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THE ESCAPE OF LAVALETTE

By LAWRENCE LESLIE.

One of the balmy days of spring, several years ago, a small company of mourners gathered in the gloomy chapel of an old church near the city of Paris to pay the last tribute of respect to the memory of her whose open coffin stood on the altar before them. Hot tears fell upon the white face of the dead, as they looked their last upon the features so furrowed by time, and so marked by sorrow and care. Brushing back the hair, white almost as the marble forehead over which it fell, the farewell kiss was given, and the poor dead maniac was left alone to the silence of the grave and the keeping of the angels. The poor brain that for forty years had been tortured by the slowly consuming fever of insanity, was at rest, the bleeding heart felt its wounds no longer, the spirit of the long-suffering, ever-loving wife had gone to join her husband, who had crossed the shadowy river a quarter of a century before.

For forty years no ray of reason had lighted up her once cultivated mind, and she had, during all those weary years, endured fearful torture, shivering in the constant expectation of the terrible death of those she loved, and imploring all around her to save her husband. At last, when the long suffering heart broke, her last words were: "Save! Oh, save my husband! He cannot, he shall not die!" The poor woman who thus suffered and died was Madame Lavalette, wife of Count Lavalette, the companion and confidant of Napoleon the First, whose condemnation and death and wonderful escape is full of interest and romance.

Lavalette was of humble though respectable origin, and at an early age entered the army of Louis, and when that monarch fell he entered the service of the Republic, where he soon attracted the attention of Napoleon, who gave him a position on his staff, and soon after married him to Emilie Louise De Beaumarnais, a beautiful woman, and a niece of Josephine.

When Napoleon went to Egypt, he selected Lavalette as private secretary, and when the empire was established he was made his postmaster-general. He continued to discharge the duties of this office until the fall of Napoleon in 1814, when he yielded to the pressure of circumstances, and gave in his adhesion to the government of Louis XVIII.

When the Emperor returned from Elba, and the Bourbons were again overthrown, Lavalette united his fortunes with his former master, and during the brilliant hundred days' reign he discharged the functions of his old office.

The battle of Waterloo and the final expulsion of Bonaparte soon followed, and the Bourbons came back to Paris, escorted by a million foreign bayonets, and immediately commenced the work of vengeance. First fell the gallant and chivalrous Ney, and then the heavy hand of royal fate was laid upon Lavalette, and he was dragged before the death commission, charged with treason to the king. He defended himself ably and eloquently, but it was unavailing before judges who had been instructed to convict, and he was adjudged guilty and sentenced to die.

His wife was not in Paris when the trial and condemnation took place, but when she heard of his arrest she hastened to join him in prison. She reached France only to find him an inmate of a felon's cell, awaiting an early execution.

The shock to the poor woman upon being informed of this misfortune was so severe that she fell insensible into the arms of an attendant. When she recovered she immediately commenced her efforts for his release. Friends came to her aid, and a strong petition for Lavalette's pardon was presented, but contemptuously refused, and the unhappy prisoner was removed to the celebrated prison, Conciergerie, whence it was believed his escape was an impossibility, and the morning of the twenty-fourth of December was fixed as the time of execution.

The condemned man, thus deprived of all hope, resigned himself to his fate, and wrote to the attorney-general, begging as his last request that his wife and child, and a few other friends,

might be permitted to make him a farewell visit, and his request was granted.

The permission was duly forwarded to the sorrow-stricken wife, and on the afternoon of December 23, the day preceding the time appointed for her husband's execution, she went to say farewell. Her health was extremely poor, and in order to avoid the movement of her carriage, she had used a Sedan chair, and was accompanied by her daughter, a girl of twelve, and a female domestic named Dutoll. Her dress was showy and extravagant in style, and such as once seen was not likely to be soon forgotten, consisting of a red merino riding coat, trimmed with fur, and a large, black hat, with a heavy, gay-colored plume falling over it.

Thus attired, she, with her companions, presented themselves at the door of the prison, and upon the presentation of the permission from the attorney-general, they were admitted by Jacques Eberle, who had been especially charged by the keeper of the prison with the care and service of Lavalette, and conducted to the count's apartments. The door was locked behind them, and the weeping friends were left alone.

As soon as the first burst of emotion which followed the meeting had subsided, Lavalette began to talk calmly of his approaching death, and gave some directions concerning his burial and the disposition of his property. His wife was entirely overcome and sank sobbing into his arms. For a short time they were silent, when Madame Lavalette started up and exclaimed:

"My husband! you cannot, you must not die! I can, and I will save you!"

He looked at her in astonishment, and for a moment he doubted her sanity. But she repeated her declaration, and in a manner so earnest, yet so calm that he listened to the plan she hurriedly unfolded. Her proposition was to change garments with him, when he was to leave the prison with the others. She urged that to him escape would be life and liberty, while no serious consequences could result to her from the detention. She contended that as soon as the authorities discovered how cleverly they had been deceived, they would release her, when she would hasten to join him in his exile.

Lavalette rejected the plan. He declared he would rather die than escape in woman's attire, and leave her in the power of an enemy who had shown how little protection law, justice, honor and truth afforded the victims of its hate. But his wife again implored him not to reject this opportunity of escape, and live, if not for himself, at least for his wife and child, and for France.

The count replied by pointing out the improbabilities of success, the impossibility of passing the several keepers through files of soldiers, and along the busy street, without certain detection, and dwelt upon the humiliation that would follow his discovery in woman's attire.

"But you will not be detected," urged the faithful wife. "Put on this black gown, this red cloak, which I have worn on purpose to make me a marked object, this gay hat, which all the turnkeys will recognize, cover your hands with gloves, simulate tears, keep your handkerchief over your face so as to conceal your features, and even the hardened men who watch over death's victims awaiting in this gloomy prison the final stroke of the ax, thinking it is me, will pity your sorrow, respect your grief, and allow you to pass without removing the handkerchief. Once outside the gate, my chair is in waiting; enter it, and, as soon as you are far enough from here to make it safe, leave, hurry to the house of our friends, who will provide you a place of concealment, where you can remain in safety until the excitement and search shall be over, when you can leave the country for a home under some more friendly government, where I hope to join you very soon."

To these arguments and entreaties by the mother the daughter added her supplications and tears, and Lavalette finally yielded, and was soon disguised in the garments the lady had worn.

To diminish as much as possible the dangers of detection, it was determined to prolong the interview as long as possible, hoping to remain until the twilight should aid their bold effort. Several times the guard rapped upon their door to notify them that their stay had been already too prolonged, but on their earnest entreaty they were permitted to stay a little longer.

It was now nearly 8 o'clock, and the order to terminate the interview was too imperative to be disregarded, and as the door opened the lady with the red cloak, the gaudy feathers, walked out, smothering her sobs with her handkerchief, which nearly covered her face, supported by her daughter, who was also weeping. The turnkey glanced around the room as he entered, and saw a person he supposed to be Lavalette sitting in an obscure corner of the room, his head bowed upon his hands and his bosom swelling and heaving with such emotions as a man might be expected to exhibit at the farewell interview with his family.

The door was securely locked, and the retiring members of the family were conducted through the line of sentinels without suspicion, and soon found themselves outside the inclosure. Their hearts bounded with mingled emotions as they heard the heavy, iron doors close behind them. They were rejoiced at their escape, but filled with sorrow at leaving the poor wife and mother to the tender mercies of the Bourbons.

But their joy at their supposed escape soon gave place to the utmost despair and consternation, for when they reached Mme. Lavalette's chair they found it deserted, the attendants having gone away to indulge in a frolic which was going on near by. Imagine the tortures endured by the fugitive, as the minutes went by and they could not hope to conceal it long, escape was an impossibility. Half an hour passed and seemed almost an age, when the attendants returned and Lavalette entered the chair and was rapidly borne away. When at a safe distance he got into a carriage and was soon whirled out of sight and into a place of safety.

As soon as he left the chair the daughter entered it, and was lowly borne toward her now desolate home. While this was going on outside, the poor, distracted woman was walking back and forth across the narrow room in which she was a voluntary prisoner, a prey to the most cruel fears and uncertainties, trembling at the sound of every footstep, fearing it might be the jailer, and the flight of the prisoner discovered, while successful pursuit was yet possible.

At last, about half an hour after the escape, the rattle of keys, bolts and locks announced the coming of Roquette, the chief turnkey, and concealment was no longer possible.

Mme. Lavalette had only time to pass behind a small screen which stood in the room and throw herself upon a sofa, covering her face with her hands, when he entered. He glanced around, saw, as he supposed, the reclining figure of Lavalette, and withdrew. It seems, however, he was not fully satisfied, for he soon returned and called Lavalette's name. Receiving no answer he went behind the screen, and, holding up his lamp, instantly recognized the person before him. The whole truth flashed upon his mind in an instant, and he uttered an exclamation of surprise and despair.

"He has gone!" Mme. Lavalette tremulously ejaculated. "Ah! madame, you have deceived me," he replied, and sprang toward the door to give the alarm, when the lady came forward and exclaimed: "Stay! Monsieur Roquette, stay!"

"No, madame; this is not to be borne," was the response. She then seized him by the arm and attempted to detain him, but he shook her off and sounded the alarm.

His son immediately started after the fugitive, and soon overtook the chair, gave a shout of joy as he saw it was occupied, rushed forward, threw open the door and called upon the inmate, whom he supposed to be Lavalette, to surrender. The only reply was a shriek from the occupant, who proved to be Mme. Lavalette.

With a curse the young man returned and a general alarm was given. The military and the police swarmed into the streets and joined in the search. Handbills containing his portrait and a most complete description of his person were sent all over France, and there was not a postmaster, postillion or gendarme on any of the roads of the kingdom who had not one of those in his pocket. Their vigilance was quickened by the offer of immense rewards, and as an additional precaution the issue of passports was suspended for a time, so that he would be unable to pass the frontiers and escape.

But it was all in vain. Count Lavalette remained in Paris, and though the gendarmes often swarmed around the place of his concealment, his retreat was never discovered.

He was, however, in constant danger, and a brace of loaded pistols were always ready for instant use, leaving him the consolation of knowing that he should never die upon the scaffold, as he intended, in case of discovery, to lodge their contents in his brain. After a few weeks the excitement of his escape partially subsided, and he began to cast about for an opportunity to leave the country, but difficulties almost insurmountable presented themselves and appalling dangers attended every moment.

When all other means failed, in his desperation he wrote to an English gentleman residing in Paris, James Bruce, in which, representing himself as a friend of Lavalette, he threw himself entirely upon Mr. Bruce's generosity, and frankly made him a confidant. He assured him that Lavalette was still in Paris, but could only escape with his assistance, entreating him not to betray him, and if he would assist him he was requested to send a letter to a designated place, advising the writer of the fact. This letter was unsigned, and sent to Mr. Bruce by mail.

That gentleman was touched with compassion, and counseled with two of his countrymen, Sir Robert Wilson and Captain Hutchinson, and the result was they all entered into the effort to place the unhappy man beyond danger. So the letter was answered, the parties met and the scheme of escape formed. They first provided him with the uniform of a quartermaster of the National Guards, and then selected a person of his own height, complexion and general appearance to procure a passport, under a feigned name and proceed with it as far as Compeigne.

Lavalette, in his uniform, and otherwise disguised, left Paris in an open carriage, in company with Bruce, who had assumed the uniform of an English general, and the man whose portrait was in the possession of the principal policemen and detectives of Paris, whose person had been so frequently and so fully described, the individual for whom all France had been thrown into a feverish excitement, rode boldly along the populous streets, in the broad glare of day, under the eyes of thousands of gendarmes, who saluted him as their superior officer, and presented arms to his companion, the English general. Arriving at Compeigne, he was met by the friend who had secured his passport, and in a few hours he found himself safe in neutral territory.

Baffled in the pursuit of Lavalette, the government turned its rage upon the poor, loving wife who had so cleverly proved her bravery and devotion. She was immediately thrown into close confinement, the charge of treason against the State was preferred, and a long series of annoyances, threats and persecutions were commenced, the certainty of trial, condemnation and execution were impressed upon her, until her constitution, already shattered by anxiety and care, gave way, reason became clouded, and, after an incarceration of fifteen months, she became a confirmed maniac, raving almost constantly about the danger to her husband, and calling upon all around her for help. Then, satisfied with their work, she was handed over to her friends; but her life was ever after a blank.

In 1822 Lavalette was pardoned, and permitted to return to France, but he wrote to a friend: "She who would have given her life to save mine is now a mental wreck, and knows not that I am saved."

Lavalette died in 1830, but his poor wife lived on until 1855, when death kindly closed her sorrows. Napoleon by his will left Lavalette a bequest of 300,000 francs, but only 60,000 francs were paid over. In 1853, however, Napoleon III. ordered the balance to be paid to his heirs, and it came in time to minister to the last necessities of the noble woman who had sacrificed so much for her conjugal love.—New York Weekly.

Dog-Watch.

Dog-watch is a corruption of dodge-watch, and is the name given to two short watches of two hours each on shipboard—one from 4 to 6 p. m. and the other from 6 to 8 p. m. The dog-watches were introduced to prevent the same men from always keeping watch at the same hours of the day; hence on these occasions the sailors are said to dodge the routine, or to be doing dodge-watch.—Boston Globe.

SCIENCE NOTES.

A correspondent of the Scientific American notes that an ordinary electric light bulb can be made to glow with a bluish light similar to an X-ray tube if it is rubbed briskly with the hand in a dark room.

In a certain kind of Wyoming coal it is found that gold is present in quantities large enough to pay for extracting it from the ashes. The same curious occurrence of the yellow metal has also been noted in a South African coal vein.

Count Zeppelin, the German aeronaut, has nearly completed another airship, with the aid of a fund of over \$25,000 raised by popular subscription, and also with the help of the government. This craft will be large enough to carry 10 persons.

A writer in Paris Cosmos says that at the present time hypnotic influence must be considered almost the only method of reforming drunkards. In Russia this treatment is meeting with startling success; but the Russians are a tractable race and the system produces fewer cures in France.

An English concern is constructing a yacht which is to be propelled by the jet system. That is, water is pumped in forward and ejected with force at the stern, the reaction tending to drive the boat ahead. This method of propulsion has been experimented with at different times without much success; but improvements in mechanical details are said to show a high degree of efficiency for it.

The discovery of a means of metamorphosing radishes into potatoes has been made in so solemn a place as the academy of Sciences, Paris. M. Mollard takes a very young radish, "pasteurizes" it in a certain way, and it grows up into a fine potato. More scientifically, the young radish is cultivated in a glass retort, after a process invented by Pasteur, in a concentrated solution of glucose. Starch then develops plentifully in the cells of the radish, which swells out, loses its pepperness, and acquires practically the consistency, flavor and especially the nutritive properties of the potato.

American Winter Resorts.

If one really wishes to find restfulness anywhere in America in the winter he will have to go to one of the summer resorts on the northern coast, which sleep from September until June.

If he goes south, to the mountains of the Carolinas or Georgia, to the rivers of Florida or along the Pacific coast, he will find great hotels and boarding-houses filled with thousands of pleasure-seekers, whose presence demands the luxuries and excitement of the city.

Wealthy patrons come thousands of miles to these resorts in private cars, bringing with them horses, carriages, servants and innumerable trunks, boxes and bags. Florida and California are the great winter pleasure grounds where the luxurious find a congenial climate in which to kill time.—London Telegraph.

Steel Cross Ties.

The Lake Shore and New York Central railroads have ordered 7000 steel cross ties. These are laid in certain sections of each road. Will steel ties last long enough to more than make up the excess of their cost over that of wooden ties? If they do, wooden ties are doomed, and the steel lords have more money coming to them.—Everybody's.

Lucky, But Poor.

Wickley—What is your opinion of Dr. Mixwell as a physician? Titlow—Not very flattering to him, I'm afraid. He has splendid luck with his patients, I'm bound to admit; but somehow he has never succeeded in accumulating wealth.—Chicago Journal.

Execution Checks Outrages.

The execution of two of their leaders has put a temporary check to the machinations of a new Chinese sect named Tsai-Yuen, in Honan, whose program was to destroy all railways and all foreigners on a day to be announced. They hate the present ruler of China, declaring that the real emperor is now residing on the "Mountain of Nine Dragons," and will make his appearance in due time.