

In the Shadow of the Guillotine

By Edmund Burton.

A THRILLING STORY OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

Illustrated by Harry Lane

Harry Lane

AN UNEXPECTED FRIEND

"MONSIEUR!" Carrington raised his eyes wearily and glanced across the dimly lit cell. It had sounded like a voice—a boy's voice—yet—

"Monsieur! Do you not hear me? Monsieur Carrington!"

The last word was pronounced with a curious rolling of the r's, suggesting some difficulty in framing the name. Carrington sprang erect and stared into the gloom. The door had opened noiselessly, and a young lad was standing within a few feet of him.

The captive gazed in astonishment. Surely this was no gaoler, this youngster? Surely someone bigger than he would have been sent to summon him to the only other place to which he expected to be summoned before the end—to the so-called Tribunal conducted by that fiend in human guise, Fouquier-Tinville, whose reprieves were as nothing compared with his condemnations.

"Hallo, youngster!" Carrington said presently, pulling himself together. "To whom am I indebted for the honour of this visit?"

The boy interrupted him by a warning gesture.

"Hist, m'sieur; not so loudly! Put on these!"

He withdrew a bundle of clothing from beneath his arm and handed it to the other.

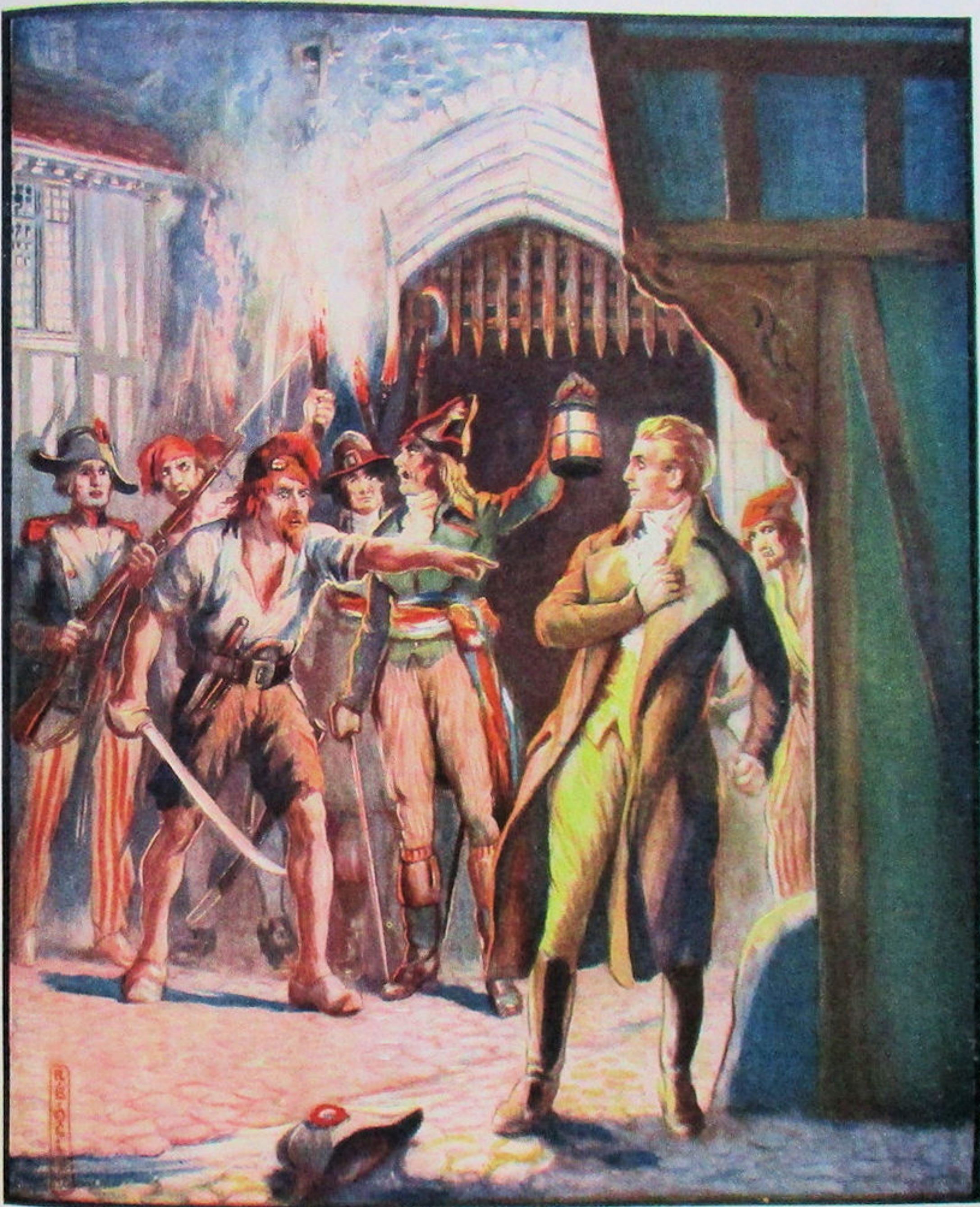
"I wish you to escape, m'sieur," he explained calmly.

"Escape!" Carrington echoed, scarcely daring to believe his ears. "But why, lad?"

The youth came a step nearer and clutched his arm. Even in the dim light his face showed its drawn eagerness.

"Because—because, in the first place, you are British, not French; and, even if you were of our people, there is no crime against you, save that you belonged to the D'Avignon household!" he replied, in a tense whisper. "The D'Avignons were never like the rest, though that seems to have been forgotten. They are of the aristocrats, and that is sufficient. But, monsieur, I—I do not forget how your adopted father, le cher marquis, treated us during that black winter when food and work were scarce, how he clothed and fed us when all France lay buried under the snow. But the others, they never think of these things. The cry is, 'A bas les aristos!' and *all* must go, the good and the bad together. It seems it must be so, but I—I know your story. Perhaps you may not remember me. Is it so?"

Carrington paused in the act of scrambling into the clothing so unexpectedly offered him, and strained his eyes properly to see his companion's face. Then he shook his head.



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A BID FOR FREEDOM FOILED!

The aristocrat, fleeing from the Red Terror, is arrested at the very gate of Paris!

"N-no; I can't say I do. But there were so many at the château——"

"Yes, there were many. The marquis kept a large retinue, but how few have remembered his goodness to them! I was there when you came, M'sieur Carrington, and the story soon travelled round. We learnt how your parents had both perished in that awful fire, and how you were rescued and taken charge of by your late father's life-long friend, the Marquis D'Avignon; how you adopted his name and became one of the family, until—— until—— But we have no time to speak further. Haste, I pray you, m'sieur! We may be disturbed at any moment!"

The boy gave an anxious glance up and down the passage outside, then returned to the cell in time to see Carrington put the finishing touches to his disguise. He rubbed some dust from the floor into his face, and effected such a transformation in his appearance that his youthful deliverer could barely restrain a gasp of satisfaction.

"But it is wonderful!" he whispered. "Now take this and follow warily!" Carrington felt a piece of paper slipped into his hand, and by holding it close to his eyes was able to read:

"Pass Citizen Devigne outside La Force.— JULES LEROT, Governor."

"The name will do as well as any other."

explained the lad. "By a trick, I got my father to sign the paper when he had taken more wine than was good for him."

"The citizen-governor is your father, then?"

"Yes. I am Armand Lerot. But hasten—this way!"

He led Carrington along the corridor, then down a winding stone staircase which emerged on the prison courtyard. Here the boy pointed towards a flickering lamp some yards away.

"See! Yonder is the gate. Show your permit to the guard there, and, once outside, mingle well with the crowd. It is your only chance!"

Carrington stepped forward, then halted uncertainly.

"But you?" he queried. "You must come also. They'll find out——"

The other, however, laughed softly.

"Non—oh, non!" he smiled. "They

will never suspect me, a son of the people, of such a traitorous action; and it is not likely that my father, even if he remembers, would accuse his own offspring, knowing what it would mean. Nay, I shall be safe, m'sieur; be sure of that."

He turned and remounted the stairs without more ado, thus forestalling further argument on the part of his companion. Carrington, shrugging his shoulders in resignation, and mentally vowing to reward his



"She has been busy lately, has Madame," said a ruffian next to Carrington, jerking his thumb upwards towards the guillotine. "Wonderfully busy; so surely she deserves a rest!" (See page 162)

young deliverer amply should the opportunity ever present itself, strode across the courtyard, where he was at once challenged by the sentry.

"Arretez! Who comes there?"

The man raised his lantern and closely scrutinised the face of the newcomer. Carrington stared back coolly, though his heart was beating unpleasantly fast.

"Your permit, citizen?"

It was handed over.

"When did you come in?" inquired the fellow. "I did not see you."

It was plain that, permit or not, he had his suspicions.

"Very probably you did not," replied Carrington calmly, "since I entered by another gate."

The sentry glanced at the paper, which he carefully folded up and placed in his pocket.

"Very good," he growled. "You can pass!"

He unlocked the massive gate, allowing Carrington through. The street outside was thronged with rabble, and, remembering the boy's advice, he worked his way into the thickest part of the crowd and let the human tide carry him along. They passed the now idle guillotine, cheering, and he cheered with them, though his soul revolted at the sight of the instrument which might yet claim him if he were not careful. He was not afraid of death itself, but death in such a form, and at such hands! Ugh!

The very thought was sickening.

"She has been busy lately, has madame," said a ruffian next him, jerking his thumb upwards. "Wonderfully busy; so surely she deserves a brief rest!"

"Ay, citizen! As you say, she is no idler." Carrington played his part well. "Even such dainty heads as those of Capet and his spouse have failed to make her take a holiday!"

There was a coarse laugh from those around.

"Well said, citizen, well said!" exclaimed the man who had first spoken. "And there is plenty more work for her. La Force and The Abbaye are full!"

Remarks of this kind went on almost without cessation, until the crowd, finding some excitement in another direction, broke up and left Carrington standing alone.

He knew his Paris well, so, striking out for the barrier which guarded the Calais road, he trudged along, meeting scarcely a soul, for whatever had occurred had drawn the crowd away to another part of the city.

When near the gate, however, he was dismayed to find half a dozen of the National Guard posted there, and apparently very wide awake.

"Good heavens!" he breathed. "Am I to be stopped after getting so far? They've seen me, too!"

His fears were justified, for two of the men were advancing towards him, one of them swinging a lantern as he came.

"Well, citizen? What——" began the taller of the pair, when the other suddenly shouted:

"Quick, Jean! The lantern! What is the meaning of this?"

Carrington, following the direction of the other's gaze, glanced down and saw, to his horror, that a couple of the buttons of the rough coat he was wearing had become unfastened, allowing a small portion of his own clothing to show through.

With a shout they sprang at him, tearing the coat open and revealing the rich apparel beneath.

"An aristo! And, sacre bleu, 'tis the son of the accursed D'Avignon! 'Twas I who helped to arrest them, and I would know him in a thousand, despite the dirt on his face!" cried one.

It was no moment for thought, only for action, swift and ruthless. Snatching the lantern from the man's hand, Carrington brought it down with a crash on his head. The fellow dropped with a grunt, and the other made a wild attempt to run Carrington through, but the lantern, flung with unerring aim, caught him full in the face and rolled him over into the gutter. The remainder of the guard, hearing the scuffle, now came running up, and Carrington dashed off like lightning up the narrow street.

Crack! A ball sang past his ear. *Crack!* Again, another tore through the sleeve of his coat. *Crack, crack, crack!* A regular fusillade rang out, but now he was around the corner, and——

Crash! He had run full tilt into a mounted man who was hastening towards the scene of the commotion. The rider rapped out an oath, and made a slash at Carrington, who dodged nimbly aside.

Then a daring plan flashed into the fugitive's brain. With a sudden spring he had gripped his antagonist round the middle, tearing him from the saddle. The cry the other would have uttered was cut off short as Carrington's hand was clapped over his mouth. Then he dragged his prisoner, kicking and struggling wildly, through an open gateway, the horse following meekly behind; but no sooner was the gate kicked to again than a scurry of passing footsteps told that the action was only in the nick of time.

"Close thing, that, mon ami!" Carrington said pleasantly to his terrified captive.

"Rather too close for my liking. And now I think I must make you somewhat uncomfortable, but let us hope you will soon be discovered. I should not advise you to shout," he added suggestively, "because I could easily settle you before they took me!"

He tore a strip from the rough coat and tightly gagged the man. Then, having stripped him, he proceeded to dress him in his own clothing, and bound him securely with some rope that was lying in the yard. The

soldier made no resistance whatever; Carrington's expression warned him not to.

Then Carrington donned the other's uniform, and, bidding his discomfited prisoner an ironical good-night, he led the horse out through the gate.

Swinging himself into the saddle, he pulled his hat down well over his eyes, and rode back at a brisk trot towards the barrier. Only one man was on guard there now, and Carrington gruffly inquired the cause.

"Number Thirty-seven has escaped from La Force," replied the man, "and the others have gone in pursuit."

"I trust they get him," said Carrington. "But open the gate quickly. I am on important business."

The soldier hesitated.

"But the Citizen-President has given orders that no barriers are to be opened after night-fall," he objected.

Carrington laid his hand upon his sword.

"'Tis on the Citizen-President's business I am going, pig!" he snapped. "Open at once, or 'twill be the worse for you."

The man sullenly obeyed, and Carrington passed through, smiling.

The gate crashed to behind him, and soon every beat of his steed's hoofs was taking Carrington nearer Calais, and farther from Paris and "The Terror."

THE END



One fellow dropped with a grunt, and the other made a wild attempt to run Carrington through, but the lantern, flung with unerring aim, caught him full in the face, and rolled him over into the gutter. (See opposite page)