

Then he began to sing. To make him stand higher, the soldiers brought him an empty wine cask. Some of them had been in America, too, evidently, for when he sang 'Yankee Doodle,' with many gestures with his drum-sticks, they joined in the chorus.

There was nobody to watch Hugh and Father Gaillard now; everybody gathered about the 'savage American boy' on the cask. Even the little lad who had been hurt laughed, as Henry crowed at the end of each stanza.

But suddenly there was a howl: a soldier had caught sight of Hugh and the priest. Henry became aware of this. He jumped from his perch, and reached Hugh's side just in time to strike back the arm of the soldier with his clasp-knife. The boy and the priest vanished in the darkness. Henry faced the soldier, who made a movement to grasp him. Henry threw the drum at his face and ran.

'Je suis Americain!' he said.
'Aristocrat! Aristocrat! Hang him!' called the soldier; but Henry had disappeared.

AT NINE O'CLOCK.

The dancers of the Carmagnole soon returned to their places. 'Ah, what a droll, savage American boy!' they said. And some of them listened to the stories told by the soldier, who had been in America, of the strange, barbarous manners of the country. And the old priest had escaped—what of it?—to-morrow he would die, they said. All priests must be killed by good citizens sooner or later.

When Henry crept into the doorway of his lodging house he was dripping with perspiration. It was not that he had run so fast, but that he had been afraid—terribly afraid even when he had seemed boldest. He believed that if he lost his life his father and mother might be lost, and this was enough to make him afraid of death.

He found Hugh and the Abbe Gaillard in one of the bedrooms of the deserted house. Hugh had got a candle, and as few boys then were ever without tinder and flint—there were no matches—he easily made a light. The old priest sat in an armchair; he was very white, and a cut in his forehead was bandaged with Hugh's handkerchief.

They both started as they heard Henry's footsteps. As he entered the old priest held out his thin hand.

'Ah, my brave boy!' he said, 'I thank you—you have saved our lives. And Hugh knows how grateful I am since I have with me the Blessed Sacrament.'

Henry bowed; he did not fully comprehend.
'Monsieur,' said Hugh, gravely, 'I promise you that your father and mother shall be saved. You know not what you have done, but you have brought a great blessing on yourself to-night. I promise!'

Henry was silent. Then he took Hugh's hand.
'As sure,' he said, 'as my name is Henry Bache, if what you say turns out to be true—if your God saves my parents, I will worship Him—I will have your old priest tell me how to do it. I like his face.'

'But he is a Jesuit,' said Hugh looking straight into Henry's face.

Henry hesitated. 'Well, I have been told—but never mind—he must be good since he has been evilly treated by those fiends. And he is a brave man. Now you must help me find my father and mother.'

Father Gaillard had listened; he understood English sufficiently to get at what Henry was saying.

'His father and mother?' he asked of Hugh. 'What says he of his father and mother?'

'They are in prison.'

'In what prison?'

'He does not know.'

'Oh, I do not know,' said Henry, tears coming into his eyes.

'And I shall go mad if I do not find them; yet, I know not, as a stranger, where to begin. If I could only speak the language well!'

The priest raised himself on his elbow, with an effort.

'You are English!'

'No,' said the boy. 'I am an American,' he added proudly.

'My name is Henry Bache.'

'American—Bache,' said the priest. 'Bache—Bache.' He tried it again to get the pronunciation. 'Ah, I remember. Your father and mother are with Madame O'Regan, in the Conciergerie. It was Madame who sent me by a trusted servant a note, telling me that she and two Americans had been thrust into prison. She told me also of a dying nun in the same prison. To her I was going, when the mob, God forgive them! recognised me.'

Henry went towards the door.

'I must go,' he said, 'to find this prison. You are safe. There is wine in the cupboard and meat downstairs. I will leave you the key. The landlord will never come back. He was guillotined yesterday for harboring an aristocrat.'

'You must not go,' said Hugh. 'It means death. We must consult.'

'I will not wait,' said Bache. 'They will die of pain without me.'

'You can do no good,' spoke the priest. 'When this pain abates so that I can walk, I will go to the prison.'

'No,' said Henry, in a low voice; 'I must go. You promised,' he said, turning to Hugh, 'that your God would save them.'

'I am sure,' said Hugh, 'that God will not let me break my word.' And he turned to the priest.

Father Gaillard smiled gently, and his lips moved in prayer.

'Oh, Father,' said Hugh, the weight of grief getting heavier on his heart, 'I must go, too—I must, I must—think of my dear mother among those demons! I will, at least, die with her.'

Henry took his hand again.

'Let us go!'

Father Gaillard saw that he could not keep them, and he felt a faintness creeping over him.

'Kneel!' he said.

Hugh drew Bache to his knees with him. And then the old priest blessed them both. Hugh rushed up to him and kissed him on both cheeks, and Henry hastily brought wine and bread, and put them, with the key, on the table within reach of the Abbe.

The boys went downstairs together.

'The old man's blessing did me good—though my father would laugh over it with his friend, Mr. Tom Paine,' said Henry. 'I don't care if he is a Jesuit—he is a good man. But—what shall I call you?'

'Hugh—that's my name.'

'Well, Hugh, you must put on some of my clothes. You had better not go out again with those clothes. They are too fine for these times. You are an aristocrat; they will recognise you as a—what do they call it?'

He thanked Henry. In a few minutes he had dressed himself in a suit of coarse brown cloth, put on a round cap, and carefully laid his ruffles and sword aside. Henry gave him a stout stick, and they went into the street. The Abbe waved his hand to them.

Surely two boys never started out to do a more hopeless thing. The Conciergerie, as the prison was called, was doubly guarded. They had no friends, and at any moment they might on some pretext be arrested and guillotined. At this time neither women nor children were spared.

'I feel,' said Hugh, as they went on, 'that only God can help us. I shall say the Litany of the Blessed Virgin as I go along. She went to look for the Infant Lord when He was lost, and we have lost our parents. She has felt our sorrow; she can understand us.'

Henry said nothing; but when they had walked on in silence for a time, he spoke:

'If I knew a prayer, I would say it.'

'Say, "Son of God, help us!"'

Henry repeated it reverently.

'Now,' said Hugh, 'we must leave the rest to Him.'

They were passing some official house. A crowd of howling women ran down the steps, singing a blasphemous song. One of them stopped, and insisted on pinning two stained rosettes on the jackets of the boys.

'Let them be,' said Henry, as Hugh was about to tear his off.

'They are red, white, and blue.'

They passed a group of men on a corner. Hugh asked one of them the way to the prison.

'Ah,' said the man, who had too much wine, pointing out the direction. 'You will be just in time, if you want to join the condemned. Robespierre has ordered that a great crowd of the prisoners shall be guillotined by moonlight. Hurry! It seems to me, citizens,' he said, turning to his friends, 'that if this goes on there will be none of us left.'

The boys could not speak; their hearts were like lead. They passed another group drinking in front of a tavern. These men were in their red shirts—for the night had grown hot—and these were open at the throat. One of them drew his hand across his neck as the boys passed.

'The guillotine will work to-night well.'

'And,' said another voice, in a lower tone, 'perhaps Robespierre may fall himself.'

'Cheer up,' Hugh said.

'I cannot,' said Henry. 'Oh, I wish we were home! How different it is out in the quiet streets of Philadelphia! To think that perhaps they will never see the beautiful Delaware or the green fields about again. Oh, why did we come?'

'It is fair in heaven—in our own land,' said Hugh softly.

'But my father and mother do not believe in heaven,' said Henry, in agony. 'I wish they did—I wish they did. It must be'—his voice choked—'it must be awful to die without hope—and they do not know whether I am alive or dead!'

'Henry,' said Hugh, earnestly, 'I will tell them—no matter if all the dirty red caps in creation stop the way. Faith, I will.'

They had reached the prison. There was a waiting crowd in front of it, silent, not rejoicing as was usual with the crowds that waited the condemned to be brought out. The heat was intense. The month was Thermidor—as the Revolutionists called it—between July and August. The air was still.

Slowly a heavy cart came out of the frowning gates. And just then a quarter to nine o'clock struck.

The cart heavily moved onward. The faces of all the condemned could be plainly seen. There was no need of torches. The moon was full and silvery. Hugh felt Henry Bache clutch his arm.

'There!'

Hugh looked. He saw his mother's face, calm, serene, smiling at him; she held her rosary in her hand. Leaning against her was a weeping woman; and near the woman stood a man, pale, horror-stricken. Hugh knew at once that this was Henry's father. They were on their way to death.

'You promised—you promised,' whispered Henry. 'God cannot save them now!' he seemed frozen to the spot. His father did not see him, and his mother's face was hidden.

Hugh was a strong boy. He thrust right and left with his stick—and perhaps the rosette on his jacket saved him from being knocked down at once. He made his way, however, thinking of nothing but the faces before him; he sprang upon the cart, and clung to its side.

'Hugh, God bless you!' And he felt his mother's arms around his neck.

'Monsieur,' he said to the wild-eyed man, 'Henry is living; he prays for you—see!'