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LAFAYETTE IN AMERICA AND FRANCE.

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II.

Naturally, the escape of Lafayette to America excited no little stir in the courts of France and England. His rank, it was, that attracted attention; his genius was yet unproved. That a marquis of France, a youth attached to his own court, an officer of his own army, should quit home and command, and king and country to espouse the cause of a little band of republicans struggling beyond the sea, seemed at once suicidal and appalling to the French King. Perhaps, we must believe, too, that at heart Louis had some sympathy, as a man, with republican institutions. But as a reigning king he must have felt alarmed. A few months before he was on the point of declaring in favor of the colonists. Now their reverses stunned him. He did not wish to be embroiled in a conflict with Great Britain, and the departure to the theatre of war of one, formerly a Court favorite, with the avowed purpose of disputing British claims, was not pacificatory, to say the least. As a king, too, he must have dreaded the effect of Lafayette's republicanism upon the masses of the French people—a people of whom perhaps it may be said that they are ever ready to follow a hero, or to create one if he does not exist. Whatever his egotism, and it was not inconsiderable, Louis never fancied himself a hero, and he appears to have had a distrust of Lafayette from

the moment he threw up his command at Metz.

What, after all, was there of profit in this foolish escapade to the assistance of the colonists? The cause of liberty seemed hopeless. Throughout the colonies there were numerous supporters of the royalists. The success of the British arms at Long Island, New York, White Plains, in New Jersey and elsewhere was depressing. Washington could barely muster three thousand undisciplined volunteers; the English commander had a force of thirty-three thousand including the hated Hessian auxiliaries. Even the equable mind of the American General, it would seem, began to waver. After the capture of Fort Lee with its artillery and stores, by Lord Cornwallis, the American commander, having retreated to Newark, addressed to Colonel Reed the pertinent query: "Should we retreat to the back parts of Pennsylvania, will the inhabitants support us?" Weighing the matter carefully, the Colonel was forced to reply: "If the lower country is conquered and driven to surrender, the upper districts will do the same." "We must retire, then, to Augusta County, Virginia," responded Washington. "There, numbers will be obliged to repair to us for safety, and, if overpowered, *we must cross the Allegheny mountains.*" (Grimshaw.)