

George Schaffner

An American Revolutionist Who Died in the French Royalist Cause

By ELIZABETH CLARKE KIEFFER

In 1938, your present essayist had the pleasure of reading before this society, a paper on the three Caspar Schaffners of Lancaster¹ whose joint lives covered practically the entire history of the borough period, and who, each in his way, contributed so much to the development of our community. In the course of that paper brief mention was made of Major George Schaffner, younger brother of the second Caspar, who marched away from Lancaster as a private in the Musketry Battalion, rose to be a major in the Partisan Corps, and after the Revolution, went to France, where he was one of the founders of the Society of the Cincinnati in that country. This was all I knew, at the time, of the romantic history of this young officer.

A year or so after the publication of that paper, I received from Mr. Henry J. Young, curator of the collections of the Historical Society of York County, a copy of several pages from: *Les français sous les treize étoiles* by André Lasseray (Paris, 1935) in which was given a brief but vigorous account of the French adventures of the young Pennsylvania-German, from West King Street, Lancaster. It is a story so wildly, improbably romantic, as to seem better fitted to the pages of Baroness Orczy's *Scarlet Pimpernel* or Sabatini's *Scaramouche* than to the sober annals of this society. Yet further research has confirmed and elaborated the history, and it seems worthwhile to record it, if only to confute the notion that a glamorous career is impossible for a child of our prosaic community.

George Schaffner was the youngest son of Caspar Schaffner the "blue dyer." At the time of my earlier paper, I was puzzled by this term, and I take this opportunity of explaining that it was equivalent to "master-dyer"—blue being the most difficult of all colors to give to a fabric, and skill in using it marking the dyer as head of his craft. This Caspar had come to America in 1733, settled in Lancaster, married Anna Maria Knobel who had crossed on the same ship with him, founded a fortune by careful investments in real estate and in various civic enterprises, served as town clerk, and elder of

¹ Papers of the Lancaster County Historical Society, vol. 42, no. 7.

his church, became the father of eleven children, of whom George was the ninth, and died in 1773.

Born June 21, 1757, the child was baptised John George, in memory of another son who had died in infancy. He was baptised in the stone building of the First Reformed Church by Philip William Otterbein, who later became the founder of the United Brethren in Christ. He doubtless attended school with his brothers in the new schoolhouse of the church on Duke Street, where they were pupils of John Hoffman, schoolmaster of the congregation. He was catechised and confirmed by William Hendel, one of the greatest ministers of the church. He probably played with little Barbara Hauer, who later became Barbara Frietchie. He heard the music of the Tanneberger organ which his father was active in buying for the congregation, and which was later played for many years by his nephew, Caspar Schaffner III. The three skills which he notably possessed in later years — riding, shooting, and woodcraft — were probably acquired in his boyhood when, like other Lancaster boys, he roamed and hunted in the great forests which still covered most of this region. The grace and charm of personality which were later to make him the pet of French aristocrats, are not inexplicable in the brother of that Caspar Schaffner who served on the Committee of Observation, was Burgess of the town for four years, helped to found our first bank, and our first college, and was, as evidence shows, a cultured and a well-read gentleman.

The French noblewoman who spoke of George in her memoirs as "of a poor and obscure family"² was speaking relatively. The Schaffners of Lancaster were obscure to the princes of Brittany, but they were probably as well-educated, and possibly no poorer than some of the hand-to-mouth owners of Breton castles in the days of the Vendean wars.

In April of 1773, when George was sixteen years old, his father died. His brother, Caspar II, was now head of the family. His mother inherited the dyeing business which Peter, the second brother, managed for her. Two sisters, Anna Maria Eichholtz and Margaret Naumann were still living, and there were a number of nieces and nephews not much younger than George himself. The spirit of Revolution was already abroad. Children played soldiers in the streets. Young boys, like George, practised sharp-shooting with the already famous Lancaster rifles, and drilled together under the command of men who had seen service in the Indian wars. On April 27, 1775, Caspar Schaffner II heard in the Grape Tavern the first news of Lexington and Concord. In March, 1776, Peter and George Schaffner enlisted in Captain Abraham DeHuff's Company of Colonel Samuel John Atlee's Regiment of the Pennsylvania Musketry Battalion. Peter was a lieutenant, George (who was not quite 19) was a private.³ The DeHuff's had been lifelong friends of the Schaffners; and Caspar and his mother probably felt that it was safe

² Mme. de Langan de Bois-Février. Notes inédites. *Journal de Fougères*, 1892. ³ Penna. Archives II, 10, 247.

for the young boy to go off to the wars with a brother as lieutenant, and a friend as captain.

When the company marched away out East King Street on their long tramp to their training camp at Marcus Hook, young George Schaffner, marching shoulder to shoulder with his schoolfellows and playmates, probably looked forward to brave and warlike adventure. He probably did not dream that he was saying good-bye forever to the life he had known, that he would see Lancaster again on only a few brief visits. Surely he could not have guessed how brave, how warlike, how truly adventurous was to be the unknown life that lay ahead.

Due to the pressing need for soldiers, the training period at Marcus Hook was extremely brief. On the 13th of June, the battalion, unequipped, only half-armed, with three months' training, and no uniforms, was ordered to Philadelphia, where they were awaiting orders on the 4th of July, and heard the Liberty Bell ring out. Like the training period, promotions were rapid, for in the brief time that had passed, George Schaffner had become a sergeant, and, in that capacity marched out of Philadelphia on July 5, on his way to the defense of New York.⁴ The battalion arrived in Perth Amboy on July 21, in so desperate and ragged a condition that Colonel Atlee protested emphatically to headquarters. He got no satisfaction, and, in spite of their condition, they were ordered to Long Island with the rest of the army on August 11. Here on August 19, young Schaffner was made an ensign,⁵ which seems to have been much the same as second lieutenant. On August 25, the battalion took part in the Battle of Brooklyn Heights, and on August 27 in the Battle of Long Island.

No earnest student of Lancaster County history needs to be reminded of what the Musketry Battalion did on that day. Let us only say that, though the battle was lost, the army was saved by the ragged troops of Pennsylvania — large numbers of them from Lancaster — that if these men hungry and exhausted, had not sacrificed their chance of escape, to protect the retreat of the main army, the American Revolution might have come to an abrupt and inglorious end on that day. Of the 397 officers and men who went into battle, 75 were killed, and 40 including Colonel Atlee were taken prisoner. Captain DeHuff's company suffered least, only 6 men and no officers lost.⁶ Both of the Schaffner brothers escaped unharmed. The remnants of the battalion, now under Captain Patrick Anderson were merged with Miles' Rifle Regiment, which had also suffered heavily. Peter Schaffner, whose term of enlistment seems to have expired, now returned to his family and business in Lancaster. George remained with the army.

⁴ Heitman here makes a mistake confusing Schaffner with George Schaeffer of the German Regiment who was made second lieutenant on July 12.

⁵ Archives II, 10, 247. ⁶ *Penna. Gazette*, September 11, 1776.

We have no evidence of where he spent the autumn and winter. The regiment was attached to the command of General Edward Hand, in Northern New Jersey, and may have taken part in the Battles of Trenton and Princeton, but there is no proof of this. Most of these troops were recalled to winter quarters in Philadelphia, in January; and we first hear of George Schaffner again on February 4, 1777, when he is listed as a first lieutenant in Captain John Paul Schott's company of Baron Ottendorf's Battalion.

Nicholas Dietrich Baron de Ottendorf, was a Swiss nobleman, who, like many foreign soldiers of fortune, had been attracted to the American cause, and having risen from captain to major in the Continental Army, was now commissioned by Congress to raise a battalion of three companies among the Germans of Pennsylvania. As German-speaking officers were needed for this group, the transfer of George Schaffner is accounted for. We need waste no time on Ottendorf, however, for on May 10, 1777, he sold his command for the sum of 2,400 livres (French) to Charles Armand Tuffin, Marquis de la Rouërie (or Rouverie, or Rouary, or even Royrie).⁷

Thus entered into the life of George Schaffner the amazing man who was to control his entire destiny for all the years that remained to him. It is necessary that we now return to an earlier date in order to give some account of a career seldom matched outside the novels of Dumas père. In summing up Armand Tuffin, Chateaubriand, who knew him well, wrote: "The rival of Lafayette and Lauzun and the forerunner of La Rochejacquin, the Marquis de la Rouërie had more spirit than any of them. He fought more battles than the first, carried off actresses from the theatre like the second, and became the comrade in arms of the third." His portrait, made at about the time he came to America, hangs in the collection of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania.⁸ The portrait shows a dashing young officer, in a rather puzzling uniform, possibly of his own invention, as it is not that of any of the services (French or American) in which he held commissions. Handsome and debonnair, he wears his fur headdress with a swagger, and looks quite ready to step down for a duel with any observer who should make slighting remarks. There is only the faintest suggestion of the tumor on his left eyelid which became very noticeable in his later portraits, and helped to identify his mutilated body after his death.

Born in 1750, at the Chateau de la Rouërie, in a part of Brittany which is so steeped in legend and fairy-lore that it leaves even the passing stranger starry-eyed with wonder, young Armand seems to have absorbed the ideals

⁷ Lenotre, G. [pseud. of Louis Gosselin] *Le Marquis de Rouërie*. Paris, 1925.

⁸ Ward, Townsend. Charles Armand Tuffin, Marquis de la Rouërie. *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, vol. 2, 1878, 1-34. An engraving from this portrait is used as a frontispiece.

of high romance with the air, the water, and the food of the soil. At the age of 17, he went up to Paris as ensign in the Royal Guard, and immediately involved himself in an attempt to elope with a young actress, who was at the time "under the protection" of his own uncle. In reaction to this scandal he attempted to take the vows of a Trappist monk, and was rescued, before they became final, by the forgiving efforts of the same tolerant uncle. He then plunged whole-heartedly into the frivolous life of the "ancien régime." He took lessons from a florist, in the designing of elegant bouquets; he danced in public in the Opéra ballet; he fought numerous duels; made love to all the notorious ladies of the day; and, at the age of 26, made further adventures in Paris impossible by wounding a cousin of the king. After an attempt at suicide had failed, his long-suffering family managed to smuggle him off to Geneva, where he remained until they could arrange to send him to the American wars.

Our Revolution seems to have been a perfect dumping ground for restless and difficult sons of the European nobility. Some of them, like Lafayette and Pulaski, seem to have had a genuine passion for liberty. Others wished only to satisfy their craving for adventure; others to strike a blow at the hated English. Some may even have had the mistaken idea that they could make money at it. Most of them, however, like young de la Rouërie were problem children, whose relatives were glad to pay heavily to hide their scandalous careers in a foreign land, where they could work off their surplus energies in the legitimate excitement of war.

A nature like that of Armand Tuffin attracts to itself melodramatic adventures. He could not even sail quietly up the Delaware, and land in Philadelphia in the usual manner. Christopher Marshall, then busy with preparations to move to Lancaster, paused on April 13, 1777,⁹ to record the fate of a ship which was chased all day by three British men-of-war, and finally run aground in the Delaware Bay, and blown up by her own captain to save her from capture. This ship was the *Morris* carrying important dispatches from France to Congress. Before destroying his ship — and himself with her — Captain Anderson entrusted the dispatches to de la Rouërie who was one of two French passengers aboard, and put him into a small boat in which he was to attempt to evade the pursuing British. A shot from the enemy sank the boat, but Armand swam ashore, walked one hundred miles to Philadelphia, and delivered the dispatches in a blaze of romantic splendor which at once won the attention and favor of the Congress.¹⁰

It was easier, however, to commend his gallantry than to find a place for him. Americans were still suspicious of the French. There were many who still recalled the horrors of 1757, and blamed them on the French. Franklin's treaty was not yet concluded, Lafayette had not yet arrived. It

⁹ Marshall. *Diary*. April 13, 1777.

¹⁰ Hazard. *Register*. August 21, 1830.

was impossible to put men who spoke no English in command of English-speaking troops, and the influx of young Frenchmen demanding commissions must have been a nuisance. They gave the young Marquis a colonel's commission, however (May 10, 1777), and authorized him to raise a "Partisan Corps" of not more than two hundred Frenchmen, with an allowance of \$2000 for expenses. As there were probably not two hundred Frenchmen available as common soldiers, the term "Frenchmen" seems to have stretched to include all foreign volunteers, also Hessian deserters, and a liberal quota of Pennsylvania Germans. Hence the purchase of Ottendorf's Battalion, which, while more expensive, was quicker than the slow process of recruiting, and hence suited the taste of the hot-headed marquis.

The Germans of his command, and the American officers with whom he associated never learned to pronounce the full name of the Frenchman, and very quickly developed the habit of calling him Colonel (later General) Armand, by which name he is mentioned in most histories and even in many official dispatches, although Washington was usually careful to use his full title. The corps, of which George Shaffner was now lieutenant, came to be known as "Armand's Partisan Corps." This very irregular organization, made up of all types of men, speaking a wide variety of languages, and coming from all classes of society, was something of a problem to the commanders. General Lee ("Light Horse Harry") to whose command the corps was once attached wrote of them, "The officers were generally foreign, and the soldiers chiefly deserters. It was the last corps in the army which should have been entrusted with the van post; because, however unexceptionable the officers may have been, the materials of which the corps were composed did not warrant such distinction."¹¹

With so unorthodox an origin, the service of the corps was varied and peculiar. It was soon obvious that Armand's greatest genius lay in conducting small brilliant raids in unexpected places with small, selected bodies of cavalry. Thus his corps was often split up into separate groups, and it is difficult to follow the adventures of any one member of his staff. We know that Lieutenant Schaffner took part in the skirmish at Short Hills, June 22, 1777, when his captain, Paul Schott, was taken prisoner, leaving him temporarily in charge of the company. On February 8, 1778, George Schaffner was made captain of the Third Cavalry Corps of the Pulaski Legion, of which Armand's Corps was then a part. This is our first intimation of his skill as a rider, which endeared him so greatly to Armand.

In June, 1778, the standing of the corps was made more regular by taking it into Continental pay (Armand had borne most of the expenses himself up to this time). Congress refused to promote him to the rank of brigadier general, but appropriated \$94,000 for enlarging the enlistment of the corps. In 1779, the various companies were widely scattered throughout the middle

¹¹ Lee. *Memoirs of the War in the Southern Department*, 1812, vol. 1, p. 177n.

states. There seems a strong probability that Schaffner's company may have been with the Sullivan Expedition in August, but we have no proof. In the winter of 1779-80, Armand's Corps was separated from Pulaski's and assigned to Lee's command in New Jersey, where Armand won national applause by his brilliant captures of Simcoe the raider, and Barremore the loyalist.¹²

While the effect of these successes was still fresh, news was received of the tragic death of Pulaski in the Siege of Savannah, and on February 10, 1780, Congress passed a resolution uniting the Pulaski Legion, and Armand's Corps into one legion under the command of Armand. The commander started south immediately, his corps followed shortly.

Christopher Marshall, in Lancaster, wrote in his diary on March 10, 1780: "Past ten came into town two companies of light horse, commanded by Capt's Shaffner and Markom," and on March 12, "The light horse that came here a few days past marched away this morning for South Carolina." This is the last definite proof we have of George Schaffner returning to his native town. We can be almost certain that his horses were stabled about at the spot where we are now gathered.

The history of the South Carolina campaign of 1780, under General Gates is one of those confused contradictory subjects over which military historians still squabble. That there was vicious mismanagement somewhere is obvious, and General Gates' strategy at the Battle of Camden seems to the untutored observer to have been almost insane. Gates, himself, and Lee, quoted above, laid most of the blame for the disgraceful rout of our army on the failure of Armand's Cavalry to hold the van. Armand claimed that Gates was angry with him for refusing to allow his cavalry horses to be used to draw the cannon, and in revenge assigned him to an utterly impossible task. He said to Colonel O. H. Williams on the evening after the battle, "I will not say that we have been betrayed; but if it had been the purpose of the General to sacrifice his army, what could he have done more to the purpose?"¹³ A Congressional investigating committee (yes, they had them in those days) exonerated Gates, but modern strategists incline to agree with Armand.

The cavalry, of whom Captain Schaffner was certainly one, felt as Armand did, and made no attempt to rally or to behave with any order during the wild and disorganized retreat that followed. A sergeant in a Delaware regiment reported: "As for Armong's horse, they thought of nothing but plundering our waggons as they retreated."¹⁴ By the time the army reached Hillsborough, 180 miles from Camden where the retreat first halted, there were left of Armand's original one hundred light horse troops, only forty

¹² For details see P.M.H.B., vol. 2, pp. 1-34.

¹³ Johnson. *Life of Greene*, vol. 1, p. 498.

¹⁴ Ms. quoted P.M.H.B., vol. 2, p. 20.

men and officers. Some of these losses, of course, were battle casualties, but many had deserted. General Greene reported them "totally deranged, and cannot be fit for service for some time."¹⁵

That Captain Schaffner stood by his colonel in this time of disaster, and near disgrace, was probably the final factor in cementing their deep friendship. A letter which Washington wrote to Congress on October 11, 1780, must have been a comfort to the marquis. The Commander-in-Chief strongly urged that the Legion be retained and built up to its former strength: "Colonel Armand is an officer of great merit, which added to his being a foreigner, to his rank in life, and to the sacrifices of property he has made, render it a point of delicacy as well as justice, to continue to him the means of serving honorably."¹⁶ The Colonel now took a six months' leave of absence, and in February, 1781, sailed for France, where he collected money and equipment from his friends for the restoration of his Legion and of his good name. While there, a forgiving king decorated him with the Cross of St. Louis, and he came back to America in August ready for a new start.

In the reorganization of the Legion, Colonel Armand bethought himself of the welfare of George Schaffner. Th. McKean of Delaware, wrote to Washington, October 12, 1781,¹⁷ that recruiting of the Legion was going slowly, as none of the higher officers spoke English, and suggested the appointment of Captain Allen McLane ("The Robin Hood of the Pennsylvania Revolution") to a vacant position as major. We do not have Washington's reply, nor any statement of Armand's on the subject, but we have two known facts. Captain McLane remained a captain, and George Schaffner was made a major on December 1, 1781. We may infer from this that Armand's love of the young officer united with Washington's sense of fairness, preferred the man who had served well with the Legion, and whose knowledge of English, French and German made him better suited than an English officer for the polyglot group he served.

In 1782, the re-conditioned Legion served under General Greene in the Southern Department, where they retrieved the mistakes of General Gates, and helped consolidate the victory of Yorktown. In 1783, they were quartered at York, Pa. (Armand's French biographer confused York and Yorktown and has Armand remaining in charge of the Virginia city). At York they remained in idleness for almost a year, getting into trouble with the local residents, as idle soldiers will do, stirring up resentment because they were billeted in private homes whose owners thus lost the room-rent they could

¹⁵ Correspondence of the Revolution, vol, 3, p. 191.

¹⁶ Sparks' *Washington*, vol. 7, p. 252.

¹⁷ Correspondence of the Revolution, vol, 3, p. 422.

have gotten in the overcrowded town.¹⁸ A futile attempt was made to involve them in the Pennsylvania mutiny in the early summer.¹⁹ On March 26, Armand received his belated promotion as brigadier general, but got no results from his efforts to obtain some payment for his services and those of his French officers. On the whole, the impression made by the Legion in York must have been favorable, for when they were disbanded in November, Armand received a testimonial address from the leading householders, expressing "a high sense of the strict discipline, good conduct, and deportment of the officers and soldiers of the corps, whilst stationed among us for the ten months past."²⁰

We cannot be far out in guessing that during this long period of inactivity, Armand and Schaffner indulged together in their favorite pastimes of riding and hunting in the forests; that it was here that Armand enjoyed the wolf hunts of which he later told his French friends; that Schaffner taught him some of the Indian tricks of hiding and living in the woods which he later applied in the Breton forests, and passed on to his followers in the Vendean rebellion, so that some of the brilliant tactics which kept the "Chouannerie" alive in France for many years, may have had their origin in our Susquehanna woods. All of this is mere inference. So is the guess that the young major may have brought his general to Lancaster to visit the comfortable homes of his brothers and sisters. Yet it seems not improbable that some such hospitality may have suggested to the general's mind the invitation which he extended to the major to return with him to France to visit him there.

Early in 1784, Armand Tuffin, and George Schaffner arrived at the Chateau de la Rouërie. Lenotre says:²¹ "He brought nothing back from America except the Cross of Cincinnatus, 50,000 francs of indebtedness, a friend, called Major Chafner, whom he had met on his campaigns, and notions of equality of a somewhat over-expansive nature, which he would have done better to hide." This is neatly expressed, but not quite accurate. The Cross of the Cincinnati he did not obtain until later in the year, when he and Schaffner with other French officers applied for permission to found a French branch of the Order. Nor was the 50,000 francs a debt, but merely the general's estimate of the amount he had spent on his campaign. His "notions of equality," too, may have been shocking to the Breton nobles, but they had little in common with the most conservative of such notions to-day.

Just as the Americans could never pronounce Armand's name, so the

¹⁸ Penna. Archives. I, x, 133.

¹⁹ Penna. Archives. I, x, 62.

²⁰ P.M.H.B., vol, 2, p. 24.

²¹ Lenotre, op. cit., p. 17.

French were utterly unable to spell Schaffner's. In all records and memoirs he henceforth became "Georges Chafner," by which name, to avoid confusion, we shall now call him. He, himself, grew quickly resigned to the change, and signed his letters and documents in this manner.

Edmond Biré, editor of the 1910 edition of Chateaubriand's *Memoirs*, a scholar of wide erudition, but distinctly sentimental ideas, assigns a too noble motive to the major's trip to France.²² "The courageous Chafner, on learning the dangers with which the throne of Louis XVI was surrounded had come from America to place himself at the service of the king who had assured the independence of his own country." This is to assign to the young man from Pennsylvania, a prescience which he certainly did not have. The throne of France was indeed in danger in 1784, but not even the king seems to have realised it. George Schaffner's purpose in coming to France was to hunt with his friend in the Seven Forests of Brittany.

The Chateau of Saint-Ouën de la Rouërie is no longer in existence. A few ruins, notably those of an ancient chapel, and an elaborate stable, may be seen by those who know where to search in the woods near the Couësnon. In 1784, it was a proud castle, fit to be named with the feudal seats of other Breton princes. It was a little out of repair due to the negligence and extravagance of its owner, but Mme. de la Rouërie, Armand's widowed mother was living there, and she had plans for the restoration of the family fortunes.

It was a little world in itself. Fresh from the bustling frontier world of Lancaster, how strange it must have seemed to the young American as he rode up the magnificent avenue of ancient oaks. Something in his heart seems to have gone out to the ancient peace and dignity of this other world—a world already doomed to so rapidly approaching an end. From the "saut-de-loup" on the castle wall could be seen the Bay of St. Michel, on whose pearly waters floats that unbelievable island, like a dream of fairyland—Mont St. Michel, crowned with its abbey, and its church, which lifts to the opalescent sky its lacework turrets and spires on the highest of which the gilded angel watches over his holy Brittany. A romantic land was this into which the two young officers had come, and they were to write with their lives one of its most romantic chapters.

Mme. de la Rouërie had written a letter to Washington, which was mailed before her son reached home. She excused her flattery by saying that no terms were too extravagant in which to address a god. With her congratulations on his victory, she managed to include the not too subtle suggestion that the general use his influence to get her son a nice soft place in the French army. Washington complaisantly wrote to Rochambeau, and in the course of years, the marquis was made Colonel of Chasseurs, but he never worked at it, and certainly got no money from this source to pay old debts or to repair the chateau.

The dowager's second plan was better—somewhat, it would seem, to

²² *Memoires d'outré tombe*. [1910], vol. 1, p. 115n.

her surprise. She had been looking over the neighborhood, and had found for her son a very wealthy heiress, of the best local nobility. In the reaction of coming home after so long and stormy a wandering, the wild young marquis obediently consented to marry, and, as the French put it, "range himself." The young lady bore the impressive title of "Très haute et très puissante demoiselle Louise-Caroline Guérin, dame marquise de Saint-Brice de Champinel, baronne des baronnies de Sens et de la Chatière, châtelaine des châtelainies de Saint-Etienne, la Fontaine-la-Chaise, Parigné, le Sollier, le Rocher-Portail et autres lieu." When one deduces from this wealth of titles that the young lady owned at least eight castles one is comfortably sure that she was able to repair la Rouërie.

The wedding took place at her castle of St. Brice, on December 22, 1785. Beside the bride's family, there were present as witnesses for the groom, Mme. de la Rouërie; Armand's cousin Thérèse de Moëlien, Comtesse de Trojollif; and Georges Chafner. It was perhaps the first meeting between Georges and Thérèse, so soon to find their lives strangely entangled with the fate of the man they both adored. What, we wonder, were the feelings of the boy from the dye-shop of Lancaster, as he served as bridegroom for a marquis and a "très haute demoiselle," in company with a marquise and a comtesse in the chapel of a feudal castle?

The marriage while financially successful was a short and a sad one. The bride, delicate from birth, found her ill-health aggravated by marriage, and sank almost at once into a long and tedious illness. The marquis discovered, in a nearby town, a young physician, named Chévetal, whose practice was not yet large enough to prevent him from moving to La Rouërie and giving his full time to the marquise. With his usual, uncritical enthusiasm, Armand took this young man into his household, and into his heart—to his later disaster. In 1786, the marquise and her physician went for a tour of the Pyrenees in hopes of finding the mountain air of benefit to her. At the same time the Marquis and Schaffner went to Prussia. A letter from the Marquis de Chastellux to the French Ambassador in Berlin recommended the travellers to his care, explaining that their intention was to study the Prussian military system.²³ When they returned, they received news of the death of Mme. de la Rouërie on July 18, 1786, just six months after her marriage.

The marquis shut himself up at La Rouërie, refusing to see any of his friends except Chafner, who was now his inseparable companion. The doctor, no longer needed at the chateau, took a notion for life in Paris, and the marquis found him a place in the suite of the Comte de Provence. Armand and Chafner spent the long days riding and hunting together in the forests. They were both wild and reckless riders, noted for their daring and skill on horseback. It was at about this time that Chateaubrand met them galloping through the woods near Rennes, "accompanied by an ape, which rode on the croup of the marquis' horse."²⁴

²³ Lenotre, p. 21.

²⁴ *Mémoires d'outre tombe*. [1910], vol. 1, p. 309.

In such lonely rides, the two friends probably made their first contacts with a secret organization which was to be the source of much of their power a few years later. The Breton forests, the wildest in France, have always been a refuge for bands of outlaws, hiding among the marshes and fens, living in hollow trees or in underground caves and tunnels like rabbit runs. These bandits were aided and protected by the peasants, who themselves lived primitive lives in isolated villages, and who were never sure when, in temporary trouble with the incomprehensible feudal laws they too might have to take to the woods until the seigneur pardoned them. These same overlords, however, although they were bitterly jealous of their feudal rights, and enforced them, in some cases with cruel extremity, were closer in spirit to their peasants than the nobles of other provinces, and they knew and tolerated the existence of the forest outlaws, even making good use of their knowledge of forest trails, and of the information they acquired there.

Among such people was organized the society of the Fendeurs, or woodsmen. Its membership included outlaws, peasants, wood-cutters, charcoal-burners, and many of the noble lords themselves, especially those who loved riding and hunting—in fact anyone who had any business, legitimate or illegitimate in the Seven Forests of Brittany. Its original purpose was to aid benighted or straying travelers or huntsmen. Any member, finding himself lost in a strange part of the forest, had only to knock on a tree-trunk with a rhythmic knock, known only to the Fendeurs, and there would presently appear at his side, a peasant with a lantern, or a wild-eyed bandit with a torch, who was bound, by his membership to guide the wanderer out of the forest, or provide him with food or shelter, or otherwise serve his needs. The knocker was equally bound to ask no questions, notice no familiar faces, and give no information to the authorities.

It was their intimate association with this society which enabled Armand de la Rouërie and Georges Chafner to raise a peasant army of 40,000; and Jean Cottereau, better known as Jean Chouan, who took over their organization was able through it to set up such a literally “underground” resistance as to annoy the French Republic for decades to come. It was, indeed, the methods and even some of the actual hiding places of the Chouannerie and the earlier Fendeurs that the Breton and Norman underground used in their resistance to the Germans in the present war; a resistance which paved the way for our D-day landings, within a few miles of the locality we are describing.

His first mourning over, Armand de la Rouërie began to appear once more in local society, taking his American friend with him. Georges Chafner, who now seems to have abandoned all idea of returning to America, made rather a hit among the provincial leaders. Mme. Langnan de Bois-Février,

whose reminiscences were published in the *Journal de Fougères* in 1892,²⁵ wrote of him: "Of a poor and obscure family, he was in truth a handsome man. I have heard tell that he was quite witty, but that must have been a matter of guesswork, for he spoke French very badly, and I have always thought that to preserve his reputation for charm, he did well not to learn, for one always interpreted to his advantage what one failed to understand. It was to this that he owed much of his success."

Meanwhile, all around them, things were happening. The year of Armand's marriage, the scandal of the Queen's necklace had rocked the nation and served as fuel for the flame of revolution which had spread from America to France. Dissatisfaction was bubbling in all classes. The insecurity of the national finances was disturbing the bourgeois, the immediate life-and-death matters of salt-taxes and imposts were driving the peasants to desperation. Everyone was urging the convocation of the States-General. In the smug little provincial city of Rennes, some twenty miles from la Rouërie, and metropolis of the district, students at the university had formed themselves into debating societies, which rapidly developed into something closely approaching revolutionary clubs.

At these meetings de la Rouërie and Georges Chafner were popular guests. Young enough to be sympathetic with the students, old enough to command their respect, they were cloaked in an aura of romance as having fought for eight years in the Revolution which to these young radicals was pattern and inspiration. Chateaubriand, who had been a student here, and was still in touch with their interests wrote of la Rouërie: "the law students at Rennes loved him for his hardihood in action, and his liberty in ideas . . . He was elegant in figure and in manners, brave in mien, charming in face. He resembled the portraits of the young seigneurs of the League."²⁶ It is questionable whether the marquis, himself, was quite clear as to where his "liberty of ideas" was leading him. Lenotre says: "He was, at the same time, royalist and revolutionist; he held with the old régime in its drive to resurrect the ancient Breton constitution, and at the same time opposed the Court for its hostility to the philosophic spirit of Parlements. We believe that principally, he was devoured by a need for activity, and that he sought every opportunity for a struggle or a conflict."²⁷

The Breton revolution, as a whole, was strangely paradoxical. The first move of defiance against the crown of France came here not from the peasants but from the nobility. They had discovered an injustice in the failure of the king to fulfill certain promises made in the marriage contract of Louis XII

²⁵ Quoted by Lenotre and Lasseray.

²⁶ *Mémoires d'outre tombe*, vol. 1, p. 115.

²⁷ Lenotre, p. 29.

and Anne of Brittany, nearly three centuries earlier. On this ground, they demanded the restoration of the ancient independence of Brittany. All the discontented elements united joyously in favor of this proposition, not apparently realising that the restoration of the absolute rights of the feudal lords would be little improvement on the more distant tyranny of Versailles. There was talk of borrowing arms from England. The student clubs began to drill.

Armand de la Rouërie was chosen one of twelve Breton gentlemen who in July, 1788, went to Paris to request the king to convoke the Estates of Brittany—the old Breton Parliament. This delegation was received at court with high disapproval. They were refused audience with the king, and when they persisted in requesting it, were thrown into the Bastille. To those of us who grew up on stories of the horrors of Bastille imprisonment, the account of the prison life of Armand and his friends is disillusioning. Each of the nobles was allowed to have his valet with him. They were allowed to receive two hundred and forty bottles of Bordeaux wine. The governor of the prison was directed to provide them with paper, ink, pens, knives, scissors, and anything else they might require. Their friends were allowed to call whenever they wished. Armand's mother came up to Paris and visited him daily. The son of another gentleman obtained permission to live in the prison with him. The prison records of August 21, 1788, inform us that a billiard table was installed, "for the amusement of the Breton gentlemen." Lenotre says: "The Revolution which destroyed the ancient gaol, hastened to erect twenty others, just as strong, whose keepers paid little attention to the 'amusement' of their prisoners."²⁸

A change of administration in August, freed these captives, and permitted the calling of Provincial assemblies. La Rouërie returned home triumphant. Fougères was illuminated for his reception, with the result that two houses burned down. The marquis now turned his attention to domestic concerns. With the fortune left him by his wife, he set about making extensive repairs at the chateau.

Chafner, who had taken no part in the Parisian adventure, now again became active. Together, the two young men drew plans, consulted carpenters and masons, and sent for expensive building materials. Their first concern was to remodel the stables on a scale suited to their ardent horsemanship. They had the stalls built of carved oak, and the walls decorated with mural paintings. Having housed their horses to suit them, they remodeled several of the farms. They terraced the castle gardens, replanted the avenues, built new barns, and remodeled the old feudal castle in the flamboyant taste of the day. In the park, they planted four tulip poplars brought from America, which Lenotre found still growing there, more than a century later.

Before these improvements were well under way, however, the marquis, true to his character, lost interest, and dashed off to Paris again, leaving

²⁸ Lenotre, p. 27. Unless otherwise noted the story from this point is almost exclusively taken from Lenotre's account.

Chafner to take care of the burdensome details. In Paris, Armand stayed with his other favorite, Dr. Chévetal. This young man was living in the Rue des Cordeliers. Next door to him lived an obscure and very dirty veterinarian named Marat. Across the street, was the office of a blustering lawyer known as Danton. The marquis was unaware of these neighbors and friends of his protégé. He amused himself, during his visit with another whirlwind love affair with an actress.

The vitally important year of 1789 was at hand. The Tennis Court Oath was sworn. The Bastille fell. The Estates General were convoked. At this last news, la Rouërie stopped playing with actresses, and hurried home hoping to be made delegate of the Breton Nobility to the Assembly. To his chagrin, he found that the very project for which he had worked before, now stood in his way. The nobles, still in favor of separating Brittany from France completely, had decided not to send delegates to the States General. La Rouërie, as Mme. de Langnan put it, was forced "to go home and plant his cabbages."

At home, he became so turbulent and dissatisfied that his mother, in disgust, gave up trying to keep house for him, and retired to the town-house in Fougères leaving her son alone with Chafner and the servants. Armand immediately sent for a new housekeeper, in the person of his cousin, Thérèse de Moëlien. This young lady, thirty years of age, was the daughter of an impoverished Count, and, having no dowery, had never married. Armand, who had played with her as a child, and was fond of her because she was as wild and headstrong as himself, may simply have ignored the conventions in order to give a home to his old playmate. Certain it is, that when she moved into the chateau, a spinster alone with a widower and a bachelor, tongues began to wag. Where would they not?

Chateaubriand accepted, as an established fact, that Thérèse was her cousin's mistress. It was so affirmed at her trial, and so assumed by most contemporaries. La Rouërie's apologists, however, insist that she was not at all attractive, and that the marquis thought of her only as an old maid cousin, to whom he was doing a charity. This is directly in contradiction of Chateaubriand's eye-witness account in which he says that she was the first really beautiful woman he had ever seen "outside his own family." It differs also from the impression we gather from the news reports of her trial and execution. Lenotre says of the apologists that, "They make her ugly in defense of her virtue, and gain nothing by it."

Thérèse, herself, in answer to a direct question from the prosecutor, at her trial, said that she was not de la Rouërie's mistress, but was, on the other hand, engaged to his friend Major Chafner. We would like to believe this. Such a romance would be the fitting climax to the career of our Lancaster boy. We must admit to a doubt, however. Thérèse was on trial for her life, at the time, and she may have wished to divorce herself as far as possible from her cousin's conspiracies which she could no longer aid.

A modern observer may be excused for wondering if Thérèse de Moëlien was really much in love with either of the young men. She seems to have

been much more absorbed in her own share in coming events. She delighted in dashing through the woods on her cousin's magnificent horses, dressed in a costume of her own designing, which is vaguely described as "à la Amazone," with the Cross of the Cincinnati at her throat. She was a born conspirator, happiest when busy with plot and counter-plot. She seems to have visualized herself as the Jeanne d'Arc of Breton Independence, and like Jeanne, probably gave little thought to the affairs of the heart. Whatever their personal relationships, the three inseparables made a strange, romantic trio—the feudal seigneur, the American officer, the enigmatic lady, living together in the fantastically remodeled chateau, riding together through the dim aisles of the ancient forests, plotting together to restore a social order long since ended. The colors of the picture are heightened when we know that none of them had three years more to live.

The position of the Breton noblemen had become oddly anomalous. Their original intention had been to restore the liberty of Brittany, and they had thus appeared to be in revolt against the King of France, and thought of themselves as very advanced revolutionists. Now they were slowly awakening to the fact that what was happening was not a local war of independence but a class revolt of peasants and bourgeois against the privileged nobility and clergy. In sudden, sharp terror, the Breton gentlemen realised that they must postpone their quarrel with the Throne, and make common cause with royalty against this much more terrible danger. By the time they reached this conclusion, there was no longer a throne with which to conspire. The king was still nominally sovereign. Actually he was a prisoner of the Assembly. His brothers and courtiers had fled to Coblenz there to conspire to bring against their native land that Prussian army which la Rouërie and Chafner had so recently inspected.

The Assembly ruled France, and the Third Estate ruled the Assembly. The Breton nobles, then, could retain some measure of consistency by claiming that by conspiring with the princes against the Assembly they were really fighting against France, and for a free Brittany. To be sure the Breton cities, Rennes and Nantes in particular, were solidly against them, for the French Revolution was essentially bourgeois; but, unlike the nobility of other provinces, they could count upon whole-hearted support from the peasants. This was the strangest feature of the Breton struggle. In no other province, had the serfs suffered so cruelly at the hands of the nobles, and nowhere else were they so fanatically loyal to those same nobles.

Historians are agreed that this loyalty might not have driven them to active participation on the side of the royalists, if the republican leaders had not made the major error of attacking the church. Like all Celtic races, the Bretons are primarily religious. Their lives centre about the church. The curé is father of the village. When the revolutionists eager to introduce all their "reforms" at the same time, drove out the priests consecrated by Rome, and placed in their pulpits married men appointed from Paris, and paid by taxation, the exiled priests took refuge with the Fendeurs in the woods, where they celebrated masses, baptised babies and performed mar-

riages in the underground hideouts, or under the open sky, where they urged the loyal peasants who flocked to their services to support the cause of the nobles who promised to restore the faith.

La Rouërie, Chafner, and Mlle. de Moëlien, riding early and late in the forest, attended such masses and meetings, talked with priests, peasants and outlaws, and knew how thousands could be reached through the underground channels, and that, when reached they would rise. As a result of their activities, when the Breton nobles met, early in 1790 at the Chateau de la Mancelliere, to plan for a local uprising to support the Prussian invasion, Armand de la Rouërie was appointed head of the conspiracy.

In these early stages, Chafner did not apparently play so large a part as he did later. After all, what interest had he in Breton politics? He stayed at home to manage the estate, when Armand, accompanied by Thérèse, two valets and a hairdresser, went to Coblenz to obtain confirmation of his appointment, and sanction of his plans from the Duc d'Artois, who was at the head of the royalist army. We need not detail the events of this journey. Its objects were achieved, and Armand, returning homeward, stopped to visit his dear Chévetal in Paris. With his usual complete indiscretion, he told the little doctor all the details of the conspiracy, and showed, with pride the papers he had been given in Coblenz, making him commander-in-chief of the Breton armies, and promising financial aid. He was happily ignorant of the fact that those two neighbors of Chévetal — Marat and Danton, were already two of that dread triumvirate which in the next three years would irrigate France with blood.

The year of 1791 was devoted to organization and preparation. The young nobility rallied to the call. Armand's chief lieutenant was Gervaise Tuffin, his cousin, but hundreds of others served as leaders of districts, ambassadors to Germany, Jersey and England, and helped to drill peasants, to gather arms and money; while nobles too old for physical activity stayed at home organizing their own peasants, or loaned their castles as meeting places or arsenals, knowing that they risked their lives each day by so doing. Lenotre says: "To mention everyone involved in the conspiracy would be to cite the whole of Brittany." The midnight knocking on the tree-trunks no longer indicated a benighted huntsman. It summoned the conspirators to hear a message from the general, or to receive a cryptic little autograph note (some are still treasured by their descendants) signed, "Armand," for the leader had resumed his American *nom-de-guerre* for purposes of secrecy.

The expenses at la Rouërie must have been enormous. A large corps of servants were in constant attendance upon visiting conspirators. All who came and went, whether nobles or peasants, were fed and lodged sumptuously. Ten horses were kept constantly saddled for emergencies. Armed guards patrolled the boundaries of the estate day and night. A table was constantly spread in the chateau kitchen from which messengers, recruits and spies might help themselves. All this must have been managed by Chafner and Thérèse. Although Calonne sent money from Coblenz, and England sent arms, much

of the expense must have come from the dowery of Armand's unfortunate wife.

By spring of 1792, the conspirators were ready to act. Indeed action had to be taken. So vast an organization could no longer be kept a secret. News had already reached the authorities at Nantes and Rennes. The republican mayor of St. Ouen, nearest village to la Rouërie, had reported the blaze of lights which burned all night at the chateau, the horsemen who dashed up on exhausted horses, the uniformed guards who halted visitors at the gate. His honor had personally hid in the bushes, and seen a gathering of the chief conspirators, including Chafner, on the terrace of the castle, but before he could get close enough to hear anything, he was discovered by the guards, and la Rouërie ordered him off the grounds on pain of death.

One of the chief difficulties and delays was to synchronize the rising with the eastern invasion. The plan was—by attacking from east and west—to divide the republican armies, so that neither the Prussians nor the Bretons would have large forces opposed to them. Since despatches to and fro had to be carried by devious and roundabout ways, this cooperation was very difficult. Despatches received in February said that the eastern forces would invade by way of Verdun in March, and that la Rouërie should give them "four or five days" before he began his own rising. By May, however, nothing had yet occurred. La Rouërie summoned all his officers for a final meeting on Pentecost Sunday, May 27, 1792. The roads about the castle were thronged with young noblemen. Tables groaned with food, the lawns and terraces were crowded as a picnic party. In the evening la Rouërie made an impassioned address, explaining the objects of the conspiracy, and swearing them by a solemn oath to support these objects to the death. Lenotre says: "Certainly none of them foresaw that the oath which they pronounced, would bind them for long years to the adventurous life of partisans, to the most atrocious privations, to nights without repose, to winters without a shelter, to the misery of proscripsts, hidden in the forest, tracked like wild beasts . . . how many of those who met here were to fall in the heaths? How many at this hour made their rendezvous with death? The Chouannerie was born, with its heroic rages, its lasting despairs, its untold disasters—and with its grandeur too, for not one of these gentlemen ever broke the oath he made to this chief whose hot eloquence created, that night, a force which Napoleon himself never succeeded in defeating. Twenty-five years later there could still be found some who, sun-burned, grizzled, unrecognizable, still led unrestingly about the province their decimated bands."

It may well be that Georges Chafner took the oath with the others, that night. We know that he was present. If so he kept it with no less a devotion than did those others. He kept it to his death.

The officials at Rennes got word of the meeting almost in time. They despatched a small army of dragoons with two cannon to lay siege to the castle, and capture as many of the leaders as possible. They moved slowly, however, and la Rouërie's spies were as good as theirs. When they reached

the chateau on June 1, they found only Loisel, a confidential secretary of the marquis. No, he knew nothing of any military activities. The marquis was absorbed in the improvements on his house. Perhaps the men reported riding to the castle were the carpenters. No the marquis was not at home. He had left on Tuesday, in company with Gervais Tuffin, Mlle. de Moëlien, and Major Chafner. The secretary, of course, had no idea where they had gone. A wonderful piece of housecleaning had been done in five days. The only things which the soldiers found to hint of an unusual gathering were four large tubs of butter.

Small search parties descended simultaneously on all the smaller castles which la Rouërie had inherited from his wife. They found no one there but the servants. At St. Brice, it is true, the master's bed had been slept in; but an apparently embarrassed footman deposed that he had been trying it out in his master's absence. All these castles were confiscated by the government, and their furniture sold at public auction. Mme. de la Rouërie, who was utterly above suspicion was allowed to keep her town house at Fougères, where she lived for many years to come. Thérèse de Moëlien attended the sale at la Rouërie, and bought in the family heirlooms for the old marquise, with money apparently furnished by Armand.

That he should go into hiding, and complete the final stages of his preparations incognito, had been part of the original plan. As "Monsieur Milet," Armand was safe at the Chateau of Launay-Villiers, where quarters had long ago been prepared for him. Here he continued his work as usual. In August, 1792, he received word that the hour had come, at last. The princes with their Prussian supporters were about to advance from the east. Let the Bretons attack from the west, and the reconquest of France would be a mere matter of a few days. This careless self-confidence is one of the most amazing phenomena of the whole period. The nobles, born to an infinite contempt for the lower classes seem never to have dreamed of the strength of the forces opposing them. Says Lenotre: "They laid plans for victory, not for war."

The Breton leaders now hesitated. They must have known that while their peasants were strong in their native forests, they would be worse than useless in an invasion of France. Moreover, the conspirators were still chiefly interested in freeing Brittany. Could they not best achieve this by waiting until the eastern invasion had drawn government troops toward the Rhine, and then, rising in their own territory, wipe out the republican officials and troops in the towns, and declare Brittany an independent nation.

While they dallied with this idea, and the dilletante army of the princes moved cumberously up to Verdun, the French people were not so idle. On August 10, the "Reds of the Midi" singing their new great anthem, the Marseillaise, attacked the Tuilleries, butchering the faithful Swiss Guard, and the fanatical Knights of the Dagger, all of whom died in the belief that they were defending a king and queen who had early slipped out of the back door, and surrendered themselves to the assembly. On the next day, drums beat again, and recruiting officers shouted the news of the threatened

invasion from Prussia. Desperate men of all trades, all ages, and all stages of military knowledge, rushed to the recruiting stands, were formed into companies as they enlisted; and as each company was completed it left at once for the frontier, without allowing time for its members to gather up their possessions or say good-bye to their friends. Opposed to the elaborately prepared, but lazily over-confident princes this utterly untrained, but fiercely desperate people's army checked the invasion at Verdun before it had really started.

Meanwhile the authorities in Brittany began a determined assault on the conspirators. Armand's hiding place was not discovered, but a raid on the Chateau de Bois-Blin produced a prize. Two young men, who at first claimed to be mere casual visitors at the chateau, when taken to Vitré for questioning made the mistake of offering the local jailor an enormous bribe to let them off. Assumed by this that the captives were important counter-revolutionaries, the local authorities sent them on the Rennes, where they were identified as Gervais Tuffin and Georges Chafner. In the records at Rennes, one may still read an amusing entry: "Chaffner, nè en la ville de Lanquaster, province de Pince-le-Vannie en le continent de la Mérique." (As Lenotre says "the clerk's knowledge of geography was sketchy.")

The two young men came out very well in their questioning. Tuffin proved that he had just returned from Paris, and claimed that he knew nothing about any uprising. Chafner admitted that he had been living at la Rouërie, but said that, being an American, he found French politics confusing, and knew little about his host's activities. He said that on the day when all of them left la Rouërie so suddenly, the marquis had asked him to escort Mme. la Pontavice and Mlle. de Moëlien to Rocher-Portail, and that, since then, he had been visiting at the homes of various friends, and knew nothing of la Rouërie's whereabouts. Their stories were so convincing that they were finally released for lack of evidence. The days of the Terror had not yet begun.

There now appeared in the neighborhood a visitor from Paris. It was Dr. Chévetal, come to spend the pleasant autumn weather in his boyhood home. It was natural that he should call to pay his respects upon certain noblemen who had been kind to him in his early days. It was also natural, that these were mostly intimate friends of Armand de la Rouërie. Without undue inquisitiveness, he naturally heard from them of the events of the summer, expressing great surprise and chagrin at the flight of the marquis, and the warrant for his arrest. In the course of conversation, he let fall how much Armand had told him about the conspiracy, and his friends, impressed by how greatly he was trusted by their leader, did not hesitate to bring him up to date with more recent details. He expressed, everywhere, a natural disappointment at not being able to see his dear friend and patron, — no he did not wish to be told where to find him — but please would any one who saw the marquis give him Chévetal's best regards. The message, of course, finally reached the marquis, who could not deny himself the pleasure of seeing his dear friend. Chévetal had a long interview with la Rouërie,

who poured out his heart and his projects. His vacation being over Chévetal returned to Paris, and went at once, to call, on his friend Danton.

A week later, he returned to Brittany, and went direct to Armand's hiding place. Meanwhile, however, Armand's Parisian spies had notified him of the doctor's perilous intimacy with the revolutionary leaders. Armand, who never tried to disguise his feelings, greeted the physician coldly. Chévetal was not embarrassed. Yes, he admitted, he was a friend of Danton. Yes, he had told him all he knew of the conspiracy. Danton, the marquis must know, was in full sympathy with the royalists. He was sick of the excesses of the Revolution which he now knew to be a lost cause. He knew that the princes would win in the long run, and wished to assure himself of their favor by throwing in his lot with la Rouërie. Chévetal had autograph letters from Danton to prove this, and a blanket commission for himself which would enable him to protect the conspirators from arrest, and even to move Revolutionary troops out of their way. Armand was rejoiced and employed Chévetal as one of his most trusted agents thereafter. If most of the commissions on which the doctor was employed turned out disastrously for the Bretons, he persisted in believing it sheer bad luck.

The news of the disaster to the eastern invasion, left the Breton conspirators in a state of shock. Armand, however, refused to give in. He knew he must postpone the rising, which could not succeed alone. His friends urged him to retire to Jersey or to England, and there await better days, but he was obstinate. With Thérèse, Chafner, and his valet, St. Pierre, he vanished into the heart of his native land.

In the last days of 1792, we have brief, almost legendary tales of him, riding, riding through the forests. He made it a rule to stop nowhere longer than a night, lest he endanger his hosts in his own peril. Wherever he went, the peasant war flared up. Acts of resistance to the police. Flashes of mob violence. Angry demonstrations against the constitutional priests. Looting of the blues to enrich the whites. Behind him followed Jean Chouan organizing the outlaw bands that he was to lead for many years, giving them work to do that their enthusiasm might not fail. The complete pattern of the Vendean war was established. Late in the winter a troupe of National Guards, looking for la Rouërie, was almost wiped out in a pitched battle with the peasants who were protecting him.

The princes, defeated at Verdun, had mostly taken refuge in England, where they were being royally treated by the British, and continued their arm-chair plotting at their ease. There was now important work for Georges Chafner, who, with his American passport, could go easily back and forth between France and England, and with his knowledge of English, was the ideal person for la Rouërie to use as a messenger. In December he was in London with messages from la Rouërie to the princes and Calonne. Here he came upon a piece of information which struck him as suspicious. He learned that, for some months, Chévetal had been in London, exhibiting a letter from la Rouërie which stated that he was an accredited agent of the marquis. As such he had been received by the princes, and was deep in the

knowledge of all their plots. The letter was genuine enough; but Chafner knew that Chévetal had never been sent by Armand to London. He was alarmed.

There is in existence a letter²⁹ purporting to have been sent from Chafner, from London, during this trip. Most historians believe it to be a forgery, as it is dated January 25, 1793, when Chafner is known to have been back in France, and the reference to the king's death makes it impossible that "25" might be a slip of the pen for an earlier date. There is much in it, however, which sounds like Chafner, especially the bad French. It is our own guess that Chafner himself wrote it, perhaps actually from London, at a *later* date, as a matter of self-protection to make it seem that he was not present during the events which immediately follow, and knew nothing of them. As the only piece of composition ever attributed to him, we give it here:

London, Jan. 25, 1793

I have been in London only a few days, dear sir, and in the momentary ignorance in which I find myself as to the retreat of our common friend, I write to you without delay at the address we agreed upon, in order to save you from a very great danger. I have learned from a very certain source, that poor la Rouërie has been sold, that he will be delivered up: and at the very hour in which I write, the Convention may have laid hands upon our chief. The Constitution Club in London, incessantly in correspondence with the Revolutionary leaders in Paris, has succeeded in discovering Armand's hiding place. I am assured that this has been done through the English government, which has all the most crooked methods at its disposal. There is not a moment to lose. I am just back from seeing Lord Mars. I have told him of all these turpitudes. He kept the silence which his official position required; but his very silence is a proof. Save la Rouërie, watch over Thérèse and over our friends, and may we soon be able to avenge, arms in hands, the death of the most virtuous of kings. As a citizen of the United States I have placed my sword and my life at the service of the French monarchy. Neither the one nor the other will ever fail. Adieu.

Chafner.

Several times in his wanderings, La Rouërie had stopped for a night at the very isolated little chateau of La Guyomarais, in the wild forest of Hunaudaye near Lamballe, in the Dinan district. The family of La Motte, who owned it, usually spent their winters in town, but in January of 1793 they were still at the castle. Probably this was because they hoped to be of further use to the marquis. In the small hours of the morning of January 12, they were aroused by the barking of the castle dogs, heralding the approach of three horsemen. An icy rain was falling, and men and horses were near

²⁹ Lenotre, p. 215n.

collapse. M. de la Motte, himself admitted them, and discovered them to be Armand de la Rouërie with his secretary Loisel, and his valet St. Pierre. The marquis apologised for placing the family in danger once more, but explained that they had been turned away from another castle, and that, while searching for a peasant's hut in which to sleep, his horse had fallen in a ravine, giving him a bad tumble. He was bruised and shaken, and went at once to bed, his valet lying on a couch in the same room.

Next morning the marquis was able to be up, but the valet was very ill with chills and fever, from his long exposure. He was quite unfit to travel, and, as the marquis was not much better, it was determined that they two should remain at the castle, while Loisel rode on, to send back a physician from the nearest village. The marquis and his servant remained shut in their room, and were not seen by any of the inmates of the castle. M. de la Motte told his family and servants that the ailing traveler was a M. Gasselín. By January 18, the valet was on his feet, but his master had become seriously ill. M. de la Motte sent for his own physician from Lamballe, and later, Loisel sent back another from one of the larger cities. Their diagnosis was a putrid bilious fever, which they treated with blisters.

On the 25th, Fontevieux, one of the more important conspirators, and Georges Chafner arrived at the chateau. They had met Loisel, and learned from him the whereabouts of the chief. Chafner brought the alarming news of Chévetal's treachery; Fontevieux, who had come straight from Paris, brought the much more terrible news of the king's execution. It was agreed that the marquis was far too ill to hear these reports. They saw him for a few moments after supper, and retired. The marquis was wakeful that night. They thought, afterward, that he might have read their news in their faces. Next morning, however, he seemed serene. At the usual hour, St. Pierre went to his room to read him the morning paper. He had been warned of course to skip the news of the execution, but, by an embarrassed look, or a hesitation in his reading, he must have betrayed himself. The marquis sent him out of the room to get some water. St. Pierre left the newspaper on a chair. He had scarcely reached the foot of the stairs when a terrible cry rang through the house. All rushed to the sick-room. The marquis had fallen, with the paper in his hand, cutting his face, which was covered with blood, but he was on his feet again, in wild delirium, calling for his horse, his clothes, his arms, shouting that he must ride to Paris to rescue the king. His friends got him to bed, and sent for the two physicians again, who pronounced that he now had cerebral fever. The delirium lasted for two days. On January 30, 1793, at four-thirty A. M., Armand de la Rouërie died.

His heart-broken friends were now faced with a terrible problem. If they declared to the authorities that la Rouërie had died at the castle, everyone who was there at the time would probably forfeit his life. The children and the servants did not, even now, know the identity of the visitors. The marquis had always been called M. Gasselín. Loisel used the name of "Friccaudeau," and Chafner posed as his servant, using the name of "Franche" which was an anagram of his real name. If the la Motte's reported the death of an

unknown stranger, investigations would follow which would surely give away the whole story. Yet they were all unwilling to carry the body of their dear friend into the winter woods, and leave it for the wolves. Mme. de la Guyomarais wished to have the body taken to their family cemetery by night; but news had come that troops of soldiers were patrolling the roads. The attempt was too dangerous. It was at last determined to bury him in the little wood back of the house, hoping that they might be able to carry him to consecrated ground at some later time.

Chafner and Loisel, aided by the physician from Lamballe, and by a young tutor who was employed by the family prepared the body for burial. A gardener, who was believed to be trustworthy, dug the grave. By the clear moonlight, they carried their chief to the woods. The physician treated the body with lime to hasten decomposition, and the grave was filled with the same material. They smoothed the surface even with the soil around, carrying the excess earth back to spread on the beds in the garden. They strewed dry leaves thickly over it, and planted a small holly-tree in the middle.

When they returned to the house they drew up the following document:

We the undersigned, Joseph de la Motte de la Guyomarais, Georges de Fonteveau, Chafner American major, Masson physician, do certify that Armand-Charles Tuffin, Marquis de la Royrie, died at la Guyomarais on the night of the 29-30 January, 1793, at four o'clock in the morning, aged 42 years.

On the 30, about ten to eleven o'clock in the evening, his body was buried in the little wood called Vieux Semis, facing the garden of la Guyomarais.

To find the place, it is in the midst of four oaks. Facing the fourth, on the grave, we have planted a holly tree so that we may be able one day to transport his remains to the Guyomarais vault, or elsewhere.

La Guyomarais, Jan. 31, 1793.

Joseph de la Guyomarais
Georges de Fonteveau
Chafner. Masson, physician

This document they rolled in a bottle, and buried at the foot of an oak tree at the edge of the wood, where it was found, accidentally in 1835. The guests at the chateau left, one by one, during the day. Fonteveau undertook to go to London to inform the princes. Chafner hastened to Fougères to break it to Thérèse. Saint-Pierre, who was in an agony of remorse, blaming his carelessness for his master's death, begged that, as partial expiation, he be entrusted with the dangerous task of carrying la Rouërie's money and papers to Desilles.

Before Chafner could reach her, Thérèse, who shared her cousin's easy habit of trusting his friends, had done a disastrous thing. Hearing of the marquis' illness, she wrote to the physician, Chévetal, begging him to come and see the invalid professionally. Chévetal was only too glad to oblige.

He arrived in Fougères on February 13, in company with one of the most infamous of Republican spies, Lalligand-Morillon, who had been put in charge of wiping out the whole Breton conspiracy. They had blanket orders, empowering them to commandeer troops, give orders to civilian authorities, and make whatever arrests they chose. Thérèse, warned by Chafner, was no longer at Fougères. The old marquise knew nothing but the fact of her son's death. She was never suspected of any share in the conspiracy. Chévetal sought out other conspirators, and finally made contact with the valet, St. Pierre, who, having often accompanied his master on his visits to the doctor in Paris, was as unsuspecting as he. He told Chévetal the entire story, except the exact location of the grave, which he did not know, as he had been too heart-broken to attend the burial. He dropped the useful information, however, that they were not quite sure of the loyalty of the gardener who had dug the grave. St. Pierre also, helpfully, explained what he had done with the papers, containing letters from the chief conspirators, and lists of all those involved.

Chévetal, who seems to have had some slight delicacy against actually appearing in the final proceedings against the friends he had betrayed, passed his information along to Lalligand, who immediately went into action. He descended upon Guyomerais, conducted a brutal inquisition, under which no one except the gardener weakened. Through him the grave was discovered, the remains identified (the soldiers carried off the decaying head upon a pike), and then began the pitiless rounding up of the major conspirators. (Chévetal, at his own suggestion, was arrested with them, but soon disappeared from among them.) Georges Chafner was again in England, and thus escaped the net, but his name was placed upon the proscription list. Almost every one else, even remotely connected with the marquis was gathered in. The Guyomerais family (including the children); the Duc de Noyon, at whose castle the conspiracy was first plotted; Mme. de St. Aulaire; Thérèse de Moëlien; the young Desilles sisters, whose father had been a friend of la Rouërie. Nearly every prominent Breton family lost at least one member. The prisoners were taken to Paris in open carts filled with straw, and lodged in the Abbaye prison to await trial. Fontevieux, who had returned from England just in time to be caught, had to sustain not only his own arrest, but the bitter discovery that most of his fellow-prisoners believed that he was the traitor who had sold them.

On June 4, 1793, twenty-seven of the prisoners (the rest had been weeded out) were brought to trial in a body. Many of them pled guilty, with pride in the confession. Others denied all knowledge of the conspiracy. Mlle. de Moëlien, whose beauty, the reporters said, stirred murmurs of admiration in the courtroom, freely admitted her share in the conspiracy, but denied that she was la Rouërie's mistress. Asked about the epaulettes and the Cross of the Cincinnati, which she habitually wore with her "Amazon" costume, she said they were not Armand's but those of her "intimate friend," Major Chafner. When asked if it was true that la Rouërie had planned to burn the Republican towns of Antrain and Pontorson, after putting all the

inhabitants at the sword, she gesticulated proudly at the twenty-seven defendants, and said: "If my cousin had been that kind of a man, would he have had this many friends?"

The trial ended on June 17, 1793. Of the twenty-seven accused, twelve were acquitted. (This was one of the earliest mass trials, and an attempt at strict justice was maintained.) Among those set free were the two la Motte sons, and two of the physicians who attended the marquis. The physician, Masson (who helped prepare the body), and the gardener were deported. The thirteen remaining prisoners, including M. and Mme. de la Guyomarais, Fontevieux, and Thérèse de Moëlien were sentenced to death.

Sentence was carried out that same day at the guillotine in the Place de la Revolution. Thérèse refused to allow the executioner's assistant to cut her beautiful hair, but herself pinned it up, out of the way of the knife. The Place was black with the heads of the crowds who came to see the show. Ticket-scalpers made small fortunes selling seats in the windows, and on soap-boxes, and quickly erected scaffolding. Others did an excellent business renting opera-glasses. All of the Paris newspapers, and most of the Breton ones had reporters at the scene. Some of their descriptions were vivid. The crowd waited three hours for a show which lasted twelve minutes. They sighed over the matronly dignity of Mme. de la Guyomarais, and over the beauty of Thérèse de Moëlien, and of Mme. de la Fonchais, whom most of them supposed to be her daughters. As Thérèse mounted the scaffold, the executioner ripped her bodice open to the waist, exposing her breast to the crowd. A reporter commented on the murmur of delight that went up from the mob. It took less than a minute each for the thirteen men and women to die. The last of them was the young tutor whose only fault was helping to bury the dead.

Georges Chafner was safe in England. He had no further ties in France. He had helped to bury his beloved general. His other intimates were beyond his help. The woman who, whether she was or was not his fiancée, was certainly the one woman who mattered in his life, was buried in the public ground of the Madeleine. The Cross of the Cincinnati which she had worn—was it really his, or Armand's?—had probably been given, as was customary, to the executioner to insure a swift and easy death. Why should an American return to France?

Let those who, during this story, have thought of Georges Chafner as a kind of toad-eater, living by flattering a wealthy patron, explain why he did not now stay in the happier of Dickens' "Two Cities." He could have found another patron. He was well-known to the emigrée princes, and to the English ministers who had backed the conspiracy. Or, if he was weary of French politics, why did he not return to America? He had his major's commission. He was a member of the Cincinnati. In Lancaster lived two well-to-do older brothers who could have found him a place in the community. Think what a figure he might have cut in small-town society!

There is a kind of nobility in the futile gesture of this lone young man—a stubbornness of loyalty which is all the more touching in that it can have

proceeded from no personal conviction. The Breton quarrel was no affair of a Lancaster boy. Indeed, if he had thought it through, the cause which he served in Brittany was exactly the opposite of that for which he had fought in America. But the memory of his lost friends was stronger than logic. Whether or not he had taken that oath of loyalty on the eve of Pentecost, he lived up to it. When word of the execution reached him in London, he returned at once to Brittany.

Of his later life we know nothing, except that he almost certainly died in the cause of his friends. Anyone who wishes to visualize the kind of a war in which he fought has only to read Victor Hugo's powerful "'93." With the now leaderless, but still fanatical army, he hid in the caves, and bushes. He fought beside them in savage and pointless battles against the "Patauds" as they called the patriots. No record of his death has been found. He does not seem to have had a trial. Few records were kept in that unauthorized war. Perhaps his epitaph may be read in the grim postscript to a letter from Santerre to the Assembly, describing a small battle with the Vendean troops:

"We have no prisoners, because we have ceased to take them."³⁰

Lenotre thinks he may have perished in the "Noyades de Carrier," at Nantes — those mass drownings of anonymous prisoners which read more horribly than anything we have heard from the horror camps of this war. Lenotre happens to be an authority on these atrocities and may have ascribed such a death to Chafner merely because of his own interest. We shall never know the truth.

In the library of Franklin and Marshall College, there is a small German book, which once belonged to Robert Bailey, and was by him given or sold to the second Caspar Schaffner, whose characteristic signature overlies that of the earlier owner. It is the 1795 edition of the famous "Revolution's-Almanach" published in Göttingen. It is full of references to la Rouërie's conspiracy and its outcome, to the Vendean war, and to the Noyades. The name of Georges Chafner does not appear. Does the possession of this volume by the major's brother argue a knowledge of his tragedy by his family in Lancaster; or does it imply an anxious search, by a responsible older brother for some news of the long-parted younger? When Caspar read the long list of names of those who had died on the guillotine, did he pass unknowingly, near the head of the list, the name of the young woman who might have become the daughter-in-law of the Lancaster blue-dyer?

There is little in the story of George Schaffner of Lancaster — Georges Chafner of France — that adds to our knowledge of our city. There is little in his tragic life to inspire or guide us. There is much of human interest, much of romance, and, at this holiday season, we may be excused for having devoted an evening to so strange a tale. Let our apology be that at least it shows that when a boy is born in Lancaster, no one can predict where he will end his days.

³⁰ Moniteur, vol. 19, p. 81.