

Adele



Two Girls. Two Paths.
One Revolution.

Elisha Wahlquist



In this epic tale, two cousins face their "coming of age" during the French Revolution. Each has decisions to make. Which path will they choose? Adele faces class tensions, political machinations, and traitors as she seeks to do right. Stephanie is brilliant and beautiful—living every girl's dream. Then, she encounters unscrupulous, handsome Gaston... The September Massacres loom overhead. Will they find the answers? And, will it be too late to save their own lives?

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"Danger... drama... suspense... adventure... moral courage... these are the elements of legends and heroes, of daring men and sturdy women who stared adversity in the face and would not bow before it.

"In *Adele*, Elisha Wahlquist skillfully weaves these age-old threads into a grand tapestry using the backdrop of the French Revolution to create a story on an epic scale, providing a fresh perspective on this convoluted period in European history, and giving a subtle, sensitive commentary on the controversies of our own time.

"Against this framework, the main characters shine like stars against midnight, delivering unique points of reference and inspiring, godly role models for boys and girls alike who peruse the pages of this novel.

"In an age when so much good has been forgotten or forsaken, *Adele* will help rouse a new generation to take up their weapons and fight for godliness and goodness in a corrupt world."

– Karen Spangler, writer

"*Adele* is a great way to learn in depth about the French Revolution—not just what happened during the days of the guillotine, but what led up to and caused the horrific slaughters. It didn't happen without warning and the recital from a young ladies' viewpoint adds unique suspense to the history of this dangerous time. Woven in with the historical happenings is the story of family striving to do the right thing despite the difficulties."

– Elizabeth Ehlinger, homeschooler

"...a stirring tale, written in a classic manner, yet simple enough for the average reader.... I gained new insights into the people of the Revolution. There are strong lessons and the gospel message is woven in. Recommended for children (age 12 and above) and adults!"

– Melissa Merritt, blogger

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*Two Girls. Two Paths.
One Revolution.*

by Elisha Ann Wahlquist

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Adele: Two Girls. Two Paths. One Revolution.

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Description: Two cousins follow different paths as the French Revolution comes to a head, bringing destruction and death— which path is right?

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The True Colors of the Revolution

8.

An angry man opens his mouth and shuts his eyes.

– Cato

“**D**eath to the Austrian!” shrieked a coarse fish-wife. The call was repeated along the line with equal vehemence.

Berthe had heard that cry many times during their weary march, but it still startled her. The reality of the vague “patriotic” ideas now began to strike. They meant what they said! They meant bloodshed and the overturn of all society!

“The Austrian” was the queen, Marie-Antoinette. Even before the diamond necklace scandal in 1785 (in which the queen, though wholly innocent, was smeared), the people had despised her. Her extravagance and selfish preoccupation did nothing to dispel the rumors. Now it had become open hate, and killing her was mentioned casually.

Berthe shifted her basket. Despite her tiredness, she had refused to let Mme. la Motte carry it, knowing its disproportionate weight. But she did lean willingly on the stout arm that was still round her.

Spread out in the drizzling haze before them was the city of Versailles, surrounded by dim green forests and muted verdurous meadows. The column slowed to a stop. Malliard arranged the women into four rough columns, putting all the cannon in the rear, “as befitting a peaceable deputation.” Then they set forth through the row of dripping elms. At crafty Malliard’s request, they struck up the national anthem, “Henri Quatre:”

“Long live Henry IV
Long live this valiant king
This fourfold devil
With the three talents
Of drinking, fighting
And womanizing

~ Elisha Ann Wahlquist ~

Let us sing the refrain
That we will sing in a thousand years:
May God maintain
His descendants in peace
Until we take the moon with our teeth

Long live France
Long live king Henry
To Reims we dance
Singing as they do in Paris
Long live France
Long live king Henry!"

Berthe sensed the singers' ironical tone—'*Down with the King*' is what they are really saying! From all sides the lower classes of Versailles thronged the columns, cheering the vast concourse of Parisian women.

As they approached the *Salle des Menus* (the meeting place of the Constituent Assembly), they could see the palace and pleasure-houses of the royal family and the rows of drenched guards.

Mme. la Motte put her lips close to Berthe's ear. "My carriage is waiting on a side-street near the Assembly room," she whispered. "Slip out of the crowd with me when there is a chance."

The vast multitude of bedraggled, sodden women beset the *Salle des Menus*. The tall "captain" over Berthe and Madame la Motte left them and pushed forward towards the door.

"Now!" whispered Mme. la Motte. Letting go of Berthe's arm, she picked up her muddy, trailing silk skirts and slipped through the crowd. When the marquise glanced back, Berthe, chestnut hair streaking her face, was right on her heels, hope giving wings to her bruised, tired feet and lighting her green eyes.

The mass of women, their loose formation breaking apart, pushed forward, each striving to enter the Constituent Assembly. Malliard and a few others held them back, causing the whole mob to swirl back and forth. Mme. la Motte heard the voices of Monsieur Malliard and a few women at the doors, shouting directions and trying to select a small deputation among the thousands to present their petition to the Assembly. She tucked her skirts more firmly over her arm and darted through a fleeting gap, sodden shoes flopping painfully with each step.

She did not notice the gap close behind her. Berthe was trapped in the great throng of shoving, shouting humanity.

The side street Mme. la Motte turned into was equally choked, but she managed at last to break through. Down a quiet little alley, she glimpsed her coach. Now that the immediate danger was over, she stumbled with fatigue. Her carefully-coiffured mound of dark curls had undone, and sappy locks fell about her face. "Oh dear – of all things – what a –"

Seeing his mistress, the coachman jumped off his box and hastened forward. His face was a picture – he had never seen his mistress like this: never, in all his years as servitor! From the way she clung to his arm he knew she was about to faint.

Mme. la Motte put a brown, misshapen shoe on the step, then paused to look back. "Where is my companion?" Worry creased her face.

"Your companion, Madame?" The man lifted her into the dry and inviting interior.

Mme. la Motte turned as if to get out again. "She is not here!" she exclaimed in blank dismay. "She is caught in the crowd – oh, me!"

"Your companion, Madame?" the coachman asked again, making no move to let her out of the coach. *Has this adventure slightly unhinged her reason?* he wondered.

"Berthe, the De Coquiell di le Mercier's *maid-de-chambe*," Madame la Motte said, "She was to follow me here – oh, we must find her! She was so exhausted –"

"If you go back, you might be seized again, Madame," the coachman protested. "Let me take you home and then I shall come back for her, if you desire –"

"She may be coming – drive as close as you dare now, Gilles," his mistress commanded.

The man would have remonstrated, but her determined look stopped his mouth. He quickly drew the red velvet curtains and shut the gilded door. The carriage began to move.

Mme. la Motte collapsed into the cushioned seats. She felt bitterly sorry that she had not double-checked Berthe's progress. *She may not have seen me turn into the side street, she thought, and so probably does not know where to go, after losing sight of me....poor thing! I must rescue her....*

Several different approaches to the milling swarm of wild women failed to disclose any sign of Berthe. When those on the fringes began to cast dark glances at the coach and shake their weapons, Mme. la Motte was forced to admit that they must turn for home. "But you shall come back to look for her!"

Fifteen minutes later found the marquise swathed in a loose warm robe in her room. Despite the attempts of her maid to dry her at the fire, rub her cold feet, and get her a cup of hot tea, Madame la Motte insisted on writing a missive before doing anything else. Her quill moved quickly over the paper.

Dear Felicie,

late afternoon 5 October 1789

I am writing just a few Lines to tell you that your maid Berthe was Accompanying the mob of women, Possibly against her Will. They are here in Versailles now at the National Constituent Assembly. I was seperat'd from her unhappily but have sent Gilles back to Look for her; I fear it may be Impossible for there are something like Seven or Eight Thousand women there. What they shall do I know not – I pray for the safety of the King and Queen.

I shall Write when I receive News of her; God be pleased to allow us to find her.

*I am, yours faithfully,
Susanne la Motte*

Folding and sealing the note, she refused even Elisabeth's ministrations until the missive had been dispatched by messenger to Paris, with all possible speed. Then she sank back in the depths of a large stuffed chair.

When the manservant returned almost an hour later, he had no news of Berthe. He had even approached on foot, thinking to get closer that way, but had not caught even a glimpse of a maid with red-brown hair. "The guards are threatening the demonstrators, and riding through them to get them to disperse, but they merely close up again and cry 'Bread! Bread!' and such like," he finished.

"Oh, we must do something!" Madame la Motte said earnestly. "She was utterly spent!...We must keep a watch out for her..."

~*~*~

Just as Madame la Motte darted through the gap in the crowd, Berthe was jostled back by a sturdy Amazon and, unbalanced by the basket, fell. By the time she regained her feet the marquise's dark brown hat was the only thing she could see above the tossing heads and waving arms. She pressed after it with a haste born of desperation. *If I lose her, I shan't escape!*

But she could hardly make headway and found herself being swept along towards the doors by the women around her. In vain she

pushed, trying again and again to break out after that now invisible brown hat.

Several minutes later she recognized a few faces, and realized she was back among her "regiment" – somehow she must have swerved back that way in the confusion, or they had been swept towards her. A wall loomed behind them, gray and dripping in the sullen drizzling rain. She was close to tears of frustration and exhaustion when her shoulder was suddenly seized, as if by talons. Berthe hardly needed to look up to know who it was – her tall "captain."

"Marshal together, wench," the woman grated, "we must stay together – then we shall teach the Austrian a lesson, and gain bread for our families! You," she said, looking particularly at Berthe, "keep near me!" She glanced about. "Where is the other one – Madame high and mighty?"

Berthe kept silent, but thought sinkingly, *I only wish I knew!*

"Ah, well," the woman said. "I shall keep doubly sure of the rest of you!"

Berthe leaned against the wall, eyes closed, letting her whole body slump. But her fingers kept their convulsive grip on her basket.

"When will our Deputation return from the king?" asked a high, nasal voice.

"How can I tell?" was the hoarse answer. "May they come back soon, with a good answer – or else! I am not very patient."

"Neither am I," cackled the other.

Some time later, the twelve women of the deputation returned. "Life to the king and his House!" they shouted as they drew near the sodden mass of women. They told of their audience with the king, and the news passed from mouth to mouth throughout the throng.

"The king was gracious, and said he would ensure that provision will be sent to Paris, if possible, and that grain shall circulate freely," an excited woman cried to Berthe and the women near her. "And when our spokesperson, Louison Chambray, was about to faint in the king's presence, he caught her in his arms – how well-disposed he is to us!"

Others, however, did not share such positive views.

"What are such promises of bread beyond mere words!" a lean-faced fishwife shouted. "I see no bread for my little ones!" She shook a thin arm, her wet sleeve flopping.

"*In his arms!* Shameless minx!" cried a broad-shouldered hussy in a faded red dress. "Is this the envoy we sent to represent us!"

"The traitress!" cried another. "Look at her fair, soft skin, while ours is rough with toil! To *la Lanterne!*"

The words were caught and repeated, in a kind of frenzy: "Traitor! Hang her!"

Berthe opened her eyes, and in horror beheld the crowd of women seizing the slim, fair figure of seventeen-year-old Louison. They dragged her, screaming and begging, to the nearest *Lanterne* (lamppost). A garter was drawn around her neck and fastened to the lamppost—Berthe turned away, aghast. *She did nothing wrong!* Berthe thought. *This is senseless, brutal....What kind of women are these? This cause, can it be right?*

A sudden clatter of hoofbeats and angry cries caused Berthe, huddled against the dripping wall, to look up again. Two mounted Bodyguards were galloping through the crowd. They swept up with incensed faces to where the women were about hang Louison. Cutting the rope with flashing swords, they drew her out of the indignant multitude—saving her from certain death.

She is saved! Berthe thought; *But by those whom I was told were our oppressors!* She closed her eyes again, still leaning against the wall, but her thoughts had taken a new turn towards those who, in the pamphlets, were painted in evil colors. And where did this late scene place the masses, whom before looked she had so favored? And what of Mme. la Motte, who had bravely helped her, though weak and exhausted herself?

She felt the weight of the gold louis: *To further these horrifying events? Non!*

~*~*~

Hours later, past eight-o'clock that evening, Francis de Coquiel di le Mercier welcomed the adjournment of the session. Ever since the women arrived and Mounier (the president of the Constituent Assembly) left to go to the King with the deputation of twelve women, things had degenerated into chaos. The twelve women had returned hours before; but still Mounier did not return. The Vice-President, and even Mirabeau, failed to suppress the throngs of women and men which pressed into the *Salle-des-Menus*, loudly demanding bread.

They even forced the Assembly to decree that the price of bread would be fixed at eight *sous* for a half-quartern, and meat at six *sous* per pound. Francis shook his head. *Fixing the price will not solve our problem, he thought. If anything, it will acerbate it.*

Night was falling, Mounier had not yet come back, and no work could be done amidst the mob's cries for bread, so the delegates agreed to adjourn for the evening. Francis rose with most of the other delegates and

began to file out, yawning and weary. Some deputies lingered, flirting shamelessly with the brazen women mingling among them.

Berthe's "captain" pushed, prodded, and by main force achieved her goal of entering the building with her charges. Pressed by the horde against a wall, Berthe gazed dully on the scene. Suddenly her pulse quickened. Over the heads in front she glimpsed a familiar face. Frozen, she looked again. Yes, it was her master, Francis! Her stomach lurched. *The basket! His money!* She shrank back among the unyielding women.

The exiting deputies were squeezing through a narrow path between the packed ranks of women. Suddenly one woman sank down, fainting, in front of a departing deputy. She was not a pretty sight—smearred with grime, with coarse graying hair falling loose over her gaunt shoulders. He stepped around her with a look of disgust, holding up his satin jacket skirts to prevent them from touching her.

There is my master, drawing near the woman.... Berthe could not help watching, fascinated. Francis bent down. Lifting the fallen woman gently, he glanced around for a protected area. In the press she would be trampled.

"Bring her here, Monsieur—there is room here," a woman called from the foot of the galleries. Francis carried over the still-insensible form, mud smearing his beautifully-embroidered silk waistcoat and jacket. *I doubt if it will come out,* Berthe thought. *One of his best coats! Ruined, yet he cares more for a shrunken old woman, one who supports all he stands against....*

Reaching the foot of the viewing-galleries, he laid her carefully down. Assisted by several rough Amazons, the old woman soon revived. Berthe could not hear what was said, but Francis pulled several coins out of his pocket and placed them in the woman's calloused palm. Her hand closed convulsively on them, her ill-favored, formerly hostile face melting into a look of amazed gratitude. With a bow as if to a lady, Francis turned and retraced his steps to the exit.

Berthe stared after him, new emotions heaving in her breast.

As Francis and the majority of deputies exited, more and more women crowded assertively into the chamber. Francis cast one glance back before stepping out into the wet darkness—the women were enacting a mocking parody of the Constituent Assembly.

~*~*~

Past midnight, the National Guard marched into Versailles from Paris. LaFayette accompanied them, their commander in title only. For hearing about the marching women, the National Guard had begun to breathe

threatenings against the king, demanding that LaFayette take them to aid the women. LaFayette refused, but they finally forced him to take them to Versailles.

In the palace, the marquis la Motte stood among the ministers and scattered courtiers who, with the king, awaited LaFayette's coming. *There is not a hopeful face among us*, Arnoul la Motte thought, *— if only the king could decide something! Decide to fly to Metz, or decide not to: but decide something, and show firmness of purpose! I know it is difficult; however...*

Three people were announced by the Usher, entering the room with respectful bows. LaFayette was first, with an expression of valorous sorrow. He advanced to the king. "I am come," he said, "to offer my head for the safety of his Majesty's."

Next spoke the two Municipals who accompanied him to state the wishes of Paris. They had four demands:

"First, that the honor of guarding the king's sacred person be conferred to the National Guards. Second, that provisions be got, if possible. Third, that the prisons, which are crowded with political delinquents, should have judges sent them."

The king nodded assent to all these—*What else can he do?* thought Arnoul la Motte—but his face changed slightly when he heard their fourth request.

"Fourth, that it would please his Majesty to come and live in Paris."

The king hesitated, asking time for deliberation. This was granted, and the deputation retired.

Between arranging his recalcitrant troops and consulting with his officers, LaFayette was to get no sleep that night; and most of Versailles would have but broken slumbers, if they slept at all.

~*~*~

Berthe hardly heeded the news of the arrival of the National Guard; and even when LaFayette's deputation returned she was too tired to care. She had never been as wretched and exhausted in her entire sheltered life. Memories came, unbidden, of the many thoughtful kindnesses bestowed on her and the other servants by the De Coquiel di le Merciers. These new thoughts made her more miserable—was she not carrying money she had stolen from them?

Around her torches swirled in the deep blackness, shining on snatches of wet and ragged garments. People splashed through the muddy streets, their faces sullen and sinister in the orange, flickering glare. The

brandished weapons—billhooks, pistols, knives on sticks, cudgels—did nothing to comfort her.

It was nearly three-o'clock in the morning when the vast concourse of rabble began to disperse, seeking places to sleep. Berthe sloshed through the muddy dark after her "captain." She had a confused impression of a gothic tower and gray stone arches before sinking wordlessly into a corner of the church nave.

Pillowling her head on her precious basket, she was asleep almost immediately, despite her drenched, chilled clothes and the unyielding stone floor.

~*~*~

But sleep was a rare commodity that night. Only a few hours later—a little past five in the morning—Berthe found herself being shaken. Her sleep-heavy eyes opened to see her tall "captain" standing over her.

"Up, you slugabeds," she grated. "To the palace!"

Berthe groaned. "Up, I said," the woman shrilled. Releasing Berthe's arm, she reached to shove the basket from under Berthe's head.

Berthe was instantly awake. All her fears about the basket came back. She sat up jerkily, lifting the basket and setting it in her lap with amazing lightness. The other women were standing up around her, grumbling in tired voices and rubbing stiff limbs. She forced herself to rise and join them.

Berthe found herself tramping along through the bleak, cloudy morning gloom towards the palace. Her head ached from lack of sleep.

When they neared the palace, a large crowd of women and the dregs of Versailles and Paris were already gathered at the palace gates. They were in no good mood. Most garments were wrinkled, semi-damp, and shrunken from yesterday's wetting. Other than a few sausages and bread provided the night before by the Assembly's president Mounier, they had eaten nothing.

Even as Berthe and her group approached, the metal gatefastenings gave way under the shaking of the multitude. With a great cry of victory, the mob surged forward into the Grand Court. Screaming in triumph, they shook their weapons menacingly at the few guards who showed themselves at the windows.

Berthe's "captain" hurried her group as close to the palace as she could. Right ahead of them was the bolted door leading to the innermost Court, the Court of Marble. Berthe longed to lean against the wall—her head was hurting, and her basket no lighter than yesterday. But she was

given no time to rest. The multitude became more threatening, yelling curses and insults at the few visible Bodyguards.

Afraid for their lives, several Bodyguards fired. A man's arm was shattered: but worse, a youth, member of the Paris National Guard, was shot. He fell instantly, scattering the pavement with his brains. A howl arose from the mob.

"Here!" cried Berthe's "captain," motioning vengefully toward a nearby palace door. The rabid swarm rushed impetuously on it.

Within moments, the grate was forced open, and the living torrent swept in. The two sentries were trampled by the mad rush, then dispatched with a hundred pikes.

Berthe, to her horror, found herself swept along with the foremost. Past the gilded riches of the royalty, up the Grand Staircase.... Halfway up the stairs, she glanced down at the mob pouring in from below. Several other entrances had been forced. She hardly knew what she was doing—only her bruised fingers kept their fierce grip on her basket.

At the top of the stairs stood one of the Bodyguards— Miomandre de Sainte-Marie. Though the first pike-waving ranks had almost reached him, he stood immovable. Strong and unwavering, he pled with the angry press to disperse, even descending several steps towards the raging inferno. The shrill women rushed him, weapons upraised. Seizing his coat and belt and hauling him up bodily, his fellow-soldiers snatched him from instant death. Then they leapt into the room beyond and slammed and fastened the door—just in time.

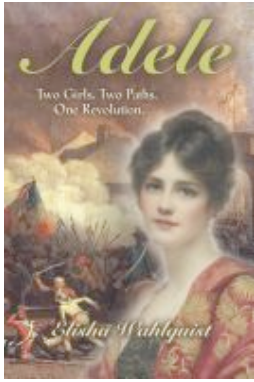
But the mob was right behind them. The door held only moments before breaking open under their enraged blows. The Bodyguards fled once more—on through room after elegant room, each barricaded door only slightly slowing their ravenous, ragged pursuers. Berthe noticed how the rampaging women trampled everything in their path, no matter how costly or beautiful. What a sight—these wolf-like women on the heels of the well-trained male soldiers! But the Bodyguards seemed stricken with utter terror. What can a few do against so many?

Courageous Miomandre showed that even with such long odds, one brave man may do much. As his comrades fled apace and the onrushing flood roared towards the Queen's apartments, he turned back. Stationing himself before the Queen's door, he cried, "Save the Queen!" His alarm was just in time. Without that warning, the Queen would have been caught in her room and most likely slaughtered by the merciless she-beasts.

Berthe knew not how he appeared, but there he was, manful, resolute, and alone, guarding the Queen's door. Berthe could hardly believe

such gallant dauntlessness. She screamed as the foremost women attacked him, but no one heard.

Already unnerved, the sight of his blood completely undid Berthe. The ferocious, maniacal faces swam before her eyes, and she fainted.



In this epic tale, two cousins face their "coming of age" during the French Revolution. Each has decisions to make. Which path will they choose? Adele faces class tensions, political machinations, and traitors as she seeks to do right. Stephanie is brilliant and beautiful—living every girl's dream. Then, she encounters unscrupulous, handsome Gaston... The September Massacres loom overhead. Will they find the answers? And, will it be too late to save their own lives?

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