before peace will be concluded between England and Spain. . . ." It was added that France was invited to join the treaty, but that in case this power refused, Spain had this affair so much at heart, that rather than fail to make this treaty, she would break the Family Compact. D'Estaing could do no more; however, he waited for his recall until November 8th.

Under the ever-increasing burden France did not falter. Spain refused to help in the expense of the preparations for an attack upon England; it was necessary to repair our ships or construct others, to maintain the army of Rochambeau, the squadron of Guichen, the troops not embarked that remained on our coasts, and to advance money to Franklin. On September 27th, 1780, when Maurepas came to expose our financial situation in such alarming terms that it seemed that we had no resource outside of peace, Vergennes, soul of resistance, wrote to the King: "Must we accelerate then, the ten-

dencies of Madrid? Who will be able to guarantee that the glory of the King of France will not be compromised? The Minister speaks only of honor, because 'the rest is nothing in comparison.' If it is necessary to take this stand, I demand a written order." The order was never given. With the view of conducting the war more energetically, on October 14th new Ministers, Ségur and Castries, were placed respectively at the head of the war and navy. Necker—who feared La Fayette *like the devil*—became too pressing for peace; he was allowed to circulate the report of the financial scandal—then Maurepas dismissed him. They put 6,000,000 *livres* at the disposition of Washington to maintain 12,000 or 15,000 men; they resolved to make a great effort upon the sea, the operations developing principally in the West Indies, under Admiral de Grasse. At this juncture Colonel Laurens, on March 19th, 1781, arrived from America.

The disclosures of Washington were quickly studied: "The natural resources of the country are exhausted,—no national capital,—no funds to buy back the paper money,—failure of the system of requisitions,—indifference of individuals to hold up the public credit,—the army at the end of its resistance both physically and morally,—the people ready to think that they are only exchanging one tyranny for another: to sum up, . . . a desperate situation, if France does not make a supreme effort." Washington asked for an immediate supply of money—naval superiority—a reinforcement of 15,000 men. At once the King gave 10,000,000 *livres*. Congress had asked for 25,000,000. With the 10,000,000 already given, the expense of the squadron and the expeditionary corps, the royal liberality surpassed the demand. The superiority of the navy is going to be

revealed. And the events are going to show that Rochambeau's 5,000 men, plus the 600 infantry brought by the *Sagittaire*, plus the 3,500 men brought from the West Indies by De Grasse, will be sufficient for the victory.

The great news that the *Concorde* brought to Rochambeau, was that the order was given to Admiral de Grasse to sail to Newport in July or August and relieve the fleet of De Barras.

## CHAPTER IX

### THE OFFENSIVE—THE MARCH UPON YORKTOWN—CAM- PAIGN OF LA FAYETTE IN VIRGINIA—YORKTOWN ATTACKED BY SEA AND LAND—CAPITULATION

Washington still desired to make an attack in the North, and Rochambeau in the South. In spite of Chastellux, who flattered himself that he had overcome the admiral's stubbornness—great minds make blunders sometimes—Rochambeau would not yield. On his return from the conference at Weatherfield, he wrote to De Grasse, May 28th: "Come! America is in distress. Bring with you from San Domingo the troops of the Marquis de Saint-Simon; obtain from the Colonists 1,200,000 *livres*, and bring that also. With your assistance we could take New York; but it would be better to occupy Charleston." As to De Barras, he persuaded him to disobey the instructions of the Ministry. Ordinarily, if the expeditionary corps left Rhode Island, the vessels should be conducted to Boston harbor, a safer place, and anchored there; it was a hundred miles by sea from Newport; but according to the ruling of the winds, the meeting of De Barras with Admiral de Grasse might be retarded for a month. Barras had the excellent good spirit to consent to remain as near as possible to his *junior*. He made this noble declaration, which Rochambeau has recorded: "No one is more interested than I in the arrival of De Grasse in these waters. He was my junior and has just been made Lieutenant-General. As soon as I learn that he is near, I shall set sail to put myself under his orders. I will make this

campaign, but I shall not make another." No one in the council dared to hesitate longer. This *brave, good man* had the soul of a *patriot*.

Letters went astray rather cleverly. It was already very *à propos* that Clinton believed Rochambeau had decided to put ceremony aside and pay him a visit in New York; thereupon the text of the conference at Weatherfield fell into his hands, and made him feel that much more tranquil in his misconception. He knew by that how much Washington repudiated an immediate expedition in the South. Then, it was another letter from De Barras to La Luzerne, announcing to him the intention of conducting the fleet to Boston. Still another letter from Rochambeau to La Luzerne had the same fate; and it would have been regretted if Clinton could have comprehended this one; but it was written in cipher, and no one in New York could solve the enigma.

On June 8th De Lauzun appeared at Newport, coming from New Windsor: he brought a message from Washington. The following day orders were given to break up the camp. On the 10th, at five o'clock in the morning, the Bourbonnais brigade embarked; at nine o'clock in the evening it was at Providence. Finding neither straw nor wood, through the kindness of the town council they were "lodged in big, empty houses." And on the 11th they were encamped on the heights which overlooked Providence on the west; the same day the Soissonais brigade joined them. To protect the fleet, Rochambeau left at Rhode Island about 1,200 militia and the larger number of the 450 recruits which had just landed at Boston.

It took eight days to secure the horses for the artillery and hospital ambulance, and the oxen which were to carry the munitions. Meanwhile, Washington reports

to Rochambeau the alarming news coming from Virginia: "The enemy having concentrated his forces, is marching across the State almost without opposition, the troops of the Marquis being too small in number to accomplish anything."—"The English army, with a considerable force, is between Richmond and Fredericksburg; its destination is not certain; but in view of its superiority it is at liberty to go where it will." And Rochambeau writes to De Grasse on June 11th: "I will not deceive you, Sir; these people are at the end of their resources; Washington will not have half the troops that he counted upon having, and I believe, although he is silent upon the subject, that he has not 6,000 men; that La Fayette has not 1,000 men of the regular troops with the militia to defend Virginia; about as many are marching to join him; that General Greene has made an attack upon Camden and has been repulsed; and I am ignorant as to when and how he will rejoin La Fayette." On the 16th he writes again: "General Washington has but a handful of men, which could possibly reach to about 7,000 or 8,000. The army of Cornwallis is in the heart of Virginia, between Richmond and Fredericksburg. . . . You can well understand that under these conditions how urgent it is that you bring some troops with you; this country is at bay, all its resources are failing at the same time: the continental paper is worth absolutely nothing." On the same day he writes a letter to Ségur, the French Minister of War: "The poor Marquis de La Fayette, with his detachment, is retreating to meet another detachment of Pennsylvania troops that General Wayne is taking to him."

We are not as uneasy as General Rochambeau about the fate of Greene; we know that Camden has already



been evacuated by Lord Rawdon, and that Ninety-six soon will be. And it is the moment to say that La Fayette is making just as good a figure in Virginia as Greene. If the truth must be told, the marquis went to the South with a slight feeling of discontentment because he was thwarted in his desires. He complains to Hamilton confidentially of being removed from the North just at the moment when the French troops were about to fight. Washington, of course, did him an honor in sending him against such an adversary as Lord Cornwallis, and the future will console him. He met all difficulties with wonderful good spirits; in his presence nobody dared to be sad. In the first place, his men had neither shirts nor shoes; he borrowed on his own credit, from the merchants of Baltimore, 2,000 pounds sterling, to buy linen, hats, and the rest. The ladies of Baltimore, who gave a ball in his honor as he was passing through the city, emulated the example of the ladies of Philadelphia, and cut out and made the shirts. Yet all these Northern soldiers that he was taking with him were prejudiced against the unhealthy Southern climate, and even with the shirts they were not contented to go so far; they deserted. We will have to confess that La Fayette hung one or two, as an example; but he possessed other powers of persuasion as well; he bravely put the following alternative on the order of the day: "The expedition will be difficult and dangerous; but I hope that I will not be abandoned by my men; however, if there are any who wish to go, they are at liberty to do so at once." He assures us that after this he had no trouble; he did not have one deserter; that even a petty officer who had a sore leg which kept him from following on foot, "rented a cart at his own expense so as not to be left behind." In default of the hussars of

Lauzun which he hoped to have had, he was given the dragoons of the country: some young men of Baltimore who formed a company of volunteers.

Let us behold him now en route. He arrived at Richmond before General Philipps, who had recently brought reinforcements to the British from New York. This was April 29th; he had made 200 miles by forced marches from Baltimore with 1,200 regulars and 2,000 militia. La Fayette saved the magazines of Richmond; the pillage of them would have been fatal. Philipps did not dare attack him, and the marquis, profiting by the surprise he gave him, made a reconnoiter with cannon upon Petersburg, south of the James River, which served at the same time for the purpose of passing quietly into Carolina a convoy of munitions and clothes of which Greene stood much in need. Philipps died; Arnold replaced him. La Fayette refused to communicate with a traitor. He could not have done less; however, this proceeding had a most happy effect upon the morale of his troops, and made a great impression in America. It put Arnold in such a false position that the English command was compelled to withdraw him. But on May 20th Cornwallis made his junction with the division at Petersburg; he had 5,000 men, and the advance-guard of Tarleton of 300 chasseurs, mounted upon the best horses of Virginia, which had been procured for them by the negroes; "like birds of prey they seized everything that came in their way." La Fayette was "not even strong enough to let himself be beaten." He did not have the command of the navigable rivers. He did a wise thing when he abandoned the right bank of the James River and concentrated his forces at Richmond. The reinforcements of the 800 Pennsylvanians were slow in coming. If La Fayette had given battle

he would have been cut to pieces. If he had refused a combat, the country, "a country where the laws were not enforced, and the government without energy," would have believed itself abandoned. He, therefore, resolved to engage in skirmishes, without getting too deep into the fray, and was careful to keep out of the reach of "that Tarleton cavalry that the militia dreaded as much as so many wild beasts." In this way he had to abandon Richmond, gain the higher country, so as to keep his communication open with Philadelphia; to evacuate in June the magazines of Fredericksburg, and withdraw as far as Raccoon Ford, always in advance of General Wayne's Pennsylvanians, who finally caught up with him.

Cornwallis did not dare to go too far into the country; he retraced his steps; at Charlottesville, his dragoons came near carrying off the Virginia Assembly; a detachment bore down upon Point of Fork, where Steuben was training 700 recruits, and threw into the river, cannon, munitions, and all the food that they could find. La Fayette let them go; but as soon as he had the Pennsylvanians well in hand, in his turn he quickly gave chase to Cornwallis. The English were at Elk Island, a march from the magazines, which it was most important to save. In the night La Fayette made a short cut, which Cornwallis did not know; at dawn he found himself in an impregnable position, between the English commander and the magazines, "the loss of which would have affected the whole army of the South." This happened the middle of June. Then Steuben rejoined the marquis: the American forces were raised to 5,000 men. La Fayette said to Washington on June 28th: "No doubt that they will exaggerate the number of our forces; and our air of boldness will con-

firm the mistake." Richmond was evacuated on the 20th of June by the English; they went toward Williamsburg. Six hundred *riflemen*—mountaineers ready for anything, fine marksmen, agile as cats—gave still more assurance to La Fayette. And to sum up: while Rochambeau was wondering how poor La Fayette was going to draw himself out of the claws of his lordship, the marquis was fishing up again the old arms and cannon thrown into the water by the enemy; and, a little astonished at the return of his good fortune, which he modestly welcomed, was saying to himself: "Shall I go after Lord Cornwallis?"

In the meantime, on June 18th, the French army left Providence; the troops only knew that they were to go "to the Hudson River" and there await orders. Mathieu Dumas received from the commissary-general, De Béville, "the order to precede the columns and indicate the camps and positions" that the regiments should successively occupy. "The different commissions with which he had been charged, and principally those which had to do with establishing the quarters of Lauzun in Connecticut, had furnished him the occasion of reconnoitering the country and the principal communications between Rhode Island and the North River." In the general rejoicing among the officers, there was not one happier than Closen. Between Providence and Boston he seemed to be walking along the road to paradise. The route all the way was bordered with acacias in full bloom, whose delicate fragrance embalmed the air. He climbed the belfries to enjoy the harmonious beauty of the scene. At the bivouacs the inhabitants arrived in crowds; they adored the military music; the French officers and soldiers danced with the American

girls; this was a fête of equality, "the first fruits of the Alliance."

The heat was intense; they could only march at night; the roads were often deep with mud and almost impassable; it was hard work to drag through this mire the heavy field-artillery, commissary-wagons, and carts carrying the flatboats for the passage of the rivers. Poor Abbé Robin, humiliated perhaps by these duties, dared to say that such a struggle and the fatigue of it was beyond all human endurance. "For lack of ink I often write with the juice of a plant. . . . At two o'clock in the morning the noisy roll of the drum orders me to arise from my humble bed of straw. . . . Extended in the dust, panting with thirst, I feel a desire, like the rich man, that a Lazarus would put his finger in water and quench my parched tongue. . . . Our young commanders, reared in comfort and luxury, support this fatigue with a courage that makes me blush for my weakness. . . . They encourage the soldiers by marching at their head." The Viscount de Noailles set the example; the Americans considered his greatest title that of being brother-in-law to the marquis; it was a much sought distinction to dance with him.

After leaving Newtown, where the army was encamped on June 27th, they entered the zone of danger; Rochambeau detached an advance-guard. During the night of June 30th he received a courier from Washington which hastened his departure; on July 2d, by doubling the march, they were at Bedford; and this same day the legion of Lauzun, just relieved from advance-guard duty, departed with the dragoons of Sheldon, to go, it was said, "in the pursuit of 400 Tories who had taken away their cattle." Deux-Ponts believed it, but the affair was more serious.

Washington, informed that the enemy had scattered his forces, "that he had even sent a tolerably large detachment into the Jerseys," thought that he could take Fort Washington by surprise, with the hope, no doubt, that once master of this key of the fortifications of New York, he could take the city. For this reason he had asked for Lauzun. The duke made grave complaints in his *Mémoires* of General Lincoln, with whom he had to operate. Instead of surprising the enemy post as he desired, the Americans amused themselves by *firing off their guns* and giving the alarm, so as to provoke the English to a sortie, of which he was sure in the end that Lincoln could not withstand. Lincoln had to fall back covered by Lauzun. We can easily see how this proceeding must have "annoyed" the Frenchmen. Washington welcomed Lincoln, beaten although not subdued; he also showed the greatest joy at seeing Lauzun again, and in his order of the day "eulogized his division in the most flattering manner. . . ."

Washington's army was already encamped upon a fixed point for the junction; he went to see the French army at North Castle on July 5th; the following day, "after a long tiresome march, through intense heat," the French troops "joined the American Army at Camp Philippsburg, three miles from King's Bridge, the first post of the enemy on the Island of New York." Deux-Ponts gives details: "The right of the two armies (French and American) was placed upon a perpendicular cliff protected by a valley which it dominated; in the center was a narrow ravine through which ran a small stream; this ravine which separated the French from the Americans, had very steep sides. The left was stationed near another stream, by the Bronx River upon which we had out-posts. The front was protected

by a woods, and there was nothing to fear from the back; the Lauzun Legion encamped at White Plains four miles to our left, made this position secure; all the avenues imaginable were covered by advance posts."

Washington was contented. Rochambeau was able to tell him that the French "had crossed Connecticut without any complaints being made of them; on the contrary, the people received them with their blessings." He wrote to Barras from White Plains, on July 8th: "We have made the most rapid march . . . without any dissatisfaction, without leaving a man behind us, except ten love-sick soldiers from the regiment of Soissonnais, who wanted to return to see their sweet hearts at Newport, and for whom I am going to send. . . . Our junction was made with great acclamations on the part of the Americans." And in a letter to Ségur he said: "We have made 220 miles in eleven days march. There are not four provinces in the Kingdom of France, where we could have traveled with as much order and economy, and without wanting for anything."

And the result of this junction was that Clinton could not embark his troops, as he had hoped to do, descend into Chesapeake Bay, and through Maryland, Pennsylvania, and the Jerseys, turn upon Washington, reduce him to the defensive upon the east side of the Hudson, and cut the communications between the North and the South.

Camp life was very pleasant; let us hear what Mathieu Dumas says about it. This seems to me to be an example of a very dignified, serious pleasure: "My friend Charles de Lameth, the two brothers Berthier, recently arrived from France (as we also recall it), and added to our staff officers, and I have established our bivouac near the General Headquarters of our Commander, De

Béville, in a most agreeable position among some rocks, and under magnificent tulip trees. We have amused ourselves by ornamenting the little space where our gun carriages are lined up, and in a short time have made a very pretty garden. General Washington making a tour of inspection wished to see us. We were notified of his visit in time, and he found upon our field tables the plan of the Battle of Trenton, with its counterpart that of West Point, and some of the other principal actions of this War."

The army remained in camp until the 19th of August, but not without some very lively distractions. On July 15th a small English flotilla, going up the Hudson, tried to burn some American ships laden with flour; they succeeded only in seizing a cargo of bread; for four days it was necessary to reduce the rations of the French soldier to four ounces; "however, he was given rice and additional meat." On the 16th Washington asked for two pieces of artillery of twelve-pound cannon and two howitzers. Deux-Ponts mounted them on a battery; the gunners were not accustomed to shoot over the water, and few shots reached the frigates of the enemy. But on the 19th, as the English were redescending the Hudson, upon passing Dobb's Ferry, they were saluted by two howitzers; one ship was set on fire; twenty men threw themselves into the water. "I did not think," wrote Rochambeau to Barras, "that they would come to look for fresh bread so soon." It was a Captain Verton who commanded the battery that made such a good shot.

It was toward the middle of July also that Rochambeau gave orders to Mathieu Dumas to push the reconnoitering as far as possible—to the end of the island, in sight of the enemy's first redoubts. This kind of operation had for object the taking of detailed observa-



tion of all the works of the fortifications around New York and the adjacent islands. Several reconnoiters had already been made; but this last one was to be more aggressive. The French forced back some small Hessian posts, and arriving to within rifle range of the forts, met an American detachment that had been exploring the other side. Dumas modestly ascribed his success to the enterprise of Sub-lieutenant Killmaine (who afterward became a brilliant cavalry general) commanding a detachment of lancers from the Lauzun Legion.

A few days afterward, on the 21st, was developed to its fullest extent the reconnaissance that the reconnoitering party had prepared. Under the command of Chastellux and Lincoln, 5,000 men set out on the march, some at eight o'clock in the evening, others at midnight, clearing the land, for an average width of three miles, that extended into a point between the east bank of the Hudson and Long Island Sound. It was held principally by American *loyalists*. All those who could not find boats to go back to the island were attacked by the hussars of Lauzun and the dragoons of escort of the generals, and either killed or taken prisoners. Washington and Rochambeau, overcome by fatigue, went to sleep under a hedge, within fire of the cannon from the enemy's ships. The English were trying to prevent the Americans and French from going on with their work. "I awakened first," relates Rochambeau, "and calling General Washington, I remarked that we had forgotten about the time of the tide. We went quickly to the mill road, upon which we had crossed the narrow arm of the sea that separated us from the main land, and found it covered with water. We were therefore on an island. They brought us two small boats in which

we embarked, carrying with us the saddles and harness of the horses. Then followed a boat with two American dragoons pulling two horses by the bridle that were good swimmers; the other horses came after them excited by the lash of the whip in the hands of some dragoons near the edge of the water. Happily our little manœuvre was not discovered by the enemy; it was all over in an hour. Such was the American way of doing things." Elsewhere, on the Morrisania side, the legion of Lauzun and an American battalion sustained, in very close quarters, a lively enough fire from both the artillery and infantry of the enemy. Count de Damas had a horse killed under him.

On the return from this reconnaissance, in the evening of the 23d or 24th of July, the generals found news from the South: Cornwallis was beating a retreat, La Fayette was "following him cautiously." In a letter of July 8th he confided to Washington that he continued to keep the secret of the real weakness of his forces: "Our forces as well as the militia are exaggerated . . . and in order to hide to what extent there are so few of us, I am obliged to go in advance, as if I expected a general engagement." General Wayne, "brave but impetuous," did not enter willingly into the idea of this strategy; he was overelated at his success of an attack upon the rearguard of Cornwallis. In a second attempt he came near having a serious engagement, and he lost his cannon: La Fayette saved him. His lordship finally shut himself up in Portsmouth, and the marquis took good care not to go there to seek him. He preferred to take a more healthy position upon Malvern Hill, and let his army rest, while he kept an eye on his enemy. It is only by the letters of the marquis of the 6th and 21st of

August that Washington was advised of the new movements of Cornwallis toward Yorktown. Rochambeau could not have known anything on July 23d, and for a very good reason, in spite of what his *Mémoires* lead us to believe. But let us do as he did: anticipate a month. How happy La Fayette is going to be in August! And how proud, modestly proud! Later, when he writes his *Commentaires*, he will come to persuade himself that he it was who had pushed his redoubtable enemy toward the sea, and that his principal object had been "to force him between the rivers in such a way that he would have no means of retreat." But he had not premeditated that much. La Fayette did not manœuvre Cornwallis. However, in following the inspiration of prudence, tempered by audacity at the right moment, dogging his enemy's footsteps, at last he found the means to gain the superiority over him. "As if by enchantment," yes, in very truth, "by enchantment," Cornwallis was to be blocked by sea and land. As La Fayette grew older, it appears to me that he forgot himself a little, by posing. He did not think of it—and he was simply and gently heroic—when he wrote those pretty letters to Washington, where we see him apply himself conscientiously to profit by the marvelous circumstance, to comprehend it, astonished at his good fortune, trembling for fear that he might lose it, as if he did not think himself entirely worthy; but he was, as the execution of it will demonstrate. His letter to his wife on August 24th is charmingly free from all boasting. He cannot resist writing to Vergennes at the same time: "When you have Cornwallis ahead of you, *Monsieur le Comte*, and when you are running after him through the sands of Virginia. . . ." And then he says in another letter, one to Maurepas: "By your interest in

me you would be alarmed at the role which they have given my youth. Five hundred miles from any other troops, they have wished to oppose me to the fortunes of Lord Cornwallis. . . ." And he returned to his activities without being too hopeful of the result. "While the enemy is establishing himself permanently at Yorktown and Gloucester, upon the two opposite banks of the James River, protecting a good anchoring place by his cross fires," explains Dumas, "La Fayette encamps at Williamsburg, between the James and York Rivers, a march from Yorktown."

Now since August 2d Rochambeau has had the response from Admiral de Grasse. Very bold and enterprising—he was called the French Rodney—De Grasse, who was sixty years old in 1781, did not seem to have the power of making himself beloved. Trading D'Estaing carried on openly, while he was accused of having a contempt "for the low interests of a common tradesman." The officers reproached him for haughtiness in the command. They even blamed him for his unusual corpulence. "Flanked with flesh, a gabion of fat—in a word, nature and art, in walling up the ramparts of his soul, thought more of the sheath than the sword." All of this has influenced many historians who, consequently, have not done him full justice. For us, he is simply the commander who, with Rochambeau, made the taking of Yorktown possible. He had just taken Tabago, and had collected a convoy of 200 sails laden with booty, and anchored off Cape Français, at San Domingo, when he received, on July 16th, the dispatches from Rochambeau and De la Luzerne. De Grasse did not lose a moment: the colonists of the island refused to advance the 1,200,000 *livres*; he offered to

guarantee his own colonial possessions. The Spanish Commissioner and Admiral de Solano, however, were pricked with a sense of honor, and went off and made up the adequate sum in Havana. He took on board the regiment of Saint-Simon, departed the 8th of August, and, taking an unaccustomed route through the Bahama Straits, he baffled the English, and arrived August 28th in Chesapeake Bay. We will see that he is not the only one at the rendezvous.

On the 19th the army of Rochambeau set out on the march, without knowing its destination. Deux-Ponts was lost in conjectures; the general pretended he was going to make an attack upon New York. A downpour of rain left the roads in a frightful condition; wagons were broken; for troops that did not understand this kind of work, it was very hard to endure. In three retrograde marches, the French corps reached King's Ferry, whence they passed the Hudson; then redescended, and going along the west bank moved in sight of Staten Island, before Chatham; there, in order to better deceive the enemy, De Villemanzy, Commissary of War, established some bread-ovens, and simulated getting ready to provision the army; upon this, Rochambeau made a quick turn to the right, and went through the Jerseys up to the Delaware, where he passed the Ford of Trenton on the 1st and 2d of December. Since the 27th of August Deux-Ponts knew, "under the greatest secrecy, from one of his well-informed friends" (Fersen, perhaps), "that the object of these marches" was Virginia. The crossing of the Jerseys had been a fête for Closen; it was called the garden-spot of America; he translated it *pays de Cognac*. He had the pleasure of hearing from the lips of Washington, and upon these very battle-fields, the positions taken in the battles of Princeton and Trenton.

On the 3d, in Philadelphia, Deux-Ponts was in a bad humor. "Congress came across our path, and we gave it all the honors that the King ordered; thirteen members took off their thirteen hats at each salute of the flag, and salute of an officer, and this was all that I saw that was civil and noteworthy." Our Abbé Robin, however, had his eyes opened wider: "The arrival of the French at Philadelphia resembled more of a triumph than a simple passage through the city. . . . The streets were crowded with people, and the ladies elegantly dressed. All Philadelphia was astonished to see travelers so fresh and clean. Such good-looking Frenchmen! They said: 'We thought you were all pygmies.' The French troops defiled before Congress, and their Minister Plenipotentiary, and camped on a vast field, watered by the Schuylkill. The next day, the Soissonnais Regiment had manœuvres; 20,000 persons at least, and many fine carriages remarkable for their elegance and lightness, embellished this scene, while the pleasant situation and serenity of the day added still more. The rapidity of the evolution of the troops, their perfect unison, their precision, astonished the spectators and made them most enthusiastic; their interest increased upon seeing among the officers '*the Ally*'; the friend of the young hero to whom they owed so much (this was the Viscount de Noailles). . . . We were amused at the mistake of the people, who took for a general one of those men that our great nobles often have in their suite to carry messages. His short doublet, his rich tunic fringed with silver, his rose colored shoes, his cap with its armorial device, his cane with a large knob at the end, appeared to them so many signs of a high dignitary. The President of Congress honored the occasion with his presence, in a fine coat of black velvet."

In the midst of a dinner given by La Luzerne a message was received from Admiral de Grasse which announced his presence in the Chesapeake. The abbé also saw the great delight of the populace when they were informed of it. "Some fun-makers mounted upon saw-horses pronounced the funeral oration of Cornwallis, and pretended to lament over the distress of the Tories. The people gathered in crowds before the house of the Minister of France; they saluted him with cries of *Vive le Roi*." And suddenly Deux-Ponts's frown disappears. No one tells better than he, about the joy of General Washington: "The expression of his whole face, his bearing changed in a trice; he forgot, for the moment, his position as arbiter of North America, and became an ordinary citizen overjoyed at the good fortune of his country; a child who had had all of his wishes gratified could not have been happier." When Rochambeau, leaving Philadelphia on the 5th, rejoined his army by way of boat to Chester, he perceived Washington on the bank of the river waving his handkerchief. "Hardly had Rochambeau landed," Closen tells us, "when Washington, usually so perfectly composed and wrapped in deep gravity, threw himself into his arms." All his troubles were forgotten. And yet the American troops under the command of Lincoln, nearly all originally from the East, had manifested in Philadelphia their discontentment at being sent to the South. Morris, the Comptroller of Finances, had not been able to advance them a month's pay. There remained 100,000 crowns in the French coffer; it was divided between the two armies.

"Come quick, General," wrote Du Portail to Rochambeau. The two generals arrived September 7th, 1781, at the Head-of-Elk, "the *source*," as Deux-Ponts said,

"of Chesapeake Bay." They found there Saint-Cèsare, captain of the admiral's ship (De Grasse). But what this officer could not know was that on September 5th the squadron of Admiral Graves having appeared off the Capes of Charles and Henry, De Grasse, whom Barras, leaving Newport on the 25th of August, had not yet joined, cut his cables and set sail immediately; and in less than an hour, in spite of the absence of 90 officers and 1,800 men employed in landing the troops, he was under sail and formed in line of battle. The combat lasted from four o'clock in the afternoon into the night; the action fell upon the vanguard of the ships, of which the honor was due, principally, to Bougainville. The five ships of the English vanguard, commanded by Sir Samuel Howe, were badly treated; one of them burned. The chase was discontinued on the 7th, and De Grasse, as he re-entered Chesapeake Bay, had the pleasure of finding Barras there, who, with his eight vessels, four frigates, and eighteen transports, brought the siege artillery and the detachment of De Choisy. All went well, so well, in fact, that from time to time, if one can believe the *Mémoires* of La Fayette, the admiral urged the marquis to raise the siege of Yorktown without waiting for Rochambeau. It is true that the *Correspondance* does not mention this; what it says upon the subject is entirely contradictory: "It would be folly to attack with only the forces that we have now. The Marquis de Saint-Simon, the Count de Grasse and General du Portail are of my opinion."

The generals, making sixty miles a day, were at Williamsburg on the 14th. Chastellux and Choisy arrived the next day. But the troops did not go so fast. At the Head-of-Elk there was only shelter enough for 1,200 men. The vanguard alone embarked; Custine com-



manded the French elements: the grenadiers of Soissonnais with Noailles, the grenadiers of Bourbonnais with the Viscount de Rochambeau, and the infantry and legion under Lauzun. The descent of the Chesapeake was difficult, and this first detachment, which set sail on the 9th, did not enter the James River until the 19th.

As for the major part of the army, it was first detained on the left bank of the Susquehanna. A few flatboats were hardly sufficient for the slow transport of the men. Mathieu Dumas, who was charged with directing the passage, went for information, and learned from the people of the country that this wide river "was fordable in the good season a little below the Falls, about twenty miles from its mouth." Over bad roads he went to the place, and sounded the ford, upon a width of six or seven hundred *toises*, amid the broken rocks "and boiling torrent; the bottom everywhere was moving pebbles, but it was not washing away, and the depth of the water was from three to four feet. I did not hesitate an instant to indicate to the generals this prompt way of crossing, although a little dangerous for passing over the artillery, the horses and all our *impediments*." There were some losses and the munitions were submerged; but all of this was reparable.

At Baltimore, on September 13th, Viomesnil charged Deux-Ponts and Laval-Montmorency to try and embark the troops. It was judged impossible to put these troops on the mean small boats, not suitable for the purpose, and "expose them to the torture of an uncomfortable, cramped position." They decided to go by land. On the 16th, however, a letter came from De la Villebrune, commander of the *Romulus*, who was at Annapolis with the transports coming from Rhode Isl-

and, two frigates and some small boats captured by Admiral de Grasse. The troops then set out on the march for Annapolis. All the war material was embarked on the 19th and the 20th, the troops on the 21st, and the *Gentille*, the *Diligente*, the *Aigrette*, the *Iris*, in all, fifteen sails, bore the Allies, "by a fresh wind which kept up all the way," to Hogs Ferry, where they landed on the 24th. The ascent of the James River with sounding-line in hand was, as usual, very difficult, and more than one boat went down. Upon the *Diligente* Deux-Ponts found Lord Rawdon and two other English officers as prisoners. On the 26th they encamped at Williamsburg. On the 28th the combined army set out on the march to go into camp around Yorktown. They began a siege of three weeks.

Meanwhile, Cornwallis strongly intrenched himself, since he had given up the hope of escape through North Carolina. Had he known that La Fayette had been prevented from following him for lack of boats to transport his army from one side of the James River to the other, he would probably have attempted the evasion. In his way the marquis played him a trick, and we must recall it, in order to do him honor, and also to give praise to his accomplice, the soldier Morgan. He was a brave man who for the good of his country resigned himself to feigning desertion. It was not to his taste; if he should die, for example, under the uniform of an English soldier, would it ever be known why he put it on? What a disgrace to his name! La Fayette promised that if he should have bad luck, the truth would be published, down there in the little village where he was known, by the journals of New Jersey. Morgan consented; he played the deserter; and one day Cornwallis asked him

if La Fayette had many boats. "I should say so!" he exclaimed innocently, "as many as he needs to cross the river." History relates that his lordship did not question him further. As to the brave Morgan, he returned to the American camp, and when the marquis wished to make him a sergeant, he refused because he did not think he knew enough. And how about money, then? No; but during his absence some one had taken his gun; he would like to find it. The gun was found for him; he never suspected that he had acted like a hero of antiquity.

Admiral de Grasse gave Washington the alarm again; he had learned that Admiral Digby was replacing Graves, and he expected an attack; he gave notice to the generals of his resolution to go out to sea and meet the naval forces of the enemy. Washington begged him not to do it; La Fayette supported the reasons of his commander-in-chief. If the French fleet should go away, Cornwallis could abandon his artillery, his baggage even, and his sick, and escape them. The admiral yielded and sacrificed a *glorious* plan in order to stand by one that was more certain. And then, after all, Digby did not appear. On the 27th of September Washington felt reassured.

And yet he had other *annoyances* with which to contend. The country was bare of everything; the military stores had not arrived, and they were out of food. La Fayette himself did not disdain the calling of "quartermaster and collector," at the risk of bursting his head. And then they began to draw supplies from the fleet: once De Villebrune gave them some of his flour; the admiral consented, but he complained that he was skinned alive, that they would reduce him to a state of starvation. "Rochambeau did not leave him anything,"

he said. He did not have any fire-wood, or fresh water, or fresh provisions; his row-boats, used for carrying freight, were nearly all put out of commission, "because of the heavy seas that beat them at their moorings, and because they were obliged to run aground on the coast." The army stole everything he had; finally, he became angry, and sharply refused thirty pounds of candles for the artillery: "Damn it! You have stretched the blanket a little too tight!" Writing to Rochambeau a few days later, he excused his bad humor thus: "I am a Provençal and a sailor, which is enough to entitle me to a quick temper, and I acknowledge my fault and trust in your friendship." Another time, Washington asked him for 800 sailors, to reinforce the posts around Gloucester, held by the Lauzun Legion and the militia of Virginia under General Weedon. De Choisy was charged with the mission. The admiral gave up his sailors, but he protested that they would ruin him in men. At other times he was anxious to move on; he reminded them continually that he could not remain longer than October 31st; and then he would predict all kinds of misfortunes. He saw Cornwallis overpowering De Choisy, cutting his way out, crossing the York River to go back to the North. Rochambeau coolly warded off these mournful prognostications: "Our operations, my dear Count, are always well calculated."

Their operations were in fact calculated with extreme precision, and everything was carried out as the generals had planned. We had about 12,000 men: 4,000 in the corps of Rochambeau, 3,000 with Saint-Simon, 2,000 with Washington, nearly as many as that with La Fayette, and 800 sailors. The besieged had about 8,000. On September 28th, at break of day, Rochambeau left Williamsburg and moved on Yorktown; the investment

began "from the head of the York River to the marshes; they took advantage of the woods, clumps of trees and the marshy creeks, drawing closer and closer to the enemy until they were within pistol range of his fortifications"; the three French brigades on the open field were shielded by cannon. On the 29th Washington, after having repaired the broken bridges, crossed the swamp and stationed his left there, and then placed his right column on the York River. The investment was "complete and pressed as close as possible to the fort." The following night the English withdrew their advance-posts and retired within the walls of the fortifications. On the 30th Rochambeau with Deux-Ponts reconnoitered the abandoned posts. They were found to be not very solid, with narrow parapets, on sandy ground; defended, however, by excellent abatis of pine wood, but this of course was easy to catch fire. The Bourbonnais Grenadiers were placed in one of them and the chasseurs of Deux-Ponts in the other. The English directed the fire of their cannon eight or ten times toward them, but without doing any damage. The volunteers of Saint-Simon, urged on by Viomesnil, became masters of a little wood in front of our left; an hussar was killed; and an officer of the Agenais regiment had his hip broken. The same day Lauzun ran into Tarleton's cavalry, and De Choisy carried his advance-posts to within a mile of Gloucester.

From the 1st of October the Americans worked upon a redoubt, which was to unite the abandoned works of the enemy, some from the American side, others from the French side; the first day, the English fired 300 rounds of cannon upon them; fewer the second day; hardly any were killed. On the 5th the line was continued; during the nights of the 4th and 5th French patrols

frequently glided into the intrenchments of the place; their guns, well filled, made the besieged restless, and the whole night "they fired off cannon incessantly"; and even during the nights of the 5th and 6th. De Grasse sent a message to Rochambeau: "All the evening and night I have heard a considerable noise. Evidently, you are tuning your instruments to accord with those of Lord Cornwallis. Make him dance lively for me."

On October 6th, "all being prepared, the fascines, the clayes and saucissons made ready, nearly all the siege artillery having arrived, the place around the trench well reconnoitered, the General gave the order to begin the attack that evening." At five o'clock Bourbonnais and Soissonnais went to the end of the trench; Viomesnil disposed them over the space of ground they had to cover; at nightfall the engineers put the workmen in their places: "250 men from each of the four regiments who were not on trench duty." Work was well conducted in perfect silence; our parallel left the river at 200 *toises* from Yorktown, and extended to the new American redoubt, situated at 250 *toises* beyond. Touraine was ordered to construct, on the enemy's right, a battery for eight pieces of cannon, and six howitzers or mortars, "which were to serve as a false attack."

From the 7th, Agenais and Saintonge, who relieved the trench at noon, were able to place their first battalions there; the second battalions remained in reserve in the ravines at the back. The trench was spread over 700 *toises*, "defended by four redoubts palisaded, and five batteries." "The ground," explains Fersen, "cut by numerous small ravines, greatly aided our approach, and we were able to arrive in safety as far as our trench, without being obliged to make a side trench." On the 9th an American battery and the Touraine battery

began firing; and on the 10th our forty-one mouths of fire, "as many cannon as mortars and howitzers," all played together as they were suddenly unmasked. Our cannon were well aimed; but the balls, without doing great damage, were buried in the sand of the fortifications; already, however, we learned from the deserters that the bombs were fast becoming effective, and the number of dead and wounded were increasing rapidly. The English had only small pieces of cannon; from the 10th they shot on an average of six rounds an hour during the day; but "they threw many bombs and royal grenades," and at night their flying batteries became active again.

Here, with Chastellux, we must render homage to the American artillery. General Knox, "thirty-five years old, very corpulent, but agile, possessing a good-natured, happy disposition, showed much intelligence in assembling, transporting, unloading and putting in place on the batteries 30 cannon or mortars of gross calibre that he often took the trouble to point himself. It can be said that if, upon this occasion, the English were astonished at the correctness of our aim, and of the terrible execution of the French artillery, we were none the less amazed at the extraordinary progress of the American artillery, as well as of the capability and instruction of a great number of their officers."

In Yorktown there was an old man who had been for thirty years employed under the English Government as Secretary of the Council of Virginia; he was called Secretary Nelson—and was the uncle of the general. "Too advanced in age to desire a Revolution, too prudent to try to stop it if it were necessary, too faithful to his fellow-citizens to separate his interests from theirs," he lived there in a fine house, decorated with

bas-reliefs of marble, upon a high hill, in the neighborhood of the most important fortifications. The house of the aged man attracted the fire of our bomb-throwers and gunners. The secretary had two sons among the besiegers; one of them sent a messenger with a flag to ask safe-conduct for his father; and Chastellux saw his anguish, as he watched the gate of the town, which would remain perhaps closed; but it was opened to let him pass, and in Washington's quarters the old man told "with a serene countenance of the effect of our batteries, of which his house had tested the first shells."

Again on the 10th the enemy ventured to send some troops up the river on flatboats in order to attack De Choisy in the rear. Our cannon obliged them to return.

At last, on October 14th, as the Gâtinais and Royal-Deux-Ponts regiments were coming to relieve the trench, the final attack was decided upon for that night. "Now Gâtinais," Rochambeau tells us, "had been made up from the Auvergne regiment. . . . I said to them: 'My children, if I need you to-night, I hope that you have not forgotten that we have served together in that brave regiment of *Auvergne sans tâche*.' They promised that if I would have their name of Auvergne returned to them, they would die to the last man; they kept their word, fought like lions, and lost a third of their troops." Rochambeau kept his word also; and King Louis XVI of France restored the fine name of Royal-Auvergne to these grenadiers who did not allow themselves to be conquered under the name of Gâtinais.

It was then the 14th. Viomesnil sent an order to Guillaume de Deux-Ponts to "come and find him at the end of the trench." He separated the grenadiers and chasseurs from the two regiments, and gave the count the command of the battalion thus formed, saying



that this was a mark of his confidence. Deux-Ponts understood; he put his men under shelter, and, in the course of the afternoon, with Viomesnil, De Lestrade, Lieutenant-Colonel de Gâtinais, and two sergeants, "as brave as they were intelligent," he made a reconnoiter, "with the greatest exactitude," of the road over which he would have to go during the night and the redoubt in question to be raised. At the right of the French the Americans under the command of La Fayette were to attack the redoubt that overlooked the river. We have his recital of the event, the report of Viomesnil, and the *Journal de Guerre* of Deux-Ponts; the latter gives us the best and most complete information.

"Viomesnil wished to conduct the column of attack himself: he left Custine in the trench. When night came, the battalion of assault, passing through the troops of workers, and the grenadiers (who wished it success and glory, although they were filled with envy to take its place) arrived at the rendezvous fixed by Viomesnil. Deux-Ponts arranged his column in the order of attack, and waited the given signal: 'six bombs fired consecutively from one of our batteries.' The Gâtinais chasseurs, in columns by squads, were at the front, the first fifty carrying fascines, eight of them with ladders. Two sergeants of the Gâtinais regiment, and eight carpenters, four from each regiment, preceded the rest. The chasseurs of Agenais and Bourbonnais, one hundred steps in the rear of the battalion stood ready to come to its aid; while the Count de Rostaing held himself in reserve, with the second Gâtinais battalion.

"Six shells were fired; the besiegers defiled in perfect order and silence. It was forbidden to shoot before arriving on the top of the parapet, forbidden to jump,

without an order, into the intrenchment. At a hundred and thirty steps away a Hessian sentinel cried out: "*Wer da!*" The assailants kept silent and quickened their speed. Under a volley of fire they reached the abatis, which stopped them for a few moments; they left some of their comrades there, but the rest jumped resolutely *into the ditch*, and made their way through the fraise which protected the parapet; the carpenters made breaks in the palisades. The brave Deux-Ponts did not succeed in getting over it, and fell back into the trench; De Sillègue, a young Gâtinais officer, held out his hand to assist him, and received, nearly at the same instant, a bullet in the thigh. As far as the eye could see, the parapet was covered; the French had opened fire and the effect was terrible. Deux-Ponts was about to give the order to jump into the redoubt and charge with bayonet, when the enemy laid down his arms."

"We jumped then with more tranquility and less risk. I immediately started the cry of: '*Vive le Roi!*' which was taken up by all the grenadiers and chasseurs, and repeated by all the troops of the King in the trench; to which the enemy responded by a general salvo of artillery and firing of guns: never have I seen a grander or more majestic spectacle!" Viomesnil was already there, and was preparing for a vigorous defensive; there was a rain of bullets, and it seemed that the English were going to counter-attack. A sentinel who observed their movements called Deux-Ponts; he looked over the parapet; a bullet passed near his head, "covering his face with sand and gravel." This was the end of it; the affair had lasted seven minutes. We had ninety killed or wounded, of which twenty-one were of the regiment of Royal-Deux-Ponts. De Berthelot was

killed, De Sireuil died of his wounds. Count de Damas and Chevalier de Lameth had taken part in the attack as volunteers; Lameth had "his knee-pan broken, and his thigh pierced by a ball." De Vauban was there also to render an account to Rochambeau. "With troops as good, brave and well disciplined as those that I had the honor to lead against the enemy, one could undertake anything," said Count Guillaume; "I owe the greatest day of my life to them."

The same spirit and the same success was noticeable upon the American side. While Colonel Laurens, with eighty men, was making a turn of the redoubt, the troops of Colonel Hamilton, seconded by Gimat, attacked the front. Not a shot was fired. "The ardor of the troops," La Fayette assures us, "did not give the sappers time to cut the way for them." La Fayette had strong American sentiments, and would not allow any one to treat his men as novices. It seemed to him that Viomesnil had a tendency in this direction. The marquis took his revenge: as the Americans were holding their redoubt, and "the French firing was still going on, he sent an aide-de-camp to ask Baron de Viomesnil if he had need of the Americans to help him." This is taken from his *Mémoires*; La Fayette forgot, however, to mention Viomesnil's answer. It was perhaps because his messenger arrived just at the time that the fact itself responded; that is, the capitulation of the English.

Here is the version of Deux-Ponts and also that of Fersen: "On the 15th we worked all day under a shower of bombs, up to the second parallel. On the 16th, at five o'clock in the morning, the men on guard, worn out, had become careless and many slept; certain batteries were deserted and the pickets suspected nothing." According to the recital of De Noailles the English re-

sorted to a ruse. He does not cite his witness, but **says** that they pretended they were Americans and cried out not to shoot. Rochambeau does not allude to anything of this kind. As many as 600 English soldiers penetrated into the parallel and spiked four pieces of cannon, but did not have time to do their work well. Chastellux interrupted them, and Noailles ended their discomfiture. Before noon, through the care of Colonel Aboville, commanding our artillery, the pieces that were badly spiked were in working order again.

Cornwallis was in great extremity; he was out of food and munitions with 1,500 sick soldiers in the hospitals. On the 17th he displayed his flag of truce and parleyed about the terms of capitulation; Laurens and Noailles were commissioned to draw up the articles signed on the 19th by Washington, Rochambeau, and Barras, at Moore House. Through the windows of this little house, set upon a high cliff, where the great event took place, the generals could view the Chesapeake—the sea, whence came their salvation. Seven thousand soldiers and 1,000 sailors fell into our hands, with 214 cannon (74 of which were bronze) and 22 flags. Rochambeau and Washington made sure that the wounded received every attention. Blanchard, quartermaster-general, and the chief surgeons Coste and Robillard were assiduous in their care of all—"friends and enemies alike."

On the 21st, Mathieu Dumas was the one selected to go and meet the prisoners of the garrison; he placed himself at the left of General O'Hara, who commanded it. Cornwallis was suffering. "On approaching the trenches, O'Hara said to me: 'Where is General Rochambeau?' 'At our left,' I answered, 'at the head of the French line.' The English General spurred his horse

in order to go and present his sword to the French General. Foreseeing his intention, I galloped after him so as to place myself between him and General Rochambeau, who just at this moment indicated to me, General Washington, facing him at the head of the American Army. 'You are making a mistake,' I said to General O'Hara, 'the General-in-Chief of our Army is at the right.' I conducted him there, and just as he raised his sword, General Washington prevented him, saying: 'Never, from such a good hand.' I remember that Colonel Abercromby (the same who afterward died on the field of battle in Egypt where he was victorious, at the moment that the enemy-troops were laying down their arms) moved rapidly away, covering his face and biting the end of his sword."

Neither the Americans nor the French gloated over the humiliation of the vanquished. It is rather pity and admiration for a noble misfortune which dominates the French *Mémoires*. Closen accompanied Rochambeau to see Lord Cornwallis; he contemplated with respect this great soldier, who could have no reason for reproaching himself. His whole attitude showed an elevation and tranquility of soul. Pontgibaud notices also the "noble confusion of all these brave and unfortunate soldiers." No expression of triumph over the faces of the conquerors; there were no spectators admitted. "A general silence," said Henry Lee, "was observed in this vast assembly of men." It was not only benevolence and courtesy, on the part of these Paladins—as Viomesnil called those men who had just shown such pure courage—on the part of those magnanimous rebels, by no means surprised or disconcerted by their sudden ascendancy; but it was all surmounted by a grave, religious feeling, and by the realization of the capricious-

ness of Destiny, who threatens those she lifts up, and renders sacred those she strikes down.

Cornwallis dined on November 2d with Rochambeau; he spoke freely of his campaign in Carolina, of his partial victories, of the cause of his present misfortune. He knew that the French fought, not so much to lower the power of England, as through an enthusiastic impulse of head and heart. In his report published in London, he spoke of the delicate way that they showed their sympathy for him and for his officers; offering them money; being kind and cordial to them; leaving, in truth, such an impression upon the hearts of the English that it could never be effaced.

And what of Clinton? On the 27th he appeared off Cape Henry with twenty-seven ships; he realized that the drama had been played, and he returned to England.

Rochambeau avoids all recrimination in his *Mémoires*; he tells what occurred; he does not like to allude to that which might have occurred. It is through a high sense of honor that he keeps silent upon the discomfiture that followed his triumph; he would like to have led his troops to the attack of Charleston, to push on farther and continue his success while he had such a good chance. But he had to have the fleet, and Admiral de Grasse was impatient to go back to the West Indies. He set sail on November 4th with the Saint-Simon corps; Washington returned to the Hudson; and La Fayette went South to reinforce General Greene. "The French remained at Yorktown, Gloucester, Hampton and Williamsburg, where they took up the quarters, which the enemy had counted upon occupying, reconstructing the houses destroyed by the operations of the siege." Rochambeau had sent to France, upon two frigates,

Lauzun and Deux-Ponts, charged with the articles of capitulation. Viomesnil also sailed for France.

But Chastellux remained and took a trip through Virginia—a well-earned rest that was permitted him. Greene brought back new victories; he had forced the English to re-enter the lines at Charleston. At the end of the campaign they were only in possession of this city, Savannah, and the islands around New York. The fortifications of Portsmouth, fraised, palisaded, surrounded by strong abatis, were demolished or burned by Mathieu Dumas, so as to prevent any notion that the English might have of landing there. Much alarm was still caused in the Carolinas by the report that aid of 4,000 men from Ireland was coming for the English. At the urgent solicitation of Greene, Rochambeau first calmed his excitement with a little philosophy; and then he sent the legion of Lauzun under De Choisy up to and along the frontier of North Carolina, and ordered Mathieu Dumas to keep up his reconnoitering, and “to prepare for the march” in case a part of the army had to be sent to the South. Dumas through his tact and intelligence came to an understanding with the legislatures of Virginia and Carolina. All these precautions are just so many more proofs of the zeal and vigilance of the French.

## CHAPTER X

THE ARMY OF ROCHAMBEAU AFTER YORKTOWN—THE WAR  
CEASES—THE SQUADRON OF VAUDREUIL AT BOSTON  
—FRANCO-AMERICAN FRIENDSHIP

Rochambeau had dispatched to the King two messengers of victory: Lauzun and Deux-Ponts. Lauzun arrived the first; he was at Versailles on November 19th, 1781. Maurepas, dying, received him "in the most touching manner." Great was the supreme joy of the old Minister, who had, with all his influence, seconded the views of Vergennes; great was the joy of the King; immense the joy of the public. A dauphin was born. And to complete the general rejoicing, the convoy from San Domingo put upon the market 2,000,000 pounds of sugar, coffee, and spices. On November 27th Paris, upon the order of her *échevins* (magistrates), was illuminated; and upon that day Notre Dame, for the first time in many years, chanted the *Te Deum*, the "divine dithyrambic" of victory.

Franklin smiled; his predictions had come true. Many came to the house in Passy to congratulate him. But Volney, the Abbé de la Roche, Turgot, Morellet, and Cabanis, whose young face was so pleasing to the patriarch, and, finally, Madame Helvetius, Madame Brion and her two daughters, what did they not say to their old friend! He told them one day: "At your age the soul is outside; at mine, it is inside and looks out the window at the noise of the passers-by." Franklin opened wide the windows of his soul, and the acclamation of France was sweet to him.



The King wrote a personal letter to Rochambeau on November 26th: "The success of my armies will never flatter me except when they are on the road to peace." And to Vergennes he said: "You have rendered our arms most brilliant and laid a stone of expectation upon which I hope we will build an honorable edifice of peace." But he was left without the order. The *Lion* had not yet brought him, in June, 1782, the instructions that he had solicited. He only knew that "the English had made to France propositions of peace as advantageous as she could possibly hope for; but, as America was not comprised in it, the King had rejected it, absolutely."

America spontaneously responded to our constancy by an equal fidelity. General Carleton, who had relieved Clinton, proposed, in the name of his government, the recognition of the independence of the United States provided they detached themselves from their alliance with France. Congress responded that the republic was bound by duty and honor never to make a separate peace. The State of Maryland declared enemy to the nation any one who would speak of a treaty without including France; Virginia, then all the colonies, adopted the same resolution. The Assembly of South Carolina refused to lay down arms. And La Luzerne reported this news to Versailles by Chevalier de Clouard.

But Rochambeau was disturbed. He thought that the English would not give up so easily. He learned in June of the disaster of Dominica and other French islands: Admiral de Grasse surprised by Rodney; his fatal manœuvre; the *Ville de Paris*, the admiral's ship, sunk; the admiral taken prisoner; 3,000 Frenchmen killed. However, he knew that the English were resigned to the evacuation of Charleston and Savannah.

In the absence of orders, he decided to do the best he could; that is, to join his troops to those of Congress in the North, so as to threaten New York. On July 27th his army was assembled at Baltimore. A detachment, under the command of De la Vallette, that Rochambeau had left behind to take away the artillery from Yorktown and Gloucester and raze these places, arrived by slow stages; from the commander to the last soldier, all were ill. It was necessary to remain in Baltimore a month, until after the season of great heat had passed.

Meanwhile, the enemy had evacuated Savannah; and Rochambeau had a letter from De Vaudreuil, "who was setting sail, with what was left of the fleet of De Grasse, for Boston." Vaudreuil came to anchor on the 26th of July at the entrance to Chesapeake Bay, to see if he could be of use to the general; he offered to land his men (it was no longer seasonable) and he asked him for 100 artillerymen with two companies of grenadiers, to attempt an operation upon Penobscot, 100 miles to the north of New York. Rochambeau knew how difficult it would be; it was no easy matter to take this post. The preceding year Washington had distinctly advised against this expedition, after the combat of Destouches in the Chesapeake. Consulted again, he thanked Vaudreuil, "with a heart full of gratitude for the noble offer of his assistance"; but he persuaded him to give up so dangerous a design; the least of the perils was to be surprised by the fleet from New York, at the lower part of the bay, with a southeast wind. However, the approach of Vaudreuil had alarmed the English; the convoys of troops and munitions dared not go as far as New York and took refuge at Halifax. At New York, even, all the vessels were drawn up behind Sandy Hook and they made ready to sink eight ships, so as to bar the

port. There was a rising of the masses. They did not recover from their fright until the 4th of September, upon the arrival of Admiral Pigot, who, after a long interval, succeeded Rodney. And Rochambeau hurried, then, to the Hudson.

The war ceased as of itself. While in the preceding years, the English corsairs, after the departure of De Grasse, had ravaged the coast of Delaware, in August, 1782, at Philadelphia, Fersen noted that the English seemed to conduct themselves in a less hostile manner in the country: they had forbidden all of their partisans called *Tories* or *Refugees* (all of that *loyalist canaille*, as Chastellux called them, who had spitefully pillaged the Carolinas and Virginia, and whom Lord Cornwallis had so much trouble to conduct and keep within bounds) to make any incursions without a permission signed by the commandant of the place. Perhaps a like horror of the hardships of war was impressed upon Louis XVI when he learned that Vaudreuil had sent La Pérouse with some frigates into Hudson Bay to destroy all of the English possessions; the *Correspondance Secrète* claims that the King speaking upon this subject to his Minister of Marine, De Castries, said: "This manner of making war gives me great displeasure."

But this, perhaps, was only a report given out by the Anglomaniacs; there were many others: upon the pretended discord that reigned between the French and American armies; upon the extravagant project nourished by the monarchy of making Washington a stadholder with the power of a Roman dictator, etc. Then there were the recriminations of the Chamber of Commerce: the United States was taking away from us, for the profit of Great Britain, a part of our commerce with our own colonies; this war opened, to our (French)

disadvantage, a brilliant career for the commerce of the neutral countries. The orators in the cafés became so indiscreet "that M. L'Hôpital, one of the declaimers at the head of the Anglomaniacs, received notice to keep quiet"; and because De Fréville, of the party of the Economists, spoke too much and too badly, he was put in the *Bastille*, and afterward in the prison of *La Force*.

In truth, even after the news of the disaster of the *Saintes* (French islands in the West Indies) the resolution of the King was sustained by the whole nation. His Majesty ordered put on the docks, immediately, 12 vessels of the line of 110, 80, and 74 cannon; his two brothers, the states of Bourgogne, the provosts of the merchants, and six companies of the merchants of Paris, and those of Marseille, Bordeaux, and Lyon, offered to the King vessels of 110 cannon. Then the *farmers-general*, the companies of finance, and individuals brought their contributions. Diplomacy had already entered upon its work, and again France armed. However, in the meanwhile, on March 4th, 1782, the British Parliament had declared enemy of the country whosoever would attempt to continue an offensive warfare against the Americans. The work of peace had begun.

And so we have but little else to relate except adventures and impressions of travelers. Having left Baltimore on the 23d of August, Rochambeau, still suffering from intermittent fever, encamped on the 16th opposite King's Ferry, where upon the left of the Hudson the Americans awaited us. "It was a family fête," said Mathieu Dumas; and Rochambeau adds in his *Mémoires*: "General Washington, wishing to show his respect to France and his gratitude for her beneficence, made us pass between two rows of his troops, dressed,

equipped and armed for the first time since the beginning of the Revolution, partly from goods and arms coming from France, partly from the magazines of Yorktown. He had the drums beat the French march during the whole of this revue." Encamped before Crompond on the mountain, the French corps were just a march from New York, or Staten Island.

It was there that Viomesnil, promoted lieutenant-general, rejoined the army, after a return voyage that we should call more romantic than unfortunate. All the young nobility of France wished to go to America with him; upon the frigates the *Gloire* and *Aigle* he brought the Prince de Broglie, eldest son of the marshal; the Count de Ségur, son of the Minister of War; the Count de Loménie and Alexandre de Lameth; and Lauzun and the Baron de Montesquieu returned. Ségur gives the best account of the adventure, with his incorrigible gay humor.

First they had a naval combat. During the night of the 4th of September, off the Bermudas, was sounded "the clearing of the ships." As soon as the ships were cleared, and the gangways closed, every one was at his post. The darkness was so thick that on board the *Gloire*, commanded by De Vallongue, they first had the impression that it was a merchant ship that they had perceived. The enemy ship and the frigate ran alongside, gradually approaching each other. When they were within gun range there was no longer any uncertainty. Vallongue answered shot for shot. Unfortunately, La Touche, his senior officer, who commanded the *Aigle*, made him a sign to turn the ship to the wind; he hesitated, obeyed, tacked about, and at that moment he presented the poop to the enemy ship,

receiving her whole volley—a volley of seventy-four cannon—from stern to bow. A lieutenant of the merchant marine saw Vallongue's embarrassment; he took charge of the manœuvre, and so well did he do it that the *Gloire* arrived in her turn on a level with the enemy's stern, and gave her back a good broadside; upon this, Vallongue embraced Lieutenant Gandeau. He thought he was lost but he wished to die courageously. With intrepid bravery, he hailed the English captain: "Down with your flag!" The Englishman called out, "All right," and a terrible volley followed his reply. They (the French) recognized the *Hector* that the English had taken from De Grasse. The *Aigle*, arriving unexpectedly, changed the fate of combat; the two boats were so near each other that the gunners could fight with their ramrods. What a fête! A yard-arm of the *Hector* caught in the mast of the *Aigle*; Viomesnil cried out: "Board her!" But the English captain preferred to cut his cable which held him to the *Aigle*, and go and sink a little farther away. On that day the Baron de Montesquieu learned what he had been ignorant of; what Ségur had not then desired to tell him. A double-headed shot—two balls joined together by a bar of iron—broke on the quarter-deck, just as they were descending, with Broglie, Lameth, and the others. "Do you want to know," said he to Loménie, "what a '*dangerous liaison*' means? Look! Here it is."

On the 11th the two frigates, on arriving at the entrance of the Delaware, fell upon an English flotilla. For lack of a pilot, they steered into a channel closed up by a sand-bar. De la Touche and De Vallongue resolved to go as far as possible, and, when they could go no farther, to turn out broadsides and sell their lives dearly. As to the land officers, they disembarked with

the dispatches and 2,500,000 *livres* in gold. They found themselves exhausted, without food, in the woods and marshes of an unknown country, where the horse of Ségur came near being lost in the quicksands. De Loménie, De Chabannes, De Melfort, and De Talleyrand were commissioned to look for beef and wagons; but wherever they went they were received as *suspects*. They finally found what they needed. Viomesnil, at the break of day, on the 13th, saw some sloops arriving loaded with the precious coin; he had just unloaded two tons of the gold when he saw other sloops approaching, manned by red coats; quickly he threw the money overboard and sailed away, going in the direction of Dover; he found out, en route, that it was possible at low tide to fish up the said tons of gold, retraced his steps, fished them up, and set sail again. They (the Frenchmen in the sloops) were "naked, without any equipment or valets," but would have been the happiest souls in the world had they not left the frigates behind them in extreme peril. The *Aigle*, in fact, was captured by Admiral Elphinston. Those who saved the treasure were eighteen sailors and five officers; one of them was called the Marquis de MacMahon.

Arriving at Philadelphia, Ségur was pleased with everything. How often a happy *ménage* has been decried in this century! The Count de Ségur writes thus to his wife: "I have thought of thee so much, and in the midst of the hail of bullets and balls whistling around my ears, I tenderly kissed thy portrait in the presence of the Prince de Broglie, who was very much touched, and also kissed it; under any other circumstances I should have been jealous." He gave his dispatches to La Luzerne, admired the wide, straight streets, the elegant residences, the whole city in fact,

which was "a noble temple raised to tolerance." At last he falls asleep; an officer awakens him; order from Vio-mesnil to go at once to the North to take the messages of the court of France to the generals. On the way to the Hudson the enchantment continues; he found politeness, kindness, and zeal for the common cause; towns well filled with inhabitants; poverty or coarseness not to be seen; a pleasing landscape full of beauty. At Crompond, on October 5th, he celebrates in lyric terms the magnificence of the Hudson, "a sea flowing between two vast forests centuries old." Duplessis in his work *Un Romain* comments upon the landscape with his souvenirs of the war. And why not let us quote again from this letter to the Countess de Ségur, which gives such a good idea of the spirit of the times: "I should like to live in this country with thee; believe me, it is much better than ours for people who love virtue. . . . The forests, still a little deserted. . . . This is the only country for honest people; the beginning of civilization is the time for their reign. Before this epoch, there was too much vulgarity, since then one is too blasé to be virtuous. . . . I have re-read *Télémaque*, it is the best lesson for a young man who goes into the army."

The Prince de Broglie was happy, witty, in fact, quite contented with himself; contented also with others. De la Luzerne loaned him a shirt and invited him to go to the house of a Mrs. Morris, who was "very fairly adorned." He took twelve cups of tea, which gave him such lively impertinence that his *Souvenirs* show the result of it. I like his impressions of Newport better. De Vauban took him one day with Fersen to the house of a Quaker: "Suddenly a door opened and we saw the Goddess of grace and beauty enter. Minerva in person, who had dropped her attributes of war for the more



pleasing garments of a simple shepherdess; it was the daughter of the '*trembleur*,' the Quaker. Her name was Polly Leiton. . . . She spoke to us using thee and thou, but with a simplicity and gracefulness that I could not better compare to anything but her costume; it was a kind of English style of dress, fitting close to the form and white as snow, a muslin apron of the same purity, a very simple fichu, high at the neck; her head adorned with a little, plain, round, pleated bonnet of batiste, which allowed half an inch of her hair to show and gave Polly the air of a Madonna. She did not seem to realize her charms; she talked, with perfect ease and the use of thee and thou of the Quakers, about polite and innocent things. She enchanted all of us, was conscious of it a little and did not appear displeased at having charmed 'her friends,' as she called us. I must admit that this little seductive Leiton appears to me to be one of nature's masterpieces."

This angel, whose eyes "reflected, like two mirrors, the sweetness of a pure and tender soul," asked Ségur why he followed "the horrible vocation of war." He answered: "For you." She replied: "Thee must not meddle with the affairs of others, unless it be to prevent bloodshed. . . . I am sure that thy wife, if she be a good heart, is of my opinion." Polly Leiton did not suspect how much justice she was doing the French.

The army did not leave Crompond until October 22d. Ségur had brought the order to be in readiness to depart with the squadron of Vaudreuil, so as to go to the islands as soon as the English would evacuate Charleston. Vaudreuil did not feel safe in Boston. He feared that the task was beyond his power. He was reassured by Rochambeau, who sent De Fleury to him. He had "perfect knowledge of the use of the language and the

manners of the country," and gave a good standing to his militia. Finally, on November 10th, Rochambeau also drew quite near to him; he encamped at Providence. Decidedly it must have been known that Charleston was evacuated. It was the moment to rush to the aid of the French islands in the West Indies. But the ships of Vaudreuil were in need of repair. They waited until the 4th of December. Newport was but ten miles distant; the officers, who had such pleasant memories of it, went there to bid farewell to their friends. At Providence, Rochambeau gave "frequent assemblies and numerous balls" that were attended by the people from far and near. "I do not recall," says Ségur again, "having seen, in any other place, a reunion more full of gayety and less confusion, more pretty women and happy couples, more grace and less coquetry, a more complete blending of persons of all classes, among whom an equal modesty prevented any shocking difference to be seen. This modesty, order, simple liberty—this happiness of the new Republic, so mature in its infancy, formed the nucleus of our conversations with Chastellux." Upon Washington also they must have talked at length; like the chevalier, Ségur admired in him the purest of heroes.

We might almost say that at the moment the French were leaving America, the union of the two nations was entering its honeymoon. They had never understood each other better, nor loved each other more. The French had formerly made slighting remarks in regard to the instruction, discipline, and uniforms of the American soldiers; Ségur does not make them now; everything seems to him the "picture of order, reason, and experience"; he infinitely enjoys "the noble air, the fine bearing, the kindly nature of these officers and

their generals."—All of the prejudices of the Americans against the French had also vanished. A deputation of Quakers from Philadelphia made the following speech to Rochambeau: "General, it is not for thy military qualities that we have come to make thee this visit. We do not take much into account talents for war; but thee art the friend of men, and thy army lived in perfect order and discipline. This is the reason that we have come to pay thee our respects." When the French army crossed Connecticut on its way to Providence, the aged Trumbull told his fellow citizens "not to raise a penny on the price of food when the French soldiers passed through the State." And they generously conformed to the order given. Rochambeau could report that the French army "left America with universal gratitude of its allies in all of the thirteen States, without exception."

From the 1st of December the French troops were directed successively toward Boston. Ségur left, with great regret, this country "where one is what one ought to be; frank, honest, loyal and free. Here one is not forced to be rich, low, false, foolish, a courtier or a soldier; one can be simple or extraordinary, a traveler or a *sédentaire*, politician, *littérateur*, merchant, occupied or idle; no one is shocked. . . . I am truly heavy-hearted upon leaving this country." Up to the 20th of December there were festivities and balls. Boston, the Puritan city, first showed its joy; then came its sorrow at the approaching separation. They commended an eighteen-year-old sergeant, Va-de-bon-cœur, formerly Count Bozon de Talleyrand Périgord, aide-de-camp to Chastellux, because he preferred, rather than go back to France, or to fight in the West Indies, and since no one wished to take him as an officer, to don the cap of a grenadier

and the epaulettes of wool, and hide himself, if one may express it that way, in the regiment of De Saint-Maime.

We can judge of the welcome of the French troops by the manner in which Chastellux was fêted the preceding month in the homes of the Bostonians. "On November 14th, the Association Ball was opened by the Marquis de Vaudreuil with Mrs. Temple; the elder M. de l'Aiguille (a naval officer) and M. Truguet danced, each one, a minuet and did honor to the French nation by their graceful and easy performance." The next day there was a soirée at the home of Mr. Cushing, deputy-governor, and tea at the same place on the 16th. "M. de Parois, nephew of the Marquis de Vaudreuil, sent for his harp and played with much charm and talent." Chastellux loved to meet the very sensible and amiable Mrs. Tudor, who understood French and spoke it very well, and what was more than wit, she had "gracious and charming manners." He enjoyed the pleasure of a quiet conversation, interrupted from time to time by music; Mathieu Dumas and Parois sang *duos*, agreeable to the ears, while the beautiful Mrs. Whitmore "took charge of the pleasure of the eyes." Messrs. Brown, Brick, Bowdoin, and Mr. Russell, "an honest merchant who made a splendid host," and the Consul of France, M. de Létombes, gathered around the chevalier the gayest and finest company. And farther on, Chastellux renders thanks to Vaudreuil: "One can hardly believe how much the presence of the squadron here has been conducive to the drawing together of the two nations. The noble bearing of M. le Marquis de Vaudreuil, his affable manners which are an example to all, as well as his simplicity and kindness, have captivated the hearts of a people who have not been, up to this time, always friendly toward us. The officers of our Navy have been



PEACE—AN ALLEGORY.

Note the effigy of Louis XVI and the bust of Vergennes.



received everywhere, not only as allies, but as brothers. They have been admitted into the greatest intimacy in the homes of the ladies of Boston, without the least indiscretion, or single pretension, or even appearance of foppishness to trouble the confidence and innocence of this intercourse."

It was necessary to depart. "In the midst of the acclamations and gratitude of the Americans, who saluted the French flag with their hurrahs," the squadron of Vaudreuil left Boston on December 24th, 1782. "The winds blew from the west, the sea was beautiful, the sky serene." Suddenly, the wind changed to the east, a storm arose. This was the beginning of a new series of trials; it is not our mission to tell how the French arrived at Porto Cabello, on the coast of Venezuela. In April Vaudreuil received orders there to take the troops back to France.

Rochambeau had left his command. He went to take leave of Washington at Newburgh on December 7th; they tenderly took farewell of each other, and the whole of the American army was eager to give to the French general the most sincere assurance of eternal brotherly affection. "On January 8th Rochambeau embarked upon the *Emeraude*, which awaited him at Annapolis, on the Chesapeake Bay; he took on board De Choisy, De Béville, De Vauban, De Montesquieu, the Viscount de Rochambeau (the son of the General), and twelve other officers. The frigate passed the Capes, the 14th; she had hardly left the entrance of the bay when she was chased by an English corvette." The captain of the French ship dropped some of his masts and yard-arms and the cannon of the forecastle, and was finally lost to sight by the enemy ship, after having made eighty miles to the south. On the 16th

the frigate went through the most violent wind-storm that the oldest sailors on board had ever witnessed. Another time lightning struck the foremast and broke it. On February 10th (1783) the *Emeraude* cast anchor at Saint-Nazaire. Rochambeau started at once for Versailles, and did not stop until he reached his destination. The King said that it was to him, and the taking of the army of Cornwallis, that he owed peace; Rochambeau, faithful in prosperity to his high character, asked permission to divide this praise with a man whose misfortunes were only known to him (the King) through the public papers, adding, "that he would never forget, and he hoped His Majesty would not forget that, without the co-operation of M. de Grasse, we would never have taken the Army of Lord Cornwallis." Rochambeau had the entrée to the King's chamber, the *Cordon Bleu*, the government of Picardy; but "that which flattered him the most," and we must believe it, was that he was granted all the favors he asked for his officers and soldiers.

What is then this peace of which the King has spoken?

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## CHAPTER XI

### A PEACE OF RECONCILIATION—CONCLUSION

It was a peace of reconciliation.

As Doniol has finely emphasized, Count de Vergennes and Lord Shelburne "were convinced that they were closing, definitely, a fatal period." They both thought that free exchanges commercially would increase the moral obligations among men, rendering wars less frequent, closing the era of conquests and submissions.

In order that the agreement could be realized, it was necessary for Shelburne to become Prime Minister. Beginning December, 1781, for the duration of three months, there were preliminary parleyings, official exchanges between David Hartley, the emissary of Lord North, and Dupont, the future Dupont de Nemours, one of the best leaders of the Economist party. In seeking the services of a man well-versed in the philosophical study of commerce, Vergennes certainly indicated that, in order to bind the two nations together, he counted upon the common doctrines and the same moral aspirations which, for years of constant intellectual intercourse, had united, across the Channel, those minds careful of the future of the human race. Dupont, however, did not declare himself in this way, but rather took pride in remaining "in the vagueness of principles."

England's game then was to lead America into a separate peace, and Hartley believed that Franklin would accede to it. The reply was definite. "This," wrote the doctor, "has always given me more disgust

than my friendship permits me to express. I believe there is not a man in America—a few English Tories excepted—that would not spurn the thought of deserting a noble and generous friend for the sake of a treaty with an unjust and cruel enemy. Congress will never instruct their Commissioners on such ignominious terms; yet if it were possible for them to give such an order as this, I should certainly refuse to act. I should instantly renounce their commission and banish myself forever from so infamous a country.”

North fell, after the semi-pacific vote of March 4th, 1782. Franklin, through Lord Cholmondeley, who was returning from Nice to London, and at his request, sent Shelburne a cordial, dignified note, after his fashion. He told him that before he died it would give him infinite pleasure to contribute to the making of peace, and he thanked him, in the name of Madame Helvetius, for the present of some gooseberry-bushes with which she and her friends were greatly pleased. Shelburne answered: “I shall be glad to consult with you about the means of aiding in promoting the happiness of mankind. It is a much more agreeable subject to my nature than the most marvelous plans to spread misery and ruin.” And again he sent over an Economist, Richard Oswald. Oswald and Adam Smith were in constant communication with Vergennes. Oswald was only accredited for American affairs; Thomas Grenville for those of Europe. Franklin kept Vergennes informed of everything.

London wished to establish, as a point of departure, the disastrous treaty of 1763. The very mention of it gave Vergennes “a chilly sensation.” It was necessary to begin entirely on a new basis, “founded upon justice and mutual agreement.” Shelburne had the same thought and his ideas had acquired full authority by

July, 1782, when he became Prime Minister. Henceforth his word was law. Fox, who had just resigned, would have given the greatest advantages to the United States, but would have refused everything to France, in the hope, as Franklin perceived, "to embroil us with our allies, and then, having to deal with us alone, take back little by little that which they had given us." Shelburne thought that this Machiavellian way of managing home affairs proceeded from an exceedingly short-sighted policy; from the free development of American forces, from the commerce with America, he frankly expected for his country a new destiny, a new expansion of power, "a supremacy of a new kind."

About the middle of August another emissary went to France from England; it was Admiral de Grasse. He had been a prisoner too much spoiled, too sensitive to the flattery of our adversary, had been decried in France, but was afterward half-pardoned, and finally commissioned by Shelburne to communicate to Vergennes the views of the English Ministry; they were practically the same as our own. On the 10th of September Rayneval, the brother of Gérard, was in London. He stipulated for America independence without restriction; for France some advantages which we will find in the treaty. For Spain, however, the agreement was more difficult; she wanted Gibraltar.

This is not the place to speak of the trouble that Spain caused us. It will be sufficient to indicate that, in order to obtain from England the unreasonable satisfaction which she exacted through our intercession, France resolved upon serious sacrifices. But it was the American Commissioners who thought of putting us in a false position. Franklin must be absolved from all blame. While he conducted affairs, he held to the great

principle: "Let there be no separate peace!" Unluckily, from the first days of July, 1782, gout confined him to his arm-chair, and Jay took charge of things. Now Jay, although he had formerly professed a warm affection for us, presented the phenomenon of one of those rapid evolutions which is called, according to the point of view, conversion or defection; he was a colleague of Oswald, who was a Whig in England as he a Whig in America. Becoming frightened by the idea which came near duping Congress at one time, "about the engagements which *riveted* America to France," he passed over to the English side. His policy, "strong and decided" as he called it, as well as that of his accomplice, John Adams, consisted in signing the preliminaries of peace with England without consulting or giving notice to the French Minister.

They betrayed their mission and exposed themselves "to the execration" of all the Colonial Assemblies. Even Massachusetts, in spite of Samuel Adams, asserted that she would reject "with the greatest horror any proposition of a separate agreement." When, on the 13th of March, Congress learned of the proceedings of John Adams and Jay, its members were most indignant, and our Minister Plenipotentiary, De la Luzerne, had to interfere to prevent trouble. As to Vergennes, he did not hide his surprise from Franklin: "Are you not convinced that you owe something to the King of France?" Franklin could reply in perfect good faith: "There was never a prince more beloved in his own realm than is the King of France by all the people of America. . . . And there is no one who feels more deeply than I do what every American owes to your King."

It was not that France had pretended to arrogate to herself the privilege of giving to America the royal

present of her independence; better and more highly inspired, she desired, on the contrary, that the United States, a sovereign power, would establish for itself, and alone, its national statutes with England. In our own negotiations we had avoided any proceeding that would have suspended the recognition of the independence. In denying their solidarity with the French Ministry, Jay and Adams not only risked French interests but they offended social laws. To our extreme consideration they returned defection, disloyalty. Their divergence, however, brought no result. The Ministers of George III, in their last analysis, did not draw up anything derogatory to us from this premature agreement. And Vergennes had the American Commissioners sign a declaration which subordinated their articles to the peace still to be concluded between France and England. "We hope," read the declaration, "that this truth, made known, will dissipate all the suspicions that some persons have tried to cast upon a young Republic, whose honor and interests equally demand that it establish itself in public opinion, as placing above everything else, its fidelity and constancy to its engagements."

The secret treaty of America is dated November 30th, 1782. The preliminaries of peace were signed at Versailles, January 20th, 1783, between England and France. Spain was given Minorca and Florida. The boundaries of our Newfoundland fisheries were re-made; we acquired Saint-Pierre and Miquelon; we kept Saint Lucia and Tabago; we gave back Grenada, Domenica, and Saint Vincent. In Africa, we recovered our Senegal possessions, lost in 1763; in India, some unimportant districts; and, lastly, there was no longer any question of an English Commissioner at Dunkerque (Dunkirk).

And now about the treaty of commerce. Signed in

1786, it was much criticised in France. It was very good for our agricultural interests, deplorable for certain of our industries, encouraging for others. We will not undertake to discuss it here. One thing is certain: the American war greatly changed, in the way of free trade, the commercial intercourse of the world, and it caused the regeneration of our islands. Another thing is true: France, morally, had never been so great. The Citizen-King, as Vergennes called Louis XVI, whose *citizen-soul* had guided him into giving to the monarchy one of its purest glories, had done good work for the future.

Shall we render an account here of what France had done for America? On the sea, 63 ships of the line, 3,668 cannon, 32,609 officers and sailors; on the land, 697 officers and 11,983 soldiers, an expense equal to \$50,000,000, according to the estimate of an American, Mr. Randolph Keim—the balance-sheet of French liberality.

As imposing as it may be, when we consider the circumstances and the time, how feebly this, alone, symbolizes the valiant and efficient confidence which our country, the country of ancient traditions, welcomed in America the promise of a new humanity, happier and nobler than the old! Simply in the name of justice and kindness, France loved these people who dared to undertake to live according to the true standard of humanity, and, for their welcome into the world, she covered them with the prestige of her ancient honor.

Our ancestors had faith in liberty. Upon the soil of our ancestors made sacred by their secular virtues and endurance, in their turn, these heirs of a great past wished to create a new world. It was a noble courage

and a bold risk, to cast off the chains of tradition and throw themselves into a future of adventure. Our friend Doctor Cooper looked upon our resolution in a different light: "Take care, young men," he said at Boston, in 1782, in the midst of a circle of French officers, "take care that the triumph of the cause upon this virgin soil does not incite your hopes to go too far; *after so many centuries of corruption*, you will have to surmount untold difficulties; it has cost us much bloodshed to gain our liberty, but you will pour out torrents before you will establish it in your Old Europe."

As the years passed by, it seemed that America had decided to leave France and Europe a prey to the witchcraft of the past. What mattered to her our painful memories, our ineffaceable regrets, our just resentment? She had grown accustomed to our complaints; she saw us the heirs of an oppressive inheritance, devoured by rancor, lost in disputes, which, periodically, set the nations of Europe against one another. She considered the Old World as, fundamentally, compromised; never would her calm and brilliant destiny be troubled by our affairs.

To-day America has discovered a higher truth. She feels that if the old home-fire of thought and humane generosity in the Old World is extinguished, the light that burns on the new continent will also die out. She loves, in their venerable source, the old things eternally young, nourishing, and life-giving. She discovers an idealism which springs from the sorrows of the past ages, and, for which reason, it is all the more chivalrous and courageous. She comes, in order to save her ideal, to defend with us the fruit of long-suffering humanity.

Through this idealism the national unity of the United States is nourished and will accomplish its destiny.

The Americans live, not, as they formerly believed, to enjoy an easy bed of happiness and prosperity, upon a soil that is inexhaustible; but, for a great purpose—to see that complete justice is rendered to all men who have inhabited this world in an unhappy state for so long a time.

Americans can read again with pride the letter that Washington wrote to La Fayette on April 5th, 1783: "Behold us now in the rank of the nations of the earth, but we have a reputation to acquire. Experience bought at the price of trials and difficulties, alone convinces us that the honor, power and true interests of this country are the honor, power and true interests of the entire continent, and that any separation would break the bond which holds us together," and cause the destruction of the ideal in the name of which the colonists appealed to arms. National unity, the unity of American aspiration, was formerly threatened by the eruption of disparaging elements, and saw only, in the republic that Washington had made, a prodigious financial market with an immense syndicate of material interests to exploit. But to-day, for the salvation of her honor, in this bloody contention into which she has thrown herself (the World War begun in Europe in August, 1914), America reconquers her original soul—a soul closely allied to that of France. Near us she meets England.

When the mother country had recognized the sovereignty of the United States, her statesmen knew how to be nobly intelligent enough to wish a great destiny to those whom they no longer called rebels, but brothers. They thought that America's greatness and England's greatness should be identical; and they had no need of a mediator. And now, to-day, England and America are



drawn close to each other in the land of France, and their blood mingles with ours to drench the soil where sleep our dead. In this significant event, the highest order of human interest, there is the promise of a great future.



## APPENDIX

### FRANCE-AMÉRIQUE

The society called *Le Comité France-Amérique*, which edits the library to which this book belongs, was founded the latter part of the year 1909 by a large number of notable persons, who sent forth the following appeal, which is a résumé of the object of the association:

The Frenchmen who sign this appeal have just founded an institution which is consecrated to an urgent work of closer connection and sympathy between France and the American Nations; it is called *Le Comité France-Amérique* (The Franco-American Committee).

*Le Comité France-Amérique* is to work for the development of the economic, intellectual, and artistic relations between the nations of the New World and the French Nation; to found a monthly review and to classify therein the most complete information upon the economic and intellectual life of the American peoples; to attract to France students and tourists from the two Americas and give them a cordial welcome; to encourage all work and activity which will make known America to France, or France to America; such will be the direction given to our efforts.

The undersigned appeal to those in France who interest themselves in the Americas, and to those in the Americas who interest themselves in France, for co-operation and active devotion.

This association was welcomed with so much enthusiasm that, as early as 1911, the number of its active and honorary members reached one thousand. At that date, after being well organized in France, it began to organize corresponding *Committees* in America.

In North America the following *Committees* were organized under the presidency of: At Montreal, the Honorable Raoul Dandurand, Senator, former President of the Federal Senate; at Quebec, Mr. Ferdinand Roy; at New Orleans, the Honorable Judge Breaux, former President of the Supreme Court of Louisiana; at Los Angeles, Mr. L. W. Brunswig; at San Diego, Mr. Eugène Daney, former President of the California Bar Association; at Salt Lake City, Major Richard W. Young, etc. The society, "The Friends of France" of San Francisco, is also affiliated with the *Comité France-Amérique*.

The *France-America* Society of New York is thus constituted: President: Doctor Nicholas Murray Butler, President of the University of Columbia; Vice-Presidents: Frederic R. Coudert, Chauncey M. Depew, William D. Guthrie, Myron T. Herrick; Treasurer: J. Pierpont Morgan; Secretary: S. Reading Bertron; President of the Executive Committee: F. Cunliffe-Owen; Members of the Board of Directors: Robert Bacon, Peter T. Barlow, George W. Burleigh, William A. Clark, Paul Fuller, Warren L. Green, McDougall Hawkes, A. Barton Hepburn, E. H. Outerbridge, George Foster Peabody, Edward Robinson, Henry W. Sackett, Herbert L. Satterlee, W. K. Vanderbilt, Henry Van Dyke, Whitney Warren, Henry White, George T. Wilson.

In Latin America *Committees* are formed, or about to be formed, at Santiago, in Chili, São Paulo, Buenos Aires, Montevideo, La Paz, Bogotá, Costa Rica, etc. The *Committee* of São Paulo, notably, organized in 1913 a brilliant Exposition of French Art, of which the Memorial Section has served to constitute the first permanent Museum of French Art in South America.

Besides this, in France, a special section, called *Ligue française de propagande*, has organized a service of information and propaganda in America in regard to touring in France, instruction in the French language, French art, and the products of French industry.

*Le Comité central de Paris*, which has its social centre at 21 rue Cassette, is composed of an Executive Board, Board of Directors, and active and honorary members. The Executive Board of *France-Amérique* is formed at present of the following personages:

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