

familiar writing. After a moment she read as follows: 'Friend of My Youth: This may, perhaps, be a line of farewell. The doctors have said the final word: I am to die soon—to-night—to-morrow. Thank God, Father Joe, I am not afraid to die! I do not mean to say that I have done all I might have accomplished. I can say only that I have made an honest effort to do my best. We have not fought over the question of religion, thank God! If my faith had wavered, Catholicism would have been my refuge. On one point we have always agreed, you remember—as to the efficacy of prayer for the dead. When I am gone, do not forget me. And if at any time, Father Joe, you can make a convert of an Episcopalian, do so. I would like to know that every man followed faithfully the light vouchsafed to him. God's blessing be yours, dear friend!

'Until we meet again,

'JOHN O. M.'

Cynthia handed the letter to her sister. 'Thank you,' she said to the Bishop, then sank into the desk chair, and, with her head in her hands, wept heart-breakingly.

Bishop Lawson went to the door. Turning, he said: 'I will leave you now for a while. You will have time to re-read your dear father's letter. My sister—she will soon be here—lunches with me to-day, and I shall make arrangements for two other places. I would like very much to have the daughters of John Minters at my table.'

Softly he closed the door.—*Ave Maria.*

SAVED BY A SPIDER'S WEB

'The story? Do you want to hear it again, child?'

The speaker was my Aunt Herminie, a frail little old lady, with a faint voice that seemed to come from a distance. She was sitting as usual in her comfortable easy-chair, in front of an open window. She had always been delicate, and I could never understand by what miracle one who had been doomed apparently to an early death should have lived to reach the age of eighty years.

I had always been her favorite, and she had told me 'the story' many, many times. In her youth, during the Terror, she lived in the Abbaye de Mauvoisin, near Corbeil, which belonged to the State. Her companions there were two old ladies, Mme. Marechal and Mme. Bedouillet.

This was 'the story':

One evening, about 10 o'clock, Mme. Marechal and I were sitting before the fire, chatting. Mme. Bedouillet was dozing, as the hour was late. The wind blew violently, making the sparks dance upwards from the blazing logs.

Suddenly we were startled by a faint rap at the door. That you may understand our exact situation, I will mention that during the day a company of soldiers—about one hundred in all—had come to the Abbaye for lodgings. Their commander, a large, florid man, brought with him an order from the authorities to that effect. The men had passed the day boisterously, drinking, singing, and card-playing. By evening they had quieted down, and were asleep.

As may be imagined, such neighbors were not very comfortable ones for three unprotected women. Mme. Marechal's husband was absent; Mme. Bedouillet was a widow, and I was an orphan. We had securely locked the door of our apartment, which was on the ground floor between the road and the chapel.

The rap was soon repeated, louder this time. We looked at each other with eyes full of fear. We were tempted to feign deafness or sickness; but in those stirring days no one dared pretend. If we were to refuse hospitality to the Revolutionists, we should be considered as suspects, and the guillotine awaited such.

Mme. Marechal began to say her prayers. Mme. Bedouillet, roused by the rapping, sat helpless, trembling in every limb. I was young, and it was my duty to open the door. I did so, and saw outside a

body of men wearing broad brimmed hats making a black spot in the moonlit road.

I was about to close the door precipitately, when one of their number came forward, with outstretched hands, and said in pleading tones:

'Have pity on us, citizeness, and give us shelter for the night! We are worn out with fatigue and hunger. Have pity!'

'Who are you?' I asked.

'Fugitives. Members of the "Gironde." We are pursued by our enemies. Save us!'

'You poor fellows!' I replied, sympathetically. 'I cannot keep you. You must hurry away. The chapel is full of soldiers. If they were to see you, it would mean certain death to you all.'

A moment of hesitation followed. Then a pale, delicate, young man, who was leaning upon a companion, faltered:

'I can't go a step further. March on, comrades and leave me! I can only die.'

But the Girondins were brave men, and they had no idea of abandoning one of their number.

'Is there no place where we can rest for two hours—just two short hours?' begged the leader.

'No place but this room,' I replied. 'But the door at the end, which you see, leads into the chapel. The soldiers have no other way of getting out.'

An expression of despair settled on the man's face.

'Good-bye, citizeness!' he said. 'The country is full of men hunting us. Pray that we may escape.'

I was overcome with pity for the suffering men. In fact my pity overcame my prudence. I was seized with a sort of fever or exaltation, and, as they were about to go, I said:

'There is perhaps a means of saving you, but it is a very dangerous one.'

All crowded forward to listen, and I could hear exclamations of dismay from the women behind me.

'At the farther end of the chapel, over the altar, is a loft. Once there you would be quite safe. But to get there—' I paused to collect myself, and then continued:

'You would have to walk along a narrow projection, or cornice, bordering the high wall, directly above the heads of the sleepers. If one of them should awaken and look up, you would be discovered.'

'Who will show us the way?' asked the leader, with fresh hope.

'I will,' I replied, scarce knowing what I said.

I seemed to be inspired, to no longer belong to myself. To save those men was my only desire. They held a short consultation, then their leader said:

'Thanks for your kindness, citizeness! We accept your offer.'

I threw open the door, and they all tiptoed into the room. There were ten of them, and they certainly looked as if they were in need of help.

'These stairs lead up to the cornice,' I said, pointing to a staircase on one side of the room. 'At the top there is a door. I will open it and look down into the chapel. If everything is quiet I will give you the signal to come up. You will follow me along the narrow ledge, until we reach the door into the loft. Once past that, you can rest. The soldiers will leave early in the morning.'

Thereupon I ascended the steps, opened the door, and looked down. The soldiers were lying about in groups on the flagging asleep, with their heads pillowed on their knapsacks. The wind howled around the tower, drowning the sound of their heavy breathing. Rays of moonlight illumined one side of the wall, leaving the other in the shadow. Fortunately, the projection along which we were creeping was on the dark side. It stretched out before us, straight and narrow, about forty feet above the sleepers.

I signalled to the men, and, in a moment they were on the stairs: then I set out on the perilous passage. Ah, what a trip! Never shall I forget it. I crept along on tiptoe, one hand clinging to the wall, the other waving into empty space, fearful at every step