

heard Dominique walk from wall to window; sometimes he sat down. Outside all sounds at last ceased, the troops were asleep.

Francoise opened the window softly and leaned out. The night was serene. The moon, setting behind the woods of Saunal, flooded the field which the shadows of the poplars barred with black. But Francoise thought not of the mysterious charm of the night. She studied the country; looked to see where the sentinels were posted. One only was in front of the mill. She could distinguish him perfectly, a great fellow, immovable, with his face turned upward, and with the dreamy air of a shepherd.

When she had inspected the place carefully, she sat down again on her bed. She sat there an hour absorbed in her thoughts. She listened again, not a breath disturbed the house. She returned to the window and looked out. The moon was down and the night dark; she could no longer see the face of the sentinel; the field was as black as ink. She listened a moment, then climbed out of the window. An iron ladder, its bars fixed in the wall, ran from the wheel to the garret. A long time elapsed it was overgrown with moss and ivy.

Francoise bravely seized one of the bars, and swung herself over; she began to descend; her skirt embarrassed her; a stone broken loose fell with a splash into the Moselle below. She stopped, frozen with terror; then she reflected that the noise would cover her descent; she boldly pushed on, tearing away the ivy with her feet to uncover the rungs. When she reached Dominique's window a new danger awaited her. It was not directly beneath her own; she put out her hand and felt—only a wall. Must she then go back and renounce her project. Her arms were tired and the sound of the Moselle below made her dizzy. She picked off a bit of plaster and threw it in at Dominique's window. He did not hear; perhaps he slept; she tore her fingers in detaching a bit of stone; she was at the end of her strength; she felt herself falling when Dominique softly raised the window.

'It is I,' she murmured. 'Take me quickly; I fall.' He bent out, caught her, and lifted her into the room. She began to cry, but stifled her tears lest some one might hear her. Then, by a supreme effort she calmed herself.

'You are guarded?' she asked in a low voice. Dominique, still stupefied at seeing her, pointed to the door. Outside the sentinel had fallen asleep, leaning against the door.

'You must fly,' she said quickly; 'I have come to beg you to fly and to say adieu.'

He did not appear to hear her, but repeated: 'It is you; it is you; oh, how you frightened me. You might have killed yourself.'

He took her hands and kissed them. 'How I love you, Francoise, you are so courageous as you are good. I had only one fear, that I would die without seeing you. But you are here, and now they will kill me.' He had drawn her toward him, and her head rested on his shoulder. Danger brought them nearer together.

'Ah,' said Dominique in a caressing voice, 'this is the day of Saint Louis, our marriage day. Nothing has been able to separate us; we have been faithful to the *romances*. Have we not, dear? This is our wedding day.'

'Yes, yes,' she repeated; 'our wedding day.' They exchanged a long, lingering kiss. Suddenly she freed herself; the terrible reality rose before her.

'You must fly, you must fly. We must not lose a minute.'

He held out his arms to beg her to return to them.

'O, I pray you,' she said, 'listen to me. In an hour it will be daybreak. If you die I will die. You must go at once.'

Rapidly she explained her plan. The ladder descended to the wheel; by means of the paddles he could reach the boat. It would be easy then to gain the other side of the river and escape.

'But the sentinels?' 'There is but one at the foot of the first willow.'

'If he sees me, if he gives the alarm?' Francoise shuddered; she put in his hand a knife she had brought with her.

'And your father and you?' he asked. 'No, I will not go. If I go they will, perhaps, kill you. You do not know. They will spare me if I will guide them through the forest of Saunal. If they find me gone they are capable of anything.'

The young girl would not stop to argue. To all this she only said:

'For love of me, fly. If you love me, Dominique, do not stay another minute in this place.'

She promised to climb back to her room; she gave him another passionate embrace. And he yielded, but asked one question more.

'Swear to me that your father knows this and bids me go.'

'My father sent me,' said Francoise, without hesitation. She had but one desire, to assure herself of his safety.

'Very well,' said Dominique, 'I will do as you wish.'

They spoke no more. Dominique opened the window. Then a sound at the door froze them. They believed their voices overheard. They clung to one another, expectant, in terrible anguish. The door creaked, but did not open. They heard a sigh, and the long breathing of the soldier asleep across the threshold.

Dominique insisted on Francoise first remounting to her room. They bade one another a mute adieu; then he helped her on to the ladder. When she had gained her room, in a voice light as a zephyr, she breathed down, 'A *revoir*. I love you.'

She leaned out, trying to follow Dominique with her eyes. She looked for the sentinel, but could not see him. An instant, and she heard the movement of Dominique's body among the vines. Then the wheel cracked, and a light sound announced that he had found the boat. She saw its black outline against the grey Moselle. A terrible anguish seized her: she thought she heard the alarm of the sentinel; the least noise seemed like the swift steps of the sentinel. Some seconds passed; the country lay in peace. Dominique ought to be across. Francoise saw nothing more. The silence was profound. Then Francoise heard a hoarse cry, and the dull thud of a body. The silence became deeper; then, as if she had felt death passing, she remained frozen and motionless in the face of the night.

At daybreak the miller sought Francoise's chamber and opened the door. She came down into the court pale and calm. But she could not repress a shudder when she saw the body of a Prussian soldier lying under a stained cloak.

Around the body soldiers cried and gesticulated full of fury. The officer called for Merlier as mayor of the company.

'See,' said he, stifling with anger, 'one of our men found assassinated by the river. I shall make an example of this, and I call upon you to help us to discover the murderer.'

'As you will,' answered the miller, 'but it will not be easy.'

The officer turned down a corner of the cloak which covered the body. The sentinel had his throat cut and the knife remained in the wound. It was a black-handled kitchen knife.

'Look at that knife and then help us in the search.' The old man started, but recovered himself and answered without moving a muscle:

'Everybody has knives like that in our country. Perhaps the man was tired of fighting and ended the matter himself.'

'Silence!' said the officer angrily. 'I don't know what keeps me from setting fire to the four corners of this village.' His anger prevented his noticing the change in Francoise's face. She could not keep her eyes from the corpse stretched almost at her feet. He was a big fellow, who looked like Dominique with his blue eyes and fair hair. This resemblance pierced her heart. Perhaps afar in Germany some loving one would weep. She recognized the knife. She had killed him.

When they discovered Dominique's flight there was terrible tumult. The officer went into the room, examined the window, and returned furious.

Father Merlier even was annoyed at Dominique's flight.

'The foolish boy, he will ruin everything,' Francoise heard him with anguish. He did not suspect her complicity.

'The scoundrel! the scoundrel!' said the officer, 'but we will find him, and the village shall pay for it. Do you know where he is?' to the miller.

Merlier laughed silently, and pointed to the extent of the wood. 'How can you find a man there?' he said.

'Oh, he has haunts that you know. I will give you ten men. You shall guide them.'

'It would take eight days to beat those woods.'

The calmness of the old man enraged the officer. At this moment he saw Francoise, pale and trembling. The anxious attitude of the young girl struck him. He was silent—looking from her to the old man.

'Is this man the lover of your daughter?' he asked brutally.

Merlier became livid. He drew himself up, but did not answer. Francoise took his face between her hands.

'I see,' said the officer, 'your girl has helped him to escape. You are her accomplice. Once more, will you give him up?'

The miller did not answer. He looked away indifferently, as if he had not been addressed. The officer was overcome with anger.

'Very well. You shall be shot in his place.'

Again he gave orders for the file of soldiers.

Merlier shrugged his shoulders plegmatically; all this drama seemed in doubtful taste. He did not believe that men were shot so easily. When the soldiers had come he said gravely:

'Then this is serious. Very well, if it must be, I as well as another.'

Francoise sprang up wildly supplicating: 'Pity, monsieur, pity. Do not harm my father. Kill me in his place. I alone am to blame.'

'Be silent, my child,' said the old man. 'Why do you say what is not true. She spent the night in her chamber, monsieur, I assure you.'

'No, I speak the truth,' she replied, 'I climbed down to his window, I made him go. It is the truth, the only truth.'

The old man grew pale. He saw that it was true, this astounding story. Ah, these children with their hearts, they spoil everything.

'She is beside herself, she does not know what she says. Let us end this.'

She still protested, threw herself on her knees, and clasped her hands. The officer listened.

'My God! I finish this. I take your father, because I have not the other. Find him and your father shall be free.'

'Horrible, horrible! where can I find Dominique at this hour? He is gone, I know no more.'

'Choose. He or your father.'

'Oh, my God! How can I choose! If I knew where Dominique was, how could I choose! My heart will break. Let me die, the sooner the better. Kill me I beg of you, kill me.'

The officer became impatient.

'Enough. I do not desire to be cruel. I will give you two hours. If in two hours your lover is not here your father shall pay for him.'

Merlier was led into Dominique's prison. His face showed no emotion. But when he was alone two great tears rolled down his cheeks. His poor child, how she suffered!

Francoise stood in the middle of the court. The soldiers passed her with pleasantries she could not understand.

She had two hours. This phrase rang in her head. Where to go, what to do? Mechanically she went toward the river and crossed it on the big rocks. She saw a spot of blood on the shore and turned pale. She followed the traces of Dominique in the disturbed grasses, that led across the meadow into the wood. There they ended. She threw herself into the wood; she sat down a moment. How long had she been gone, five minutes, a half-hour? She sprang to her feet. Perhaps Dominique was hid in a dell where they had gathered nuts together. A lark flew by uttering its sweet sad note. Perhaps he had taken refuge in the rocks. She sought him there; the desire to find him took possession of her; she would climb a tree and look. She sought for one, calling his name every few steps. Only the cuckoo answered her. Once she thought she saw him, she stopped. No, she could not take him back to be shot. She would not tell him. She would beg him to go on, to save himself. Then she thought of her father, and what awaited him. She fell on the turf crying out:

'My God! my God! why am I here!'

Frantically she sought to fly from the forest. Three times when she believed she had found the mill she came out on the prairie. At last she saw the village and stopped. How could she go back alone?

She stood a moment; a voice called sweetly, 'Francoise, Francoise.'

She saw Dominique lifting his head out of a ditch. She had found him. Heaven then wished his death. She cried out, and fell in the ditch.

'You want me?'

'Yes,' she answered, not knowing what she said.

'What has happened?'

Her eyes fell, she murmured:

'Nothing, nothing. I was restless. I wanted to see you.'

When she was quiet he explained that he was not going away lest the Prussians be revenged on them. All would be well, and, he added, laughing:

'Our wedding will be a week later, that is all.'

Then, as she remained bewildered, he became grave.

'You are concealing something.'

'No, I swear it, I ran away to come here.'

He embraced her and told her it was imprudent for them to remain longer there. He must go into the forest. She held him shuddering.

'Listen. You had better stay here; no one seeks you. Fear nothing.'

'Francoise, you conceal something,' he repeated.

Again she denied it, only she wanted to be near him; she evaded him, she appeared so strange, that now he refused to leave her, otherwise he would seek the French troops; he had seen some on the other side of Saunal.

'Ah, they come, they will soon be here,' she murmured eagerly.

The clock of Rocreuse sounded eleven. The strokes were clear, distinct. She was terrified. It was two hours since she had left the mill.

'Listen. If we have need of you I will wave a handkerchief from my window.'

She ran and left him. Dominique, uneasy, walked along the border of the ditch toward the mill.

As she ran toward Rocreuse Francoise met an old beggar, Bontemps, who knew the country thoroughly. He greeted her, he had just seen the miller in the hands of the Prussians; he made the sign of the cross and passed on.

'The two hours are up,' said the officer when Francoise appeared.

Merlier was there, on a bench, still smoking. A grin the young girl begged and wept on her knees; she wanted to gain time in the hope that the French would arrive. As she implored, she thought she could hear the tramp of the soldiers. Oh! if they would but come and deliver them!

'But one hour, one hour more, grant me but one hour?'

The officer was immovable. He ordered two men to take her out, that the execution might proceed quietly. A frightful struggle rent her heart. She could not kill her father. No, she would die instead with Dominique; she started to her chamber—and at that moment Dominique entered the door.

The officer and soldiers gave a cry of triumph.

But as if only Francoise was there, he went toward her gravely.

'This was not well. Why did you not bring me back? It was left for Father Bontemps to tell me. Here I am.'

The Prussians shut Dominique up without saying what fate was in store for him. Francoise, overwhelmed with anguish, remained in the court, despite the wishes of her father. She expected the French. But the hours ran by, and night was coming on.

At length the Prussians made preparations for departure. The officer, as the evening before, entered Dominique's room. Francoise knew that his fate was decided. She clasped her hands and prayed. Her father at her side kept the silent, rigid attitude of an old peasant who knows he cannot struggle against fate.

'Oh, my God, my God!' murmured Francoise, 'they will kill him.'

The miller drew her toward him and took her on his knees like a child.

The officer came out; behind him two men led Dominique.

'Never, never,' said he; 'I am ready to die.'

'Reflect,' said the officer, 'this service you refuse me another will give. I offer you your life. I am generous. Guide us through the wood to Montredon.'

Dominique did not answer.

'Why are you so obstinate?'

'Kill me. Let us finish this,' he replied.

Francoise, with clasped hands, besought him. She would have agreed even to dishonour. Merlier took her hands so that the Prussians should not see her wild gestures.

'He is right,' murmured he. 'Death is better.'

The file of soldiers was there; the officer waited for some sign of weakness on Dominique's part. All were silent. A far were heard violent strokes of thunder; a dull heat oppressed them. In the midst of this silence was a cry:

'The French! the French!'

On the road to Saunal, along the edge of the wood, could be seen a line of red pantaloons. All was confusion in the mill. The Prussians ran here and there with guttural exclamations.

'The French! the French!' cried Francoise, clapping her hands.

She was like one demented. She broke from her father's arms, and ran about laughing and waving her arms. They would come, they would come in time. Dominique would live.

The sound of firing startled her like a thunder-clap. She turned. The officer said:

'First, let us finish this affair.'

With his own hand he pressed Dominique against the wall of the stable and gave the order to fire.

Then Francoise saw Dominique, his breast pierced by a dozen balls.

She did not weep; she stood dazed, her eyes fixed on the stable; occasionally she made a wondering, childlike movement of the hand. The Prussians had seized the miller as a hostage.

It was a fine fight. The officer could not retreat; he must sell his life as dearly as possible. It was the Prussians who now defended the mill and the French who now attacked it. For a half-hour the fusillade continued.

The French posted a battery in the ditch below, that had concealed Dominique. The struggle now would not be long.

Ah, the poor mill, the balls pierced it through and through. The ivy torn from the crumbling walls hung like caterpillars. The Moselle carried away the chamber of Francoise; it was torn open exposing the bed with its white curtains. Suddenly the old wheel received two balls and