WOMAN IN FRANCE

DURING THE

EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

Charlotte Corday

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BY JULIA KAVANAGH

AUTHOR OF 'MADELAINE: A TALE OF AUVERGNE'
ETC. ETC.

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. II.

WITH PORTRAITS

G. P. PUTNAM'S SONS

NEW YORK
27 W. TWENTY-THIRD STREET

LONDON
24 BEDFORD STREET, STRAND

1893

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PERIOD THE THIRD.

REIGN OF LOUIS XVI.

CHAPTER I.

LOUIS XVI. AND MARIE ANTOINETTE—THEIR POPULARITY—ILL-FEELING AGAINST THE QUEEN—CHANGE IN THE SPIRIT OF SOCIETY.

THE same warning voice which had so boldly upbraided the vices of Louis XV., calling on the guilty sovereign to repent ere the hour of repentance should have once more gone by, now ushered in the opening reign with accents of prophetic woe.

Jean of Beauvais, Bishop of Senez, was enjoined to preach the funeral sermon of the deceased monarch, whom he had so unsparingly censured in all the pomp and pride of his kingly power. The austere prelate belonged to the strict and uncompromising portion of the French clergy; he fulfilled his arduous task with mournful but courageous severity. The aspect of perishable mortality could not awe him into pitying and treacherous silence, or make him flatter, with lying lips, the many errors of the royal dead. He spared them not: openly alluding to the unpopularity of Louis XV. during the latter years of his reign, he uttered this striking and—for absolute sovereigns—ever-memorable remark: "The people," said he, solemnly, "have not perhaps the right of complaining; but theirs is at least the right of remaining silent. Their silence, then, becomes the lesson of kings."

Whilst pronouncing the funeral oration of Louis XV., the orator seemed to be also lamenting over the dark era of vice and philosophy; which, though born beneath that monarch's sway, was not now, like him, going down to the tomb. The Bishop of Senez addressed the whole eighteenth century in a tone of gloomy foreboding. He acknowledged the intellectual

progress France had made; but he bitterly reproached the age for its impious and profligate philosophy. "We shall have no more superstition," he mournfully observed, "because religion will be extinct; no more false heroism, because honour will have ceased to exist. . . . Behold! ye bold spirits, the ruin caused by your systems! Tremble at your successes, and at a revolution more fatal than the heresies which have changed the aspect of several states around us: for there, at least, men still worship and live virtuously. And shall our unhappy descendants have no faith, no honour, and no God? O holy Gallican Church! O most Christian kingdom! God of our fathers, have mercy on posterity!" Few heeded the warning of the too-clear-sighted bishop, who lived to see the revolution he had foretold.

Voltaire answered the Bishop of Senez's attack on the eighteenth century, in a strain of coarse, personal abuse. He accused him of ingratitude, for having boldly alluded to the vices of Louis XV.; which he, Voltaire, termed *love weaknesses!* With equal effrontery, he declared, that at no other epoch had there been seen so many princesses renowned for their virtue, or so great a number of disinterested and noble-minded ministers. "Never," he proceeds, "have men been happier and more enlightened"—the fruits of this happiness and enlightenment became manifest at the French Revolution—"never has society been more amiable, and animated by stronger feelings of honour. Never, in short, have belles-lettres exercised a greater influence over the manners and feelings of the people!"

The tone of Voltaire's answer to the Bishop of Senez gives a correct idea of the wilful blindness of the philosophers. Surrounded by a general corruption, which they had aided and enlisted in their cause, of which traces might be found in all their works, they had the guilt and folly to deny its very existence. The individuals who shared the gloomy presentments of the Bishop of Senez were, indeed, very few; the mass of the nation hailed with rapture the reign of Louis XVI.: less, however, through love of the new king, than from a feeling of deep hatred for the memory of his pre-

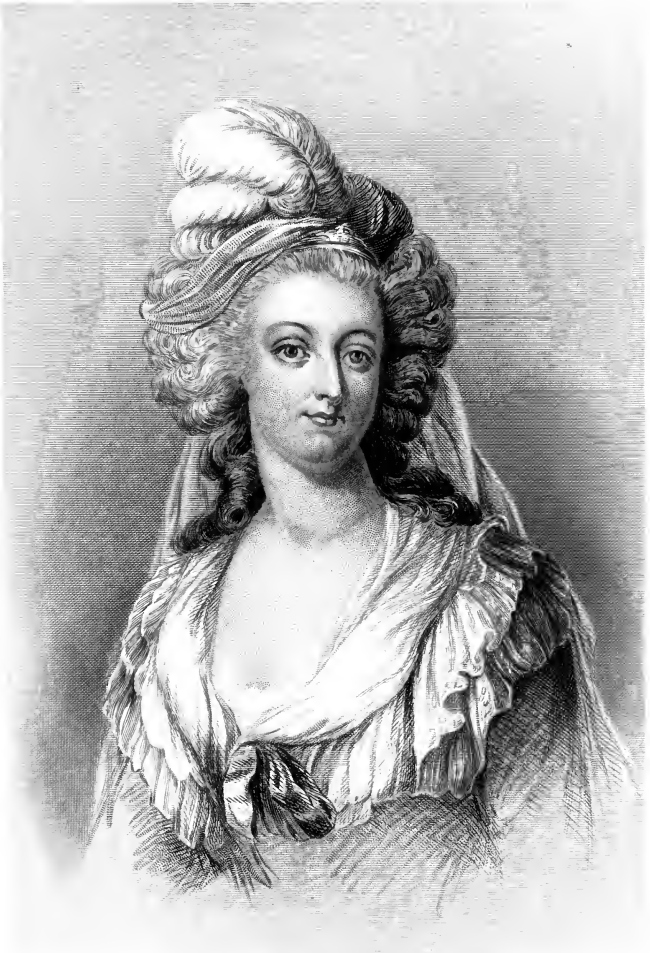
decessor. "I never saw," observes the traveller Swinburne, "joy more visible than it appears to be on the loss of this same Louis le bien-aimé." Without examining from what motive arose the enthusiasm of the people, or what hopes their accession to the throne was doomed to realise or disappoint, the young sovereigns ingenuously rejoiced over their brief and unearned popularity.

The king had then reached his twentieth year. His features were heavy and commonplace, but of a mild and benevolent expression. His person was awkward and ungainly; his manner timid, hesitating, and abrupt. Without being mean or vulgar, his bearing had none of the conscious dignity which becomes the exercise of royal power. It was impossible to behold him and not to feel that the respect he received was paid to rank alone. The character of Louis XVI. corresponded with his personal appearance: pious, kind-hearted, humane, but weak and timid, his virtues were of those which secure affection and esteem, whilst they ever fail to command admiration. His intellect neither rose above nor sank beneath average excellence. He was, however, one of the best geographers in his kingdom, and drew up, with his own hand, the instructions for the expedition of the ill-fated La Pérouse; who attributed them to members of the Academy of Sciences, and was greatly astonished to learn that they emanated from the king. His chief pleasures were hunting and smithwork, in which he excelled; his tastes and feelings were essentially simple and homely: everywhere, save on a throne, he would have been happy and respected; but with all the virtues of a private man, he had none of those that a monarch should possess. The keen, unerring sense that reads through men and men's motives, the skill to avoid needless danger, the daring to brave it, the power and energy that fit a man for strife and victory, were all wanting in Louis XVI. Weak and resistless between his friends and his enemies, always influenced by the last speaker, he never knew how to carry out the plans for reform with which he opened his reign. Of all the high qualities a king should own, he had

but one: the patient and almost sublime endurance of irremediable misfortunes.

The feelings generally inspired by Louis XVI., at the epoch of his accession to the throne, were esteem and hope: these feelings rose into enthusiasm when he appeared in public with his young and lovely wife. From her first entrance into the country over which she was destined to reign, Marie Antoinette had excited, by her grace and beauty, a universal sentiment of admiration. When the chivalrous Duke of Brissac, then governor of Paris, received the young dauphiness in his official rank, his sole harangue was the gallant assurance that, in the crowd around her, she had already made the conquest of two hundred thousand lovers. "Ah! the good people!" both she and the dauphin artlessly exclaimed, as they saw themselves surrounded in the Tuileries by a respectful and loving multitude. Though the dauphiness was then little more than fifteen, she displayed a singular degree of tact and address. On returning from Paris to Versailles, she said to her father-in-law:—"Oh! we have been so kindly received! How much you must be loved!" Thus delicately attributing to the affection felt for the king the sudden popularity, of which he might otherwise have shewn himself jealous. On the evening of her arrival, she supped with the princes, and several court ladies, among whom was Madame du Barry. Louis XV. unblushingly introduced the profligate courtesan to his daughter-in-law. The youthful Marie Antoinette deeply resented this indignity; but, not wishing to testify her anger too openly, she merely asked what was the beautiful Madame du Barry's office at court. "To please and amuse the king," was the courtier-like and ambiguous reply. "Then I shall become her rival," answered the dauphiness, with a smile.

Marie Antoinette was in her nineteenth year at the death of Louis XV. Years had ripened her loveliness, which had still all the bloom and freshness of youth. Graceful and gay, even more than strictly beautiful, she exercised, on all those who approached her, a deep and irresistible fascination. To



the golden hair, the dazzling fairness, and the brilliant complexion of a northern beauty, she united all the grace and animation of the south. Her oval and expressive countenance was rendered remarkably characteristic by the high, clear forehead, delicately-formed aquiline nose, and full Austrian lip, hereditary in her race. The admiration her personal attractions called forth was, however, always tempered by the homage due to her rank. The penetrating glance of her fine blue eyes, the mingled pride and sweetness of her smile, and the striking elegance and dignity of her carriage, whilst they added to the loveliness of the woman, never allowed the beholder to forget the queen. Marie Antoinette had been educated for the express purpose of appearing with the utmost advantage at the court of France. She readily acquired all the tact and frivolous grace necessary to a princess who was destined to reign over the most polished and fastidious nation of Europe, and to mingle with women of unrivalled taste and elegance. But, further than this, the teaching she received did not, unfortunately, extend. In every external matter, she was perfectly accomplished; she failed in those essential points which it is the duty of true education to develop. To a prompt, unreflecting mind, a frivolous and haughty temper, she united a nature full of rash but noble impulses. Though she appeared to have inherited all the determination of her mother, Maria Theresa, she wanted the sagacity and courageous calmness which distinguished the empress-queen. Ardent, generous, and imprudent, Marie Antoinette seemed destined to dazzle for a moment the court over which she doubly reigned, as woman and as queen; to share and embitter her husband's fatal destiny; and to shed around the story of his reign the melancholy charm of her beauty, heroism, and misfortunes.

No signs of this gloomy future were yet visible. The horizon was one of unclouded serenity. None of those who crowded around the loved and admired queen of France could foresee the dark prison-house that was to replace her brilliant court, or the scaffold which closed her brief and sad career.

But, even at that epoch of universal hope and joy, many were those who beheld, with secret disaffection, the daughter of Maria Theresa seated on the throne of France. From the opening of her reign, a party, inimical to the young queen and the Austrian alliance, watched with hostile glance every imprudence of Marie Antoinette. It has been mentioned, in the preceding pages, that Choiseul, in order to preserve himself in his position of prime minister, after the death of Madame de Pompadour, had married the dauphin to a princess of Austria. This union was, at the time, viewed with displeasure by the greatest portion of the nation. France had been for too many centuries at war with Austria, and the alliance concluded with that power through Madame de Pompadour was too thoroughly hateful for the marriage of the heir to the crown with Marie Antoinette not to be generally viewed with disfavour. The superstitiously-inclined did not fail to notice the many fatal omens which had ushered in this unhappy union. A mysterious and melancholy fate had, they said, been predicted, during her youth, to the favourite daughter of Maria Theresa. She left Vienna amidst the mourning of the whole people, and images of grief and horror greeted her on her arrival in France. The pavilion prepared for her at Strasburg was hung with tapestries representing Medea still covered with the blood of her children, and the hapless Creusa writhing in the agonies of death. A terrific storm burst forth on her marriage day; and the splendid fireworks given on the Place Louis XV., in honour of her nuptials with the dauphin, cost the lives of several hundred persons, who perished on the same fatal spot where both she and her husband were afterwards to suffer. Marie Antoinette probably thought little of these incidents: so far, at least, as their relation to the future was concerned; but there were others who treasured up these circumstances in their hearts, and dwelt upon them with superstitious dread.

Apart even from the prejudice her Austrian birth raised against her, the young dauphiness was so unfortunate, on her arrival in France, as to make numerous enemies, on a ridicu-

lous point of etiquette. Maria Theresa had requested of Louis XV., that her daughter's cousin, Mademoiselle de Lorraine, might dance a minuet at the marriage-ball, immediately after the princes and princesses of the royal family. The French duchesses opposed this in the most vehement manner, declaring that they recognised no intervening rank between themselves and the princes of the blood, and that if Mademoiselle de Lorraine were allowed to dance her minuet, to the detriment of their privileges, all the court ladies would abstain from appearing at the ball. Louis XV. vainly asked them, as a personal favour, to waive their right for once: they inexorably refused. The dauphiness was greatly offended at their obstinacy. Having procured one of the letters which Louis XV. had addressed on this subject to his rebellious aristocracy, she put it away carefully, and wrote on the margin, "*Je m'en souviendrai.*"

From this apparently trifling matter sprang that vague and mutual feeling of mistrust which always existed between Marie Antoinette and the high court nobility. This feeling was increased by the resentment the queen felt for the comparative neglect with which she had been treated until her husband's accession to the throne.

Madame du Barry was all powerful during the latter years of Louis XV.'s reign. Whilst *she* was surrounded by assiduous courtiers, the proud young dauphiness was scarcely allowed to share that general influence of which women are often more jealous than of the substantial realities of power. An unacknowledged struggle was incessantly carried on between the dauphin's wife and the king's mistress. Madame du Barry protected the retrograde party, and Marie Antoinette gave what little power she possessed to the Duke of Choiseul and the philosophers: the very men whose imprudence was preparing the Revolution.

Although she was too haughty to shew how deeply the slights of the courtiers had wounded her, Marie Antoinette never forgot them; and perhaps manifested her resentment and contempt too openly, when she received, as queen of

France, the homage hitherto paid to Madame du Barry. This conduct did not tend to pacify the anti-Austrian party, who soon began to spread rumours injurious to the young sovereign. Her light-heartedness and love of pleasure were insidiously construed into a tendency to satire, and a wish for guilty and forbidden amusements. One of the most innocent errors of Marie Antoinette—her disregard of etiquette—proved, however, very fatal. The ancient customs of the land fettered the sovereigns with numerous and tedious usages, which had the advantage of not allowing a shadow of reproach to rest on the name of the monarch's spouse. It was felt that, like Cæsar's wife, she should not even be suspected. Confiding and inexperienced, the queen, who disliked restraint, hastened to free herself from the constant surveillance exercised upon her by her titled attendants. She thus merely complied with the independent spirit of the age; but this freedom of conduct subjected her to grievous misinterpretations. A queen who could walk out without hoops, and who, in her retreat of Trianon, actually requested all the guests to be seated in her presence, was indignantly pronounced—by the virtuous dowagers of the court of Louis XV.—capable of any impropriety. It is a fact beyond doubt, that the infamous calumnies against the queen, and of which the traces are not yet wholly effaced in France, first originated amongst the nobility.

With the recklessness which always characterised her, Marie Antoinette did little to conciliate the nobles of her court. She had not forgotten their subserviency to Madame du Barry, or their conduct towards Mademoiselle de Lorraine at the epoch of her marriage; and she both laughed at and despised their aristocratic pretensions: well knowing that scarcely even one amongst the highest families was free from the stain of some financial mesalliance. This latter consideration induced the queen not to consult merely high birth in the gift of those places and favours which were at her disposal, but to be guided chiefly by her own personal feelings and affections. The great families, who looked on all the posts at court as theirs by right, were profoundly irritated to see them bestowed

on those persons whom the queen's friendship had alone raised from obscurity. Marie Antoinette cared little for their discontent; policy was never her favourite virtue: she did not see the necessity of sacrificing her own inclinations to those whom she had been accustomed to consider as mere dependants on royalty; and she was still less disposed to fetter her freedom with the dull and wearisome routine of etiquette.

Her tastes were naturally simple: a solitary walk in the wild and shady gardens of her favourite Trianon delighted her more than all the stately magnificence of Versailles, with its terraces, broad avenues, and sculptured marble fountains. Marie Antoinette often displayed the natural kindness of her heart in these lonely promenades. None ever implored her pity in vain: she indiscriminately relieved the wretched beings who sought her assistance. Her benevolence had all the sincerity and indiscretion of youth. Although these morning excursions were perfectly innocent, the queen trusted too exclusively to the love and esteem of the people as her safeguard against calumny. Her generous nature deceived her with respect to the real worth of popularity. Heedless of the future, she welcomed royalty as a glorious vision, fraught with happiness and joy. Time alone shewed her that even the bright diadem she wore might in the end become a sharp and heavy crown of thorns.

The example of the queen, though generally reproved, was almost universally followed. The fashions daily became more simple, and less of the old ostentatious formality marked social intercourse. Since the death of Louis XIV., the rigid etiquette of former times had gradually decreased. Nothing was so calculated to banish it entirely as the growing importance given to assemblies: it is when men meet seldom that a feeling of jealous restraint marks their intercourse. As the eighteenth century progressed and drew to a close, that ardent desire of equality and freedom, which ultimately broke forth in a sanguinary revolution, induced those persons who then composed good society to indulge in all the liberty consistent with their habits. Although a great degree of independence already

prevailed, yet, in order to render it more extensive still, the mistresses of the most fashionable houses of Paris disposed their drawing-rooms as *cafés*, with separate tables, refreshments, cards, and newspapers, for the convenience of the guests; who were almost as free from restraint as if they had really been in a place of public resort. When the queen admitted men at her table—an innovation till then unheard of—the etiquette of ordinary life naturally relaxed its severity. A more moral and democratic tone seemed to pervade every class of society; individual merit openly took its legitimate rank; the bourgeoisie adopted a more confidant bearing, and the nobles a tone of greater complaisance: the barriers of prejudice and station daily yielded to the increasing desire of equality.

Though Louis XVI. did not at first feel for the queen that passionate attachment with which she afterwards inspired him, his moral and religious feelings inclined him towards a calm domestic life; of which he felt that it was his duty to give the first example. Whilst the court was still in mourning for his grandfather, the king, who could not then indulge in hunting, took long matrimonial walks with the queen, in those gardens of Choisy where Louis XV. had formerly attended the beautiful Madame de Chateauroux. On the day following the first of these promenades, several worthy couples, little remarkable for conjugal affection, took pattern of the royal pair, and had the courage to walk arm-in-arm together for several hours. This was considered a heroic instance of the power of flattery. Though decency is not virtue, it has still some value. If the court of Louis XVI. was not in reality more moral than that of his predecessor, it was by far more respectable and decorous. The novels of Voisenon and Crébillon were no longer read openly, and even the name of Voltaire could not shield from blame the licentiousness of some of his productions.

The reign of Marie Antoinette and Louis XVI. may thus be said to have ushered in a remarkable change in the history of French social life. Previously to the death of Louis XV. the spirit of philosophy had already undergone some modi-

fications. After being gross and licentious under the regency, exact, ironical, and reasoning, in the middle of the century, it now assumed a sentimental and levelling tendency, which contrasted with the sensual and aristocratic doctrines of Voltaire. The aspect which society presented was in accordance with the spirit of the authors in fashion. The enthusiastic Rousseau, the grave and domestic Richardson, the sentimental Sterne, the pastoral Gessner, his disciple, Florian, St Pierre, the author of "Paul and Virginia," had replaced the cold sceptics of preceding years. Philosophy now assumed a wholly different tendency. Vague desires for the general progress of humanity, undefined aspirations towards excellence, and exaggerated manifestations of feeling (which were ironically stigmatised by the name of *sensiblerie*) began to characterise French society.

In the environs of Paris, and in several of the provinces, moral festivals were established. Prizes were given to the most exemplary young girls, to pious children, and to kind mothers.—A prize for maternal kindness! Good actions and useful labours were also rewarded. In one place La Fête des Bonnes Gens was enthusiastically celebrated. In another, La Fête des Bonnes Mœurs (pure morals!) was held with much applause.

Such festivals and ceremonies might, perhaps, have been natural and appropriate in a pure and primitive social state; though it is likely that in such a state they would not have been thought of; but in France, in the eighteenth century, in the very centre of a corrupt and decaying world, they were only hollow vanities—a mere philosophical varnish, too transparent to hide the foul corruption which lay beneath this fair seeming of virtue. This affectation of external show, so well named "emphase philosophique," was essentially opposed to the pure internal morality of Christianity. In this distinction between meretricious ornaments and austere beauty lay the difference of the two systems.

Madame Riccoboni, a clever authoress of the period, detected, with her usual tact, the ridiculous aspect of this new

mania. "What!" she petulantly observed, "cannot an author now write ten lines without exclaiming, 'O goodness!' 'O benevolence!' 'O humanity!' 'O virtue!'" There was, unfortunately, too much of the specious morality of Rousseau in this display of refined and elevated feeling. Because men spoke with rapturous enthusiasm of virtues they never practised, they thought themselves virtuous. Dissipated and ambitious women gravely discussed the charms of a calm, retired life, and dwelt with emphasis on the pure pleasures of platonic love. But even in this exaggerated philanthropy there was much that was good and true. The doctrines of love and equality on which it rested were derived from Christianity; and, although the philosophers marred their beautiful and primitive simplicity by an inflated and declamatory enthusiasm, they could not destroy the serene loveliness of the divine original. This "sensiblerie," however ridiculous it may have been, was only the weak side of a very important change in the feelings and opinions of the French people. According to another observation of the keen-sighted Madame Riccoboni, depth had now become the folly of a nation once celebrated for its graceful frivolousness. The example of England had greatly contributed to this change. Both men and women began to ask themselves if there were no higher object in life than mere pleasure. Court intrigues, and the adventures of profligate nobles, no longer engrossed exclusively every conversation. The declamations of Rousseau, and the pastorals of Florian, gave fashionable people a taste for the country, which displayed itself in imitations of English cottage life, and in such fanciful "bergeries" as that of Trianon, where Marie Antoinette, her husband, and a few chosen friends, assumed the character of peasants, and endeavoured to feel as happy as the humble beings they represented.

Florian was popular, but the favourite writer of this epoch appears to have been the novelist Richardson: "That sublime genius," as Diderot enthusiastically called him. When questioned once concerning his own affairs, the French philosopher could only answer by broken exclamations of, "O Pamela!

O Clarissa! My friends! O Richardson!" This spirit was carried by the women to an extravagant height. Madame de Tessé, on being shewn by Richardson's son-in-law the grave of her favourite author, in Saint Bride's church, knelt down on the hallowed spot, and there shed such an abundance of tears, that her guide thought she must certainly faint away from excess of emotion. The sober citizen was no little alarmed at her extraordinary behaviour, and henceforth shewed himself somewhat reluctant to exhibit the tomb of his deceased relative to French ladies of such exquisite feelings. The fashionable foibles naturally took the tone of this extreme sensitiveness. Geometry and *bel esprit* were almost out of date. Ladies were now afflicted with mysterious diseases springing from the delicacy of their nature. Vapours, and fainting fits returning at stated periods, became the prevalent complaints, whilst plays of the most tender and lachrymose cast had alone the power of pleasing the public.

A republican feeling accompanied, however, this philanthropic reaction. The fashions took a Grecian aspect, and antiquity was now less studied for its literary resources than for its political characteristics. Art fashioned itself according to the prevailing mood. The days when Watteau and Boucher interpreted the poetry of Chaulieu, Bernis, and Gentil Bernard by voluptuous paintings, were past. Greuze now painted pictures in the style of La Chaussée's plaintive comedies, whilst the academical vein prepared the young David to be the painter of the Revolution. This admiration of republican principles was first professed by the nobles. It was they who applauded in the palace of Versailles the "Brutus" of Voltaire, acted in the presence and by the commend of royalty. These two lines,

> "Je suis fils de Brutus, et je porte en mon cœur
> La liberté gravée, et les rois en horreur,"

were received with enthusiastic acclamations. The imprudent and inconsistent admirers of republican freedom were the same nobles who, after aiding and encouraging the Revolution,

turned from it as soon as it seemed likely to injure their privileges; and who, under the name ef émigrés, armed all Europe against a republic which partly owed its existence to their efforts.

In this, however, as well as in many other points, the nobles are scarcely to be considered free agents. Carried down the tide of opinion by the irresistible impulse of their age, they never rightly understood the stern task they were fated to accomplish. It is seldom that the ideas destined to benefit the people are first called forth, or even propagated, by them. The philosophy of the eighteenth century was essentially aristocratic in its origin. From princes to nobles, from nobles to financiers, from these to bourgeois, and from the bourgeoisie to the people, the new doctrines slowly descended in ever-widening circles, until the last broad ring of all embraced the whole nation. And then, but not till then, did thoughts shape themselves into deeds.

This gradual descent was very visible: it ought to have been equally significant. A traveller returned to France under the reign of Louis XVI., after having been several years away: he was asked what change he found in Paris since his former stay,—"Nothing," answered he, "save that they are now saying in the streets what was formerly said in the drawing-rooms."

The traveller was right: "philosophy" had gone down to the people. It had shattered moral and religious feelings, in the minds of those whom such feelings alone could render patient under the weight of their misery. In a deep and thrilling voice it had told the injured of their rights as men: it had reminded them of their many galling wrongs. Habit still made them suffer in silence, but the seed of future vengeance was sown.

CHAPTER II.

DECLINE OF THE BUREAUX D'ESPRIT — MARÉCHALE DE LUXEMBOURG — MADAME DE BEAUHARNAIS — MADAME NECKER—GERMAINE NECKER.

THE remarkable change indicated in the preceding chapter as having taken place in French society had not yet caused it to forego its exquisitely-polished elegance. The rule of woman over this artificial world was, however, now passing rapidly away.

Madame Geoffrin and Mademoiselle de Lespinasse died in the earlier portion of the reign of Louis XVI., and no ladies of equal tact or talent were found to seize on the power they thus left vacant. Old, blind, ill-tempered Madame du Deffand still remained; but she, alas, now uttered many querulous complaints concerning neglect and ingratitude of friends, who all abandoned her in her old age. Bent double with years, her quick intellect unimpaired, her memory still stored with tales of the regency, and many a scandalous anecdote of the days of Louis XV., she stood amid the new generation, sightless and alone, a withered relic of the past. How strangely must she—so frankly selfish and inexorably real—have wondered at all the strains of high-flown sentiment and lofty philanthropy which suddenly broke forth upon her ear. Well might she also feel chagrined to note how her own caustic wit, though still keen and brilliant as ever, had lost its wonted power to dazzle and attract. Poor woman! she had outlived her day. Light, epicurean philosophy, satirical wit, late suppers and good cheer, had vanished before fine feeling, pastoral lore, and primitive simplicity of manners. Suppers were almost immoral, now that the golden age was to return,

brought back to earth by the "contrat social," and that poor suffering humanity was to be regenerated without toil or woe.

Like all those who resorted to Paris for amusement, Walpole noticed this alteration with evident displeasure. "They may be growing wiser," he pettishly observes, "but the intermediate change is dulness." The era for bureaux d'esprit was, however, gone beyond recall. Philosophy, indeed, no longer sought the aid of their fostering care; it did not even need them as those central points whence it formerly disseminated its doctrines far and wide. The whole spirit of the nation had become philosophic; every drawing-room was now a fit arena. It thus happened that when the three great bureaux d'esprit had ceased to exist, no effort was made to replace them. That such assemblies would be as needless now as they had formerly been useful, seemed to be felt almost by intuition. New wants, new feelings had arisen. Like many prouder institutions, as soon as their appointed task of good or evil was fulfilled, the bureaux d'esprit were forgotten; and their sentimental successors now spoke of them as slightingly as they had probably spoken of the soirées of the Hôtel Rambouillet and the *ruelles* * of the seventeenth century.

The passion for sentiment and "bergerie" was, indeed, carried to strange lengths. The Duchess of Mazarin, a fair and florid dame, more remarkable for good temper than for tact or wit, indulged her pastoral tendencies to an extravagant degree. She once resolved to give, in the heart of winter, a fête that should eclipse everything of the kind yet known. She fitted up her vast saloon in a style of extraordinary splendour, with wide looking-glasses that reached from the floor to the ceiling. At the further extremity of the apartment, a wide recess, separated from it by a glass casement,

* The *précieuses* of the seventeenth century generally received their morning visitors before they had risen. Their guests were thus invited to take seats in the *ruelle*, or space extending between the bed-side and the wall, and which was sufficiently wide to accommodate several persons. From this circumstance a morning conversazione became known under the name of *ruelle*.

was beautifully decorated with shrubs and flowers so as to represent a lonely bower. Along a winding path, a pretty actress from the opera, attired as a shepherdess, was to appear, with dog and crook, leading a flock of snowy sheep, to the sound of soft, pastoral melody. The light of the lamps, and the surrounding draperies, had been judiciously disposed so as to heighten the effect of this little scene, with which the dancers were to be suddenly surprised at the most interesting moment of the ball. The poor Duchess of Mazarin was all impatience until that auspicious moment should arrive; but before she could give the signal that was to summon the shepherdess and her flock, a most unfortunate accident occurred. The sheep suddenly broke forth from their place of confinement, and burst through the glass casement into the ball-room. Panic-struck with the novel sight, and especially with the glare of innumerable lights, reflected in the large mirrors, they rushed in every direction, knocked down dancers, trampled furiously over them, and attacked all the looking-glasses with desperate energy. Ladies screamed and fainted away; whilst the disconsolate Duchess of Mazarin looked on the whole scene of havoc and confusion with unutterable chagrin.

This untoward incident amused Paris for a whole week, but cured no one of pastoral longings. It was discussed with little mercy in the circle of the old Maréchale de Luxembourg, the friend of Madame du Deffand—like her, the sceptical derider of affected feeling, and, though opposed to the prevailing whim, one of the reigning oracles of wit and bon ton. If social academies had lost their once extensive power, the influence of woman was still widely felt in all matters connected with politeness and good-breeding—matters of which she was, indeed, the sole acknowledged judge. From this source sprang the power of the Maréchale, a very agreeable old woman, of aristocratic and elegant manners. She had been a beauty in her youth, when her numerous adventures formed the theme of many a satirical couplet. Though now grown timorous and devout, she occasionally amused herself

with singing over, in a thin quavering voice, those *noëls* as antiquated as her charms. But, whilst she carefully remembered all the verses that spoke of her departed beauty, she omitted the less flattering comments on her virtue, with the declaration—"that her memory was failing her, and that at her age one began to forget all about those things."

Walpole, who found no one truly fascinating save Madame du Deffand, probably because she admired him extravagantly, speaks thus of the Maréchale de Luxembourg: "She has been very handsome, very abandoned, and very mischievous. Her beauty is gone, her lovers are gone, and she thinks the devil is coming. This dejection has softened her into being rather agreeable, for she has wit and good breeding; but you would swear by the restlessness of her person, and the horrors she cannot conceal, that she had signed the compact, and expected to be called upon in a week for the performance." The fastidious Rousseau judged her differently. The reputation of her caustic wit had prepared him for an epigrammatic, overbearing woman; whereas, on beholding her for the first time, he was not less charmed by the unaffected grace and seducing gentleness of her manners, than by the keenness and delicacy of her tact. The prudent old Maréchale knew very well with whom to be satirical: she did not deal out her arrows right and left, needlessly making herself enemies, like her splenetic friend, Madame du Deffand; to whom she, however, remained faithful, notwithstanding her ill-temper, carefully nursing her in her last illness, and assiduously playing loto with Madame de Choiseul by the bedside of the dying woman.*

Madame de Luxembourg knew how to choose her victims; amongst these was the unlucky Duchess of Mazarin, whose pastoral tendencies, want of tact, full, luxuriant figure, and complexion somewhat too rich and blooming, found no mercy in her sight. "You cannot, however, deny that her colour is beautifully fresh," some one once observed to the Maréchale. "Yes," she impatiently replied, "as fresh as butcher's meat."

* See page 176.

The Maréchale had been one of the most delicate beauties of the court of Louis XV. This crude and pitiless comparison, which happened to be strikingly correct, joined to the adventure of the terrified flock, nearly drove Madame de Mazarin to despair.

Madame de Luxembourg did not, however, indulge frequently in satire or gossip: these are vulgar amusements, and she held a school of good breeding. Nor did she think herself justified in being too rigorous; for she knew that, with one word of censure, she could exclude whomsoever she chose from the established pale of propriety and good taste. Her decisions on those matters were without appeal. In consequence of this high reputation, the old Maréchale might generally be seen surrounded by a wide circle of the young noblesse of both sexes, who listened to her attentively, modelled their speech and manners on her example, and carefully treasured her precepts. Her charming granddaughter generally appeared near her, as the living testimony of the admirable education an unscrupulous woman of the world could give in her penitent old age. The Countess Amélie, as she was generally called, was one of those rare beings who seem too bewitching not to be universally admired, and too good and gentle not to be still more loved. Young, wealthy, and high born, exquisitely beautiful, pious and pure as an angel, lenient to the follies of the world, and towards herself rigidly severe, the charm of her nature was such as to enable her to dispense with the wit and brilliancy which were then considered absolutely necessary for an accomplished woman. Without seeking to dazzle, she attracted universally. Few women of her time inspired so great a number of romantic and passionate attachments: her husband, the worthless Duke of Lauzun, alone remained indifferent to her virtues and beauty. She charmed even her own sex. Many women conceived for her an enthusiastic admiration which shewed how far they thought her removed, in her excellence, beyond the reach of emulation or jealousy. A portrait of the Countess Amélie, by the calm Madame Necker,

would make this account appear cold and tame in comparison with the glowing eulogy bestowed upon her by the methodical and reasoning Genevese. Nature had done much for this charming woman, but it was also acknowledged that she owed far more to the studious care with which she had been reared by her grandmother. It was from the Maréchale de Luxembourg that she had derived the indescribable grace of manner which rendered her so truly fascinating: she was, however, far more simple than her old relative, who carried, to a singular degree, her love of studied elegance. Notwithstanding her extreme devotion, which increased as she advanced in years, the Maréchale is said to have had little faith in the efficacy of prayers that did not happen to prove models of style and taste; and to have candidly believed, in her aristocratic pride, that elegance of language could not fail, as well as sincerity of heart, from being acceptable to the Supreme Being.

Thus, notwithstanding the visible decline of female influence, society still preserved its exquisite polish. Discussions and earnest conversations were seldom allowed; they were considered as leading to exclusiveness and ennui. To pass from one subject to another with tact and frivolous ease, was the most essential point of conversational good breeding. This excessive elegance produced in the end great monotony: all individuality was destroyed; originality of thought or feeling became almost a reproach; and social intercourse, instead of consisting in the exchange of spontaneous feeling, assumed a tone of dull and tedious sameness.

Many novel ideas emerged from this antiquated background, but the new path which was to lead to a revolution in social manners, though already struck, was, as yet, scarcely trod upon. Almost all the old frivolousness remained: many ladies had no graver occupation than *parfilage*, which consisted in unravelling the gold from the silk thread in the rich lace then worn by men of rank. The women solicited, for this purpose, the old lace of the cast-off clothes belonging to their male friends; and, in their eagerness, they often cut off

and seized upon that which was new. This fashion was carried to such an extent that the presents offered to ladies on New-Year's Day consisted almost exclusively of toys made of gold thread, and all destined to be unravelled. This zeal in favour of *parfilage* was not wholly disinterested. The gold, when separated from the silk, was always sold, and it was calculated that a clever *parfileuse* could earn about a hundred *louis* a year by this lucrative amusement. All the women were not, however, so frivolously engaged, and a few still opened their saloons to philosophy. The elegant Duchess of Brancas and Madame Fanny de Beauharnais, the poetess, shared (at an infinite distance, it is true) the empire of the Maréchale de Luxembourg.

Madame Fanny de Beauharnais, the aunt of Joséphine's first husband, was a lady of fashion, who seemed attended by the same ill-fortune that persecuted the Duchess of Mazarin. All her efforts at notoriety either failed or ended most unpleasantly. She began by opening a bureau d'esprit, destined to rival that of Madame Geoffrin; but the philosophers and encyclopédists refused to abandon their old friend, and Madame de Beauharnais was obliged to receive second-rate authors, with Dorat, the poet, at their head. She next took to writing indifferent poetry, which she most unadvisedly published. This was a very unfortunate step. The men who gathered willingly around a clever woman of the world cared very little for an authoress, who might eclipse their own reputation, and who would, at least, exact a degree of flattery and praise they came to receive and not to bestow. These reasons rendered the soirées of Madame de Beauharnais almost as dull as those of her friend and sister poetess, Madame du Bocage. In the year 1773, Madame de Beauharnais published a little work, entitled "A Tous les Penseurs, Salut!" in which she undertook the defence of female authorship. In an age when women ruled everything, from state affairs down to fashionable trifles, this was, however, considered a strange instance of audacity. The bitter and satirical poet, Lebrun, answered Madame de Beauharnais in a strain of keen sarcasm. "Ink,"

said he, "ill becomes rosy fingers." Dorat was accused of composing his friend's poetry; there is no proof that the accusation was founded on truth, but it served to prompt Lebrun with the following clever epigram :—

> "La belle Eglé, dit-on, a deux petits travers:
> Elle fait son visage, et ne fait pas ses vers."

It was not true, however, that Madame de Beauharnais made her face. Lebrun had never seen her when he wrote this; he met her afterwards, and admired both her graceful person and her agreeable manners. This did not prevent him, however, from still directing against her some of his keenest epigrams. Madame de Beauharnais, weary of the unequal contest, retired at length from Paris, which had been rendered odious to her by repeated mortifications.

The wife of the minister, Necker, possessed a more real and serious power.

Madame Necker was a religious, pure-minded woman, with principles of rigid austerity. Learned, methodical, with a touch of the puritanism of Geneva in her tone and feelings; in manner calm and grave, she looked a severe and statue-like figure amidst the gay and graceful Frenchwomen of the period. She was a native of Geneva, and the daughter of M. Curchod, a Protestant pastor, residing in the vicinity of Lausanne. Her father gave her the severe and classical education which is usually bestowed on men alone, and the young Suzanne Curchod was renowned throughout the whole province for her wit, beauty, and erudition. Gibbon, the future historian, but then an unknown youth studying in Lausanne, met Mademoiselle Curchod, fell in love with her, and succeeded in rendering his attachment acceptable to both the object of his affections and her parents. When he returned, however, to England, his father indignantly refused to hear of the proposed marriage between him and the Swiss minister's portionless daughter. Gibbon yielded to parental authority, and philosophically forgot his learned mistress. After her father's death, which left her wholly unprovided for, Suzanne

Curchod retired with her mother to Geneva. She there earned a precarious subsistance by teaching persons of her own sex. When her mother died, a lady named Madame de Vermenoux induced Mademoiselle Curchod to come to Paris, in order to teach Latin to her son. It was in this lady's house that she met Necker. He was then in the employment of Thélusson the banker, and occasionally visited Madame de Vermenoux. Struck with the noble character and grave beauty of the young governess, Necker cultivated her acquaintance, and ultimately made her his wife. Mutual poverty had delayed their marriage for several years ; but it was not long ere Necker rose from his obscurity. Madame Necker had an ardent love of honourable distinction, which she imparted to her husband, and which greatly served to quicken his efforts ; his high talents in financial matters were at length recognised : he became a wealthy and respected man. Shortly after her marriage, Madame Necker expressed the desire of devoting herself to literature. Her husband, however, delicately intimated to her that he should regret seeing her adopt such a course. This sufficed to induce her to relinquish her intention : she loved him so entirely, that, without effort or repining, she could make his least wish her law.

Madame Necker soon perceived the power of woman in French society. With her talents, and the wealth at her command, she saw how easily she could acquire an influence which might be highly advantageous to her husband. Long before Necker was called to office in 1776, his wife had, therefore, opened her house to Marmontel, Saint-Lambert, the Princess of Monaco, Thomas, Guibert, the Countess Amélie, Madame de Grammont, Buffon, Madame d'Angivilliers—formerly Madame du Marchais—La Harpe, Grimm, Raynal, and all the members of the philosophic body. Though she partly succeeded in her object of thus adding to her husband's increasing popularity, Madame Necker wholly mistook her vocation when she endeavoured to shine beyond the quiet circle of domestic privacy. Notwithstanding her long residence in France, she could never divest herself entirely of the

primitive austerity imbibed with her early education. Her learning, her method, her rigid morality, and strict piety, unfitted her for the part she had chosen; which only required a light, brilliant wit, and graceful ease of manner. The truthfulness, and even the simplicity, of her pure nature, secured the respect and esteem of her guests; but they all felt that she failed in that power of pleasing, then far more highly valued than the most sterling qualities. Her brilliant complexion, intelligent features, and fine figure, only elicited cold admiration. Even her friends could not forgive her dancing so awkwardly, dressing with so little taste, and, above all, wanting the charm of that all-pervading grace which had rendered the plain Mademoiselle de Lespinasse attractive, and almost beautiful. They found her bearing formal and constrained; her language too cold and stately. In vain she drew around her men of talent and agreeable women; in vain she paid the most sedulous attention to her guests, and exerted herself to please them: there seemed, in all she said or did, something to be wanting still. The severity of her religious principles, and the freedom with which she manifested them, somewhat annoyed and restrained her philosophic guests. They felt also (what her polite hospitality could never wholly conceal) that the pleasure she found in their company was not the chief object for which she drew them around her. To procure her husband a pleasing relaxation, and to advance him in life, were her real intentions in opening her house to the philosophers; and she unfortunately allowed this to be rather too clearly perceived. The honest but pompous Necker did not interfere with his wife's literary society. He was always present, but spoke little, and allowed every one else to talk for his amusement. The task of directing the conversation he left to Madame Necker. Her solid and serious mind was little adapted for this responsibility. It has been said that she often prepared her evening conversations beforehand: she certainly wanted that spontaneousness which gives to social intercourse its greatest charm. But the capital error of Madame Necker, in the eyes of the philosophers, was that,

either through mismanagement or economy, she failed in providing them with good cheer. Grimm feelingly complained of her cook, who was no doubt vastly inferior to that of Baron d'Holbach, the celebrated maître d'hôtel of philosophy.

Though Madame Necker's Friday dinners were too stiffly solemn, and very indifferent in a gastronomic point of view, the growing importance of her husband, and her own real, if not very brilliant, merit, caused them, in spite of the touch of ennui they imparted, to be well attended. Her worldly position, as the wife of a wealthy banker, was one of great influence. It was Madame Necker who first conceived, in the year 1770, the idea of erecting, by the subscriptions of literary men, a statue to Voltaire. Subscriptions soon poured in: Rousseau, to Voltaire's infinite annoyance, sent his subscription of three louis; and the sculptor Pigalle was despatched to take a model of the favoured French poet. When, a few years later, Gibbon visited Paris, he found his Mademoiselle Curchod on a level with those ladies who then gave the tone to foreign courts and Parisian society. She received her former admirer with a cordial unembarrassed manner, which shewed that, if his infidelity had ever inspired her with any resentment, the feeling had long since subsided and yielded to entire indifference. Gibbon, forgetting that years had not improved his personal appearance—he was very short, and had grown enormously stout—was not a little nettled to perceive that Necker, no wise jealous of his wife's first lover, did not scruple to leave them alone together, whilst he comfortably retired to rest. Necker, however, very highly prized Gibbon's conversation, and subsequently visited him in England, accompanied by his wife.

As Necker rose in the world, Madame Necker's influence increased; but it never was an individual power, like that of Madame du Deffand, or of the Maréchale de Luxembourg. Over her husband she always possessed great influence. Her virtues and noble character had inspired him with a feeling akin to veneration. He was not wholly guided by her counsels, but he respected her opinions as those of a high-minded

being, whom all the surrounding folly and corruption could not draw down from her sphere of holy purity. If Madame Necker was loved and esteemed by her husband, she may be said to have almost idolised him; and her passionate attachment probably increased the feelings of vanity and self-importance of which Necker has often been accused. This exclusive devotedness caused some wonder amongst the friends of the minister and his wife; for seldom had these sceptical philosophers witnessed a conjugal union so strict and uncompromising, and yet so touching in its very severity.

When Necker became, in 1776, Director-General of the Finances, his wife resolved that the influence her husband's official position gave her should not be employed in procuring unmerited favours for flatterers or parasites. She placed before herself the far more noble object of alleviating misfortune, and pointing out to her reforming husband some of the innumerable abuses which then existed in every department of the state. One of her first attempts was to overthrow the lottery. She pressed the point on Necker's attention; but, though he shared her convictions, he had not the power of destroying this great evil: he did, however, all he could to moderate its excesses. The prisons and hospitals of Paris greatly occupied the attention of Madame Necker during the five years of her husband's power. Her devotedness to the cause of humanity was admirable, and shone with double lustre amidst the heartless selfishness of the surrounding world. She once happened to learn that a certain Count of Lautrec had been imprisoned in a dungeon of the fortress of Ham for twenty-eight years! and that the unhappy captive now scarcely seemed to belong to human-kind. A feeling of deep compassion seized her heart. To liberate a state prisoner was more than her influence could command, but she resolved to lighten, if possible, his load of misery. She set out for Ham, and succeeded in obtaining a sight of M. de Lautrec. She found a miserable-looking man, lying listlessly on the straw of his dungeon, scarcely clothed with a few tattered rags, and surrounded by rats and reptiles. Madame Necker soothed

his fixed and sullen despair with promises of speedy relief; nor did she depart until she had kept her word, and seen M. de Lautrec removed to an abode where, if still a prisoner, he might at least spend in peace the few days left him by the tyranny of his oppressors.

It is said that the celebrated De la Tude, the ill-fated victim of Madame de Pompadour, also owed his freedom to the interference of Madame Necker, whose attention was first drawn to his case by the humble but generous Madame le Gros. Acts of individual benevolence were not, however, the only object of the minister's wife. Notwithstanding the munificence of her private charities, she aimed none the less to effect general good. Considerable ameliorations were introduced by her in the condition of the hospitals of Paris. She entered, with unwearied patience, into the most minute details of their actual administration, and, with admirable ingenuity, rectified errors or suggested improvements. Her aim was to effect a greater amount of good with the same capital, which she now saw grossly squandered and misapplied. The reforms which she thus introduced were both important and severe. She sacrificed almost the whole of her time to this praiseworthy task, and ultimately devoted a considerable sum to found the hospital which still bears her name. Beyond this, Madame Necker sought to exercise no power over her husband, or through his means. She loved him far too truly and too well to aim at an influence which might have degraded him in the eyes of the world. Necker was, however, proud of his noble-hearted wife, and never hesitated to confess how much he was indebted to her advice. When he retired from office, in 1781, and published his famous "Compte Rendu," he seized the opportunity of paying a high and heartfelt homage to the virtues of his wife. "Whilst retracing," he observes at the conclusion of his work, "a portion of the charitable tasks prescribed by your majesty, let me be permitted, sire, to allude, without naming her, to a person gifted with singular virtues, and who has materially assisted me in accomplishing the designs of your majesty.

Although her name was never uttered to you, in all the vanities of high office, it is right, sire, that you should be aware that it is known and frequently invoked in the most obscure asylums of suffering humanity. It is no doubt most fortunate for a minister of finance to find, in the companion of his life, the assistance he needs for so many details of beneficence and charity, which might otherwise prove too much for his strength and attention. Carried away by the tumults of general affairs,—often obliged to sacrifice the feelings of the private man to the duties of the citizen, he may well esteem himself happy, when the complaints of poverty and misery can be confided to an enlightened person who shares the sentiment of his duties."

Necker was greatly criticised for the public acknowledgment he thus made of his wife's virtues, and of the aid which he had derived from them; but he spoke so because her power had been pure, and such as he did not blush to avow. The influence of Madame Necker over her husband was not, however, always irreprehensible: his resignation, in 1781, which delivered France over to Calonne and Loménie, is generally attributed to her. The grief she felt at the libels which daily appeared against him, joined to her ardent and ambitious wish of seeing him acknowledged minister—an office of which he had all the toil and responsibility without the dignity it conferred—induced her to persuade her husband to tender his resignation, unless he could obtain the post to which his services gave him a claim. The intrigues of Maurepas, and of all the courtiers he had irritated by his economy, prevented this justice from being rendered to Necker. His resignation was accepted, and he retired once more to private life.

The saloon of Madame Necker, during this her husband's first ministry, (for such it was in reality, though not in name,) was much enlivened by the presence of her only child, Germaine Necker, who afterwards became the celebrated Madame de Staël, and whose character already differed so strikingly from that of her mother. Madame Necker, with all her high principle and noble qualities, was rigid and somewhat pedantic.

She was capable of a deep and sincere attachment, but her mind was too calm and too well-disciplined for passion. Her slightest actions were regulated by a sense of method and duty. She neither admitted nor understood other laws of conduct. Germaine Necker, on the contrary, displayed, even as a child, an ardent nature, full of passionate impulses, strange in one so young. The least emotion of joy or grief affected her even to pain; she could scarcely hear her parents commended without bursting into tears; and the mere thought of meeting some remarkable and celebrated personage made her heart beat, and powerfully agitated her whole frame. For this impetuous and enthusiastic young being to be placed under the control of the calm and methodical Madame Necker, was like a lava stream compelled to flow through some cold northern region. Nothing annoyed Madame Necker more deeply than this wide dissimilarity which nature had placed between herself and her daughter. She had early resolved to educate her child according to a peculiarly strict system of her own; but it was in vain that she sought to curb that burning spirit within the sphere of her formal rules. Germaine was docile to the will of her parents, and would willingly have obeyed, if an irresistible impulse had not led her far beyond her mother's cold and methodical teaching. One of her favourite amusements, as a child, was to cut out paper kings and queens, and make them act in tragedies which she improvised on the instant, speaking for all the characters successively. Madame Necker, whose rigid Calvinist notions were offended by her daughter's theatrical predilections, interdicted this amusement, which Germaine, unable to relinquish, followed in secret. It was also by stealth that she read most of the novels of the day; amongst the rest, Richardson's "Clarissa Harlowe," whose elopement, as she afterwards so happily expressed it, had been one of the great events of her own youth.

Instead of being educated, like most of the young ladies of the period, in the calm seclusion of a convent, Mademoiselle Necker was thus reared at home, and allowed to mingle freely

with the talented guests who assembled in her mother's drawing-room. This produced in her a premature development of intellect which, though it could not weaken her powerful genius, most probably abridged her brilliant career. Germaine generally sat on a low wooden stool, near the arm-chair, and under the watchful eye of Madame Necker, who constantly reminded her to hold herself straight. Though the child was dark and plain, the striking intelligence of her expressive countenance, and the wonderful beauty of her large black eyes, gave her a singular attraction; with all the grace and freshness of youth, she had had none of its puerility. Some of the gravest men who visited Madame Necker, found evident pleasure in conversing with the pale, earnest girl. The precocity of her judgment already revealed what she would one day become. The Abbé Raynal discerned amongst the first her intellectual power; and she was scarcely emerging from childhood, when he wished her to contribute a dissertation on the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes, for his great philosophical work. In this feverish atmosphere of praise and intellectual excitement grew up Germaine Necker. From her mother she imbibed a strong religious feeling, which never abandoned her; Necker imparted to her his ambitious love of political popularity; and the society in which she was brought up strengthened her passion for literature and fed the burning flame of her genius. Her life and her writings bear deep traces of these three powerful principles.

The natural result of an education which thus sequestered her almost entirely from that self-communion that teaches how to dispense with the world's approbation or blame, was to engender a passionate thirst of applause and social distinction in the daughter of Necker. Dazzled by the power then granted to conversational eloquence, she also sought to shine by that brilliant accomplishment: nor was it mere vanity that induced her to act thus; there is, and must ever be, deep pleasure in the exercise of great intellectual powers like hers. As a talker, she has not, perhaps, been surpassed. Clear, comprehensive, and vigorous, like that of man, her

language was also full of womanly passion and tenderness. The calm Madame Necker was soon thrown into the shade by her brilliant and accomplished daughter: she was too noble-minded to feel the least jealousy of one who was so dear to her, although their natures were most uncongenial; but she was hurt to perceive that her husband, that object of her exclusive idolatry, almost preferred the companionship of his daughter to her own. The deep attachment which Necker's wife always professed for him was a passion in the soul of the more ardent Germaine. She carried this feeling to an excess, and once confessed, "that she could almost feel jealous of her mother." Could a man so ardently loved fail to be vain? The decaying health of her mother also contributed to give more importance to Germaine, in the soirées held at her father's house. Madame Necker became afflicted towards the end of her life with a painful nervous disease, that compelled her to remain constantly standing: she had become thin and extremely pale; her dazzling freshness had wholly vanished, and when she now received her guests she looked more cold and statue-like than ever by the side of her animated daughter. Weakened by long illness, she welcomed, as a relief, the comparative neglect of her latter years, and gladly left Paris after the close of her husband's second ministry. They retired to Coppet, where she died in 1794, calm and resigned amidst the most acute sufferings.

If Madame Necker has not left so remarkable a name as many women of her time; if her contemporaries, justly perhaps, found her too cold and formal; yet she shines, at least in that dark age, a noble example of woman's highest virtues —devoted love, truth, and purity.

CHAPTER III.

MADAME DE GENLIS—THE "ORDER OF PERSEVERANCE"—MADAME DE MONTESSON—FRANKLIN—DEATH OF VOLTAIRE AND ROUSSEAU.

THE golden days, when woman ruled arbitrarily over the French social world, were now nearly over. The society of Madame Necker was one of the very few that maintained its position; and this may have been partly owing to Necker's political power. The little economist coterie of Madame d'Angivilliers still remained; but it was too circumscribed in its spirit to possess the wide influence it might otherwise have exercised. Notwithstanding these disadvantageous circumstances, many women could still, when sufficiently attractive, obtain a considerable share of the dominion which had at one time been so liberally granted to their sex; but the difference between their former and their actual power was that the latter proved to be essentially personal, and could no longer be exercised through the medium of a coterie.

Amongst the women who possessed most of this individual influence, during the earlier portion of the reign of Louis XVI., was the pretty and clever Madame de Genlis, then in all the freshness of her charms, and the enjoyment of her literary celebrity. Young, agreeable, with brilliant black eyes, luxuriant light-brown hair, and a countenance of remarkable piquancy, which often caused her to be likened to Marmontel's Roxelane; she, moreover, possessed the suppleness of manner, and soft, insinuating grace, in which the more honest and straightforward Madame Necker entirely failed. Madame de Genlis is now chiefly considered as the authoress of very clever works on education: but, at the epoch when

she figured so brilliantly in French society, she was known as a witty woman of fashion, who played admirably on almost every known musical instrument, mingled in all the gaieties of life, amused herself, and intrigued with the best of Parisian ladies; and who, notwithstanding the time she gave to pleasure, found means, by her singular perseverance and industry, to study various sciences and languages, and to engage in the composition of works requiring, not only a well-practised pen, but also great talent and a considerable degree of research. The highly moral and useful aim of her most important works could not, however, secure the reputation of Madame de Genlis from reproach.

From her first appearance in Parisian society, as Mademoiselle de Saint-Aubin, a young lady of noble birth, reduced to the position of a musical artiste, down to her equivocal connexion with Philippe Egalité, and her intrigues for his party during the revolution, her character and position always appeared in the doubtful and ambiguous light which seldom fails to prove fatal to a woman's fair name.

Her family was ancient and noble, but greatly impoverished. She was still a child, when pecuniary distress compelled her father to leave France. She remained with her mother, a handsome, clever, and intriguing woman, who won the favour of M. de la Popelinière, and was received with her daughter at the splendid seat he possessed at Passy, near Paris. The rich and voluptuous financier allowed himself to be charmed in his old age by the grace and dawning beauty of the youthful Mademoiselle de Saint-Aubin. He lamented her extreme youth, which rendered it impossible to think of marrying her: as, had she only been a few years older, he would have done, in spite of his conjugal experiences and misfortunes. Child as she was, she understood very well his sighing exclamation of *Quel dommage!* whenever his look rested on her graceful though girlish form; and she frankly confesses, in her Memoirs, that she could almost have said *Quel dommage!* herself. Although the disparity of years between sixty-six and thirteen rendered a conjugal union impossible, Mademoiselle

de Saint-Aubin soon wormed herself into the favour of her ancient admirer, by an easy, caressing manner, of which her dependent position early taught her the value. As soon as he discovered the great talent for music of his young protégée, M. de la Popelinière procured her the best and most expensive masters : she was likewise taught declamation, singing, and dancing, at the cost of her generous protector. Nature seemed to have destined her to excel in brilliant and external accomplishments : she soon acted on the theatre in M. de la Popelinière's residence, with infinite tact and humour, and delighted all his guests by dancing a characteristic *pas* taught her by the famous Deshayes.

It was to the early and careful teaching she thus received that Stéphanie de Saint-Aubin owed the musical excellence which, on the death of their benefactor, her mother was compelled to turn to pecuniary advantage. Madame de Saint-Aubin took her daughter into the most fashionable societies, where her musical performances were liberally remunerated, By many of her hosts the young girl was received with the courtesy her birth and former position in life demanded ; but a far greater number treated her slightingly, or at the best with patronising politeness. She was drawn from this subordinate position by her marriage with the Count of Genlis, one of the most witty and profligate nobles of the period. The young nobleman had met her father in the colonies, and there contracted a close intimacy with him. When they had been acquainted some time, M. de Saint-Aubin confidentially shewed to his young friend the letters he received from his daughter. M. de Genlis was charmed with the simple and graceful style of these epistles, and still more with a delightful miniature portrait which accompanied them, and scarcely did justice to the attractive features and graceful person of the writer. His first visit, when he returned to France, was paid to Mademoiselle de Saint-Aubin. The freshness and piquancy of her beauty, the easy vivacity of her manners, her wit, and accomplishments, surpassed his expectations and fascinated him completely. He married her, notwithstanding the op-

position of his family, and generously enabled her father to return to France, by paying off his creditors.

The pretty Madame de Genlis soon ranked amongst the fashionable women of the day. Full of tact and talent, ambitious and persevering under an air of frivolous gaiety, she succeeded in pacifying her husband's relatives, and in obliterating whatever discredit she might have derived from her former position as a musical artiste. Her conduct was, however, strongly characterised by that mixture of independence and levity which marked society under the rule of Louis XV.: she rode and dressed like a man; went in disguise to the Bal des Porcherons; danced there with the footman of M. de Brancas; and, when not otherwise occupied, amused herself with studying anatomy and bleeding the sick. Her restless and aspiring temper led her to seek distinction by every attainable method. There then existed in French society a fashionable reaction in favour of knightly virtues, and the golden days of ancient chivalry. Carousals and other pastimes of the olden time were revived at Versailles. This enthusiasm resembled, in many respects, the spirit of knight-errantry. The young nobles seemed to have proclaimed themselves the champions of freedom and humanity. Women, like the ladies of yore,

> "Whose bright eyes
> Rain'd influence, and judged the prize,"

urged them on, and by their impulsive enthusiasm materially aided this movement. In order to identify herself with it, Madame de Genlis founded a romantic order entitled the "Order of Perseverance;" but fearing lest her own authority might not suffice to recommend and bring it into repute, she declared that it was of the very highest antiquity, having originally flourished in Poland, for several centuries, and that she held the laws and statutes from the Princess Potocka and the Count of Brostocki: both were her friends, and confirmed this account. Stanislaus, King of Poland, with whom Madame de Genlis then carried on a friendly correspondence, who had sent her his portrait, and to whom she had forwarded

hers in return, favoured her sentimental fraud by writing her a letter intended to be exhibited, and in which he thanked her for having revived this ancient Polish order. Picturesque costumes, borrowed from the Middle Ages, enigmas composed by Madame de Genlis, moral questions, virtuous speeches, ingenious mottoes, and chivalrous oaths, formed the staple of this "Order of Perseverance:" a toy well fit for a puerile and decaying aristocracy.

The fêtes and ceremonies of this institution afford no interest; the most amusing circumstance connected with it was, that the historian Rulhière gravely told Madame de Genlis he was well acquainted with the order and all its statutes, having met with interesting details relative to it in his researches on the history of Poland. Madame de Genlis could not inform him that the soi-disant Polish order owed its existence to her own fertile brain; but she was much entertained at the positive knowledge displayed by the learned historian. Her literary successes, and the education of the children of the Duke of Chartres, soon diverted the attention of Madame de Genlis from her "Order of Perseverance;" which, being deprived of her fostering care, languished, and was ultimately forgotten.

The connexion of Madame de Genlis with the Orleans family (a connexion which influenced the whole of her life) had originated with her husband, one of the favourites and boon companions of the Duke of Chartres. The clever lady had early displayed her talent for intrigue at the expense of this branch of the royal family, by marrying her aunt, Madame de Montesson, to the old Duke of Orleans. The duke had for many years been connected with an actress named *Marquise.* This circumstance gave great annoyance to the ladies of his little court, who, unable to associate with the mistress of the prince, were thus debarred from the fêtes and pleasure parties he gave at his various country-seats to Mademoiselle Marquise. In order to obviate so serious an evil, they tacitly agreed—well-bred people never speak of such things—to give the duke, if possible, a mistress of their own rank: a nobly-born, accom-

plished lady, who would know how to do the honours of her lover's princely entertainments, and with whom they could associate, at least without degradation. They fixed upon the Marchioness of Montesson—a handsome widow, with whom the prince was evidently as much in love as his phlegmatic nature would allow him to be with any one—as the person most likely to effect their prudent and moral purpose. Madame de Montesson was accordingly studiously praised *to* the Duke of Orleans. Her beauty, her talents, her virtues, were so constantly exalted in his presence, that the weak-minded old man thought she must certainly be a paragon of perfection. She behaved with infinite tact; for, instead of throwing herself in the duke's way, she feigned a violent and despairing passion for the Count of Guines. This nobleman was in the secret, and treated her with marked indifference. The old duke, affected by the sorrow of the woman he loved, sought to console her; Madame de Montesson eagerly accepted his friendship, and, after heightening his passion by every art in her power, ended by declaring herself entirely cured of her unhappy love. This rather cooled the Duke of Orleans: the great disparity of rank between them made him hesitate to offer her his hand; the rigidity of the principles he had always heard her profess, forbade him to think of any less honourable proposal. In this dilemma, he would probably have given up Madame de Montesson altogether, if her niece had not interfered. Madame de Genlis wished to serve her aunt; she also entertained the ambitious and not unnatural desire of being connected by alliance with the Orleans family. She accordingly employed all her tact and talent to seduce the old duke into the proposed marriage; he wavered long, but her arts finally triumphed, and in the year 1773, Madame de Montesson became the wife of one of the first princes of the royal blood of France.

The vexation of the ladies who had contributed to raise her to this unexpected elevation was extreme. They had not suspected Madame de Montesson of so much ambition or principle, nor had they thought to find a superior where they

only wished for an equal. They, however, derived some consolation from the fact that, though the king acknowledged her as the legitimate wife of the Duke of Orleans, he refused her the rank and titles of her husband. Madame de Montesson, consequently, abstained from going to court. The Count of Guines received the embassy of Berlin for his share in the intrigue, and Madame de Genlis owed to the joint efforts of her aunt and her husband, a place in the household of the young Duchess of Chartres then recently married.

Madame de Montesson, not being recognised as Duchess of Orleans, attempted to shine by her talents. She gained an unfortunate degree of notoriety from the number of bad plays she wrote. They were admired by her friends, and hissed by the public : this ill fortune afforded her, however, the opportunity of acting with great spirit and dignity. She was advised not to acknowledge the authorship of the unsuccessful comedies, and thus to screen herself from ridicule ; but she firmly refused, lest some other person might be suspected. Madame de Montesson might be a bad authoress, but she was a very clever and agreeable woman ; she sang and played well, and even in her old age excelled in flower-painting, of which she has left some masterly specimens. She understood several sciences, spoke with grace and elegance, and was an admirable actress ; in consequence of which, private theatricals were her favourite amusement. These qualifications, joined to high rank, great wealth, and polished manners, caused her house to be considered one of the most pleasant in Paris ; even though the guests were sometimes obliged to praise, and, what was more difficult, to listen to her tedious, heavy comedies. When Voltaire visited Paris in the year 1778, he solicited with great eagerness the favour of being admitted to one of the private performances, in which she acted with the Duke of Orleans. The request was granted, and the old poet shewed his gratitude by applauding until the fall of the the curtain. The duke, leaning on the arm of his wife, then advanced towards the box of Voltaire ; who, with the extreme and ludicrous vivacity which characterised him even in old

age, knelt down to receive the prince and Madame de Montesson.

The Duke of Orleans died in 1785. Louis XVI., somewhat ungraciously, forbade Madame de Montesson to wear deep mourning for her husband. She retired to a convent, where she spent the time of her widowhood. When she reappeared in the world, it was to signalise herself by her benevolence. During the severe winter of the year 1788, she converted her hothouses into asylums for the poor. There they not only received a shelter from the intense cold, but were fed and employed at her expense. It is said that this generous act was not forgotten by the people, and enabled Madame de Montesson to pass unscathed through the evil days of the French Revolution.

As ambitious as her aunt, and far more talented, Madame de Genlis was, in the mean while, laying the basis of her future reputation. She had excellent opportunities of doing so in the household of the young Duchess of Chartres, with whom she soon became as great a favourite as her husband was with the Duke. The Duchess of Chartres, though virtuous, and wholly devoted to her unworthy husband, was also young, beautiful, and fond of pleasure. Almost all her ladies of honour were handsome and witty; they formed a very gay little court, much frequented by foreigners of distinction, and by those members of the French aristocracy who preferred the freedom of the Palais-Royal to the old stateliness of Versailles. The Duchess of Chartres, in thus establishing a court of her own, only aimed at amusement; her husband entertained far deeper views. The unbounded indulgence of those excesses, which had left their indelible traces on his once noble and handsome features, had not erased from the mind of the young duke the hereditary talent, pride, and jealousy of his race. He was disliked by Marie Antoinette and Louis XVI.; he hated them in return. If his errors were great, he felt they were not more flagrant than those of the king's brother, the Count of Artois. Yet he was pointed out, almost exclusively, to public scorn. Disappointed ambition heightened the re-

sentment of wounded pride. Louis XVI., with the policy of his predecessors, refused to grant the Duke of Chartres the high posts and the influence which he claimed.

The elements of a vast opposition, social and not yet political (for the government was still absolute) pervaded the whole of society; the irritated prince gathered them within his grasp, and led the movement. He soon became the model of fashion with the young and profligate nobles; the women admired his recklessness and daring; the court feared him; the people, flattered by his courtesy, remembered the traditions which foretold a high destiny for his house: in those traditions it is said that he himself had a superstitious faith. Thoughtless young men and clever women became the chief agents of his ambitious designs. He was quickly and instinctively attracted by the wit, beauty, and supple intriguing spirit of Madame de Genlis. The very pointed attentions he paid her gave rise to some rumours unheeded by the guileless Duchess of Chartres. The Count of Genlis betrayed not the least jealousy. In the year 1776, the Duke of Chartres, with the consent of his wife, confided to Madame de Genlis the education of his infant daughters; and, some time afterwards, named her *gouverneur* of his sons.

Whatever may have been the errors of Madame de Genlis, or the nature of her connexion with the father of the children whose instruction she undertook, she at least educated them as few French princes had been educated since the time of Fénelon. "She made them," said an eminent historian, "not princes, but men." The numerous works on education which she composed for their benefit procured her, at the same time, an extraordinary degree of reputation. Buffon, who affectionately gave her the name of "daughter," once compared her style to that of Fénelon; and, alluding to the moral tone of her writings, enthusiastically styled her "an angel of light!" The education which Madame de Genlis gave to her pupils, whilst leaving them all the elegance and graces of their high rank, was eminently calculated to render them popular at a future time. This was done intentionally. The duke

and the governess needed not much penetration to perceive the increasing power awarded to liberal ideas. A signal instance was afforded by the immense influence which the American War of Independence exercised towards this period over public opinion in France.

All the latent republican tendencies of the nation burst forth with sudden and unexpected energy. The sympathy with the insurgent Americans was so strong and universal as to alarm the king and queen; though they both favoured the American cause. In this matter, as in many other respects, their personal feelings were wholly at variance with their policy. Joseph II., the brother of Marie Antoinette, and a reforming and philosophic sovereign, had, however, tact enough to perceive that it ill became an absolute monarch, like his brother-in-law, to assist and countenance republican insurgents. He was sojourning at Versailles at the time when the American question proved, even in the royal palace, the all-absorbing topic of every conversation. A lady asked his opinion on the subject: "I must decline answering," he replied: "my business is to be a royalist." The young Marquis of La Fayette, who was then only eighteen years of age, observed not the same caution. He spoke, at the circle of the queen, openly and enthusiastically in favour of the American cause. Marie Antoinette greatly resented his indiscretion. She instinctively hated a war waged by the people against royalty.

Young, wealthy, and the bearer of a noble name, La Fayette might have aspired to the first offices of the court; he preferred to these vain distinctions the dangers and the glory of a foreign war in favour of freedom and independence. In spite of the opposition of his family, and notwithstanding the displeasure of government, he openly declared that he at least would unite his standard to that of the Americans. A considerable number of the young French nobles shared his ardour, and followed him across the Atlantic, eager to shed their blood in the cause of plebeian liberty. The enthusiasm which animated the whole nation at this epoch would now

appear excessive and almost incredible. It is not, however, so difficult to understand it on reflection. Imbued as they were with republican and philosophic doctrines, the French had yet no politics of their own. Their energies were wasted away in the unproductive warfare of literature, or in vain drawing-room discussions. Dreams, aspirations towards the future, brilliant and fruitless theories, were the only real occupation of daring and intelligent men, who blushed and murmured at the childish inactivity to which they were condemned. The American war, by engrossing every mind, acted as a temporary palliative; but, whilst so doing, it fanned the internal flame which then consumed the very heart of France. The freedom denied at home was at least worshipped abroad: every token of admiration for America and her heroic deliverers was an indirect but energetic protest against the enslaved condition of France, and the blind neglect of her rulers. The noble La Fayette became the hero of the day: his bust was seen everywhere; his name was pronounced by all with respect and enthusiasm.

The extreme popularity of the young and chivalrous noble was divided, and possessed, perhaps, even in a greater degree, by the plain Quaker, Franklin. When the American printer appeared in the Parisian circles, with his prim Quaker dress, unpowdered hair, and plain round hat, the contrast his sober attire offered to the rich and brilliant costume worn by both sexes produced an extraordinary impression on the still frivolous society of the period. The Quaker garb henceforth became identified with primitive virtue and republican simplicity. The quaintness of the doctor's manners; his shrewdness, sagacity, and good sense; the calm firmness of his patriotism, were all idealised by the women; whose enthusiasm greatly contributed to his success. Franklin bore his good fortune with great equanimity. "The account you have had of the vogue I am in here," he observes in one of his letters to his American friends, "has some truth. Perhaps few strangers in France have had the good fortune to be so universally popular. I hope to preserve, while I stay, the

regard you mention of the French ladies; for their society and conversation, when I have time to enjoy them, are extremely agreeable." He is still more explicit in a letter to his daughter:—"The clay medallion of me you say you gave to Mr Hopkinson, was the first of the kind made in France. A variety of others have been made since of different sizes, some to be set in the lid of snuff-boxes, and some so small as to be worn in wrings; and the number sold is incredible. These, with the pictures, busts, and prints, (of which copies upon copies are spread everywhere,) have made your father's face as well known as that of the moon; so that he durst not do anything that would oblige him to run away, as his phiz would discover him wherever he should venture to shew it."

There is no exaggeration in the account given by Franklin of his popularity. Though the queen scarcely concealed her astonishment at the enthusiasm he excited, the Parisian ladies gave him several splendid fêtes, at which all the élite of French society assisted. On one of those occasions, the most beautiful among the three hundred women present crowned the patriotic doctor with a laurel wreath, and then kissed him on either cheek. His bust was not only seen everywhere with that of La Fayette, but, even at the exhibition of Sèvres porcelain, which took place in the palace of Versailles, medallions of Franklin, bearing the legend,

"Eripuit cœlo fulmen
Sceptrumque tyrannis,"

were publicly sold. Everything became *à la Franklin* and *à la Washington*. The celebrated dancer, Vestris, who styled himself, in his Provençal dialect, *le diou de la danse*, and who openly declared that the age had only produced three great men—Frederick, Voltaire, and himself!—condescended to assume the name and character of Washington, when the rebellious opera-dancers, who were then quarrelling with their director, formed themselves into a *congress* (*sic*) at the house of Mademoiselle Guimard.

Whilst in the triumph of America France already hailed her own revolution, she bade a last farewell to the chiefs of

the old sceptic philosophy and the new democratic theories, Voltaire and Rousseau; who died in the spring of the year 1778, within a month of each other.

After an absence of twenty-seven years, and in the eighty-fourth year of his age, Voltaire once more visited Paris. It was decided that he should not be received at court. Marie Antoinette, less strictly devout than her husband, regretted being unable to behold one of the most illustrious men of his age. Voltaire was amply compensated for this slight of the court by the extraordinary honours with which he was everywhere else received. He no sooner appeared in the theatre where his last piece, "Irene," was acted, than the whole audience rose and greeted him with long and enthusiastic acclamations. When the tragedy was over, the author's bust was discovered on the stage, and crowned with laurel, amidst repeated bursts of applause. Few men ever had a more passionate love of renown than Voltaire, and few had their desire so entirely fulfilled. Overpowered with emotion, he rose at length, on trembling limbs, and prepared to depart. His countenance was wasted and pale, but his fine dark eyes, now filled with tears, had preserved all their former softness and brilliancy. Men of the highest rank, and the most noble and beautiful women, crowded around him as he left his seat, and literally bore him down to his carriage. "Do you, then, want to kill me with joy?" he exclaimed, addressing those who surrounded him. He was led home by an enthusiastic crowd, bearing lighted torches, so that all might behold once more the idol of France. The streets resounded with shouts of triumph as the poet passed by.

A few weeks after receiving these memorable honours, Voltaire died, on the 30th of May 1778. The clergy refused to bury him; and, whilst his name was on every lip, the government forbade his death to be mentioned in the public journals —a strange instance of the wilful blindness of those by whom France was then ruled.

A month after the death of Voltaire occurred that of Rousseau. No lofty and dazzling triumph awaited the obscure end

of the apostle of democracy. Surrounded by the few friends whom his misanthropic temper had not yet wholly estranged, he felt the hand of death stealing upon him at the close of a lovely summer's day. "Let me behold once more that glorious setting sun," was his last request; and with his dying glance turned towards the western horizon, he passed away from life, his last look greeted by those pure harmonies of creation in which alone his feverish and troubled spirit had ever found repose.

Though Rousseau's death produced no visible sensation in French society, he left behind him a spirit far more potent than that of Voltaire. To destroy creed had been Voltaire's chosen mission: to create a new society was that of Rousseau. On these two principles rested the whole theory of the French Revolution.

CHAPTER IV.

UNPOPULARITY OF MARIE ANTOINETTE—FAVOURS SHEWN TO MADAME DE POLIGNAC—HER SOCIETY—ILL FEELING BETWEEN MADAME DE GENLIS AND THE QUEEN.

THE American war, the visit of Voltaire to Paris, his triumph and death, gave a powerful impulse to public opinion. When America was entirely free, and when peace had been concluded with England, this impulse was strongly felt. The attention of all then reverted to the internal state of France; which had, in the meantime, grown extremely critical.

Louis XVI. was sincere and honest: he really intended to fulfil the hopes excited by his accession to the throne; but those hopes were so extravagant, they implied so complete a change in every existing institution, that he soon considered the task of radical reform beyond his power. He sought, however, to remedy desperate evils with temporary palliatives; whilst the nation, irritated against the old abuses, daily manifested a more impatient and uncontrollable spirit. Within the first year of his reign, when the joy it had excited was still at its height, there lurked through all this enthusiasm a secret feeling of discontent. In almost all the towns of France, serious riots, occasioned by the high price of corn, broke forth. Seditions and violent placards, urging the people to revolt, were every morning torn from the walls by the watchful police. Severe measures were taken to repress this revolt: a few men were hanged; the people subsided once more into their sullen silence, and the whole of this plebeian affair soon sank into oblivion.

With the choice of his ministers arose the first embarrassment of Louis XVI. The power of D'Aiguillon fell, of course, with Madame du Barry. The young queen, possessed as yet

of no influence, vainly sought to reinstate Choiseul. Her husband would not hear of the favourite of Madame de Pompadour. In this dilemma, the young monarch consulted his aunts, MESDAMES. The fate of France then hung on the caprice of four women, who had never been allowed the least political power, and whose principles were directed by the liking or aversion they had conceived for the ministers, whom the whim of their father's mistresses successively raised to office. They hesitated for some time between two ex-ministers, Machault and Maurepas. Machault, severe and honest, had made numerous enemies at court; Maurepas, a gay and brilliant courtier, had been disgraced for composing a satirical song against Madame de Pompadour; MESDAMES decided in his favour. The frivolous old man, to whom age could not impart its wisdom or even its gravity, was once more called to power. The king also sought the assistance of Malesherbes and Turgot, both members of the philosophic party. They were talented and zealous, but too intolerant and exclusive. Their attempts at premature reform only raised them a host of enemies; and the men who sought no less than to regenerate a whole nation, fell before paltry court intriguers. This philosophic power was, nevertheless, a step taken in the right direction, since it acknowledged the supremacy of public opinion. The reforming ministers employed pamphleteers to expose and defend their opinions, and adopted other indirect methods of ascertaining how far the current of general feeling lay in their favour. The publicity thus given to the ministerial measures also occasioned very important debates in society. Necker, seconded by his wife, acted a leading part in those discussions; for serious dissensions divided even the philosophic party. Necker early opposed the plans of Turgot; a circumstance which obtained him the favour of those nobles whom the severity of Turgot's principles had alienated. The women, according to their custom, took an active share in this controversy, discussed political economy at their toilet, and dogmatically established the supremacy of whatever opinions they chose to favour.

Marie Antoinette also interfered in these important matters, but not with much judgment or success. Her sympathies for Choiseul first led her to favour the reformers; she was, however, soon disgusted with their severity. The partisans of the old system of government, who accused her of inducing her husband to confide too exclusively to the economists, urged her to unite herself to Maurepas, in order to overthrow Turgot. She did so, and effected her object: for already had she gained over her weak husband that fatal power which is linked with almost every error in the history of his reign.

For a long time the dazzling beauty and winning grace of Marie Antoinette had remained powerless over the calm and phlegmatic Louis XVI. He allowed her no influence whatever during the first year of his reign. Mesdames, it is said, had prejudiced him against his wife,—the pledge of the hated Austrian alliance. The young monarch, like them, instinctively distrusted Marie Antoinette. He knew so well her passionate attachment for the house of Austria, that, whenever any affair relative to it had to be transacted, he anxiously recommended his ministers not to mention the matter to the queen. However great her power may have been subsequently, it is certain that she could never exercise it either in favour of Choiseul or of her Austrian relatives. When the native coldness of Louis XVI. had been once subdued, he granted, however, considerable influence to his young and beautiful wife. After she had given heirs to the throne, the queen thought herself justified in interfering with political matters more openly than she had done till then. From the moment that this was perceived to be the case, her popularity rapidly declined. It was still at its height, when her brother, Joseph II., visited France, in the year 1777. They went together one night to the opera, and entered the theatre as the actors, who performed Gluck's "Iphigénia," were singing the chorus—

"Chantons, celebrons notre reine," &c.

When Marie Antoinette appeared in her box the whole house seized the apropos, and enthusiastically repeated

"Chantons, celebrons notre reine," &c. Overcome with emotion, the young queen bowed her head between her hands and burst into tears. Linked, as her name is now with scarcely-paralleled misfortunes most heroically endured, it is difficult to conceive how Marie Antoinette could draw down on herself the deep hatred which grew in silent strength with every year of her unhappy reign, suddenly broke forth at the Revolution, and ultimately led her to the scaffold. Minute and almost trifling causes produced this result.

The qualities of Marie Antoinette were of those which misfortune calls forth, but which seldom shine in prosperity. Fickle and wilful in everything, she capriciously favoured or opposed ministers. Whilst the reformers were in fashion, they had her support; she withdrew it when they had lost the approbation of the frivolous coteries who guided her opinions.

This conduct, with a recklessness dangerous even in a queen, and a slight tendency to satire, added to the number of her enemies. Annoyed at the rigid punctiliousness of her lady of honour, Madame de Noailles, she petulantly named her "Madame l'Etiquette." The great and powerful family of the offended lady deeply resented this affront, and entered into a secret, and finally an open, opposition against the queen. Unfortunately for his wife, the graver Louis XVI. did not check her imprudent vivacity, and allowed her to indulge, without restraint, in all the gaieties of the court. Whilst the queen compromised the old stateliness of royalty by too great though innocent freedom, Louis was absorbed in his favourite geography, or studying smith-work with a locksmith named Gamain; who assumed with him the tone and all the authority of a master. "The king," said Gamain, many years afterwards, "was good, forbearing, timid, inquisitive, and addicted to sleep. He was fond of lockmaking to excess; and he concealed himself from the queen and the court to file and forge with me. In order to convey his anvil and my own backwards and forwards, we were obliged to use a thousand stratagems."

Besides the influential Noailles, the queen estranged the

severe religious party, headed by the Princess of Marsan, governess of Louis XVI.'s two sisters. This lady, offended at the ridicule with which Marie Antoinette, whilst yet dauphiness, had spoken of the austere education she gave her pupils, dwelt, in her turn, with some asperity on the levity of the young Austrian princess; who found censors still more severe in the bosom of the royal family. Mesdames, though good and amiable women, never liked their niece. She was an Austrian, and she favoured Choiseul, whom they detested. They deplored her frivolousness, her prodigality, and especially her influence over her husband; which had superseded their own. They sought not to injure her, but their ill-repressed blame swelled the voice of general murmur. Her brother-in-law, Monsieur, (afterwards Louis XVIII.,) and his wife, Madame, proved more active and formidable opponents. They envied the queen, and headed a sort of secret court opposition against her and Louis XVI. The Duke of Chartres was her professed enemy: he hated her; for to her and her influence he ascribed all the mortifications his ambition and pride had endured.

However uninteresting these trifling court matters may justly seem at the present epoch, they then possessed a vast degree of importance. The wounded pride of Madame de Noailles, the discontent of Madame de Marsan and Mesdames, the envy of Monsieur, the resentment of the Duke of Chartres, considerably influenced public opinion with regard to Marie Antoinette; and that hatred which the people were gradually taught to feel for her very name, hastened the Revolution, and precipitated the fall of monarchy. Each frivolous action, light word, or look of scornful pride,—each feeling of enmity she had ever raised,—bore their fruit in time for the hapless queen. Evilly disposed, however, as were her enemies, she could only blame her own imprudence if their calumnies took effect. Few women, so critically placed as she was, sacrificed less than Marie Antoinette to the spirit of the times. France was an absolute monarchy, but tempered, as a courtier once observed, by songs and epigrams: in other words, by the

power of public opinion. If the queen had secured this mighty auxiliary on her side, she might well have braved her antagonists; but, proud in the consciousness of innocence and sovereign power, she recklessly allowed them to enlist every class of society against her and her name. It was for the sake of conciliating a few individuals, and often a female favourite, that Marie Antoinette thus estranged influential masses. She carried friendship to the height of a passion. Her love for the king, though sincere and devoted, could not absorb all her affections. The contrast between Louis XVI. and his beautiful wife suggested many uncharitable thoughts to their courtiers. Calumny successively attributed to the Count of Artois, the Duke of Lauzun, and the Count of Fersen, a share in the favour of the queen. No proofs of her alleged errors have ever been produced. Her favourite attendant, Madame Campan, when pressed on this subject, many years after the death of her royal mistress, confessed that Marie Antoinette had indeed once experienced a deep and unhappy attachment, but averred with solemn energy that this involuntary feeling had ever remained pure and unsullied. The restraints which duty and self-respect thus imposed upon her feelings, rendered the queen more unreserved in the manifestations of her friendship. Madame de Maillé, the Princess of Lamballe, and Madame de Polignac successively attracted her notice. They were all three gentle and beautiful women, but the affection she felt for them proved very fatal to the popularity of Marie Antoinette.

Madame de Polignac was disinterested, and really loved the queen for her own sake; but she was surrounded by a host of needy, grasping, and ambitious relatives, who speculated in a shameful manner on the friendship of Marie Antoinette. Titles, pensions, favours, and lucrative posts, were showered down on the happy favourite and her friends. Her sister-in-law, the Countess Diana of Polignac, an ugly, overbearing woman, generally detested, was said to rule her completely; to instruct her every morning concerning her behaviour with the queen, and to give her a list of the favours to be asked in

the course of the day. So insolent did this Countess Diana become, that even the gentle Princess Elizabeth, to whom she was lady of honour, could not endure her tyranny; and, in order to escape from her, took refuge at Saint-Cyr. It was only on the personal intercession of Louis XVI., who shared all his wife's weakness for the Polignacs, that harmony was restored between Madame Elizabeth and her imperious attendant.

The lucrative favours bestowed on the Princess of Lamballe, and especially on Madame de Polignac and her friends, caused much jealousy at court. The proud and powerful Noailles looked down with haughty displeasure on their upstart rivals. The political power which Marie Antoinette granted to the Polignacs was viewed with equal disfavour by all those who could not hope to share in it. If she ruled the king, the Polignacs ruled her. Necker, in the account he subsequently gave of his second ministry, complained that the measures he proposed to the king had to be submitted to the queen, the princes, Madame de Polignac, her friends, and even to Marie Antoinette's femme de chambre, Madame Campan, before they could be carried into effect. Marie Antoinette was, however, friendly to Necker. She sought to prevent him from resigning in 1781; but it was by employing personal entreaty, and not by obtaining for him the post he had asked, and which his services certainly deserved. When Necker had resigned his authority, the queen desired to have a private interview with him, for the purpose of inducing him to remain in office. A crowd of distinguished persons waited at the door of her apartment, in order to learn the result of her interference. She soon came forth, with a sad and troubled countenance: "He refuses absolutely!" she said with a sigh. Necker's resignation—the work of Maurepas—was indeed considered in the light of a public calamity. Marie Antoinette—offended perhaps at not having conquered the resolve of the austere Genevese, and probably influenced by her friends—capriciously withdrew her favour from Necker, and strenuously opposed his recall at a later period.

A vague consciousness of her failing popularity, the knowledge of the great social power which women then possessed, and the wish of sharing in this influence, induced Marie Antoinette to open to her friends the drawing-room of Madame de Polignac, to whom she had given an apartment in the palace of Versailles. "Here," she often observed with a smile, "I am no longer the queen: I am myself." She wished for the power thus exercised to be exclusively the power of the woman. But, beautiful and attractive as she was, Marie Antoinette acted imprudently in thus casting away the prestige of rank. She was not sufficiently brilliant or witty to rival the women who presided over the societies of the day; unless, indeed, she opened, like them, the saloon of her friend to the men: without whom those societies would, after all, have been insipid. She did not do so; and, though honoured with the royal presence, the society of Madame de Polignac was accordingly considered most unentertaining. The queen possessed little conversational talent; her quiet friend had none—"For," as the envious courtiers never failed, indeed, to remark, "the royal favourites were all commonplace women." This was true; and it confirmed the report that, notwithstanding a few happy repartees, Marie Antoinette was not herself very clever or intellectual. She disliked serious conversation, and excluded it wherever she appeared. The eighteenth century never produced a less literary coterie than that over which she presided. The agreeable Madame de Boufflers, wishing to excuse herself from complying with a request addressed to her by Madame de Polignac, did so in a polite letter, mingled with poetry. Madame de Polignac shewed the verses to her friends, who criticised them very bitterly. Their remarks being repeated to Madame de Boufflers, she replied, with a smile, "I regret that they find the verses so bad, for the sake of poor Racine; for they are by him, and not by me." Superficial wits, like Rivarol, were received at the soirées of Madame de Polignac, in order to supply the deficiencies of the ladies. When the queen gave a concert, Gluck came to accompany her singing. The old

Duchess of Grammont—favoured on account of her brother, Choiseul—the Count of Artois, the Count of Vaudreuil, Rivarol, and the friends of the Polignac family, were amongst the few members of this society; which, with little of the wit of coteries, had their worst fault—exclusion.

The courtiers whom Marie Antoinette refused to admit became so many covert enemies. They spoke with great bitterness on the impropriety of her conduct in thus mingling with untitled literary men, and in singing to the accompaniment of a mere artist like Gluck. They said, and not unjustly, that the evenings which Marie Antoinette devoted to her private amusements were abstracted from the court. Constituted as French society then was, this was a serious objection—one which, had she not been so imprudent, would have had weight with Marie Antoinette. What, indeed, without the presence of the queen, were all the fêtes, pomps, pleasures, and boasted glories of Versailles? When Marie Lecsinska adopted, through extreme devotion, a course somewhat similar, her absence from the court was not felt. She was queen in name only; Madame de Pompadour had all the reality and homage of queenly power. But such was not the case with Marie Antoinette. The king loved no other woman; she reigned alone over the court; and when she abandoned it, to seek the quiet drawing-room of Madame de Polignac, the courtiers thought themselves justified in filling the palace with upbraiding murmurs. It was, indeed, folly in the queen to think that she could unite all the power and splendour of rank to the ease and freedom of privacy. The discontent of the noblesse soon reached the middle and inferior classes, between whom and the upper ranks there now existed a much more rapid communication than of yore. Although beyond the precincts of the court the favour of Madame de Polignac could inspire no personal jealousy, a deep feeling of irritation was nevertheless created by the immense sums she was supposed to draw from the state. The favourites of kings had seldom been popular in France; but those of queens had always been odious.

Besides the courtiers and the people, Marie Antoinette also alienated a numerous and powerful class—the artists and literary men, whom she neglected to patronise. She read little, and only light literature. She, whose part in history was to be so dark and tragic, never perused those historical narratives whence she might, perchance, have derived a few useful lessons. Marie Antoinette has very erroneously been represented as a learned and accomplished princess. She frankly confessed to Madame Campan that she had never understood one word of the Latin harangues she uttered in Vienna, and had not even touched the beautiful drawings said by Maria Theresa to be the production of her favourite daughter. The courtiers were somewhat mortified at the queen's evident ignorance, which all her tact and grace could not disguise. When she acted in private theatricals with her brothers-in-law and their wives, many of the spectators observed, loud enough to be heard, that the acting was royally bad, (royalement mal joué.) The queen was still more unfortunate with regard to those pieces which were acted before her, and first produced by her command. In spite of her patronage—perhaps because they were patronised by her—they almost always fell before the Parisian audiences. She was very keenly alive to the slight thus put upon her taste, and which probably arose from a feeling of resentment; for if Madame de Pompadour had been blamed for doing so little in favour of literature, it was nevertheless acknowledged that infinitely less was done by Marie Antoinette.

The Polignacs, though as indifferent as their mistress to such subjects, once chose, however, to patronise an author and a comedy: the author was the unprincipled Beaumarchais—the comedy, the cynical production known as the "Marriage of Figaro," in itself the herald of a revolution. It was a characteristic feature of the times, that this play, which attacked society and government with an immoral degree of levity, and yet with much truth and power, should have been patronised by the friends of Marie Antoinette. The censors,

having prohibited it from being acted, Beaumarchais read the piece to a circle of influential friends, by whom it was pronounced admirable. Every one accordingly wished to hear it, and every one, thanks to the author's complaisance, had heard it ere long. Nothing but the prohibited comedy was spoken of throughout all Paris. The circle of Madame de Polignac was in raptures with "Figaro," and incessantly teazed the king to grant the permission for having it performed. Louis, who had heard it in private, refused, and sent a lettre de cachet, forbidding even the private performance of the comedy, at the moment it was going to take place before an eager and fashionable circle. This prohibition excited the most vehement indignation. The king was styled tyrant and oppressor by the very courtiers whose reactionary feelings afterwards caused his ruin. Beaumarchais exclaimed in his anger, "The piece shall be acted, even though it should be in the very choir of Notre Dame!" He consented, however, to soften down a few passages; and, with the aid of the Vaudreuils and the Polignacs, succeeded in wringing the long-wished-for permission from the king. "Figaro" obtained almost unexampled success; and the seventy-second performance was as crowded as the first. The court did not dare to suspend the representations of the comedy, but unwisely imprisoned the author!

The permission of acting the "Marriage of Figaro" had been so reluctantly granted, that no one thanked the Polignacs for their share in obtaining it. The queen, though she had nothing to do with this affair, was blamed by those who feared the effect of the profligate comedy. Whatever occurred, ill fortune attended her still. Even the encouragement which she gave to music and her countryman Gluck was productive of a strife memorable in the annals of French society. Though the genius of Gluck was recognised, the party opposed to the queen promptly brought forward, as his rival, the Italian Piccini. Two inimical factions henceforth divided the town. In the streets, in coffee-houses, private dwellings, and academies, the important point was warmly discussed. "Are

you a Gluckist or a Piccinist?" was now a question universally addressed; and, according as the answer might be, friendships were confirmed or angrily dissolved. The quarrels of the Jansenists and the Molinists, or even those of the philosophers and the devotees, had never possessed so much importance, or been marked with half the acrimony now raised in the name of the gentlest of all arts.

Gluck and music were the only objects of Marie Antoinette's encouragement. She neglected painters and their productions, though both were patronised by several of the Parisian ladies. Madame de Genlis, in particular, was always surrounded by some of the most talented artists of the day. Between this lady and the queen there unfortunately existed a very bitter animosity. In general, Marie Antoinette did not like the women of her time, and was not liked by them. When she gave birth to her first child, (the Duchess of Angouleme,) the Duchess of Chartres, on paying her the customary visit, besought her majesty to accept the excuses of Madame de Genlis, who was too ill to appear. Marie Antoinette haughtily replied that, although the celebrity of Madame de Genlis might cause her absence from court to be noticed, her rank did not authorise her to send in excuses. Madame de Genlis had already been slighted by the queen, who disliked her character, and cared little for her writings; wounded to the quick by this last affront, she criticised with some acrimony the tastes and habits of Marie Antoinette. The queen spoke with equal asperity of Madame de Genlis's conduct and literary productions. Courtiers embittered the quarrel. Those who wished to render themselves agreeable to the queen discovered that they could do so by turning Madame de Genlis into ridicule; whilst others, equally uncharitable, immediately repeated to the authoress all the keen epigrams and satirical remarks uttered, at her expense, in the apartment of Marie Antoinette. This treatment was greatly resented by Madame de Genlis, who was easily irritated, and not so easily appeased. She disagreed with the rigid Madame Necker, and kept up a vehement quarrel with her impassioned daughter; she

wrangled for a long time with the aristocratic party, and ultimately fell out with the revolutionists. The philosophers she held in utter detestation, since the Academy, instead of bestowing the Montyon prize on one of her works, gave it to Madame d'Epinay's "Conversations d'Emilie." The old Duchess of Grammont, whose temper was probably soured by disappointed ambition, confessed herself delighted at this result, and declared—"That she hoped Madame de Genlis would either die of spite, which would be a highly fortunate event, or that, if she survived her disgrace, she would at least write a good satire against the philosophers, which would prove almost as amusing."

Though Madame de Genlis was not generally liked, her position and talents gave her great influence. It would have been politic even for the queen of France to have secured her good-will: an easy task, when a look and a smile from Marie Antoinette were counted high favours! But the queen would not stoop to conciliation. She preferred braving the most influential women of the day to the higher triumph of subduing them by grace and gentleness. The austere and virtuous Madame Necker did not stand higher in her favour than the pliant Madame de Genlis. Louis XVI. shared her feelings: he accused Necker of allowing himself to be governed by his wife, "who wanted to make of France a quarrelsome republic like her own Geneva." This was a general impression. Some of the caricatures of the day represented Necker sitting at his dinner, whilst his wife stood by him, on account of her infirmity, and read him a moral treatise. Madame Necker was far too prudent to display the open animosity of Madame de Genlis, but she blamed the frivolousness and imprudence of the queen in language which, though covertly expressed, was far more effective.

It is sad and true that, though Marie Antoinette could inspire her chosen friends with feelings of heroic devotedness to her person, she never knew how to conciliate the general sympathies of her own sex. Proud and unbending, when she

saw her share of popularity and social influence pass into the hands of other women, she made desperate efforts to win back the failing power; but she would never stoop to accept it from those whom a few gracious words might have rallied to her cause and made her own for ever.

CHAPTER V.

CONFUSED STATE OF FRENCH SOCIETY—THE DIAMOND NECKLACE—MINISTERS FAVOURED BY THE QUEEN—MADAME DE STAEL—MADAME DE CONDORCET.

On the eve of her great Revolution—that is to say, from 1781 to 1789—France was in that state of confusion and disorder which generally ushers in deep social convulsions. The most opposite principles were recognised and adopted: for in that wide chaos, though there might be much tumult, there was as yet no strife. The contrasts which this state of society presented were often full of singularity.

The French nobles who returned from the American war found the popularity of Franklin and Washington superseded by the Anglomania. This was only a seeming contradiction. The French had willingly inflicted a severe blow on England; but they loved English freedom and constitutional monarchy. Unable to enjoy either, they adopted at least English customs. English clubs, horses, racing, jockeys, and even high boots and plain cloth coats, were not thought unworthy of imitation. The clubs were not political at first; but, by separating the two sexes, they proved fatal to female influence, and changed the spirit of society. It lost its frivolous polish: the graceful effeminacy which had prevailed so long gave way to a new power and energy, well fitted to prepare the nation for the revolutionary outbreak.

This revolution was anticipated by all; but, unlike other social contests, it was expected to be both pacific and pure. Political dissentions, the blood-stained scaffold, foreign war, and civil strife, with all the selfishness, treachery, and fierce passions they arouse, were unsuspected by the enthusiastic

innovators. The nobles spoke of the approaching struggle as of a new fashion introduced and patronised by them. They neither regretted the past nor feared the future. Surrounded by all the privileges of feudal power, they had discarded its flattering customs for the independence of English manners. Their lands and vassals gave wealth and influence; their birth bestowed distinctions unearned by toil and long patience. They could afford to be philosophers, friends of men, and even democrats. This anomaly was only one of the signs of the times. Philosophy, the spirit of old chivalry, republican enthusiasm, licentiousness, and vain affectation of sentiment, often characterised the same individual, even as they characterised the whole nation.

A touch of mystic enthusiasm nevertheless pervaded all this confusion and levity. Mesmer, who perverted to unworthy uses the phenomena of animal magnetism, and Cagliostro, whose wild assertions of supernatural power now excite only a smile of contempt, found numerous disciples in the land of scepticism. The name of the latter notorious charlatan then bestowed a new interest on the memorable affair of the diamond necklace, which brought in contact the names of a profligate cardinal, a noted intriguer, a courtesan, two common sharpers, and the queen of France!

The origin of an event so fatal to the fair name of Marie Antoinette as woman, and to her dignity as queen, lay in the enmity she had long entertained against the Cardinal de Rohan. She knew that, whilst he was ambassador at Vienna, the cardinal had opposed her marriage with the dauphin, and she came to France greatly irritated against him. In a letter to D'Aiguillon, Rohan ridiculed the affected sorrow of Maria Theresa for the partition of Poland. D'Aiguillon shewed the letter to Madame du Barry; she took it from him, and, being then in open hostility to the dauphiness, communicated it to all her friends. Marie Antoinette understood that the letter had been originally addressed by the Cardinal to Madame du Barry herself. This wounded her to the quick. When she became queen, and the ambassador returned from Vienna, she

treated him with marked disfavour. It was said, and believed, that there also existed another motive for this pointed aversion, and that the cardinal—a vain, handsome man, noted for the profligacy of his conduct—had early conceived a passion for Marie Antoinette, which she perceived, and thus severely checked. Her coldness nearly drove him to despair. It was in vain that, with almost boundless wealth at his command, he could revel in all the luxurious pleasures his unscrupulous conscience so freely allowed; in vain that he belonged to one of the first families of the land, and held the highest dignities of the Gallican Church, with broad lands and many fair revenues: so long as he lacked the sunshine of the queen's smiles, and Versailles remained forbidden ground for him, life was shorn of all joy and delight. Ten years passed away, and wrought no change in this strange infatuation. The cardinal caught distant glimpses of the queen, and hoped against all hope for the return of her favour, whilst she relentlessly persisted in the manifestations of her haughty displeasure.

A clever intriguing woman, named the Countess de la Mothe Valois, who represented herself as being descended from the royal house of Valois, and who was so in reality, audaciously resolved to profit by this weakness of the cardinal. She was pretty, insinuating, and easily succeeded. She made him believe that she secretly possessed the favour of the queen, and offered to reconcile him to her. He eagerly accepted, and wrote a long letter of justification, which Madame de la Mothe undertook to deliver. She soon returned him a forged reply, in which Marie Antoinette was made to profess a complete alteration in his favour, although she declined, for prudential reasons, to see him yet, or manifest any external change in her bearing. The excess of the cardinal's joy rendered him even more credulous than he was by nature; although he believed in Cagliostro, alchemy, and the philosopher's stone. He had seen Madame de la Mothe enter and leave the palace through private entrances, and on this authority he readily admitted all that she told him concerning her intimacy with the queen.

Madame de la Mothe derived considerable sums from the Cardinal de Rohan, through means of forged letters, in which the queen requested him to assist her with various loans of money for acts of private charity. The sums, which the delighted cardinal eagerly forwarded, were all intrusted to Madame de la Mothe, as well as two hundred letters which he addressed to Marie Antoinette. When he at length became impatient for more substantial marks of the queen's good graces, Madame de la Mothe bribed a tall, handsome courtesan of the Palais Royal, named D'Oliva, to take the part of Marie Antoinette, whom she greatly resembled. This girl was easily persuaded that the queen wished her, in a frolic, to assume her character in the gardens of Trianon, and exchange a few words with a nobleman.

On a dark evening of the month of July 1784, D'Oliva, attired in white like the queen, was introduced by Madame de la Mothe into the gardens of Trianon, where, seated in a shaded bower, she awaited the approach of the cardinal. He came, and sank down at her feet in a transport of joy. He had only time, however, to take a rose with which she presented him, and listen to a few gracious words which fell from her lips, when her accomplices made a sound of approaching footsteps, and thus disturbed the interview. The false queen rose in well-feigned alarm, and hastily retired, leaving the cardinal chagrined at the brevity of this meeting, but full of intoxicating hopes; for, in his soaring wishes, he aspired both to the favour of the queen and the love of the woman. The sums which Madame de la Mothe had drawn from the cardinal enabled her to live in handsome style, and to persuade various persons that she was really in favour with the queen. Boehmer, the jeweller, besought her to persuade her majesty to purchase the necklace of magnificent diamonds, which he had collected together with infinite toil and trouble for Madame du Barry. A writer, whose depth and penetratration have thrown much light on this doubtful subject, thus elaborately describes this queenly ornament:—

"A row of seventeen glorious diamonds, large almost as

filberts, encircle, not too tightly, the neck a first time. Looser, gracefully fastened thrice to these, a three-wreathed festoon, and pendants enough, simple, pear-shaped, multiple star-shaped, and clustering amorphous encircle it, enwreathe it a second time. Loosest of all, softly flowing round from behind, in priceless catenary, rush down two broad threefold rows, seem to knot themselves, round a very queen of diamonds, on the bosom : then rush on, again separated, as if there were length in plenty ; the very tassels of them were a fortune for some men. And now, lastly, two other inexpressible threefold rows, also with their tassels, will, when the necklace is put on and clasped, unite themselves behind into a doubly inexpressible sixfold row ; and so stream down, together or asunder, over the hind-neck, we may fancy, like lambent zodiacal, or aurora-borealis fire."*

This magnificent necklace was worth 1,800,000 livres. The queen had several times refused to purchase it, thinking it too costly and profitless an ornament. "We have more need of seventy-fours than of necklaces," she once nobly replied to Boehmer's earnest solicitations. Madame de la Mothe, to whom he applied, seemed disinclined to interfere in the matter ; but carelessly hinted that the Cardinal de Rohan might effect the object he so ardently desired. She had already insinuated to the cardinal, that Marie Antoinette longed passionately for the splendid necklace, without daring to purchase it openly. Rohan eagerly offered to render her this service. Many seeming difficulties were raised ; but at last Madame de la Mothe said she had procured the consent of the queen, and, on the 29th of January 1785, an agreement was drawn up between the Cardinal de Rohan and Boehmer, by which the latter agreed to deliver up the necklace to the cardinal for the sum of 1,600,000 livres. This agreement was taken to Versailles by Madame de la Mothe, who returned it with the addition, *Bon—Marie Antoinette de France.* Neither the cardinal nor the court-jeweller noticed that the words *de France*—which belonged to the royal family of France only

* Carlyle's Essays, vol. v., p. 20.

—could not have been used by an Austrian princess. On the following day the necklace was delivered to Madame de la Mothe by the cardinal. Cagliostro, in whom he placed great trust, was consulted on this occasion, and prophesied that this affair would end most fortunately for his eminence.

Madame de la Mothe's husband in the meantime took the diamonds to England, and there parted with them separately. Nothing was discovered until the first instalment became due. The money not being paid at the appointed time, it was claimed by Boehmer. The queen denied all knowledge of the necklace; an explanation ensued, and the matter was immediately laid by Marie Antoinette before her husband. On the 15th of August 1785, which was also Assumption-day, the Cardinal de Rohan was summoned to the royal presence. His confused manner and hesitating replies conveyed to Louis XVI., who shared his wife's prejudices against him, a strong impression of his guilt. The shame of having been so grossly duped might, however, have explained the cardinal's bearing. The king ordered him to be taken into custody; he had time, nevertheless, to say a few words in German to his attendant, who hurried to Paris, and reached his master's hotel before the officers of justice. The most important of the cardinal's papers, such as his correspondence with Madame de la Mothe, and the forged letters of the queen, were instantly destroyed by his confidant, the Abbé Georgee.

The Cardinal de Rohan's trial, in which Madame de la Mothe, D'Oliva, and Cagliostro were also implicated, lasted nine months, and created immense scandal. The queen was accused of being the accomplice of Madame de la Mothe, and of having joined in this intrigue for the purpose of ruining the cardinal; who, instead of being ridiculed as a foolish dupe, was elevated to the dignity of a victim of court machinations, and of Marie Antoinette's implacable hatred. The whole aristocracy exclaimed against the enormity of bringing a man of his rank to trial. Madame de Marsan, though nearly allied to him, alone behaved nobly, for she purchased and

suppressed one of the numerous libels against the queen, to whom this trait was never even known.

The trial did not only give rise to the most injurious surmises against Marie Antoinette, it inflicted on monarchy a deep irremediable stain. The queen might be pure as snow; but the prestige of royalty had been broken. The Church suffered more deeply still: the spectacle of one of its first dignitaries leaguing himself with a man like Cagliostro, and a woman like Madame de la Mothe, in order to obtain the favour of the queen of France, was a disgrace which deeply affected the sincere religious party. They felt that her own faithless servants were the greatest foes of religion.

The Parliament acquitted the cardinal; less, it is said, from a belief in his innocence, than from a feeling of animosity against the queen. On learning the acquittal, Marie Antoinette wept bitterly. How deeply must the consciousness of her failing power have come over her then? Madame de la Mothe was publicly whipped and branded. She afterwards escaped to England: her end is a mystery still. Notwithstanding his acquittal, the cardinal was ordered to retire to Auvergne. He afterwards became a member of the Constituent Assembly, and ultimately emigrated.

The tears which Marie Antoinette shed on hearing of the acquittal of De Rohan did not subdue her haughty temper. She continued to place herself in opposition to the general will, until she brought down on her head the vengeance of the whole nation. Still yielding to the advice of the Polignac coterie, she succeeded in having Calonne appointed minister. Dexterous, unprincipled, holding as his first political dogma, that to curtail the magnificence (*i.e.*, extravagance) of royalty was rank heresy, Calonne was indeed the man after a true courtier's own heart. Places and pensions were freely showered down during his prodigal rule; which hastened—but could scarcely render more certain—the ruin of the state. Calonne was at first in great favour with the queen. He encouraged her extravagance, instead of checking it like Turgot or Necker. She once sent to consult him on a

financial matter of some importance. "Tell her majesty," he promptly replied to the messenger, "that if what she asks is difficult, it is already done; if it is impossible, it shall be done." Thus encouraged, the queen, notwithstanding the impoverished state of the finances, purchased the magnificent seat of Saint Cloud from the Duke of Orleans: a step which was much censured. Ere long, however, she became dissatisfied with Calonne: her pride was wounded at the undue ascendancy the Polignacs sought to exercise over her. She perceived too late the difference between a favourite and a friend. She was also hurt to see that Madame de Polignac became cordial or distant in her behaviour according to the favours granted or refused to her friends. If she loved her still, it was because she knew her nature to be pure and good; but the charm of her intercourse had vanished. The extravagance of Calonne at length compelled him to retire from office: he left the finances in a deplorable condition. It was generally expected that Necker would be recalled; but such was not the case. The queen once more yielded to the fatal advice of a favourite, and her old preceptor, the Abbé de Vermond, mainly contributed to the appointment of Brienne, Archbishop of Sens.

M. de Sens, as he was generally called, according to the custom which designated an ecclesiastical dignitary by the name of his see, was a tall, handsome man, of stately presence and courtly manners, beneath which he veiled a spirit of unconquerable ambition and pride. His conduct was dissolute; his religious principles verged on atheism. He had urged Louis XVI. to check the freedom of the press, and persecute the Protestants. He was a great friend of the philosophers whilst still Archbishop of Toulouse, and frequented the evening parties of Mademoiselle de Lespinasse and the suppers of Madame du Deffand. When Mademoiselle de Lespinasse died, she left him, as a proof of her friendship, a few trifling debts to pay. The popularity of the Archbishop of Sens was considerable with the women of his time, and he availed himself of it with infinite address. His brother, M. de Brienne,

had married a wealthy heiress, on whose rich dowry, and the archbishop's ecclesiastical revenues, they lived with great state and splendour in the handsome castle of Brienne. All the luxuries of art and wealth abounded in this magnificent residence. Brienne was thronged with visitors; men of fashion, and the most beautiful women of the day, hastened to enjoy the delights of a place where balls, comedies, and even easy lectures on natural philosophy, were daily prepared for their amusement. Those persons who had been so fortunate as to receive an invitation, and to spend a few days at this fairy palace, spoke of it with enthusiasm, and spread everywhere the renown of the polite archbishop. Marie Antoinette, with her usual frivolousness, concluded that the object of this general approbation must necessarily be capable of governing the state, and yielded to him her share of influence.

The Archbishop of Sens immediately assumed the imperious tone of a second Richelieu. His measures proved almost as obnoxious to the nobles as to the people. Several women, influenced by motives of private pique, withdrew their support from him, and contributed to his unpopularity. Amongst these was Madame de Coigny, noted for her beauty, harsh voice, and caustic wit. So great was her power, that Marie Antoinette somewhat jealously said, "I am only queen of Versailles; Madame de Coigny is queen of Paris." This lady had spent some time at Brienne, and greatly desired to act a conspicuous part in one of the plays performed for the amusement of the guests. Her disagreeable voice induced the archbishop to evade the request. She never forgave him, and became his professed enemy. After a series of measures which only proved his total incapacity for affairs, the archbishop ended by convoking the States-General (8th of August 1788) and retiring from the ministry. Few men in office had rendered themselves so heartily detested; yet the queen, with her usual haughtiness and imprudence, affected to treat him with more favour than ever. Yielding to her earnest entreaties, Louis XVI. solicited and obtained from the Pope a cardinal's hat for the discarded minister; to whom Marie Antoinette

sent her portrait, and addressed several letters expressive of her friendship and esteem. These letters were subsequently published in 1789, and did the queen infinite injury. They tended to shew how opposed she was to the spirit of reform, and led many to believe that her fatal influence might cause her weak husband to share in those feelings.

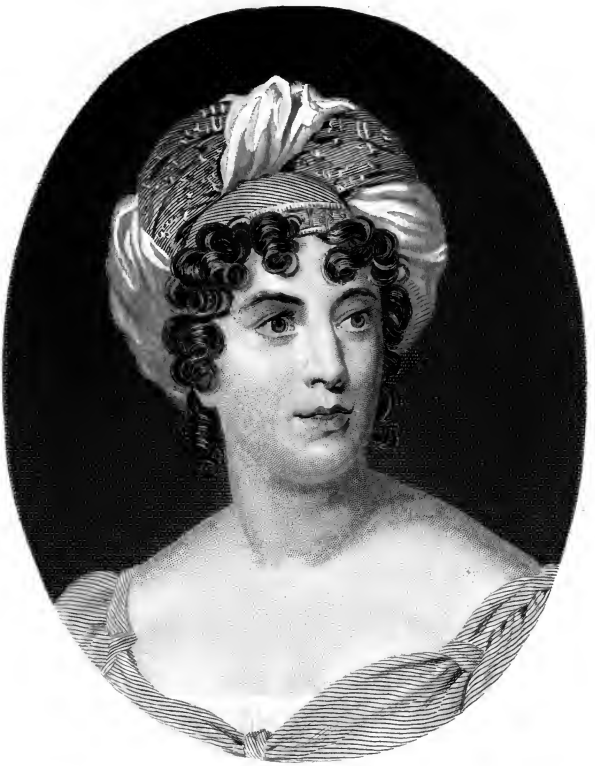
After the dismissal of the archbishop, Necker was recalled. His popularity had considerably increased since 1781. The weakness of his system, which consisted in reforming the internal condition of France by the administration suited to a private household, or to a banking-house, was not so forcibly felt then as now, when nations have passed through the bitter experience of revolutions. His extraordinary popularity was at its height when he entered on the duties of his second ministry, as the recognised advocate of the liberal principles which agitated the whole of French society.

The power of Necker was considerably strengthened by the influence which his daughter was beginning to acquire as Madame de Staël. In 1786, Germaine Necker, who was then in her twentieth year, married the Baron of Staël-Holstein, ambassador of Sweden at the French court. He was a handsome, commonplace man, considerably older than her, but his rank, high birth, and Protestant faith, recommended him to her parents. Germaine Necker, seeing how ardently they desired this union, married M. de Staël from feelings of duty. Shortly after her marriage the new ambassadress was presented at court. Her literary celebrity caused her appearance there to excite a good deal of attention. It was noticed, as an extraordinary circumstance, that she missed one of her courtesies, and that the trimming of her dress was partly unfastened. A few days afterwards, she paid a visit to the Duchess of Polignac, and forgot her cap in her carriage : she was in consequence stigmatised as a very strange, eccentric woman.

The extraordinary genius of Madame de Staël was already fully recognised. The Count of Guibert, the pitiless lover of Mademoiselle de Lespinasse, was one of her most impassioned

admirers, and thus portrayed her, under the name of Zulmé. —"Zulmé is only twenty years of age, and she is already the most celebrated priestess of Apollo. Her incense is to him the most welcome: her hymns are those he prizes best. . . . Her large dark eyes sparkle with genius; her ebon hair falls in waving locks on her shoulders. Her features are more characteristic than delicate, and bear the impress of a higher destiny than that which usually falls to the lot of her sex."

Young and striking in aspect, if not beautiful,—though many found beauty in her intellectual countenance, lit up by a look in which beamed all the inspiration she afterwards ascribed to her imaginary Corinne,—Madame de Staël was destined to exercise a more than common power. She came at the time most fit for the part she took. Her passion and energy would have been superfluous in the frivolous world of which her youth beheld the last traces, but they suited well the stormy times on which France was entering. Her rank and origin were likewise in her favour: the nobly born could associate freely with the Swedish ambassadress; the liberals saw in her the daughter of the popular minister, Necker. But her genius, and its irresistible fascinations, were arguments more powerful still. Ere long, the most eminent men of the day eagerly gathered around a woman whose admirable and enthusiastic improvisations on political and literary subjects held them all spell-bound. This display has been censured as unfeminine in Madame de Staël; but it was always redeemed, in the opinion of those who knew and heard her, by being so perfectly unaffected and genuine. It was a great and glorious gift freely exercised: eloquence was a part of her being; to divest herself of it would have been impossible. M. de Narbonne, Talleyrand, the old Duchess of Grammont, La Fayette, Siéyès, Madame de Lauzun, the Princess of Beauvau, Madame de Poix, Vergniaud, and most of the men who afterwards became the Girondins, Madame de Coigny, then in open hostility with the queen, successively appeared in her drawing-room, and acknowledged the power of her commanding genius. In vain did Madame de Genlis ridicule her per-



Mde. de Staël Holstein

son and her works, and appeal to the praises of Buffon as the test of her own superiority; it was felt, almost by intuition, that no comparison could exist between these two women, divided as they were by the wide boundary which distinguishes genius from talent.

Only one woman seemed likely to share the power of Madame de Staël, and she owed this apparent equality, not to her intellectual acquirements, though they were of no mean order, but to her beauty, position, and political principles. This lady was Sophie de Grouchy, Marchioness of Condorcet, born in 1765, a year before the daughter of Necker, and married, like her, in 1786. Madame de Condorcet was a woman of a daring and independent turn of mind, full of talent, and as exquisitely beautiful as Madame de Staël was eloquent: and beauty had then, as it has ever, a deep and winning eloquence of its own. Madame de Staël was painfully conscious of her personal deficiencies, and often declared that she would give half her genius to be as handsome as Madame de Simiane: a lady noted for the poverty of her intellect and the incomparable loveliness of her face and person. Notwithstanding her beauty, Madame de Condorcet could not have struggled against the genius of Madame de Staël, had they been rivals; but such was not the case. Their political principles, if not identical, had the same tendency towards freedom. Madame de Condorcet had derived from her husband all the philosophic and democratic principles which distinguished the disciple of Voltaire and the friend of Turgot. Like him, she was enthusiastic in the liberal cause, and favoured with all her power the progress of the rising revolution. She received the most ardent philosophers and politicians of the day; and the conversations which were held at her house were noted for their grave and abstract nature. Condorcet was a man of some scientific eminence; his wife shared all his tastes, and assisted him in the literary portion of his labours. Notwithstanding this similarity of feeling, they presented externally a very striking contrast. Condorcet, middle-aged, grave, and cold, concealed a burning enthusiasm beneath this calm as-

pect, and had been characterised by D'Alembert, who knew him well, as a volcano covered with snow. Madame de Condorcet, on the contrary, young, beautiful, and excitable, abandoned herself without reserve to her political prejudices, and to every passion of the moment. The society which met at her house had all the characteristics of the times. On the eve of a revolution, full of hope, energy, and daring thought, it cast away, with proud disdain, the elegant frivolousness which had distinguished it so long. Independence of opinion and manner, ardent discussions, and often fatal quarrels, had replaced the love intrigues and puerile amusements of a past which was never more to return.

The extreme activity which pervaded society during the last days of monarchy proved very fatal to the court, and especially to Marie Antoinette. Instead of conciliating the influential women of the day, she seemed determined to alienate them from her cause. She had conceived a sort of haughty dislike for Madame de Staël,—probably because she was the daughter of Necker,—and she displayed this feeling with all her customary imprudence. Madame de Staël, on the other hand, did not like the queen; she believed her to be a vain and frivolous woman, whose folly was ruining the state. No one then foresaw the weight of misery beneath which Marie Antoinette was to expiate her errors; and the Swedish ambassadress used, in her strictures, a degree of severity which, could she have seen through the gloomy future, she would have sorrowfully forsworn. Personal motives, and a distrust of the queen's policy, which was then felt by the whole nation, thus united Madame de Coigny, Madame de Genlis, Madame de Condorcet, Madame Necker, and Madame de Staël, the five most influential women of the day, in a powerful political opposition against the queen. Madame de Staël, passionately devoted, as she was, to her father, deeply resented the evident hostility with which he was regarded by Marie Antoinette. On the day that he was recalled to office, Madame de Staël went to Versailles, and the same evening informed her friends, with some bitterness, that the queen had

far more graciously received Madame de Canisy, the niece of the dismissed Archbishop of Sens, than the daughter of the recalled minister. It was impossible to know Marie Antoinette, and not to feel such conduct to be intentional; and as impossible not to resent the slight, which, when she pleased, the haughty queen could so well convey with one disdainful glance.

It was more than imprudence in Marie Antoinette to act thus: it was pure folly. She could not but perceive that she had lost both the affection and the esteem of the nation. "The Austrian woman" was the gentlest epithet applied to her now. The Assembly of the Notables, convoked by Calonne, shewed her that she had nothing to expect but reproach and insult from the first orders of the state. That these feelings were shared by the people, she could not doubt. Beyond the narrow circle of the Polignac coterie, she met everywhere with gloomy and estranged looks. When she walked in the gardens of Saint Cloud, the very children followed and insulted her. Allusions against her were eagerly seized in every theatre; and the lieutenant of police had to beg that she would no longer come to Paris, as he could not answer for the consequences of her presence. Every class seemed bent on ascribing to her the misery of the nation: the nobles calumniated her—the people called her Madame Deficit.

Marie Antoinette bore all in haughty silence; but every insult, every proof of hatred she received, sank deeply in her heart. Her beauty, once so fresh and dazzling, gradually faded away; her cheek became pale and thin; her eyes grew dim with weeping, and with nights of anxious vigils. The sunny smile, which had lent so great a charm to her expressive countenance, visited it no more. If she saw not yet the terrible future, she was haunted with the shadow of dark, foreboding thoughts; and a secret terror filled her heart whenever she asked herself what fate awaited her, her husband, and her children? Through every fear and trial, she maintained, however, a bearing more composed, and more truly royal, than that which had marked the days of her splendid pros-

perity. But though she had the heroism which braves, Marie Antoinette lacked the prudence which wards off evil. No suffering, no danger, could subdue her wilful nature. She struggled, even unto folly, against the tide of popular feeling; and her enemies read her features well when they said, that through all their traces of sorrow, they still bore the impress of unconquered pride. She waited her fate undismayed: alone against a nation.

PERIOD THE FOURTH.

THE REVOLUTION.

CHAPTER I.

THE REVOLUTION AND MARIE ANTOINETTE.

The convocation of the States-General—rendered imperative by the deplorable condition of the country—was, in itself, the herald of a revolution. Louis XVI. welcomed this important crisis with a feeling of relief, and fondly thought the burden of royalty over. Marie Antoinette, more clear-sighted than her husband, and far more jealous than he was of the privileges and power of royal rank, learned, with an unusual degree of agitation, that the convocation was granted. On the evening of that eventful day, she was standing in the recess of a window, with her face turned towards the gardens of Versailles. The chef de goblet had brought her a cup of coffee, which she sipped abstractedly; her bearing was thoughtful and grave. She beckoned Madame Campan to approach, and observed to her: "Grand Dieu! what a piece of news will be made public to-day! The king grants the States-General." She raised her eyes to heaven with evident emotion, and continued dwelling on the subject. She seemed to consider this step as the forerunner of great calamities for monarchy and France, and bitterly exclaimed against the intrigues of the parliament and the nobility, which had reduced the king to this perilous course.

But, deeply as she still resented the conduct of an aristocracy who had both insulted and calumniated her, the queen, nevertheless, sided with that body in their struggle against the people. If anything could increase her unpopularity, it was this. From the opening of the States, the name of "the Austrian woman" became identified with falling despotism. To her hated power every obnoxious and oppressive measure

was ascribed: often with justice; for gentleness and moderation in opposing her enemies ranked not amongst the qualities of Marie Antoinette.

On the 4th of May 1789, the three orders proceeded with solemn pomp to the church of Notre Dame. The procession was magnificent in the extreme. The nobles and the clergy were apparelled with all the splendour of old feudal dignity; but the commoners, in their severe and simple costume, represented the reality of power. The queen was splendidly and royally attired for this occasion; she was received with ominous silence: the only sounds that greeted her ears, were cries of "Long live the Duke of Orleans!" She felt so deeply affected by this premeditated insult, that she nearly fainted away. The thought of having thus betrayed her sensitiveness rankled more in her proud heart than the affront itself. The opening of the States was hailed with different feelings by the various classes of the nation; hope was, however, the prevailing mood. The daughter of Necker, and the wife of the minister Montmorin, beheld together the procession from a gallery. Madame de Staël was full of hope and joy, but her companion checked her transports. "You are wrong," said she, "to rejoice; this event forebodes much misery to France and to ourselves." The words were prophetic: the husband of Madame de Montmorin was massacred in the prisons on the 2d of September; she herself suffered on the scaffold with one of her sons; another was drowned; her eldest daughter perished in prison; and the youngest, unable to survive such misfortunes, died of a broken heart!

With the States-General began that long revolutionary struggle which brought on the fall of monarchy; but which did not end until, weary of her own excesses, France at last resigned herself to the despotism of Napoleon. In this contest, of which she became one of the most unhappy and illustrious victims, Marie Antoinette took an active part, until the 10th of August 1792. During those three years, the reckless disposition of the queen, and the overwhelming force of circumstances, made her seek the alliance of almost every party:

at first, in the vain hope of checking the revolution, and when that was evidently impossible, for the desperate necessity of securing, at least, a temporary respite. Whenever she was personally exposed to danger, Marie Antoinette shewed herself the heroic and fearless daughter of Maria Theresa; but in her political conduct there was neither heroism nor greatness. She opposed the revolution vehemently and blindly, and without seeking to work the salvation of royalty through any settled plan of conduct. By mere unflinching resistance, she hoped to conquer a revolution which the master genius of a Mirabeau afterwards vainly sought to subdue. When events, too significant to be misunderstood, shewed her the powerlessness of her efforts, the queen had not the magnanimity to confess herself conquered, and to yield frankly to the revolution she could not control. Too haughty and noble-minded, however, to stoop to conciliate those whom she hated, she adopted the policy that might have enabled her formerly to baffle court intrigues; she bribed a few of her opponents, forgetting that her real enemy was the nation. She considered the revolution as the ambitious struggle of a few headlong men, when it was the awakening of a long-oppressed people; she sought to check, not to guide its course. The narrow-minded coterie who had urged her to the mistaken policy of resistance, soon abandoned her and Louis XVI. to their destiny; and, by their intrigues at foreign courts, exasperated the whole nation against its sovereigns.

Marie Antoinette began her imprudent course by opposing Necker, then at the height of his power. The court party detested him, as the representative of liberal ideas and the favourite of the people. The people knew this well. When Necker was attacked, they felt against whom the blow was directed; and they resented the insult by deeds of wild violence, which stained the pure cause of liberty. The coercive measures which the queen and her advisers induced the king to adopt, on the 23rd of June 1789, caused Necker to send in his resignation. On the 24th, a deputation from the nobility waited on the king, the princes, and the queen, in

order to thank them for their support. Marie Antoinette received them very graciously, and shewing them the dauphin, whom she held in her arms, told the deputies that she gave him to the nobility, and would teach him to consider that illustrious body as the firmest support of the throne. But so strong was the popular feeling against those obnoxious measures, that, on the very same day, Marie Antoinette was compelled to send for Necker, beseeching him to resume his office and allay the excitement: she promised, at the same time, that his advice only should be followed in future. The queen soon broke her word. She was not insincere, but her inconstancy often made her appear such. Weakness produced a similar effect in her husband. Yielding to her advisers, she persuaded the king not to grant any further concessions to the popular party. One of her most partial historians* confesses that the troops which were gradually concentrated around the assembly, in order, no doubt, to intimidate it into compliance, were summoned there by the king, in pursuance with his wife's energetic representations. These measures were followed by the sudden dismissal of Necker on the 11th of July. With a strange mixture of weakness and audacity, the court party, though thus defying the nation by discarding its favourite minister, did not dare to commit this act openly.

The king made Necker promise that he would leave France instantly, and without mentioning his departure to any one. Necker obeyed. He dined as usual with his family and his friends, and talked with his customary cheerfulness: no one had the least suspicion of the truth. After dinner he communicated the matter to his wife, stepped with her into his carriage, apparently in order to take his daily airing; but he soon bade the coachman alter his course, and, having procured a proper conveyance, left the kingdom with the utmost speed and secrecy. His departure was not known even to Madame de Staël until the following day. The continued pouring in of troops around Versailles, and the dismissal of Necker,

* Weber.

created a profound sensation in Paris. The town was soon in a ferment; conflicts with the soldiery took place; the whole people rose to arms; the Bastile was stormed and compelled to surrender on the 14th of July, and thus, three days after the attempted court reaction, a serious revolution had been accomplished. The king was compelled to yield to the tide of popular feeling: on the 15th, he proceeded to the assembly, made concessions, and was led back in triumph to his palace. In compliance with the wish of the crowd, he appeared on a balcony with his wife and children. Marie Antoinette held the dauphin in her arms and embraced him, amid repeated cheers. A revolution, illegal in form and just in its object, which was the triumph of the majority over the will of the few, was thus sanctioned by royalty itself. But neither on the side of the court, nor on that of the people, was the reconciliation sincere. Threats against Marie Antoinette and Madame de Polignac were uttered amidst the loud acclamations of the crowd, and the demagogue, Saint-Huruge, was heard menacing the throne under the windows of the royal palace.

Marie Antoinette knew well the danger of the crisis, and besought Madame de Polignac and her relatives to leave the kingdom. They immediately emigrated, with the princes of Condé and the Count of Artois. The departure of Madame de Polignac deeply affected the queen; she forgot their political differences, and only felt that the woman she had once loved passionately, and to whom she still felt warmly attached, was leaving her, probably for ever. Their last interview was sad and affecting: with dark forebodings, and unavailing tears, they parted—to meet no more on earth. On subsequently learning the death of her royal mistress, the ex-favourite died of grief. So much was the name of Madame de Polignac detested, that she was compelled to leave France disguised as a femme de chambre. On passing through the town of Sens, she was stopped with her friends by an excited crowd, who eagerly asked if France had yet got rid of the Polignacs. The travellers replied in the affirmative, and were allowed to pro-

ceed. At Bâle, Madame de Polignac met Necker, who was proceeding to Coppet. From the fugitive favourite, the exiled minister learned the storm his banishment had raised. They were still speaking of these strange events when Necker received two letters; one from the monarch, and the other from the assembly; both recalling him to his post. He obeyed, and his return through France was one long scene of triumph. When he reached Paris, and presented himself at the Hôtel de Ville, he was received with fervent enthusiasm. It was indeed, "one highest culminating day, with immortal vivats, with wife and daughter kneeling publicly to kiss his hand."* It is easy to imagine with what heartfelt pride Madame Necker and Madame de Staël thus publicly paid homage to the object of their common idolatry. Overpowered with joy at her father's triumph, Madame de Staël fainted away.

Whilst the people and their minister thus triumphed, the court party was filled with dismay. On the 17th of July the king resolved to go to Paris, in order to allay the popular excitement. The queen, although a prey to the most gloomy apprehensions, restrained her tears as she saw him depart, and shut herself up with her family in her private apartments. She sent for some of the persons attached to her court; but, seized with a sudden terror, they had all fled from Versailles. A silence, deep and ominous like that of death, now filled the deserted palace; where, with straining ear and beating heart, Marie Antoinette awaited the arrival of the couriers, who every hour brought her news from her husband, and reported to her the events of his journey. So little did she hope for his return that, in case he should—as she fully expected—be detained, she had prepared an address for the National Assembly, throwing herself and her children on its protection, and beseeching, above all things, to be allowed to join the king. Her joy on his safe return from Paris was unbounded; but even in that moment of felicity wounded pride was blended with all her gladness. A cloud passed over her

* Carlyle—"French Revolution," vol. i., p. 321.

haughty brow, when she learned that Bailly, the new mayor of Paris, had remarked, in his address to Louis XVI., "Henry IV. conquered his people, and here are the people conquering their king." "Conquering!" she repeated indignantly. Alas! whilst thus contesting the reality of popular power, was she not yielding to it herself? Was she not compelled to dismiss and send from the kingdom even her old frivolous Abbé de Vermond, lest the mere fact of having been in her favour should doom him to destruction?

The lesson which the taking of the Bastile might have inculcated was soon forgotten by Marie Antoinette. Before three months had elapsed, she again attempted a reaction, which gave rise to the disgraceful events of the 5th and 6th of October: disgraceful alike for the sovereign and the people. On the 23d of September the regiment of Flanders arrived at Versailles, and gave a splendid dinner to the gardes du corps on the 1st of October. The king granted them the hall of the opera for the occasion. The queen had been urged to appear and honour the guests with her presence; but she prudently declined. This judicious resolve was overruled by one of the courtiers. Towards the close of the repast, when the heads of the revellers were heated with wine, the queen, the king, and their children appeared in the scene of festivity. Their presence excited the greatest transports. "*Richard, O mon Roi,*" was enthusiastically sung, and the health of the royal visitors drunk amidst deafening cheers. The usual toast to the nation was intentionally omitted, the tricolour cockade was trampled under foot, and the white cockade, the badge of loyalty, triumphantly displayed. When intelligence of this banquet, of the insults to the revolutionary principles by which it had been accompanied, and of the sanction these circumstances had received from the royal presence, reached Paris, the news created a feeling of deep indignant resentment. As though determined to make matters still worse, the court party persisted in their folly. A breakfast, consisting of the fragments left from the dinner, was given on the 2d of October: the same defiant spirit was

displayed by the guests, whilst all the court ladies busied themselves in sewing white cockades, which they distributed to the imprudent partisans of absolute royalty. This was a time of great scarcity, almost of famine, in Paris. The rich banquet given by the regiment of Flanders, the imprudent menaces of quelling the revolution uttered by the officers, the contrast the supposed abundance and profusion of Versailles offered to the misery of the capital, produced deep irritation; and, on the 5th of October, an insurrection of women took place. It has been asserted that this insurrection was premeditated: that the Orleans faction had directed it against the queen's life, in order to obviate the inconvenience of her regency, in case the king should be deposed; but there is every reason to believe that the movement was wholly spontaneous.

On the morning of the 5th of October, a large body of women, consisting chiefly of the refuse of the populace, seized on the Hôtel de Ville. Headed by the usher Maillard and Théroigne de Méricourt, they proceeded to Versailles. Théroigne was a beautiful courtesan, who acted a conspicuous part in every insurrectionary movement of those times. She was a native of Méricourt, near Liege; her parents were farmers in easy circumstances, and gave her a good education. She was only seventeen when a nobleman of the neighbourhood seduced and soon abandoned her. She fled to England, then came to Paris, saw Mirabeau, Siéyès, Brissot, Des Moulins, and Romme, and plunged into an agitated and dissipated life. From the first she espoused, with passionate ardour, the extreme revolutionary principles. Dressed in a red riding-habit, with dark flowing locks beneath a hat and plume, a sabre by her side, and two pistols in her belt, she headed every popular tumult. Her eloquence, bravery, and recklessness fitted her for the part she had chosen. At the storming of the Bastile she appeared first on the tower of the fortress; and the conquerors, struck with her courage, decreed her a sabre of honour on the breach. She now placed herself foremost amongst the women on the 5th of

October. The band, amounting to several thousand, proceeded to Versailles, apparently without any fixed object. They insisted on seeing the king, and seized tumultuously on the hall of the assembly; but although they manifested a very riotous disposition, they were kept in tolerable order. Their threats against the queen excited, however, the alarm of Louis for her safety, and he earnestly urged her to depart with her children; but her spirit was of that order which rises with the storm: she firmly refused to abandon her husband. "I know," said she, "that it is my life they seek; but I am the daughter of Maria Theresa, and I have learned not to fear death."

On the morning of the 6th, a body of men and poissardes proceeded to the badly-guarded palace. A conflict between them and the gardes du corps immediately began. With the instinct of hatred the infuriated populace rushed towards the apartment of the queen: she had retired to rest at a late hour, ordering her attendants to do the same. They, fortunately, disobeyed, and remained with their own women seated near her bed-room door. "About half-past four in the morning," relates Madame Campan, "they heard horrible yells and discharges of fire-arms. One ran in to the queen to awaken her, and get her out of bed. My sister flew to the place from which the tumult seemed to proceed; she opened the door of the ante-chamber which leads to the great guard-room, and beheld one of the body-guards holding his musket across the door, and attacked by a mob, who were striking at him; his face was covered with blood. He turned round and exclaimed, "Save the queen, madam: they are come to assassinate her!" She hastily shut the door upon the unfortunate victim of duty, fastened it with the great bolt, and took the same precaution on leaving the next room. On reaching the queen's chamber she cried out to her, "Get up, madam! do not stay to dress yourself: fly to the king's apartment." Marie Antoinette rose in haste, and did not escape without difficulty.

When La Fayette had succeeded in clearing the palace, all peril was not over for the queen. She sat near a window

talking to M. de la Luzerne, one of the ministers, when a ball from below, intended for her, struck the wall close to her. M. de la Luzerne, without seeming to heed this fact, rose, and, continuing his discourse, placed himself quietly between the queen and the window. "Nay, sir," said she, with dignified calmness, and signing him to resume his seat, "this is not your place, it is mine." During the whole of that dreadful day she displayed the same lofty heroism. On the first sounds of the conflict, Necker, closely followed by his wife and daughter, hastened to the palace. The people, in the courts below, were asking vehemently that the royal family should return with them to Paris. The king promised to comply, and shots were fired in token of rejoicing. It was at this moment that the queen appeared in the great saloon. Her fair and luxuriant hair fell in disorder around her pale countenance; but never had her whole aspect borne the impress of such commanding majesty. "Everything in her person struck the imagination," observes Madame de Staël. The people asked, with loud shouts, that the queen should appear on the balcony as well as the king.

The expressive countenance of Marie Antoinette betrayed what fate she dreaded, but she unhesitatingly advanced towards the balcony, between her two children. The ominous cry of "No children!" arose below her from the vast marble court, then full of armed men. She understood those fatal words, and gently pushing back the children into the apartment, returned to the balcony, unprotected and alone. "Should I die, I will do it!" had energetically exclaimed this daughter of Maria Theresa; and with hands folded on her bosom and eyes raised to heaven, she now stood there awaiting her fate, in heroic and sublime resignation. But her hour was not yet come: years of sorrow were before her still; and a doom far more sad, far more bitter than the assassin could inflict, awaited the hapless queen. One man pointed his gun towards her, but another of his companions struck it down: the calm heroism of the woman subdued the anger felt by the crowd against the imprudent queen; and when La Fayette stepped forward and respectfully raised her hand to his lips, the jus-

tice of the homage was acknowledged by a loud cry of "Vive la Reine!"

When Marie Antoinette left the balcony and re-entered the saloon, she approached Madame Necker, and said to her, in a voice rendered inaudible by convulsive sobs, "They are going to compel me and the king to return to Paris, with the heads of our gardes du corps carried on their pikes before us." Two of the gardes du corps had indeed been murdered, and their heads were borne in triumph to Paris by the poissardes; but fortunately not within sight of the unhappy sovereigns. Before leaving the royal palace of Versailles for ever, the queen observed, with much emotion, to one of her attendants, "We are lost: dragged away, perhaps to death: when kings become prisoners, they have not long to live." The journey from Versailles to Paris lasted five hours; a promiscuous mob of men and women accompanied the royal carriage; they shouted, sang, carried loaves of bread on their pikes, and exclaimed, in allusion to the king, queen, and dauphin, "We are bringing the baker, his wife, and the little apprentice." Notwithstanding the fatigue and sufferings of that eventful day, the self-possession of Marie Antoinette did not desert her. The king, on arriving at the Hôtel de Ville, said to the mayor, Bailly, "that he always came with pleasure to his good city of Paris." "And with confidence," quickly added the queen. They proceeded to the Tuileries, which had not been inhabited for nearly a century, and was in a most dilapidated condition. When, on the following day, Marie Antoinette received her court and the corps diplomatique in those dismal and antiquated apartments, she could hardly speak for her tears. Those whom she addressed were scarcely less moved. She apologised for being obliged to receive her guests in the room where her children had spent the night. "You know," said she, "that I did not expect to come here." And as she spoke thus, her fine and irritated countenance was such as when once seen could not easily be forgotten.*

Her beautiful and gentle sister-in-law, Madame Elizabeth,

* Madame de Staël.

bore this change with a more serene resignation. Although this charming princess was not, it is said, of a naturally amiable disposition, her deep and sincere piety had so completely eradicated her early defects, and imparted to her whole being something so holy and so pure, that, notwithstanding her youth and loveliness, the chief feeling which she inspired was veneration. Indifferent to her own fate, she was evidently not so with regard to the fate of her brother, whom she loved passionately, and of his wife and children. But her anxiety for them was tempered by religious submission: less heroic than the queen, she was not less noble or devoted.

Whilst monarchy was thus rapidly approaching its last perilous crisis, French society was likewise undergoing a marked transformation. Ever since the opening of the States-General, politics had absorbed every conversation. When the greatest social questions were at stake, what interest could be felt in the literary discussions of narrow coteries? The hall of the National Assembly had become the wide arena where the struggle for power and popularity was now carried on. Women thronged the galleries, as spectators of this great contest, and watched with deep interest the last throes of that expiring society with which their old power was fast passing away. But when, after the 6th of October, the assembly was transferred to Paris, the beautiful and high-born ladies, who had looked down from the *tribunes* on the stirring scene below, gradually vanished, and were replaced by ferocious and hideous poissardes; who, from always bringing their knitting with them, acquired the name of *tricotteuses*. The dawn of the revolution, and the taking of the Bastile had, however, been hailed with rapturous enthusiasm by the élite of French society. When the old fortress fell, its ruins offered a strange and varied aspect: tents and cafés arose, as by enchantment, amongst the wrecks of towers and bastions; fashionable women came in their carriages to visit that once gloomy and silent spot, now as gay and crowded as Long Champs. Here the still lively and brilliant Madame de Genlis brought her princely pupils, to read them moral lessons over fallen des-

potism: as a proof of her entire sympathy with the popular cause, she afterwards wore suspended around her neck a miniature Bastile, made of real Bastile sandstone. Madame de Staël, Mirabeau, the young Chateaubriand, then wholly unknown, likewise visited the last ruins of feudalism. Statesmen, actors, poets, artists, and men and women of the world, thronged together to the place, amidst the din and laughter of the workmen, who joyously demolished the vast edifice. A ball was afterwards given on the spot where the once-dreaded fortress had stood.

But notwithstanding the sympathy which they manifested for the spirit of the revolution, at least in its early stages, the women of those times exercised a very slight degree of influence in comparison with the power they had formerly possessed.

For some time Madame de Genlis still drew around her a portion of the most elegant society of the times. Every Sunday she received a political and literary coterie in the apartments she occupied with her pupils at Bellechasse; but as the revolution progressed, her circle gradually became narrower. Those persons who did not wish to attach themselves to the Orleans faction, dreaded her tact and insinuation, and avoided frequenting her saloon. Many affected to be repelled by her reputation for intrigue, and her enemies—who were numerous among the royalists—industriously circulated reports most injurious to her reputation. These reports were countenanced by the suspicions which the Duchess of Orleans had at length expressed with regard to the connexion between her husband and the governess of her sons. The duchess also complained that the affections of her children were estranged from her by Madame de Genlis, whom she accordingly wished to resign her functions. Both the duke and the governess refused to accede to this; the duchess was loud in her complaints, and the public, who esteemed her virtues, and pitied her for being united to a profligate husband, threw all the odium on Madame de Genlis.

The power of Madame de Staël and Madame de Condorcet

was likewise declining. The partisans of constitutional monarchy rallied for a while around the gifted daughter of Necker, but her sway was as brief as that of the principles she professed. Madame de Condorcet belonged to the republican party, and received men of democratic opinions; but, although she was visited by the notorious Anacharsis Clootz, (who called himself the "Orator of the Human Race,") and was styled by him, in compliment to her great charms, "the Lycean Venus," she did not exercise a wide or lasting power. When her husband fell with the Girondists, she sank into total obscurity, notwithstanding her talents and beauty. Though many women figured in the revolution, there are in reality but three who can be said to have acted in it a really important part, and whose names are imperishably linked with the history of their times. These three women are, the queen, whose long and unavailing struggle for monarchy brought her to the scaffold; the republican Madame Roland, who perished with the Girondists; and the noble-minded Madame Tallien, who hastened the fall of Robespierre, and avenged so many pure and illustrious victims. The time for speaking of Madame Roland or Madame Tallien is not yet come, and we must now return to Marie Antoinette. If, in her political conduct, there will be, as usual, much inconsistency and imprudence to deplore, yet shall we ever find her sublime and heroic in the hour of danger.

CHAPTER II.

MARIE ANTOINETTE AND THE FALL OF THE MONARCHY.

The principal errors and misfortunes of Marie Antoinette may be attributed to the extreme difficulties of her position. As a woman, she could exercise only an occult power, peculiarly unsuitable to her open nature. Impetuous and energetic, she was fit for instantaneous action, but ill adapted for giving the calm counsel on which another could act. The hesitating and apathetic temper of her husband would alone have sufficed to counteract whatever good she might have effected. Louis XVI. only knew how to suffer passively. Marie Antoinette early saw this, and, in spite of the respectful reserve with which she always alluded to the king, it was easy to perceive that a feeling akin to bitterness rankled in her mind when she thought on the fetters of her position. Could she have acted freely and alone, the revolution would have been sooner over: she could not have saved monarchy or the monarch, but their fall, not being delayed so long, would not have been so overwhelming and so deep. But this very energy of Marie Antoinette—which, had she been independent, would have hastened the crisis—prolonged it, because she was not free, and gave it the dangerous aspect of a struggle. When she had exhausted every form of opposition, she perceived too late that resignation might have been the wisest course. There is regret for past imprudence in those words which she addressed, shortly before the 10th of August 1792, to one of her confidants: "As for myself," said she, after alluding to the passive temper of the king, "I could do anything, and appear on horseback were it needed; but that

would be furnishing weapons to the king's enemies: throughout all France a cry against the Austrian and the rule of a woman would be raised instantly. By coming forward, I should, moreover, reduce the king to a humiliating and inferior position. A queen," she added mournfully, "who, like me, is nothing in her own right—who is not even regent—has but one part to act—to wait the event silently, and prepare to die."

During the three years which elapsed from the events of the month of October 1789, to the fall of monarchy in August 1792, Marie Antoinette had acted in direct opposition to the principle of passive submission. The outrages to which she was subjected, from the moment that the Tuileries became the residence of the royal family, embittered her against the revolution and its partisans. Shortly after the events of October, she visited, with the king, a large manufactory in the faubourg Saint-Antoine. They were received with much enthusiasm. "See, madam!" observed La Fayette, who accompanied the royal couple, "how good this people are when one comes to meet them." "But are they so when they come to meet us?" bitterly asked Marie Antoinette. The queen was resentful; but she disdained vengeance. A prosecution was instituted by the Châtelet against the instigators of the insurrection of the 5th of October, and a deputation waited on the queen, in order to hear from her lips an account of what she had personally seen and suffered. In answer to their inquiries, she replied: "I will never inform against any of my subjects. I saw all; I knew all; and I have forgotten all."

The instinctive policy of Marie Antoinette seems to have been to save the royal power alone. She stood in equal dread of the revolutionists and the emigrants. To yield to the former was ruin; to accept the aid of the latter was degradation. She recoiled with distrust from either course, until events became too imperious to allow her to persevere in her aim at solitary influence. We, accordingly, find her alternately holding conferences with Mirabeau, Barnave, and

even Danton; or placing in foreign intervention her only remaining hope of safety. Her characteristic and interesting connexion with Mirabeau began in the month of May 1790. It would have commenced much earlier, but for the scruples of the king; who objected to form even a private alliance with a man so notorious for his immorality. Marie Antoinette, more clear-sighted and less rigidly scrupulous than her husband, at length overcame his objections.

The first interview of the queen and the great orator had all the mystery of romance. One evening, in the month of May, Mirabeau left Paris, apparently for the purpose of riding to the country house of his friend Clavière; but he soon turned towards Saint Cloud, entered the park by a private entrance, and found the queen waiting for him, alone, in a shady and retired spot. "With a foe of ordinary capacity," said she, "with an everyday enemy, I should now be guilty of a very foolish, a very injudicious step: but with a MIRABEAU!"— The grace, dignity, and energy of the queen produced a powerful impression on Mirabeau. With a woman's ready tact she noticed this, and also observed to Madame Campan that the expression of "a Mirabeau," which she had employed intentionally, had not failed in its desired effect. The close of their interview alone is known. "Madame," then exclaimed Mirabeau, "whenever your illustrious mother, Maria Theresa, honoured one of her loyal subjects with an interview, she never suffered them to depart without according to them her royal hand." The queen, with a queen's grace, held forth her hand; Mirabeau, with a king's dignified elegance, knelt and fervently kissed it: that kiss shot strength through his frame, and, starting to his feet, he cried, with native self-confidence,—

"Madam, the monarchy is saved!" *

This meeting gave Mirabeau a high opinion of the queen. He emphatically observed to Dumont: "She is the only man of the family!" an expression which Napoleon afterwards

* "Mirabeau: A Life-History," p. 221, vol. ii.

borrowed, and applied to Marie Antoinette's daughter, the Duchess of Angoulême. Mirabeau also perceived, that to act on the king it was necessary to influence his wife, since she alone could rouse him to action. It was, therefore, to Marie Antoinette that he addressed his advice and correspondence, and gave detailed explanations of his plans for the restoration of monarchical power. That he even intended her to act a conspicuous part in carrying out his projects, is apparent by a phrase which occurs in one of his letters: "The moment may come when it will be necessary to see, that which we may see, *on horseback, a woman and a child:* these are family traditions, familiar to the queen." The noble nature of her new ally strongly attracted Marie Antoinette; but she had scarcely sufficient firmness of purpose to adhere to his plans. She consulted Mirabeau, as she consulted so many others, in the vain hope of deriving the desired benefit from their advice, without binding herself to follow it implicitly.

A year after the commencement of their intercourse, Mirabeau died, and whatever hopes the queen might have founded on his aid, perished with him. He died, happily for his fame, at the precise time when his powerlessness to allay the storm he had helped to raise would have been felt; but though his life could not have stayed the revolutionary torrent, his death contributed to accelerate its course. From that moment the position of the royal family became daily more precarious. The king, with his habitual indecision, knew not which party to favour. More fearless and energetic, Marie Antoinette held all concessions weakness, and hated disguise with all the force of a frank nature. To smile on those she disliked, and not to dare to favour those she loved, was a moral thraldom she could not endure. She longed to break her chains; to conquer back that royal sceptre, which had escaped from her husband's feeble hand; and to subdue that stern revolution, which had begun with insulting her name and threatening her life. The dangers which surrounded her husband, her children, and herself, strengthened her resolve. She was in constant expectation of seeing her apartments

invaded by the populace. A sound of musketry, which appeared to come from the palace itself, one night roused Louis XVI. from his slumber. He hastened to the queen's apartment; it was vacant: he proceeded further, and found his wife by the dauphin's bed, clasping the child in her arms. "I was at my post," she calmly observed, in reply to his inquiries. The alarm proved to be false: but such was the state of anxiety in which Marie Antoinette lived. The royal family at length resolved upon flight: a fatal and imprudent step.

Marie Antoinette intrusted the conduct of this important enterprise to the Count of Fersen, a young and chivalrous Swede, who had conceived a romantic passion for the beautiful captive queen. His sovereign, Gustavus III., had already proclaimed himself her knight, and vowed to defend her; the Count of Fersen endeavoured to save, at least, the life of the woman he loved. His measures were at first attended with great success. On the night of the 20th of June 1791, the members of the royal family, all carefully disguised, left the palace by different issues. Their flight was not discovered until the next morning. Favoured by this advance, the fugitives might have reached their place of destination in safety, if they had not been recognised by Drouet, the son of a postmaster, who caused them to be intercepted at Varennes. In spite of their protestations, they were compelled to alight at the house of the syndic, a grocer named Sausse. It was night; but the positive assertions of Drouet, and the characteristic features of both the sovereigns, betrayed them. Louis XVI., still persisting in denial, was rudely contradicted by the men around: with that strong sense of dignity which never deserted her, Marie Antoinette, seeing that all was over, stepped forward, and addressing Sausse and his companions, authoritatively observed: "Since you acknowledge him for your sovereign, treat him as such." Her look and tone silenced these men. Louis, casting aside all disguise, confessed his rank, and begged not to be detained; representing the evils that would accrue to the country from that detention.

But it was in vain that the king pleaded and commanded by turns; in vain that the queen, now haughty no longer, weepingly begged of Madame Sausse to remember her feelings as a wife and a mother, and intercede with her husband. Tears and entreaties proved useless, and the royal family retired to a narrow room above the shop to spend the night: but not to rest. In that night the fair hair of Marie Antoinette turned white with grief.

It was a melancholy journey for the fugitives from Varennes to Paris. The shouts and execrations of the people accompanied them all the way. An old nobleman having approached the royal carriage, and expressed his sympathy for those within it, was murdered before their eyes. A priest would have shared the same fate, but for the interference of Barnave, one of the two deputies sent by the National Assembly to protect the king. Young, eloquent, and popular, Barnave had figured, since the opening of the States, as the rival of Mirabeau, and the vehement opponent of the court. Péthion, who shared his present mission, was likewise a member of the left, and a republican; as he informed the king he was bringing home a captive. The two deputies sat in the same carriage with the royal family. Péthion behaved with rude insolence; Barnave with unfeigned sympathy and respect: he gazed with surprise on the woman he had judged from the reports of her calumniators; he saw her beautiful and dignified in her queenly sorrow, and, with the enthusiasm of a generous heart, he secretly vowed to protect and defend her. There is not, perhaps, a circumstance more honourable to Marie Antoinette than the passionate admiration which, without effort, she inspired in men of every rank and party, whenever they could approach her. Her power was gone; tears and suffering had faded her once-dazzling loveliness: the devotedness she excited was not paid to the woman or to the queen; it was the instinctive tribute which a fine and generous nature must always call forth. During the whole of the journey homewards, she behaved with a courage and self-possession which increased the admiration of Barnave. She calmly alighted

at the Tuileries, regardless of the hootings of the populace; and, unconquered even in that hour, haughtily refused the offered protection of the Viscount de Noailles, one of the members of the aristocracy who sided with the people.

The unsuccessful flight to Varennes greatly aggravated the position of the royal family. They were so closely watched, that it was only by stealth the queen could see her husband. National guards remained in her room, even at night, and she protested in vain against this gross indecency. Notwithstanding this close surveillance, she found means to communicate with Barnave. Alone, in an obscure room of the palace, she often waited whole hours for the young deputy, with her hand on the lock of the door. The sincerity of Barnave's devotedness had deeply touched Marie Antoinette. She sympathised with his youth, his talent, and even with the ambition which had proved so fatal to her. Whilst she declared, "that she could never forgive the nobles who had commenced the revolution, she excused the young commoner for having ardently embraced a cause which opened a path to his legitimate ambition." The king and Madame Elizabeth shared those feelings. The queen did not, however, adopt the plans of Barnave. He proposed constitutional prudence and moderation; but for this Marie Antoinette instinctively and justly felt that it was now too late. Had this plan been adopted earlier, with all sincerity and truth, the revolution might, perhaps, have been checked, and the constitution firmly established. We say *perhaps;* for on examination, it is difficult to avoid perceiving that the revolution was merely a political struggle for freedom and rights long denied: it was a social war of the suffering and exasperated masses against their former oppressors. A constitution which fettered them with a king, and checked the progress of the revolution, was therefore as little acceptable to an immense number of individuals, as it was distasteful to the sovereigns themselves. The party of the constitutionalists and the moderates was, however, large and powerful; and it might have held back the democratic element, but for the violence

of the royalists, the constant hesitation of Louis XVI., and the reactionary tendencies of the queen. Owing to these auxiliaries, the nation lost all faith in the efficacy of constitutional monarchy, and was ripe for a republic by the time the constitution was finished.

The queen was, therefore, both more practical and more clear-sighted than Barnave, when she rejected as useless his plan of adhering faithfully to the constitution; but she erred in thinking a reaction possible. After sacrificing his popularity to the royal cause, Barnave had the mortification to perceive that the sacrifice had been made in vain, and that the queen now relied exclusively on the aid of emigrants and foreigners. Marie Antoinette reluctantly adopted this course. She had never loved the aristocracy, and she well knew the degree of favour and submission they would expect, if they succeeded in quelling the revolution. A few months after the dissolution of the National Assembly, Barnave left Paris, and parted from the queen. She assured him that, in the event of a reaction, he should still possess her friendship and esteem. Barnave mournfully pointed out the fallacy of her hopes; told her he knew that he had risked his head in her cause, and risked it in vain; but enthusiastically added, that, so far from repenting aught he had done, he should hold himself fully repaid if she would only grant him the honour of pressing to his lips her royal hand. The queen, with much emotion, extended her hand towards him: he seized and kissed it fervently. Thus they parted, to meet no more; but to perish within a few days of one another, the queen and the commoner, on the same scaffold.

The hopes of Marie Antoinette did not rest solely with the emigrants: she believed that the excess of the anarchy she foresaw would lead to the re-establishment of order. It was so; but not until she, and all those she loved, had fallen victims to the popular anger so imprudently encouraged. In the month of November of the year 1791, the year of the flight to Varennes, La Fayette and Péthion contended for the mayorship of Paris. The former was a constitutionalist, the

latter a republican. Marie Antoinette disliked La Fayette, as being one of the first men who had humbled monarchy. She accordingly opposed his election, and spent large sums to secure that of his rival. It was perhaps to her efforts that Péthion owed his return.

This conduct was extremely imprudent; for since the acceptation of the constitution by the king, the difficulties of his position had materially increased. Friends and enemies seemed leagued alike against the peace of the sovereigns. Friends complained that their advice had not been followed; court ladies threw up their places in the royal household with disgust, because privileges were abolished by the new constitution, and duchesses were deprived of their traditionary stool or tabouret. Marie Antoinette was hurt with this conduct, and contrasted it probably with the behaviour of Madame du Barry. From the commencement of the revolution the ex-mistress of Louis XV. distinguished herself by her zeal in favour of the queen; at whose court she knew, however, that she could never hope to appear. At one period, hearing that the queen was in want of money, she offered her the costly and magnificent diamonds she had received from the late king. The queen thanked her and declined. After the events of the 6th of October, Madame du Barry, at the risk of her life, received the wounded gardes du corps who had defended the apartment of Marie Antoinette, and attended them with the utmost devotedness. More affected by this trait than if she had received a personal favour from her former antagonist, Marie Antoinette commissioned one of her friends to go and thank Madame du Barry in her name.

Fortunately for the honour of the French female noblesse, Madame du Barry was not the only titled lady who braved real peril in the cause of royalty. The beautiful Princess of Lamballe no sooner learned that the queen was surrounded with danger, than, leaving her safe asylum in England, she returned to France, and claimed her post of superintendent of the queen's household. Not long before the 10th of August, she observed to one of her friends: "As the peril grows

greater, so do I feel more strength. I am ready to die : I fear nothing." Other women emulated her devotedness : but those were solitary instances ; and the intrigues of the narrow-minded coteries who still gathered around Marie Antoinette, might well, when joined to the cabals of her enemies, justify the passionate exclamation she addressed to her brother : "Is it fated then, that I, with the blood I am come of, with the sentiments I have, must live and die among such beings ?"

With the Legislative Assembly, which succeeded to the Constituent, arose a new and powerful party, destined to hasten the course of the revolution, and to perish amongst its earliest victims. This party (that of the Girondists) yielded to the influence of several remarkable women. Whilst its leading members still affected constitutional principles, they submitted to the power of Madame de Staël and Madame de Condorcet. These two ladies succeeded in procuring the appointment of the Count of Narbonne as War Minister. He was a young, handsome, and brilliant nobleman, and a passionate attachment was said to be at the root of the interest testified for him by the daughter of Necker and the wife of Condorcet. But gradually, and as their policy assumed a more republican shape, the Girondists fell off from Madame de Staël, who still remained faithful to her father's doctrine of constitutional monarchy. A Madame d'Udon, now well nigh forgotten, and a clever actress, named Mademoiselle Caudeille, attracted them for a time ; their power was quickly effaced by that of Madame Roland, a woman whose name is imperishably connected with the history of the Girondist party. It was this woman whom General Dumouriez endeavoured to fascinate, when he succeeded Narbonne, in March 1792. He saw her power over her friends, and wished to rule them through her. But if Madame Roland was graceful and lovely as a Frenchwoman of the eighteenth century, she was also as austere as a Roman matron. Dumouriez, unprincipled and accustomed to the intrigues of the old régime, smiled at the earnestness of her republican enthusiasm : leaving her to her bright visions of the future, he secretly resolved

to turn his attention to the more practicable object of saving monarchy and the queenly Marie Antoinette. Could he do this, he knew his fortune would be secure for ever; and, though ambitious, the daring and brilliant Dumouriez was also capable of devoted and chivalrous feelings: the task of delivering from the toils of her enemies a proud and oppressed queen was as soothing to his vanity as the long vista of honours its accomplishment would open to his soaring spirit.

His first care on his appointment was, therefore, to seek an interview with Marie Antoinette. He found her alone, pacing her apartment agitatedly. Her cheeks were flushed, and she looked irritated. She was probably so at the appointment of Dumouriez, who had the reputation of being a vehement Jacobin. "Sir," said she, walking up towards him, "you are now all powerful; but popularity is brief. I will deal frankly with you. Neither the king nor myself submit willingly to the constitutional innovations which have been forced upon us. Choose now the part you wish to take." To this strange and imprudent speech, Dumouriez replied by pointing out the necessity of appearing to adopt the extreme principles it was so desirable to control: such, he hinted, had already been his policy. But Marie Antoinette either disliked this course or mistrusted the general, and she received his advances coldly. Not discouraged by this repulse, Dumouriez, whose interest in the fate of the courageous queen was increased by her daring and imprudent temper, continued to urge the point; and, falling at her feet, passionately exclaimed, as he pressed her hand to his lips,—"O madam, allow yourself to be saved!" Marie Antoinette, thinking he acted a part, remained inflexible. She certainly erred in not giving the plans of Dumouriez a fair trial. Of all the members of the Girondist ministry, he was the only one who did not aim at a republic: the only one really devoted to the king.

The unhappy monarch daily found, in his advisers, enemies ready to watch and expose his errors. He unfortunately gave them a pretence for opposition, by refusing to sanction the decree against the nonjuring priests. The ministers remon-

strated; he dismissed them, but could not find men fit to succeed them: the sense of his helpless and desperate position then struck him so forcibly that for ten days he scarcely uttered a word. The queen, filled with grief at his deplorable state, threw herself at his feet, and conjured him, in her name and that of her children, to arouse himself. "If perish we must," she energetically exclaimed, "let us perish with honour, striving for our cause; and let us not remain to be stifled in the walls of our palace."

The organised insurrection of the 20th of June 1792, which followed the dismissal of the Girondist ministry, seemed destined to humble and degrade royalty before it should be crushed for ever. An infuriated populace broke into the palace, insulted the royal family, and committed every violence short of assassination. Louis XVI. rose into sublimity through mere passive courage; Marie Antoinette was heroic and dignified; Madame Elizabeth devoted. On the first sounds of the tumult, the young princess broke from the grasp of her women and rushed to the "œuil de bœuf," where she found the king surrounded by an angry crowd. She made her way towards him, and clasped him passionately in her arms. "The queen! it is the queen!" exclaimed a hundred voices at once, and at that hated name arms rose and glittered threateningly towards her. She waited her expected fate in calm and silent resignation; the hurried explanations of a few officers of the palace alone saved her from instant death. "Ah! why," she mournfully exclaimed, "did you undeceive them? Perhaps, by dying for the queen, I might have saved her."

Bitterly conscious that her presence could only add to the peril of her husband, Marie Antoinette was compelled to remain with her children in her own apartment. Her only defenders were a few devoted nobles, timid attendants, and the Princess of Lamballe; who, in spite of the queen's entreaties, had hastened to her post on the first rumour of danger. For two hours the populace vociferated at the door for admittance. It was at length thought prudent to comply.

The doors were thrown open; the queen, her children, and the women having previously been entrenched in the recess of a window, behind a wide table. Here, for three hours, Marie Antoinette, with unsubdued courage and incomparable dignity, stood listening to the insults of her enemies as they passed before her. The women especially addressed her in the fiercest and most disgusting language. "Did I ever injure you?" at length asked the queen, of one of these furies. "No," she answered; "but you are the foe of the people." "You have been deceived," mournfully said the queen. "Alas! I was happy when you all loved me." "Forgive me," said the woman, bursting into tears; "I see that you are good." Even Santerre, the fierce hero of the faubourgs, was touched at the sight of undeserved ignominy so royally endured. By looks and broken words he intimated his sympathy to the queen; and from that time held secret intelligence with her. After being indulged in their tyranny for five hours, the crowd were at length dispersed. The emotion of Marie Antoinette, on beholding her husband, betrayed itself by hysterical shrieks. For some time the king vainly endeavoured to calm her; when he had at length succeeded, he perceived that he still wore the coarse red cap he had been compelled to assume in order to save his life. He cast it away indignantly, bitterly exclaiming, "Ah! madam, did you come from Vienna to behold me thus degraded?"

From that day to the 10th of August, the sovereigns lived in the full consciousness of their approaching fate. They were persuaded not to touch the meals prepared for them, and to partake in secret of the food provided by a few faithful servants. Their own apprehensions were of a more serious nature. "They will not assassinate me," often observed the king; "they will judge me openly." The queen entertained the same foreboding. "I fear that they will try the king," she said to Madame Campan: "as for me, I am a foreigner; they will murder me. . . . What will become of our poor children!" She wept bitterly. The femme de chambre, remembering how subject she had formerly been to spasms and

hysterics, offered her a composing draught. "Nay," said the queen, with deep sadness, "it is only happy women that can feel nervous. I need no such remedies now." And Madame Campan bears witness that the health of her royal mistress was never so uniformly excellent as when her whole energies were called forth by grief.

Marie Antoinette accustomed herself to the thought of death, but not to the calumnies of her foes. She one day surprised an attendant in the act of superintending her food, lest poison should be introduced into it. "Remember," said the queen, "it is not by poison, but by calumny, that I shall die." Of all the accusations against her, none wounded her so deeply as that of not loving France, and being still an Austrian at heart. Several times she was on the point of leaving her apartment, in order to address the crowd assembled under her window to insult her. "Yes," she passionately exclaimed, pacing her room with hurried steps, her cheeks growing flushed, and her heart swelling as she spoke—"yes, I will go and say to them, Frenchmen, they have persuaded you that I do not love France! That I, the wife of your king, the mother of your dauphin—I, seated on the greatest throne of Europe, and blest amongst the daughters of Maria Theresa; that I do not love France! Ah! what have I to find in Vienna now? Nothing, save tombs! What have I to lose in France? Everything that can render life honourable and dear!" So spoke and felt the unhappy queen; but sad and calm reflection soon shewed her that the appeal she meditated would be made in vain. The evil passions which hatred had so long roused against her, were not to be thus silenced by a few heroic words. Not until many years had passed over her unhonoured grave could even her memory obtain justice, pursued as it was still by those foul calumnies which had hastened her destruction.

The events of the 20th of June filled the noble soul of La Fayette with indignation. He protested against the daily-increasing anarchy, and offered his support to the king. But Marie Antoinette preferred to his assistance the purchased and

doubtful influence of Danton. "Never," she energetically exclaimed, "will we accept the aid of those who first seized on our power. If we perish, we shall perish with dignity: history awaits us." The queen then entertained strong hopes, founded on the approach of the foreign troops. One night in July, while she was looking at the moon, she observed to a friend near her, "When in a month this moon will appear again as we see it now, I shall be free and happy." The reluctance which the sovereigns had long felt to foreign intervention was now over. The grossest insults awaited them in that palace where their predecessors had reigned as kings, and where they were held as the hostages of the people. In the royal chapel, where they came to pray, the singers greeted them with the Marseillaise or the "Ca Ira." On one of the last Sundays of July they repeated three times, with much exultation, these words from the *Magnificat*: "He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree."* Every day the sovereigns were confirmed in the knowledge of the attack the faubourgs intended to make on the palace. One night, when they expected it to take place, the king and Madame Elizabeth agreed not to waken Marie Antoinette, who happened to be asleep. She complained bitterly, on the following day, that whilst his sister was with her husband, she had been allowed to slumber on. "I am his wife," she added, "and I will share every one of his dangers."

The day came at length. The insurrection of the 10th of August was organised by the Jacobins and a portion of the Girondist party. They united for a moment to overthrow royalty and found the republic, and to resume on the very next day their bitter and fatal dissensions. The night from the 9th to the 10th was spent in watchful anxiety by the royal family. The king confessed himself, and calmly prepared for death. More heroic, and less resigned, the queen vainly sought to communicate to him her own spirit of resistance. The pious and gentle Madame Elizabeth needed no prepara-

* Luke i. 52.

tion: the sacrifice of her life had internally been made ever since her devotedness to her brother prevented her from leaving the kingdom with her other relatives.

From the dawn till the close of that eventful day, the behaviour of Marie Antoinette was admirable. She was true to every feeling of her nature; true to the impulses of the woman, the mother, and the queen: whilst the king submitted with pious but ill-timed resignation to his destiny, her courage rose with every new danger. Could she have imparted this heroism to her husband, a desperate, and perhaps successful, resistance would have taken place. His timid, embarrassed, and awkward manner chilled the ardour of his defenders. The queenly bearing of Marie Antoinette, her hurried but still dignified step, the kindling and penetrating glance of her blue eyes, the inexpressible majesty of her pale countenance,—everything in her person,—roused the admiration and enthusiasm of the volunteers before whose ranks she passed. But the emotion was transitory; she could not act, she could not even speak. The king uttered a few hesitating words; heroic and spirit-stirring expressions rose to the lips of his wife, but they died unspoken: she would not provoke a contrast that might wound his dignity; now more than ever she felt that her part was "to submit silently, and prepare to die." Carried away, however, by the excitement of the hour, she once seized on a pair of pistols, and presented them to her husband, exclaiming, as she did so, "Now is the time to shew yourself a king;" but she found no response in the peaceable soul of Louis XVI.: though he could die with calm dignity on a scaffold, the battle strife was not fit for him. He made no reply, and gently put the pistols away.

The great difficulty of defending the palace was, that amongst the National Guards, who had been summoned to protect it, there were numerous allies of the insurgents. This became apparent when the king entered the gardens in order to review the troops in it: he was hooted, insulted, and very nearly assassinated. The sound of the execrations directed against him reached the apartment of Marie Antoinette: she

rushed to a window; one of the ministers gently drew her back: "Good God!" she exclaimed, bursting into tears, "it is the king they are hooting." But such was her self-command that in a few seconds her eyes were dry, and her look had resumed its courageous serenity. According to the words of one who saw her then, "The Austrian lip and the aquiline nose fuller than usual, gave to her countenance something of majesty, which they that did not see her in those moments cannot well conceive." But the manner in which the king had been received by the troops charged to defend him, disheartened even the heroic Marie Antoinette. She still protested, however, against the course recommended by their advisers—that the king and his family, giving up a useless resistance, should retire before the people had invaded their palace, and take refuge in the National Assembly. To yield without a struggle, to seek the protection of those who had brought down the royal power so low, and to forsake the devoted friends who were now ready to shed their blood for their sovereign, seemed to Marie Antoinette the height of degradation and shame. In this her heroic heart inspired her well. What did this concession avail Louis XVI.? He forfeited his crown, his kingly dignity, his life, the lives of his family, of the faithful Swiss, of his noble adherents—for a chance of safety. To risk all, in desperate cases, is often the truest, the highest wisdom.

The cheeks of Marie Antoinette burned with shame as the king at length took this resolve. She followed him in silence, with Madame Elizabeth and her children, to the asylum he had been persuaded to choose. On reaching the Assembly, the royal family were placed in the narrow box occupied by the newspaper reporters. For fourteen hours they remained there, in a stifling atmosphere, listening to the deliberations of the Assembly, and to the sounds of the combat carried on in the palace they had abandoned. The victory of the people, the massacre of the Swiss, and the suspension of royal power, were announced in their presence. The king preserved his mournful calmness; the queen her indignant and unsubdued

bearing. The thought of the friends they had left behind them to perish; of the children who slept unconscious on her knee, and who had lost, in one night, the fairest realm of Europe; of her husband's future fate; of her own; of power and glory gone for ever, might tear her heart with inward agony, but could not cause one sign of weakness to appear on her imperial brow.

For two days this torture was renewed, and the royal family heard, from the same place, the deliberations of the Assembly; every one of which was to them as the knell of their fallen fortunes. Deprived of the commonest necessaries, Marie Antoinette was compelled to borrow twenty-five louis of one of her attendants, and to accept the change of linen for herself and her children sent by the English ambassadress.

On the third day the captives, for such they were now, were conveyed to the Temple: a gloomy, monastic residence, fit prison for a fallen king. Of the five persons who entered this dark dwelling, three left it for the scaffold; one for a foreign land, where she still dwells, a sorrowful exile; the fifth, that pure and lovely child who slept on the bosom of Marie Antoinette, died within the walls of his prison, after a few years of bodily torture and mental degradation, the innocent victim of the crimes and errors of his race, and of the pitiless vengeance of a nation.

CHAPTER III.

THE ENGRAVER'S DAUGHTER, MADAME ROLAND.

Two women may be said to have acted a part of more than common importance in the fall of monarchy. The one, as queen of France, by her ill-timed resistance to the revolution; the other by her imprudent enthusiasm as the secret inspirer of the republican party.

Though thus tending, by different means, and with far different objects, to the same end—an end which proved ruin for both, and for the principles they professed—these two women, divided by the vast difference of their social positions, never met. Their struggle was carried on through the men they influenced. This is no vague assertion: the struggle existed; it was a long and severe one—the struggle of energetic reaction represented by Marie Antoinette, and of republican ardour embodied by Madame Roland. The queen was certainly no more the whole reaction than the engraver's daughter was the whole republican party; but it is a significant and important fact, to find in two women the fittest representatives of the great principles which divided France at that momentous period of her history.

We have already dwelt at some length on the conduct of Marie Antoinette; on the imprudence which hastened the fall of Louis XVI.; on the heroism which gave to that fall some of her own native dignity. Whilst the queen thus pursued her ill-advised course, Madame Roland—as lovely, high-spirited, and inflexible as the daughter of Maria Theresa, but with less of her frivolous grace, and with an intellect of more commanding grasp and energy—gathered around her, by the power of her beauty and eloquence, a party of talented and

ardent men, who, yielding to her inspirations, hurried France towards a brief and premature republic.

Beautiful—but of that chaste and almost spiritual beauty which is felt and not portrayed—tall and graceful in person, with a broad, clear brow, blue eyes, deep and thoughtful, dark curling locks that clustered around her neck, and features which, if not strictly regular, were full of fire and expression, Madame Roland exercised an irresistible fascination on all those who approached her. Great as was the power of her personal charms, it yielded to that of her voice. Those who had heard it once could never forget it again. The low, clear tones—so mellow and so deep—haunted them like a strain of exquisite melody through years, long after she who gave them utterance had perished on a scaffold.

But the real source of Madame Roland's influence must be sought in her dauntless and noble character. To the austere heroism of a Roman matron, she united that sensitive and passionate enthusiasm unknown to the ancients; and which has sprung from Christianity, with its fount of boundless love, and its yearning thirst of self-sacrifice. Great, indeed, as her talents were, they were far surpassed by a spirit as heroic, and yet as womanly, as ever tenanted female form. Earnest and deeply convinced herself, she could convince others: her eloquence was not merely the eloquence of genius; it sprang from the heart, and had that power which the heart alone can give.

There is nothing, perhaps, more remarkable in the history of this eminent woman than the simple dignity of her earlier years. We may take her from her obscure youth, and follow her to the scaffold; we still find her the same pure, resolute, and independent being, bearing her unmerited isolation and poverty with the same fortitude which she afterwards displayed in a prison, with the prospect of a certain death before her. It is in this completeness of her character that lies its true, its perfect greatness. Manon Phlipon was born at Paris, in the year 1756, of obscure but respectable parents: her father was an engraver of some talent, and in easy circum-

stances. She was surrounded from her youth by those pure and religious influences which, notwithstanding the scepticism of the age, still lingered in the humble homes of the bourgeois. Even as a child Manon was grave and thoughtful, and displayed an inflexible temper, strange in one so young. She yielded to persuasion, but resisted force or arbitrary will with unflinching obstinacy. When she was about six years old, she was ordered, during one of her childish illnesses, to take a nauseous draught: the disgust natural to her age made her refuse. Her father immediately administered to her a personal chastisement, and imperatively bade her obey; she refused again, and the correction was repeated; a third injunction to drink the medicine was then delivered to her; this time the child said nothing: without even deigning to utter a refusal, she offered herself silently to the expected blow. A gentle prayer and remonstrance from her mother, who then interfered, sufficed to make her comply: overpowering her strong reluctance, she drank off the medicine without hesitation. Struck with the indomitable resolution of his daughter's temper, M. Phlipon yielded her entirely to the management of his wife, and forbore exercising over Manon an injudicious tyranny, which might pervert, but could not subdue, the native energy of her character.

Notwithstanding the inflexibility she displayed whenever she thought herself the victim of injustice or caprice, Manon was habitually of a gentle and serene disposition. Her earliest inclination was a passionate fondness for books and flowers; with both of which she afterwards cheered her prison solitude. A child in years, a woman in the depth and earnestness of her feelings, she might often be seen seated in a recess of her father's workshop, poring for hours over an old volume of Plutarch's Lives; her cheeks flushed, and her eyes swimming with tears, as she dwelt on the immortal pages which have roused and inspired so many heroic spirits. Often then the loved book fell from her grasp, whilst, with brow bent down and clasped hands, she silently wept, to think that she was not born in ancient Sparta or glorious Rome. When her

mother, a woman of remarkable beauty and gentleness, wished to draw away Manon from her books, for which the child, as has already been observed, always felt a strange yearning, she offered her flowers. The volume of Plutarch, however, left her but seldom: she secretly carried it with her, instead of her prayer-book, whenever Madame Phlipon, who was extremely devout, took her to the parish church during Lent. The deeds of the heroic men of old were the "Acts of the Apostles" which steeled the soul of the martyr of liberty. Unconscious of the stern future destined to her, she already envied, perchance, in the dreams of her childhood, that gloomy and yet glorious fate which has revealed her to posterity. And is not character, indeed, that secret power of fashioning life and events which was so long called destiny?

The parents of the young Manon, proud of her dawning beauty and singular talents, strained their means to give her an education worthy of her, though far above her position in life. History, geography, astronomy, chemistry, geometry, Latin, English, Italian, music, dancing, and drawing, were taught her by various masters; who all admired her rapid progress. Her eagerness to learn was such that she often rose, unbidden, at five in the morning, in order to have more time for her studies. But knowledge could not absorb entirely a soul naturally so ardent and enthusiastic. That longing for ideal excellence, which she afterwards placed in stoic endurance and republican freedom, already haunted the mind of the thoughtful child. She wished to understand her own nature, to know the real destination of man, and to prepare herself for it, whatever it might be. This earnestness of purpose is one of the noblest characteristics of her brief existence. In youth, her aspirations took the form of religious mysticism: she gave herself up to prayer and contemplation. Like the beautiful and impassioned Saint Theresa, of Avilar, she early sighed for martyrdom, and dwelt with silent rapture on the unfathomed mysteries of divine love. She entertained for a while the project of embracing a religious life: the sublime devotedness of the Sisters of Charity

deeply touched her heart, already thirsting for self-sacrifice. Yielding to her earnest prayers, her parents allowed her to spend a year in a convent. In this calm retreat her mind acquired the deep and subdued tone of feeling characteristic of those persons who have lived in loneliness and self-communion. She loved to sit apart from her companions, reading and meditating in the solitary avenues of the grounds by which the convent was surrounded, or to muse in the lonely cloisters, over the grave of some departed nun, familiarising her soul with the solemn thoughts of death and eternity. Though the religious sentiments of Manon Phlipon yielded, at a later period, to the scepticism of the age, their purifying influence is to be traced through every stage of her existence. They imparted to her character that tenderness and calm fortitude which marked her domestic and public life, and chastened down the almost pagan heroism of her last hours.

When the young girl—for she was now no longer a child—left the convent, and returned to her father's house, it was to lead a life of severe retirement. For several years she remained wholly secluded within the pure atmosphere of domestic life. Religion, study, and humble household cares filled her quiet existence, and fortified her soul for future struggles. An active correspondence which she then carried on with two of her convent friends, Henriette and Sophie Cannet, shews how calm and obscure was the life she led. The influence of early home is felt throughout every woman's life; her world is essentially inward: it is in the practice of homely duties, in slight but repeated trials and sufferings, that she acquires the subdued gentleness, the habit of calm endurance, which, in more impatient man, are the result of judgment or iron will. Manon accustomed herself to a severe self-discipline. She was early convinced that it is more easy to repress our passions than to satisfy them with due moderation. Whenever her active imagination seemed to her in need of control, she therefore studied geometry and algebra with passionate ardour. The austere turn of her mind made her dislike the licentious novels then in fashion; history even lost its charms for her:

she missed, in the events and characters to which it related, the heroism and dignity she vainly longed to find, and which she sought for a while in the stern doctrines of the Stoics. The change which then took place in her religious opinions confirmed, instead of weakening, this austerity of principle. The philosophical works of the time destroyed her faith, for she proceeded on the erroneous principle that she was bound to prove logically to herself every article of her creed; but her soul was so noble and so pure, that, whilst she gave up her former belief in immortality, and even for a time her faith in the existence of a God, she did not swerve from the severe line of duty she had early resolved to adopt. "The gospel," she writes to her devout friend, Sophie Cannet, to whom she candidly confessed her scepticism, "is the best book I know. I receive this admirable code of morals, and am resolved to conform my whole conduct to it." So anxious was she not to yield to the secret impulse of passion, in her change of belief, that she openly declared, "that when we doubt, we must live as though we believed:" a scepticism very foreign in practice to that of the eighteenth century, whose philosophers believed in little or nothing, and acted according to their faith.

The errors of Manon were those of her understanding: her heart remained pure. She confessed that when she listened to it, exclusively of reason, she believed: it was then that she rejected what she called "the melancholy truths of atheism." But, even when she adopted those desolating doctrines to their widest extent, she conceived herself bound to adhere to the self-denying virtues of Christianity, as fully as if she had been convinced of the immortality of the soul and the future reward of virtue. "Sincerity with myself, and the accordance of my conduct with the system which I shall have adopted (whatsoever it may be) shall, at every time, prove the great object of my care, and the end of my efforts." A noble profession of faith, to which she ever remained true.

Several years were thus spent by Manon in her father's house. The greatest portion of her time she gave to study;

she occasionally amused herself with literary composition, but without the least intention of devoting herself to authorship. "I early perceived," she observes in her Memoirs, "that a female author lost more than she gained, since she was disliked by the men, and criticised by her own sex." This wise indifference to mere reputation did not extend to political matters. In spite of the obscurity of her birth and station, Manon could not feel herself foreign to the welfare of her country. She took a deep interest in the struggles between the Parliament and the crown. Even then she was eminently republican in her feelings and opinions: she resigned herself to an absolute monarchy, but always regretted that she was not born under a democratic government.

The philosophic and popular spirit which had been gradually descending through every class of the nation, now began to pervade the bourgeoisie. Manon adopted eagerly the doctrines of equality and brotherhood, which the philosophers had borrowed from Christianity, even whilst they denied its Divine origin. Like Milton's archangel, "severe in youthful beauty," she gazed with austere displeasure on the follies and vices of the elegant world, which she beheld from afar. Wounded pride, and a sense of her own worth, gave strength to those feelings; but, wherever chance might have placed her, a soul so ardent, and naturally so democratic as was hers, could never have sympathised with the aristocratic indifference and frivolousness of the upper classes. On the accession of Louis XVI. and Marie Antoinette, her parents took her to Versailles. She saw at a distance the splendours of the court, and marked, with contempt and irritation, the idolatrous worship paid by the courtiers to the new sovereign. She thought of ancient Athens, that seat of magnificence and freedom; but she only thought of its just and happy times. She forgot the death of Socrates, the exile of Aristides, and the condemnation of Phocion: "I did not know," she adds, whilst retracing those emotions of her youth in her lonely prison, "that Heaven reserved me to witness errors like those of which they became the victims, and, after having professed

their principles, to participate in the glory of a similar persecution."

These republican feelings increased the stoical nature of her character: she looked upon life as a struggle and a duty. The knowledge of truth and the constant love of excellence were the only boons she asked of Heaven: "O Thou, who hast placed me upon earth," she exclaimed, addressing the Divinity, to whom, in spite of sophistical arguments, her heart ever returned, "grant me to fulfil my destiny in the manner most conformable to Thy holy will and the good of my brethren." But this resignation was not entire. Manon viewed her position with involuntary dissatisfaction. She felt that, with her opinions, she was shackled by the fetters of society: she was not free, she could not act; and, as she passionately exclaimed, addressing her friend, "My whole strength is wasted in vainly endeavouring to shake off my fetters. O Liberty! idol of energetic souls, source of every virtue, thou art but a name for me."

The writings of Rousseau, with which she became acquainted towards this epoch, produced a powerful impression upon her mind: she eagerly seized on whatever his philosophy held of noble and pure, and longed to become acquainted with him personally. One of her friends, desirous of gratifying her, furnished her with an opportunity of paying the admired writer a visit. He had been commissioned to deliver Rousseau a letter; instead of calling with it himself, he gave it to Mademoiselle Phlipon, who, not to take the philosopher by surprise, wrote to him, warning him of her visit, and of its object. Rousseau was probably in one of his gloomy fits when he received the letter of his young admirer; the handwriting was that of a woman, but the conciseness and energy of style, convinced him it was the production of a man. Evidently this was only another trap of his numerous enemies: their malice was apparent in the choice of the agent, a young and, probably, beautiful girl, whom he would not be likely to mistrust.

Unconscious of the suspicions she had roused, Manon, with

a beating heart, left her father's house on the appointed day, and proceeded to the gloomy dwelling in the Rue de la Plâtrière, where Rousseau then resided. She ascended the dark staircase, and paused before the narrow door of the illustrious Genevese, with mingled emotion and respect. She rang the bell; the sour-faced Therese opened the door, eyed her suspiciously, and when she had explained the object of her visit, abruptly informed her that M. Rousseau knew she was not the author of the letter she had sent; that the stratagem was discovered, and that he would not see her; with this she closed the door in her face. Little did Rousseau suspect that the young girl thus unceremoniously dismissed from his threshold, was destined to become one of the first and most illustrious victims of the democratic principles it had been the study of his lifetime to teach.

Whilst the mind of the engraver's daughter was thus absorbed by study and philosophy, her serene and modest beauty attracted much admiration in the vicinity of her father's dwelling. She received various offers of marriage from wealthy tradesmen, but refused them all. The idea of uniting herself to a man with tastes and feelings inferior to her own revolted her: to remain single was, in her opinion, a far more preferable fate. She watched with jealous care over every feeling of her heart, and, as though actuated by a foreknowledge of her high destiny, proudly avoided indulging in anything resembling an unworthy affection. A young man named De la Blancherie produced, however, some impression upon her. He was amiable and talented; she thought his character equal to her own, and invested him with all the heroism and magnanimity in which her ardent soul delighted. Events soon undeceived her: she beheld in La Blancherie an ordinary mortal, and her love vanished with the illusion which had created it. "If I could be induced to love by mere eyesight," she wrote to Sophie Cannet, "I would sooner die of shame than yield to such love." "Burn nothing of what I write to you," she observed, in allusion to the same subject, and betraying that self-severity which ever characterised her; "even should my letters

be one day seen by the whole world, I do not wish to conceal the only proofs of my feelings and my weakness." Manon certainly did not dream, as she wrote this, that her supposition would one day be realised, and that the confidential letters addressed to Sophie Cannet, and carefully preserved by her, would be published, and reveal to the world all the purity and truth of her nature.

The sudden death of Madame Phlipon was the first real sorrow which fell on her daughter. She had loved her mother passionately, and her grief was overwhelming. She gradually sank into a state of languor, which for some time endangered her life. With her good and gentle mother vanished the happiness Manon had enjoyed in the home of her youth. Her father plunged into dissipation and extravagance, and foolishly squandered his daughter's property as well as his own. The grief she felt at M. Phlipon's imprudent conduct, and her own altered prospects could not, however, disturb the cheerful serenity of Manon's temper: she found in all her sorrow that severe pleasure which results from the consciousness of inward rectitude and unmerited reproach calmly endured. She saw clowds lowering over her dark horizon, but she turned not away from the path: she still went onward, "gathering her courage," in her own forcible expression, "as a cloak around her," and calmly waiting the coming of the storm.

Notwithstanding the alteration which she foresaw in her father's circumstances, Manon still inflexibly refused to marry. It was not until her hand was asked by Roland de la Plâtière that her resolve wavered. Roland, whom she had known for several years, was then on the verge of fifty. Tall and thin in person, reserved and somewhat abrupt in his manners, with a harsh voice and a severe look, few would have thought Roland likely to fascinate a young and beautiful woman. Nor was it love, indeed, which Manon felt for him. Since her unhappy experiment with La Blancherie, she held love as a beautiful chimera. But if she did not believe in the reality of this feeling—such as she understood it—she had still faith in friendship and esteem, and held no destiny so

worthy of a woman's ambition as that of wife and mother. Beneath the austere aspect of Roland, she saw and admired a soul worthy of an ancient philosopher by its stern and unyielding virtues. His character was one which the passionate admirer of Plutarch's heroes could well appreciate. In her enthusiasm she even over-rated his qualities; of which a rigid and uncompromising honesty of purpose was the most prominent. If there was in him much to command esteem, it could not be said that there was much to love.

The beauty and superior mind of Mademoiselle Phlipon inspired Roland with a very sincere feeling of admiration. With her approbation, he asked her hand from her father; but M. Phlipon had conceived a secret dislike for the rigid philosopher, and refused to give his consent. Manon acted with sudden and unexpected decision. Several circumstances had long rendered it desirable that she should cease to reside in her father's house; she now left it, and retired to the convent where she had formerly spent a year. The narrow income she had inherited from her mother did not permit her to enter this establishment as a boarder: she only rented a small room, where she prepared her own food, consisting of the coarsest and cheapest vegetables. Notwithstanding the severity of her privations, books, music, and drawing, still yielded her their accustomed pleasures; the only interruption to these occupations was the time she devoted to the mending of her father's linen; for, notwithstanding their separation, she still rigidly fulfilled the most minute of her duties towards him. The sense of freedom, and the secret and severe pleasure she always found in stoic endurance, supported her under this trying dispensation.

Roland took six months to reflect on the course he had better adopt with regard to Mademoiselle Phlipon. When he returned to Paris—he had been at Amiens all this time—he determined on offering her his hand once more. The cool prudence of his conduct had greatly abated her first enthusiasm; but the high esteem she felt for his character, more than the sense of her loneliness, induced her, after a little hesitation, to

accept his offer. They were, accordingly, married in 1781: Manon was then in her twenty-fourth year. In this union Madame Roland found peace and happiness; but such happiness as few women would envy. The love of Roland was a love selfish and domineering, to which he expected every feeling of his wife to yield. So jealous was he of her exclusive affection, that he exacted from her the sacrifice of every female friendship of her youth. This injudicious severity would have alienated from him the heart of any other woman; but the high esteem she felt for her husband, the entire confidence he reposed in her, and her own stern sense of duty, enabled Madame Roland to bear the trials of her new lot. A year after her marriage she proceeded with Roland to Amiens, where he was inspector of several important manufactories. It was there that she gave birth to her daughter and only child, that Eudora whom she so passionately loved.

From the first, Madame Roland assisted her husband in the literary labours he undertook: she transcribed his compositions, corrected the proof-sheets, and, with a humility rare in one of her high talents, seldom ventured to oppose or contradict his opinions. Domestic tasks and walks in the country were the only relaxations of this severe and monotonous existence. From Amiens they removed, after four years, to Villefranche near Lyons, the home of Roland. Here Madame Roland, though not without sufficient annoyance from her husband's relatives—a younger brother and an aged mother-in-law—led the same calm domestic life, in which she found the happiness which attends the accomplishment of a noble and self-imposed duty. Her charity to the poor, the kindness with which she assisted them in their necessities, or attended them when they were sick, soon caused her to be almost worshipped in the vicinity of her new home. The opening events of the French Revolution first disturbed this obscure but happy existence.

The dawn of that great convulsion, so full as it was then of glorious hopes, so free from presentiments of evil, filled the republican soul of Madame Roland with a fervent enthusiasm.

which she communicated to the colder mind of her husband. She knew not what events might bring forth for her; but, whether it was good or evil, she rejoiced with her whole heart at the prospect of the general welfare, and energetically protested her willingness to submit without a murmur to whatever fate might decree. "Blood may be shed," she enthusiastically wrote from her retirement to a friend, "but tyranny will not be re-established: her iron throne is tottering throughout all Europe. The efforts of the potentates can only accelerate its fall. Let it fall! even though we should be buried beneath its ruins! A new generation will arise to enjoy the freedom we shall have bequeathed, and to bless our efforts in its cause." A sort of dim consciousness of the future seemed to haunt her mind even in the calm retreat of Villefranche. As early as 1790, we find her protesting, in a letter to one of her political friends, that "whenever it may be her destiny to die, she shall know how to leave life with feelings worthy of her friends and her country." It is easy to imagine with what feelings of deep interest she watched from her solitude the progress of events. The time was gone when she wept at not having been born in one of the republics of old. Now, she proudly thought, France need no longer envy ancient freedom. Was she not pure, regenerated, and free? The political opinions of Roland caused him to be elected one of the first members of the municipality of Lyons: he was sent to Paris by this body in the early part of 1791. Madame Roland accompanied him to the capital.

Almost immediately after her arrival, she hastened to the Constituent Assembly. She was dissatisfied with all she saw and heard there. Her clear and practical mind soon grew wearied of the endless discussions which marked every meeting. She had little faith in constitutional monarchy. That a nation which could regain its entire freedom, should surrender a considerable portion of it to a monarch formerly possessed of unlimited authority, and never regret it; and that this monarch, educated in the idea of divine right, should be satisfied with exactly the portion of power given him by the nation.

and never seek for more, seemed to her equally dangerous and improbable. The event shewed that she was in the right: that abuses had extended too far for constitutional monarchy to prove successful in France, and that a republic was almost the only possible solution of numerous difficulties. Roland had, amongst the members of the extreme party, many connexions who were as dissatisfied with the prospect of constitutional monarchy as Madame Roland. The beauty of this remarkable woman, her enthusiasm and eloquence, soon exercised a powerful fascination over her husband's friends. Péthion, Buzot, Brissot, and Robespierre, met four times a week at her house, to discuss the measures it was expedient for them to adopt in the National Assembly. Madame Roland took no share in those discussions: like Madame de Maintenon, when Louis XIV. and his ministers met in her boudoir, she sat apart, busy with some piece of needle-work, or even writing letters, a deeply-interested though silent observer of all that passed. The tediousness, the hesitation, which marked these lengthy and fruitless conversations annoyed her decisive and energetic mind. She longed to utter her own brief and practical opinions on the subjects discussed, but that feeling of womanly reserve, which never forsook her, always checked the words as they rose to her lips.

Notwithstanding her apparent calmness, she was already seized with the revolutionary fever. She felt, as must have felt all those who were cast on that stormy sea, a new intensity in the power of existence. "We live ten years in twenty-four hours," she wrote to one of her friends, in July 1791. And it was well that it should be so; for those whose hours sped along thus swiftly, gathering years in their brief compass, were destined to perish in their youth, long before the span of life allotted to humanity should have been exhausted. The death of Mirabeau, who alone opposed the tide of democracy and the imprudent flight of the king to Varennes, increased the republican feelings of Madame Roland. She lost all faith in the sincerity of Louis XVI. "How could it be believed," she impatiently asked, "that a king who had fled from the constitution before it was completed, would be faithful

to it when it was so evidently distasteful to him? Why capture him? why bring him back from Varennes? Let the perjured monarch fly, and the republic be proclaimed at once." How much misery, blood, and shame might have been spared to France if Louis XVI., instead of being brought back to degradation and death, had been allowed to proceed on his journey. The young republic, pure and free, would not then have been stained with the innocent blood of one whose only crime was that of being born an absolute king. On the evening of the day when the monarch's flight was discovered, Péthion, Buzot, Brissot, and Robespierre had met as usual at the house of Madame Roland. The three first and her husband agreed with her concerning the expediency of a republic, and considered the flight of Louis as equivalent to an abdication. Robespierre alone differed from them: it was characteristic of him that he never went further than events, though he was always ready to go as far. On this occasion he felt convinced that the royalists had prepared a general massacre of the patriots, and that he should be one of the earliest victims: a belief which gave a more livid hue than usual to his thin and greenish countenance. When Madame Roland and her friends spoke of a republic, Robespierre bit his nails, and eyeing his future victims, then his friends, asked them with a sneer what they meant by a republic.

The republic of their enthusiastic dreams was one of freedom and glory, as pure as it was ideal; time shewed what blood and tyranny it took for Robespierre to found his. In the month of September of the year 1791, Roland, whose mission was over, returned with his wife to Villefranche.

Here Madame Roland resumed her domestic duties; to all appearance as calm as ever. But there had arisen in her soul a fever which could only be quenched in her blood. All the burning enthusiasm of her youth, all the passion which slumbered in her heart, and which her marriage with Roland only repressed, broke forth with the strength of a long-hidden fire. She gave to freedom and her country that love which, in her as in all noble minds, was only a longing for ideal excellence such as no human being or earthly affection could have gratified.

CHAPTER IV.

MADAME ROLAND AND THE GIRONDISTS.

In the month of December of the year 1791, Roland and his wife, unable to remain longer away from the centre of agitation, returned to Paris. The constitution had been accepted by the king. The labours of the Constituent Assembly were over, and those of the Legislative Assembly now began.

Three parties divided the new assembly: the Girondists, the Mountaineers, and the Plain. The first took their name from the department of the Gironde, whence most of them came: they were young, eloquent, and enthusiastic men; but rash, inexperienced, and deficient in firmness or stability. With far less talent, and much more violence, than the Girondists, the Mountaineers carried in their convictions an earnestness and fanaticism which could scarcely fail to insure their ultimate triumph. They were called Mountaineers, from the elevated benches on which they sat in the Assembly. The name of Plain was given to a weak and moderate party which occupied the central and lowest portion of the house.

The unhappy dissensions of the Girondists and Mountaineers, which proved the ruin of the republic, did not begin in earnest until the fall of monarchy. Previously to the 10th of August, serious differences arose between these two parties; but they were not such as to prevent them from acting together every time a new blow could be directed against royal authority. This bond of republican feeling gradually drew them around Madame Roland. Without seeking for it, she thus found herself ere long the nucleus of a large and powerful party. The singular and expressive beauty of her

face and person, which reminded some of her admirers of Rousseau's Julie, the native elegance and dignity of her manners, her harmonious voice and flowing language, and, above all, the fervour and eloquence of her patriotism, seemed to mark her out for the part which had been instinctively assigned to her. She presided over political meetings with so much tact and discretion, as to appear a calm spectator; whilst she, in reality, imparted her own fervent enthusiasm to all those who came near her. The young and handsome Barbaroux, the elegant Buzot, the licentious Louvet, Sillery, the husband of Madame de Genlis, Vergniaud, the orator, equally admired and respected her. Though possessed of more than ordinary attractions, and married to a man who might have been her father; though surrounded by men, young, handsome, and eloquent; Madame Roland, strong in her severe purity, preserved her character and reputation unsullied. Her friends spoke of her with mingled veneration and enthusiasm. "O Roland! Roland!" exclaimed Louvet, after her untimely death, "how many virtues have they assassinated with thee! how much virtue, beauty, and genius have they not immolated, in the person of thy wife—a far greater man than thou ever wert!"

The admiration his wife excited was the cause of Roland's rise and ruin. When the Girondist ministry was formed, in March 1792, his friends had him named Minister of the Interior. Madame Roland, without allowing herself to be dazzled by her new position, quietly removed from her little apartment in the Rue de la Harpe to the splendid hotel formerly occupied by Calonne and Necker. Her political power during this her husband's first ministry was, like that she had previously exercised, great though occult. She influenced not only the acts of her husband, who reposed unbounded confidence in her, but likewise those of the entire Girondist party. She generally sat in a little drawing-room, furnished with extreme simplicity, and where Roland received his colleagues and most intimate friends. They concerted their measures in her presence, and often asked and

took her advice. Her tact and gentleness were especially displayed in moderating their discussions whenever they became too animated.

Madame Roland instinctively imparted to the Girondists that feeling of mistrust against the king, which was strengthened in her by the earnestness of her republican tendencies. She had no faith in the sincerity of Louis XVI. since the flight to Varennes, and despised his vacillating weakness. She believed the calumnious imputations cast on the morals of the queen, and hated her as the persevering enemy of freedom. If she was too severe, and often unjust, towards the sovereigns, Madame Roland did not err when she pronounced the constitution impracticable. Experience only strengthened this conviction, which the Girondists gradually learned to share. They had never been very sincere partisans of constitutional monarchy, and they now affected to consider the sovereign as a secret foe, whom it was their duty to watch and detect. Let it not be forgotten that neither Louis XVI. nor Marie Antoinette could appear to their contemporaries as they have since been seen by posterity, with a halo of misfortune to purify and exalt their characters. They were then real, unromantic, and imprudent human beings, most awkwardly and unhappily placed in the path of the revolution. Notwithstanding their prejudices, the Girondist ministers were frequently touched by the evident goodness of heart of the king; but the imprudently-avowed hatred of the queen for the constitution, and her well-known influence over her husband, steeled them against Louis XVI., even more effectually than the persevering mistrust of Madame Roland. This mistrust, caused by a jealous love of freedom, is the only stain which rests on her political career. It unfortunately happens that, in times of national strife and convulsion, few, even amongst the most noble-minded, are willing to believe in the sincerity of their opponents; they are thus led, not only into injustice, but into great political errors. The exaggerated doubts of Madame Roland, and of the Girondists, concerning the sincerity of the king, ultimately

proved as fatal to themselves as to the sovereign. In one respect, however, the penetration of Madame Roland did not deceive her: she perceived from the first the double part Dumouriez was playing, and she repeatedly warned her husband and his colleagues of that general's insincerity.

With this mistrust on one side, and a hesitation which almost warranted it on the other, the policy of the ministers and that of the king daily became more irreconcilable. The ministers exacted that he should sanction the decrees of the assembly against the emigrants and the clergy, and Louis refused to give those decrees the sanction by which they were to become law. Madame Roland, rendered impatient by this delay, and feeling anxious to screen her husband from any responsibility he might incur, advised him to write a letter to the king urging him to compliance, and to keep a copy of this letter for his personal justification. Roland consented, and, as his wife always assisted him in his literary compositions, he now requested her to undertake this which she had suggested: she complied. This famous letter was couched in the most austere language: it contained truths, but too harshly expressed to be acceptable. Had it been written to a powerful monarch, this letter would have been courageous and noble, but addressed to a weak and captive king on the brink of ruin, it was cruel and ungenerous. Her hatred for royalty, and her zeal for the republic, rendered Madame Roland unjust. The only effect which the letter she had written in her husband's name produced upon the king, was to make him persist in his conduct, and dismiss his ministry. Roland immediately read the copy of his letter to the assembly, as a justification of his conduct. The resistance of the king, and his dismissal of the popular ministers, heightened the deep feeling of irritation which already existed against Louis XVI. Roland and the other ministers were hailed as martyrs to their patriotism, and Roland's letter was ordered to be printed, and sent to the eighty-three departments.

The power of Madame Roland was not such as to vanish

with station. Her influence was never greater than in the humble apartment of the faubourg St Jacques, to which she retired on leaving the minister's splendid hotel. The Girondists, now openly aiming at a republic, gathered around her, and spoke with more freedom than they had yet displayed. Amongst those who then visited her assiduously was Barbaroux, whom a vague conjecture asserts to have been the object of that secret passion to which Madame Roland remotely alludes in a passage of her Memoirs.

Barbaroux was the handsomest of the Girondists: he came from Marseilles, where the descendants of the Grecian colonists often inherit the old classic beauty of their ancestors. Handsome as an Antinous, eloquent and patriotic, Barbaroux may have appeared to Madame Roland the realisation of her youthful dreams. Her beauty and noble character inspired him with a deep and respectful admiration. He soon discerned, that if "of all modern men Roland most resembled Cato," it was to his wife that he owed his courage and talents. They frequently conversed on the state of the country, on the perfidy of the court, and the failing cause of freedom. Once, when Roland had been expressing his mournful apprehensions, "his wife," observes Barbaroux in his Memoirs, "wept as she listened to him; I wept myself, as I looked upon her." With the promptness which characterised him, Barbaroux suggested to his friends that the south of France might be made the stronghold of freedom. As the enthusiastic young man developed his plan, and spoke of the republican tendencies of his countrymen, the austere brow of Roland gradually became more serene, whilst his beautiful wife, drying her tears, listened with hopeful joy. If any love did indeed exist between these two kindred spirits, it was such as neither would have blushed to avow.

A few days after Roland's dismissal from the ministry, the events of the 20th of June took place; the 10th of August and the fall of monarchy speedily followed. Roland and his colleagues were recalled to power: his wife re-entered the minister's hotel; the triumphant Girondists once more

gathered around her: but their day was gone, and, after sharing their errors and illusions, Madame Roland was now destined to endure their sufferings and noble martyrdom.

The events of the 10th of August could never have taken place but for the union of the Girondists and the Mountaineers. Casting aside their dissensions, the two parties united their efforts for that one day: but they renewed their quarrel on the morrow. In their impatience of once more getting into power and founding the republic, the Girondists overlooked the immense advantage they gave to a daring and unscrupulous party. When their object was gained, they wished to check the progress of the anarchy they had helped to create; but the Mountaineers had now their own ends to further, and they were prepared to make their road to popular favour through blood, were it so needed. They soon perceived how shrinkingly the Girondists held back whenever the blood of the innocent was at stake, and yet how reluctant they were to yield their popularity. The Mountaineers made a fearful use of the scruples and weakness of their antagonists; who now found themselves, like Mirabeau at the epoch of his death, in the path of the torrent they had let loose. Compelled to endure the massacres of September and the execution of Louis XVI. for the sake of their own safety, they revolted, at length, against this sanguinary tyranny, and perished for having protested against the Reign of Terror.

No sooner was monarchy overthrown than the Girondists perceived their weakness. Danton and his accomplices organised a general massacre of the royalists then imprisoned in Paris. Roland, though Minister of the Interior, only possessed a nominal power: the real authority was invested in the hands of Danton; the use he made of that authority was to deluge the prisons with blood. Never were female heroism and devotedness displayed more conspicuously than during those fearful massacres. They began on the 2d of September 1792, at the Abbaye, with the murder of thirty priests, and of the Swiss soldiers imprisoned since the 10th of August.

An usher named Maillard attempted to give some shew of legality to these hideous doings. He presided in the prison over a mock tribunal, before which the victims were summoned in rapid succession: a few were purposely acquitted. Amongst those who came to receive their sentence, was M. de Sombreuil, the obnoxious governor of the Invalides, and whose name has been immortalised by the heroic devotedness of his daughter. Her love for her father had induced her to share his captivity and dangers ever since his arrest. On the day of the massacre, she stood, from the beginning, near the tribunal, within hearing of all that passed, ready to perish with her father. He came, was heard, and condemned. The door of the court-yard where the victims met their fate opened, but Mademoiselle de Sombreuil threw herself before the old man; she clung to him with the energy of despair, and in heart-rending accents besought the blood-stained murderers to spare her father's life. Moved by her tears and passionate entreaties, they granted the request; but on a fearful condition: blood was then flowing around them like water; the blood of the aristocrats; would she prove her patriotism by drinking a glass of the still warm tide. "Give it," she energetically replied, "you will see what a daughter can do for her father;" and she drank unshrinkingly. The courage of her love awed the monsters around her: struck with admiration, they protected her against their comrades, and took her and her father home in triumph.

The youthful daughter of the author Cazotte emulated the heroism of Mademoiselle de Sombreuil, whose room she shared in the Abbaye. The enthusiastic piety of Cazotte, and his correspondence with Laporte, were the crimes for which he had been incarcerated. His daughter, of her own accord, accompanied him to prison; she knew some time beforehand of the massacres that were going to take place—for the fact was generally suspected—and endeavoured to conciliate the ferocious Marseillaise, by whom it was to be effected. Softened by her youth and beauty, they promised to spare her father's life. Notwithstanding this assurance, Mademoiselle Cazotte accompanied her father to the tribunal;

he was condemned; but when the door opened that led to the fatal court, his child, like Mademoiselle de Sombreuil, threw herself before him, and interceded for his life. The Marseillaise, faithful to their promise, saved them both from the fury of the crowd, and did not leave them until they had found a safe asylum. One of the men who had rendered themselves guilty of this act of compassion, confessed the fact, with some misgiving, to Marat on the following day. Thirsting as he did for the blood of the aristocrats, Marat could not restrain his tears as he heard of the heroic devotedness of Cazotte's daughter. "Nay," he exclaimed, "the father who had such a child deserved to live." The pure and holy love of Mademoiselle Cazotte could not, however, shield her father from further danger: a short time after the massacres of September, he was again incarcerated; his daughter was sent to a different prison, and not released until he had perished on the scaffold, lest she should soften judges as she had softened murderers.

The royalist ladies imprisoned after the 10th of August were, from the beginning of the massacre, marked out as fit victims of the popular hatred. The Princess de Tarente gloried with undaunted courage, in her friendship for the queen, defied her murderers, and roused, by her daring spirit, whatever trace of generosity still lingered in their hearts: she was dismissed unhurt. The Princess of Lamballe proved less fortunate. Her father-in-law, the Duke of Penthièvre, who loved her as his own child, spent a hundred thousand crowns in order to purchase her life from her gaolers and judges. Her known attachment to Marie Antoinette was the only crime of this beautiful and amiable woman. She was incarcerated in the prison of La Force, and for two days remained in her cell apparently forgotten by the murderers: from her room she could hear the sounds of the massacre below; rendered almost unconscious by terror, she only wakened from one fainting fit to sink into another. On the second day two National Guards entered her room, and abruptly bade her follow them to the Abbaye: she rose, hastily attired herself, and obeyed. On reaching the tribunal, and beholding the

traces of the recent massacre, she fainted away with horror. When she recovered consciousness, her judges bade her swear to love equality and freedom, and hate kings and queens. "I can take the first oath," she replied; "but hatred of the king and queen I cannot swear, for it is not in my heart." "Swear," said one of the judges, "or you perish." The princess remained silent. They then ordered her to be taken out into the street, recommending her to cry out, "Long live the nation!" as soon as she left the prison. She forgot to do so, and uttered an exclamation of horror on beholding the pavement strewn with corpses. Her pure and touching beauty interested many of those who now gazed upon her, and, anxious to save her, they exclaimed from the crowd, "Cry out, 'Long live the nation!' and nothing shall be done to thee." The princess was, unfortunately, too terrified to obey: the silence of fear was taken for the refusal of defiance: a blow was aimed at her head; her blood flowed; in an instant she was felled to the earth, and murdered, with circumstances of the most atrocious barbarity. Her head, borne on a pike, was carried all over Paris, and displayed before the windows of the royal family in the Temple. The king threw himself before Marie Antoinette, and drew her away before her look could rest on the livid features of her murdered friend.

The Princess of Lamballe was not the last victim: her death, which made the old Duke of Penthièvre die with grief, was but the prelude of deeds more hideous still, but foreign to the purport of this work.

Théroigne de Méricourt, and women of her stamp, took an active share in these massacres. The wives of the "égorgeurs" (cut-throats) regularly brought their husbands their soup, as though they were engaged in some ordinary work. Heroism, devoted love, pity, fierceness, and callous indifference, were alike displayed during those days of terror; which, whatever may be said to the contrary, were indeed "the crime of a few men, but not the crime of liberty." *

* Lamartine, Hist. des Girondins, vol. iii., p. 400.

The soul of Madame Roland was filled with horror at what she saw and heard. If anything increased her despair, it was the consciousness that her husband, though Minister of the Interior, could not prevent, could not do anything. "We are under the knife of Robespierre and Marat," she despairingly wrote to a friend, on the 5th of September; and on the 9th she added, "You know my enthusiasm for the revolution; well, I am ashamed of it now: it has been sullied by monsters; it is hideous." The proclamation of the republic, which at another time would have filled her with joy, now seemed to her prophetic soul but the forerunner of the fall of the men by whom that republic had been founded. The Girondists themselves were not unconscious of their approaching destiny. On the evening of the day on which the republic was proclaimed, they met at the house of Madame Roland. At the close of their frugal supper, Vergniaud rose, and filled his glass, in order to drink to the republic. Before he drank, Madame Roland scattered rose leaves, from her bouquet, over the wine, according to the custom of the ancients. When the beverage was quaffed, Vergniaud, setting down the glass, turned towards Barbaroux, and said, in a low voice, "Branches of the cypress-tree, Barbaroux, not roses, should have been scattered on our wine to-night: who knows, if, in drinking to a republic whose cradle is steeped in the blood of September, we be not drinking to our own deaths? Nevertheless, and if this wine were my blood, I would still quaff it to equality and freedom."

The energetic protest of Roland against the massacres drew down on him, and on his wife, who was known to have inspired it, the hatred of Marat and Danton. No consideration of policy or safety could induce Madame Roland to suffer the intimacy or protection of a man who always appeared to her stained with the blood of September. Notwithstanding Danton's attempts to effect a reconciliation, she never ceased—from September 1792 to the execution of Louis XVI. in January 1793, when Roland resigned—to urge her husband to a noble though unavailing resistance against the power of the

Mountaineers. This energetic abhorrence of crime and criminals she communicated to the whole party of the Gironde. The passion and eloquence which had hastened the progress of the revolution, were now all directed to the holy object of purifying it from the stains cast upon it by a few guilty men. And in this, her second and nobler task, she displayed still more fearlessness and independence than when she urged her friends to the overthrow of royalty. The power of Madame Roland over the Girondists at this epoch, and the apprehensions her eloquence and energy excited, are proved by the hatred which was suddenly displayed against her by the Jacobins. Marat included her in his denunciations against the Girondists, and assailed her in the coarsest terms in his *Ami du Peuple.* Matters went so far that her life and that of Roland were openly threatened. On several occasions, they were persuaded by their friends to leave the ministerial hotel, and sleep in some secure place. Madame Roland complied very reluctantly. Her heroic soul told her that if such a crime were to be committed by the anarchists, the very horror it would inspire might be useful to liberty. She justly thought that those who engage in a revolution, and who value honour and freedom, must learn to count life as nothing. Towards the close of her husband's ministry, when events became daily more critical, she absolutely refused to leave the hotel. The only precaution she adopted, was to sleep with a pistol under her pillow, in order to protect herself from the brutality of those who might attempt her life.

The quarrels of the Jacobins and the Girondists became more bitter and incessant as they drew to a close. The Girondists inexorably repulsed Danton every time he attempted a reconciliation: they would either have a pure republic, or they would perish. Urged by Madame Roland, they, moreover, resolved to attack Robespierre; whose power had rapidly increased. In a speech of memorable eloquence, Louvet unveiled the secret ambition of the revolutionary pharisee: but the attack only recoiled on its authors, and tended to strengthen the power of the future dictator. The resolve of the

Convention to accuse and judge the king might alone have warned the Girondists of their fate. A friend of Madame Roland was with her and her husband when they learned this important decision of the Convention. "The Convention both accuses and judges," exclaimed Roland; "it is dishonoured!" His wife said nothing; but when their child came in, she pressed her to her heart, and wept silently. Impatient to ruin a woman from whose talents and energy they felt they had so much to fear, the Jacobins sought to implicate Madame Roland in an imaginary royalist conspiracy, through the agency of a contemptible spy named Viard. She was summoned before the bar of the Convention, in order to justify herself from Viard's accusations. She appeared in the assembly with the easy dignity that always characterised her. On being asked her name, "My name is Roland," she replied, "a name of which I am proud; for it is that of a good and honourable man." Several other questions were addressed to her, such as, "If she knew Viard? when she had seen him? and what had passed between them?" She answered, that Viard had twice written to her to obtain an interview; that she had seen him once; and, after some conversation, having discovered him to be a spy, had dismissed him with contempt. The evident falsehood of Viard's accusation, and the simple dignity of Madame Roland's replies, told equally in her favour. Amidst the general applause of the members, the president decreed that the honours of the sitting belonged to her. The Jacobins in the galleries remained silent. Marat rose, and pointing to them, gloomily observed: "Look at that public; it is wiser than you are."

The trial of Louis XVI. betrayed the increasing weakness of the Girondists. Many of them not only sympathised with him as a man, but thought that the nation, though it might depose, could not judge its monarch. But, with this conviction, they, nevertheless, sanctioned the trial, and took part in it; lest their refusal should furnish the Jacobins with a pretence of accusing them of royalist tendencies. Two days after the king's execution, on the 23d of January 1793, Roland re-

signed his post; which had long been purely nominal. Oppressed with grief at the dangers she foresaw for the republic, Madame Roland lived in great retirement. A few of her friends still visited, however, the woman whom Marat and Camile Desmoulins attacked in their pamphlets, and whom Danton openly denounced as the Circe of the republic. The only charm she used was that of her own heroic spirit, which she sought to infuse into the men who struggled for freedom against anarchy. This struggle was drawing to a close. After several unsuccessful attempts, the Jacobins resolved to coerce the Convention into submission to their will: that will was, that the twenty-two Girondist members should be accused of treason, arrested, and condemned. For that purpose they organised an insurrection, which lasted from the 30th of May to the 2d of June. The Convention, threatened, insulted, and besieged, at length yielded to force, and passed the decree which doomed its most illustrious and eloquent members to death, and France to anarchy and terror.

The hatred of the triumphant Mountaineers did not forget either Roland or his wife. On the evening of the 31st of May, six armed men, provided with an order from the Revolutionary Committee, went to arrest the ex-minister. Roland energetically declared that nothing but force should induce him to obey the order of this illegal power. The men, not daring to enforce their mandate, left a guard upon Roland and retired for new orders. Madame Roland, though seriously ill, rose, dressed herself hastily, and immediately proceeded to the Convention, to protest against the attempted outrage. She made her way through the troops and armed men who surrounded the Tuileries, but could not succeed in gaining admittance to the hall, where the Girondists were then engaged in their death struggle.

From the place where she stood waiting, she could hear, however, the sounds of the stormy debate within. Vergniaud, on learning that she was there, came and exchanged a few words with her. She urged him to procure her admittance; she thought that an energetic and eloquent reproof might

rouse, perchance, the Convention from the stupor into which it had been thrown by the audacity of the Jacobins. Vergniaud dissuaded her from this course, of which he shewed her the perfect uselessness. She returned home to consult with Roland. He had escaped by a back-door, and she found him concealed in the house of a friend. After a short deliberation between them, it was agreed that she should return to the Convention. She did so; but when she reached the Tuileries, she found that the sitting was over: a group of canoneers, who still lingered on the Place de la Revolution, where they had come to intimidate the Convention, informed her that the Jacobins had prevailed, and that their next triumph would be the decree of accusation against the Girondists; which the assembly could not fail to pass when it met on the following day.

Madame Roland had long been aware that when her friends fell, she must fall with them. She was known to have shared their principles, and guided many of their measures; the blame of her husband's acts had been publicly thrown upon her by Danton in the hall of the Convention, and her political part had been sufficiently remarkable to make her feel that she was bound, in honour, to accept its responsibility, even though that responsibility should be death on a scaffold. It was this sense of duty that rendered her unwilling to leave Paris, as she might have done, before the 31st of May. Conscious of her own innocence, and of the purity of her motives, she disdained a flight unworthy alike of her character and of her destiny. The success of the Jacobins on the 31st of May confirmed her in this resolve. The friend at whose house Roland had taken refuge could not let her share his asylum; she seized this as a pretence, and returned home to await her fate. Overcome with fatigue she was yielding to sleep, when her servant entered her room and informed her that several armed men requested to see her. This was no more than she had expected. The promptness with which they made use of their power shewed her how deep and unrelenting was the hatred of her enemies. She rose, dressed herself carefully, and

appeared before her visitors; they shewed her a warrant for her apprehension, in which the motives of her arrest were not even set forth. She knew the document to be illegal, but perceiving the uselessness of resistance, calmly submitted. She had already provided for the safety of her daughter, and all she now asked for was leisure to make her own preparations. She did so with perfect calmness, notwithstanding the crowd of individuals of every sort who filled the apartment. At seven in the morning everything was in readiness to take her to prison, and she bade her daughter and the weeping servants a last farewell; gently exhorting them to resignation.

The men who arrested her beheld with surprise the marks of affection bestowed on a woman whom the calumnies of Marat had taught them to consider with abhorrence. A hackney-coach waited below to convey her to the Abbaye; she walked towards it between two rows of armed men, who followed the coach when she had entered it. "To the guillotine!" cried a few women in the crowd. "Shall we draw down the blinds?" asked one of the commissioners. Madame Roland calmly refused: "Innocence," she said, "has no need to put on the aspect of crime." "You have more strength of mind than most men," observed the commissioner; "and you will wait patiently for justice!" "Justice!" she passionately exclaimed; "were justice done to me, I should not be here to-day: but I shall walk as calmly to the scaffold as I now proceed to prison."

That prison was reached ere long. Was this, then, the goal of those high dreams and aspirations towards freedom which had haunted her mind even from the days of her childhood?

CHAPTER V.

CHARLOTTE CORDAY.

Amongst the women of the French Revolution, there is one who stands essentially apart: a solitary episode of the eventful story. She appears for a moment, performs a deed,—heroic as to the intention, criminal as to the means,—and disappears for ever: lost in the shadow of time—an unfathomed mystery.

And it is, perhaps, this very mystery that has invested with so much interest the name of one known by a single deed; which, though intended by her to deliver her country, changed little in its destinies. To admire her entirely is impossible; to condemn her is equally difficult. No one can read her history without feeling that, to judge her absolutely, lies not in the province of man. Beautiful, pure, gentle, and a murderess, she attracts and repels us in almost equal degrees; like all those beings whose nature is inexplicable and strange, according to the ordinary standard of humanity. Although it is generally acknowledged that she did not exercise over contemporary events that repressing power for which she sacrificed her life, it is felt, nevertheless, that no history of the times in which she lived, is complete without her name; and to her brief and tragic history an eloquent modern historian * has devoted some of his most impressive pages. This would be a sufficient apology for introducing her here, were not, moreover, her name as closely linked with the history of the Girondists as that of Madame Roland. If one was the chief of that ill-fated party, the other undertook to be their avenger.

* Lamartine.

The 31st of May was the signal of the fall and dispersion of the Girondists. Some, like Barbaroux, Buzot, Louvet, and their friends, retired to the provinces, which they endeavoured to rouse for one last struggle. Others, like Madame Roland and the twenty-two, prepared themselves in their silent prison solitude for death and the scaffold. The name of the Girondists now became a sound as proscribed as that of royalist had been during their brief sway. No voice gifted with power was raised throughout the republic in favour of the men by whom, in the midst of such enthusiastic acclamations, that republic had been founded. France was rapidly sinking into that state of silent apathy which foreboded the Reign of Terror: discouraged by their experience of the past, men lost their faith in humanity, and selfishly despaired of the future. A maiden's heroic spirit alone conceived the daring project of saving those who had so long and so nobly striven for freedom; or, if this might not be, of avenging their fall, and striking terror into the hearts of their foes, by a deed of solemn immolation, worthy of the stern sacrifices of paganism, offered up of yore on the blood-stained shrines of the goddess Nemesis.

This maiden was Marie-Anne Charlotte of Corday and of Armont, one of the last descendants of a noble though impoverished Norman family, which counted amongst its near relatives, Fontenelle, the wit and philosopher of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and amongst its ancestors, the father of the great tragic poet of France, Pierre Corneille.

Her father, Jacques of Corday and of Armont, was a younger son of this noble line. He was, however, poorer than many of the peasants amongst whom he lived, cultivating with his own hands his narrow inheritance. He married in early life a lady of gentle blood, but as poor as himself. They had five children and a noble name to support, in a vain show of dignity, on their insufficient income. It thus happened that Charlotte, their fourth child and second daughter, was born in a thatched dwelling, in the village of Saint-Saturnin des Lignerets; and that in the register of the parish church where

she was baptized, on the 28th of July 1768, the day after her birth, she is described as "born in lawful wedlock of Jacques Francois of Corday, esquire, sieur of Armont, and of the noble dame Marie Charlotte-Jacqueline, of Gauthier des Authieux, his wife." It was under these difficult circumstances, which embittered his temper, and often caused him to inveigh in energetic terms against the injustice of the law of primogeniture, that M. d'Armont reared his family. As soon as they were of age, his sons entered the army; one of his daughters died young; and he became a widower when the other two were emerging from childhood into youth. They remained for some time with their father, but at length entered the Abbaye aux Dames, in the neighbouring town of Caen.

The greatest portion of the youth of Charlotte Corday—to give her the name by which she is generally known—was spent in the calm obscurity of her convent solitude. Many high visions, many burning dreams and lofty aspirations, already haunted her imaginative and enthusiastic mind, as she slowly paced the silent cloisters, or rested, lost in thought, beneath the shadow of the ancient elms. It is said that, like Madame Roland, she contemplated secluding herself for ever from the world in her monastic retreat; but, affected by the scepticism of the age, which penetrated even beyond convent walls, she gave up this project. From these early religious feelings, Charlotte derived, however, the calm devotedness which characterised her brief career: for though self-sacrifice may not be the exclusive attribute of Christianity, it cannot be denied that the deep humility by which it is accompanied —a feeling almost unknown to the ancients—is in itself the very spirit of Christ. The peaceful and solemn shadow of the old cloister favoured the mild seriousness of Charlotte's character. Within the precincts of her sacred retreat she grew up in grave and serene loveliness, a being fit for the gentlest duties of woman's household life, or for one of those austere and fearless deeds which lead to the scaffold and give martyrdom in a holy cause.

The scepticism that prevailed for the last few years preced-

ing the revolution was not the sensual atheism which had disgraced the eighteenth century so long. The faith in a first and eternal Cause, in the sacredness of human rights and the holiness of duty, was firmly held by many noble spirits, who hailed with enthusiasm the first dawn of democracy. This faith was blended, in the soul of Charlotte Corday, with a passionate admiration of antiquity. All the austerity and republican enthusiasm of her illustrious ancestor, Pierre Corneille, seemed to have come down to his young descendant. Even Rousseau and Raynal, the apostles of democracy, had no pages that could absorb her so deeply as those of ancient history, with its stirring deeds and immortal recollections. Often, like Manon Phlipon in the recess of her father's workshop, might Charlotte Corday be seen, in her convent cell, thoughtfully bending over an open volume of Plutarch; that powerful and eloquent historian of all heroic sacrifices.

When the Abbaye aux Dames was closed, in consequence of the revolution, Charlotte was in her twentieth year, in the prime of life and of her wonderful beauty; and never, perhaps, did a vision of more dazzling loveliness, step forth from beneath the dark convent portal into the light of the free and open world. She was rather tall, but admirably proportioned, with a figure full of native grace and dignity: her hands, arms, and shoulders, were models of pure sculptural beauty. An expression of singular gentleness and serenity characterised her fair, oval countenance and regular features. Her open forehead, dark and well-arched eyebrows, and eyes of a gray so deep that it was often mistaken for blue, added to her naturally grave and meditative appearance; her nose was straight and well-formed, her mouth serious but exquisitely beautiful. Like most of the women of the fine Norman race, she had a complexion of transparent purity; enhanced by the rich brown hair which fell in thick curls around her neck, according to the fashion of the period. A simple severity characterised her dress of sombre hue, and the low and becoming lace cap which she habitually wore is still known by her name in France. Her whole aspect was fraught with so

much modest grace and dignity, that, notwithstanding her youth, the first feeling she invariably inspired was one of respect, blended with involuntary admiration for a being of such pure and touching loveliness.

On leaving the convent in which she had been educated, Charlotte Corday went to reside with her aunt, Madame Coutellier de Bretteville Gouville; an old royalist lady, who inhabited an ancient-looking house in one of the principal streets of Caen. There the young girl, who had inherited a little property, spent several years, chiefly engaged in watching the progress of the revolution. The feelings of her father were similarly engrossed: he wrote several pamphlets in favour of the revolutionary principles; and one in which he attacked the right of primogeniture. His republican tendencies confirmed Charlotte in her opinions; but of the deep, overpowering strength which those opinions acquired in her soul, during the long hours she daily devoted to meditation, no one ever knew, until a stern and fearful deed—more stern and fearful in one so gentle—had revealed it to all France. A silent reserve characterised this epoch of Charlotte Corday's life: her enthusiasm was not external, but inward: she listened to the discussions which were carried on around her without taking a part in them herself. She seemed to feel instinctively that great thoughts are always better nursed in the heart's solitude: that they can only lose their native depth and intensity by being revealed too freely before the indifferent gaze of the world. Those with whom she then occasionally conversed took little heed of the substance of her discourse, and could remember nothing of it when she afterwards became celebrated; but all recollected well her voice, and spoke with strange enthusiasm of its pure, silvery sound. Like Madame Roland, whom she resembled in so many respects, Charlotte possessed this rare and great attraction; and there was something so touching in her youthful and almost childlike utterance of heroic thoughts, that it affected even to tears those who heard her, on her trial, calmly defending herself from the infamous accusations of her judges, and glorying,

with the same low, sweet tones, in the deadly deed which had brought her before them.

The fall of the Girondists, on the 31st of May, first suggested to Charlotte Corday the possibility of giving an active shape to her hitherto passive feelings. She watched with intense, though still silent, interest the progress of events, concealing her secret indignation and thoughts of vengeance under her habitually calm aspect. Those feelings were heightened in her soul by the presence of the fugitive Girondists, who had found a refuge in Caen, and were urging the Normans to raise an army to march on Paris. She found a pretence to call upon Barbaroux, then with his friends at the Intendance. She came twice, accompanied by an old servant, and protected by her own modest dignity. Péthion saw her in the hall, where she was waiting for the handsome Girondist, and observed, with a smile, "So, the beautiful aristocrat is come to see republicans." "Citizen Péthion," she replied, "you now judge me without knowing me, but a time will come when you shall learn who I am." With Barbaroux, Charlotte chiefly conversed of the imprisoned Girondists; of Madame Roland and Marat. The name of this man had long haunted her with a mingled feeling of dread and horror. To Marat she ascribed the proscription of the Girondists, the woes of the republic, and on him she resolved to avenge her ill-fated country. Charlotte was not aware that Marat was but the tool of Danton and Robespierre. "If such actions could be counselled," afterwards said Barbaroux, "it is not Marat whom we would have advised her to strike."

Whilst this deadly thought was daily strengthening itself in Charlotte's mind, she received several offers of marriage. She declined them, on the plea of wishing to remain free: but strange, indeed, must have seemed to her, at that moment, those proposals of earthly love. One of those whom her beauty had enamoured, M. de Franquelin, a young volunteer in the cause of the Girondists, died of grief on learning her fate; his last request was, that her portrait, and a few letters

he had formerly received from her, might be buried with him in his grave.

For several days after her last interview with Barbaroux, Charlotte brooded silently over her great thought; often meditating on the history of Judith. Her aunt subsequently remembered that, on entering her room one morning, she found an old Bible open on her bed: the verse in which it is recorded that "the Lord had gifted Judith with a special beauty and fairness" for the deliverance of Israel was underlined with a pencil.

On another occasion Madame de Bretteville found her niece weeping alone; she inquired the cause of her tears. "They flow," replied Charlotte, "for the misfortunes of my country." Heroic and devoted as she was, she then also wept, perchance, over her own youth and beauty, so soon to be sacrificed for ever. No personal considerations altered her resolve: she procured a passport, provided herself with money, and paid a farewell visit to her father, to inform him that, considering the unsettled condition of France, she thought it best to retire to England. He approved of her intention, and bade her adieu. On returning to Caen, Charlotte told the same tale to Madame de Bretteville, left a secret provision for an old nurse, and distributed the little property she possessed amongst her friends.

It was on the morning of the 9th of July 1793, that she left the house of her aunt, without trusting herself with a last farewell. Her most earnest wish was, when her deed should have been accomplished, to perish, wholly unknown, by the hands of an infuriated multitude. The woman who could contemplate such a fate, and calmly devote herself to it, without one selfish thought of future renown, had indeed the heroic soul of a martyr.

Her journey to Paris was marked by no other event than the unwelcome attentions of some Jacobins with whom she travelled. One of them, struck by her modest and gentle beauty, made her a very serious proposal of marriage: she playfully evaded his request, but promised that he should

learn who and what she was at some future period. On entering Paris, she proceeded immediately to the Hotel de la Providence, Rue des Vieux Augustins, not far from Marat's dwelling. Here she rested for two days, before calling on her intended victim. Nothing can mark more forcibly the singular calmness of her mind: she felt no hurry to accomplish the deed for which she had journeyed so far, and over which she had meditated so deeply: her soul remained serene and undaunted to the last. The room which she occupied, and which has often been pointed out to inquiring strangers, was a dark and wretched attic, into which light scarcely ever penetrated. There she read again the volume of Plutarch she had brought with her,—unwilling to part from her favourite author, even in her last hours,—and probably composed that energetic address to the people which was found upon her after her apprehension. One of the first acts of Charlotte was to call on the Girondist, Duperret, for whom she was provided with a letter from Barbaroux, relative to the supposed business she had in Paris: her real motive was to learn how she could see Marat. She had first intended to strike him in the Champ de Mars, on the 14th of July, the anniversary of the fall of the Bastile, when a great and imposing ceremony was to take place. The festival being delayed, she resolved to seek him in the Convention, and immolate him on the very summit of the mountain; but Marat was too ill to attend the meetings of the National Assembly: this Charlotte learned from Duperret. She resolved, nevertheless, to go to the Convention, in order to fortify herself in her resolve. Mingling with the horde of Jacobins who crowded the galleries, she watched with deep attention the scene below. Saint Just was then urging the Convention to proscribe Lanjuinais, the heroic defender of the Girondists. A young foreigner, a friend of Lanjuinais, and who stood at a short distance from Charlotte, noticed the expression of stern indignation which gathered over her features; until, like one overpowered by her feelings and apprehensive of displaying them too openly, she abruptly left the place. Struck with her whole appear-

ance, he followed her out; a sudden shower of rain, which compelled them to seek shelter under the same archway, afforded him an opportunity of entering into conversation with her. When she learned that he was a friend of Lanjuinais, she waived her reserve, and questioned him with much interest concerning Madame Roland and the Girondists. She also asked him about Marat, with whom she said she had business. "Marat is ill; it would be better for you to apply to the public accuser, Fouquier Tinville," said the stranger. "I do not want him now, but I may have to deal with him yet," she significantly replied.

Perceiving that the rain did not cease, she requested her companion to procure her a conveyance; he complied; and, before parting from her, begged to be favoured with her name. She refused; adding, however, "You will know it before long." With Italian courtesy, he kissed her hand as he assisted her into the fiacre. She smiled, and bade him farewell.

Charlotte perceived that to call on Marat was the only means by which she might accomplish her purpose. She did so on the morning of the 13th of July, having first purchased a knife in the Palais Royal, and written him a note, in which she requested an interview. She was refused admittance. She then wrote him a second note, more pressing than the first, and in which she represented herself as persecuted for the cause of freedom. Without waiting to see what effect this note might produce, she called again at half-past seven the same evening.

Marat then resided in the Rue des Cordeliers, in a gloomy-looking house, which has since been demolished. His constant fears of assassination were shared by those around him; the porter, seeing a strange woman pass by his lodge without pausing to make any inquiry, ran out and called her back. She did not heed his remonstrance, but swiftly ascended the old stone staircase, until she had reached the door of Marat's apartment. It was cautiously opened by Albertine, a woman with whom Marat cohabited, and who passed for his wife.

Recognising the same young and handsome girl who had already called on her husband, and animated, perhaps, by a feeling of jealous mistrust, Albertine refused to admit her; Charlotte insisted with great earnestness. The sound of their altercation reached Marat; he immediately ordered his wife to admit the stranger, whom he recognised as the author of the two letters he had received in the course of the day. Albertine obeyed reluctantly; she allowed Charlotte to enter; and, after crossing with her an antechamber, where she had been occupied with a man named Laurent Basse in folding some numbers of the *Ami du Peuple*, she ushered her through two other rooms, until they came to a narrow closet where Marat was then in a bath. He gave a look at Charlotte, and ordered his wife to leave them alone: she complied, but allowed the door of the closet to remain half open, and kept within call.

According to his usual custom, Marat wore a soiled handkerchief bound round his head, increasing his natural hideousness. A coarse covering was thrown across the bath; a board, likewise placed transversely, supported his papers. Laying down his pen, he asked Charlotte the purport of her visit. The closet was so narrow that she touched the bath near which she stood. She gazed on him with ill-disguised horror and disgust, but answered, as composedly as she could, that she had come from Caen, in order to give him correct intelligence concerning the proceedings of the Girondists there. He listened, questioned her eagerly, wrote down the names of the Girondists, then added, with a smile of triumph, "Before a week, they shall have perished on the guillotine." "These words," afterwards said Charlotte, "sealed his fate." Drawing from beneath the handkerchief which covered her bosom the knife she had kept there all along, she plunged it to the hilt in Marat's heart. He gave one loud expiring cry for help, and sank back dead in the bath. By an instinctive impulse, Charlotte had instantly drawn out the knife from the breast of her victim, but she did not strike again; casting it down at his feet, she left the closet, and sat down

in the neighbouring room, thoughtfully passing her hand across her brow: her task was done.

The wife of Marat had rushed to his aid on hearing his cry for help. Laurent Basse, seeing that all was over, turned round towards Charlotte, and, with a blow of a chair, felled her to the floor; whilst the infuriated Albertine trampled her under her feet. The tumult aroused the other tenants of the house; the alarm spread, and a crowd gathered in the apartment, who learned with stupor that Marat, the Friend of the People, had been murdered. Deeper still was their wonder when they gazed on the murderess. She stood there before them with still-disordered garments, and her dishevelled hair, loosely bound by a broad green ribbon falling around her; but so calm, so serenely lovely, that those who most abhorred her crime gazed on her with involuntary admiration. "Was she, then, so beautiful?" was the question addressed, many years afterwards, to an old man, one of the few remaining witnesses of this scene. "Beautiful!" he echoed, enthusiastically; adding, with the eternal regrets of old age: "Ay, there is none such now!"

The commissary of police began her interrogatory in the saloon of Marat's apartment. She told him her name, how long she had been in Paris, confessed her crime, and recognised the knife with which it had been perpetrated. The sheath was found in her pocket, with a thimble, some thread, money, and her watch.

"What was your motive in assassinating Marat?" asked the commissary.

"To prevent a civil war," she answered.

"Who are your accomplices?"

"I have none."

She was ordered to be transferred to the Abbaye, the nearest prison. An immense and infuriated crowd had gathered around the door of Marat's house; one of the witnesses perceived that she would have liked to be delivered to this maddened multitude, and thus perish at once. She was not saved from their hands without difficulty; her courage failed her at

the sight of the peril she ran, and she fainted away on being conveyed to the fiacre. On reaching the Abbaye, she was questioned until midnight by Chabot and Drouet, two Jacobin members of the Convention. She answered their interrogatories with singular firmness; observing, in conclusion: "I have done my task, let others do theirs." Chabot threatened her with the scaffold; she answered him with a smile of disdain. Her behaviour until the 17th, the day of her trial, was marked by the same firmness. She wrote to Barbaroux a charming letter, full of graceful wit and heroic feeling. Her playfulness never degenerated into levity: like that of the illustrious Thomas More, it was the serenity of a mind that death had no power to daunt. Speaking of her action, she observed, "I considered that so many brave men need not come to Paris for the head of one man. He deserved not so much honour: the hand of a woman was enough. . . . . I have never hated but one being, and him with what intensity I have sufficiently shewn; but there are a thousand whom I love still more than I hated him. . . . . I confess that I employed a perfidious artifice in order that he might receive me. In leaving Caen, I thought to sacrifice him on the pinnacle of 'the mountain,' but he no longer went to it. In Paris they cannot understand how a useless woman, whose longest life could have been of no good, could sacrifice herself to save her country. . . . . May peace be as soon established as I desire! A great criminal has been laid low . . . . the happiness of my country makes mine. . . . . A lively imagination and a feeling heart promise but a stormy life; I beseech those who might regret me to consider this: they will then rejoice at my fate." A tenderer tone marks the brief letter she addressed to her father on the eve of her trial and death: "Forgive me, my dear father," she observed, "for having disposed of my existence without your permission. I have avenged many innocent victims. I have warded away many disasters. The people, undeceived, will one day rejoice at being delivered from a tyrant. If I endeavoured to persuade you that I was going to England, it was because I hoped

to remain unknown: I recognised that this was impossible. I hope you will not be subjected to annoyance: you have at least defenders at Caen; I have chosen Gustave Doulcet de Pontécoulant for mine: it is a mere matter of form. Such a deed allows of no defence. Farewell, my dear father. I beseech of you to forget me; or, rather, to rejoice at my fate. I die for a good cause. I embrace my sister, whom I love with my whole heart. Do not forget the line of Corneille—

'Le crime fait la honte, et non pas l'échafaud.'

To-morrow at eight I am to be tried."

On the morning of the 17th, she was led before her judges. She was dressed with care, and had never looked more lovely. Her bearing was so imposing and dignified, that the spectators and the judges seemed to stand arraigned before her. She interrupted the first witness, by declaring that it was she who had killed Marat. "Who inspired you with so much hatred against him?" asked the President.

"I needed not the hatred of others, I had enough of my own," she energetically replied; "besides, we do not execute well that which we have not ourselves conceived."

"What, then, did you hate in Marat?"

"His crimes."

"Do you think that you have assassinated all the Marats?"

"No; but now that he is dead, the rest may fear."

She answered other questions with equal firmness and laconism. Her project, she declared, had been formed since the 31st of May. "She had killed one man to save a hundred thousand. She was a republican long before the revolution, and had never failed in energy."

"What do you understand by energy?" asked the President.

"That feeling," she replied, "which induces us to cast aside selfish considerations, and sacrifice ourselves for our country."

Fouquier Tinville here observed, alluding to the sure blow she had given, that she must be well practised in crime. "The monster takes me for an assassin!" she exclaimed, in a

tone thrilling with indignation. This closed the debates, and her defender rose. It was not Doulcet de Pontécoulant—who had not received her letter—but Chauveau de la Garde, chosen by the President. Charlotte gave him an anxious look, as though she feared he might seek to save her at the expense of honour. He spoke, and she perceived that her apprehensions were unfounded. Without excusing her crime or attributing it to insanity, he pleaded for the fervour of her conviction; which he had the courage to call sublime. The appeal proved unavailing. Charlotte Corday was condemned. Without deigning to answer the President, who asked her if she had aught to object to the penalty of death being carried out against her, she rose, and walking up to her defender, thanked him gracefully. "These gentlemen," said she, pointing to the judges, "have just informed me that the whole of my property is confiscated. I owe something in the prison: as a proof of my friendship and esteem, I request you to pay this little debt."

On returning to the conciergerie, she found an artist, named Hauër, waiting for her, to finish her portrait, which he had begun at the tribunal. They conversed freely together, until the executioner, carrying the red chemise destined for assassins, and the scissors with which he was to cut her hair off, made his appearance. "What, so soon!" exclaimed Charlotte Corday, slightly turning pale; but rallying her courage, she resumed her composure, and presented a lock of her hair to M. Hauër, as the only reward in her power to offer. A priest came to offer her his ministry. She thanked him and the persons by whom he had been sent, but declined his spiritual aid. The executioner cut her hair, bound her hands, and threw the red chemise over her. M. Hauër was struck with the almost unearthly loveliness which the crimson hue of this garment imparted to the ill-fated maiden. "This toilet of death, though performed by rude hands, leads to immortality," said Charlotte with a smile.

A heavy storm broke forth as the car of the condemned left the conciergerie for the Place de la Revolution. An immense crowd lined every street through which Charlotte Corday

passed. Hootings and execrations at first rose on her path; but as her pure and serene beauty dawned on the multitude, as the exquisite loveliness of her countenance and the sculptural beauty of her figure became more fully revealed, pity and admiration superseded every other feeling. Her bearing was so admirably calm and dignified, as to rouse sympathy in the breasts of those who detested not only her crime, but the cause for which it had been committed. Many men of every party took off their hats and bowed as the cart passed before them. Amongst those who waited its approach, was a young German, named Adam Luz, who stood at the entrance of the Rue Saint Honoré, and followed Charlotte to the scaffold. He gazed on the lovely and heroic maiden with all the enthusiasm of his imaginative race. A love, unexampled perhaps in the history of the human heart, took possession of his soul. Not one wandering look of "those beautiful eyes, which revealed a soul as intrepid as it was tender," escaped him. Every earthly grace so soon to perish in death, every trace of the lofty and immortal spirit, filled him with bitter and intoxicating emotions unknown till then. "To die for her; to be struck by the same hand; to feel in death the same cold axe which had severed the angelic head of Charlotte; to be united to her in heroism, freedom, love, and death, was now the only hope and desire of his heart."

Unconscious of the passionate love she had awakened, Charlotte now stood near the guillotine. She turned pale on first beholding it, but soon resumed her serenity. A deep blush suffused her face when the executioner removed the handkerchief that covered her neck and shoulders, but she calmly laid her head upon the block. The executioner touched a spring, and the axe came down. One of Sanson's assistants immediately stepped forward, and holding up the lifeless head to the gaze of the crowd, struck it on either cheek. The brutal act only excited a feeling of horror; and it is said that—as though even in death her indignant spirit protested against this outrage—an angry and crimson flush passed over the features of Charlotte Corday.

A few days after her execution, Adam Luz published a pamphlet, in which he enthusiastically praised her deed, and proposed that a statue, with the inscription, "GREATER THAN BRUTUS," should be erected to her memory on the spot where she had perished. He was arrested and thrown into prison. On entering the Abbaye, he passionately exclaimed: "I am going to die for her!" His wish was fulfilled ere long.

Strange feverish times were those which could rouse a gentle and lovely maiden to avenge freedom by such a deadly deed; which could waken in a human heart a love whose thoughts were not of life or earthly bliss, but of the grave and the scaffold. Let the times, then, explain those natures, where so much evil and heroism are blended that man cannot mark the limits between both. Whatever judgment may be passed upon her, the character of Charlotte Corday was certainly not cast in an ordinary mould. It is a striking and noble trait, that to the last she did not repent: never was error more sincere. If she could have repented, she would never have become guilty.

Her deed created an extraordinary impression throughout France. On hearing of it, a beautiful royalist lady fell down on her knees and invoked "Saint Charlotte Corday." The republican Madame Roland calls her a heroine worthy of a better age. The poet, André Chénier—who, before a year had elapsed, followed her on the scaffold—sang her heroism in a soul-stirring strain.

The political influence of that deed may be estimated by the exclamation of Vergniaud: "She kills us, but she teaches us how to die!" It was so. The assassination of Marat exasperated all his fanatic partisans against the Girondists. Almost divine honours were paid to his memory; forms of prayer were addressed to him; altars were erected to his honour, and numberless victims sent to the scaffold as a peace-offering to his manes. On the wreck of his popularity rose the far more dangerous power of Robespierre: a new impulse was given to the Reign of Terror. Such was the "peace" which the erring and heroic Charlotte Corday won for France.

CHAPTER VI.

MARIE ANTOINETTE'S CAPTIVITY, TRIAL, AND DEATH.

MARIE ANTOINETTE had been incarcerated ten months, when Madame Roland was thrown into prison. The queen and the republican inspirer of the Gironde had met a like fate. The scaffold, which awaited them both, was to complete the resemblance between their destinies.

Well known as are the details of the captivity of the royal family in the Temple, they cannot be omitted here. We have seen the queen in her prosperity, it is fitting to behold her in misfortune. In reading once more that sad history, it will perhaps be found easier to understand how, notwithstanding her errors, Marie Antoinette has left a name to which, through all the changes of political creeds, pity and admiration will ever cling.

The Temple, to which the royal family were transferred after the 10th of August, was an old, gloomy building, erected and inhabited by the Knights-Templar of the Middle Ages. It stood in a walled enclosure, of which the gates were shut every night. Debtors found a safe refuge in this place, which their creditors had no power to invade; but their presence, and the narrow streets and low dwellings in which they lived, rendered this little neighbourhood very mean and unhealthy. "The tower," observes Cléry, in his narrative, "is about a hundred and fifty feet high, and consists of four stories; to this place it was that Louis and his unfortunate family were removed. The Bastile presented nothing of equal horror: around the foot of the tower was dug a wide deep ditch, and the part of the garden reserved for the walk of the august prisoners was enclosed by an immensely high wall; the doors,

which were made of iron, were so low and so narrow, that it was necessary to bend double and move sideways to pass the threshold; scarcely any light was suffered to enter through the windows, from the slanting screens which were placed over them, and the thick iron bars with which they were secured."

Louis XVI. accepted this sudden change of fortune with his usual resignation; his pious sister, as a trial sent by Heaven; Marie Antoinette, with subdued and silent indignation. The first few days of their captivity were not, however, the most painful the royal prisoners had to pass. Hope had not deserted them yet: the success of the foreign armies would have delivered them. In that success they believed, not without some show of reason; for the untaught bravery of French plebeians had not yet been tested on the field of battle. The first deep grief of Marie Antoinette was her separation from the Princess of Lamballe; who was torn from her arms at dead of night, and transferred to La Force, in order to be murdered a few days later by the Septembriseurs. The proclamation of the republic on the 21st of September shewed the king and his family that, from France at least, they had no more to hope: their part was over there for ever. The Princess of Lamballe, and the few devoted attendants who had followed the royal family to the Temple, were replaced by a rude man named Tison and his wife. This woman, whose mind was in an unsettled state, treated the prisoners with alternate harshness and pity: she sometimes professed herself devoted to the queen, and offered to serve her; until, alarmed for her own safety, she suddenly betrayed and accused her. Simon, a shoemaker, and Roucher, a saddler, shared the office of gaoler, and took a cruel and cowardly pleasure in tormenting their captives. They menaced and insulted the king, addressed the princesses with familiarity and arrogance, compelled them to listen to their disgusting and threatening language, and repeatedly tortured them by throwing out intimations that Louis XVI. should ere long be separated from them, in order that they might behold their tears, and receive their entreaties.

These menaces were once carried into execution. The king was abruptly separated from his family; but the despair of the queen was so overwhelming and so deep, her threats of allowing herself to die of hunger, if this barbarous separation were persisted in, so vehement, as to soften even Simon, and make him shed tears. Notwithstanding the order of the Commune to the contrary, he assumed the responsibility of allowing Louis XVI. to take his meals with his family: this favour was, fortunately, not revoked. Another indulgence, almost as great, was that the faithful Cléry was allowed to remain with the king: he proved both a servant and a friend. The life of the royal family had all the monotony without the seclusion of captivity. Watched on every side, they could scarcely hold any real communication with one another. The king rose early, and prayed and read until nine, at which time he met his family at breakfast. When this meal was over, Cléry combed out the hair of the princesses, whilst Louis instructed his son, chiefly in geography. At twelve, the whole family went down to the dreary garden which lay at the foot of their prison. They were followed, even there, by insults; which changed these hours of freedom into hours of punishment. The distant windows which overlooked the temple were, however, often thronged with sympathising friends, whose looks and gestures of pity and love cheered the royal captives. At two, they went up to dinner; this meal was embittered by the presence of their gaolers, who checked everything like freedom and confidence. Notwithstanding the severity with which they were watched, the prisoners, however, found means to hold some intercourse with their friends, and even to learn the news. Paid news-venders passed under the windows of the Temple, and, whilst appearing to hawk their papers, contrived to let the king know their contents. The princesses worked and read during the afternoon. "In the evening," relates Cléry, "the family sat round a table, whilst the queen read to them from books of history, or other instructive works. Often, and unexpectedly, she met with narratives of events that bore too great a resemblance to their

fate. These would give birth to the most melancholy reflections: Madame Elizabeth was then obliged to take up the book. The reading generally continued until eight, when I gave the dauphin his supper: the queen always heard him say his prayers."

The gaolers manifested more severity towards their prisoners as the days of their captivity increased. The princesses were compelled to mend their own clothes, those of the king and of the children, to sweep the floors of their prison, and perform many menial offices. But it was chiefly the ceaseless insults and annoyances to which they were subjected that embittered their lot. These outrages were, however, seldom directed to the queen. Her imposing dignity awed even Roucher and Simon, if not into respect, at least into silence. Their gross provocations were addressed to the king and his gentle sister, who endured everything with heroic patience. Calmly resigned to her fate, Madame Elizabeth might often be seen kneeling in prayer at the foot of her bed. She would remain there for hours in the same attitude, serene and beautiful, like a being of another and a better world.

This pious resignation formed no part of the character of Marie Antoinette: in her it would have been unnatural. She could not and would not forget that she had been a queen; that she was now a captive; that the fate of Charles I. awaited her husband: what fait awaited her, her children and the devoted sister who shared their prison, she knew not. In this agony she was sustained by pride; for the love she bore to those around her could only bow her down with despair and grief: it was for them that she suffered, and over their destiny that she wept and brooded during the livelong nights of her captivity: nights seldom refreshed by sleep. Love had no power to soothe the sorrows it had caused, but pride could enable her to bear them, if not with passive patience, at least with dignity. Such pride was not all to be condemned; for what was it but the last protest of a heroic soul against fate and man's injustice?

The fascination which Marie Antoinette had so long exercised on all those who approached her, did not vanish with rank and power. Her fading loveliness, faded by grief more than by years, had an eloquence beyond the freshness of youthful beauty. An injured queen, and a suffering wife and mother, commanded both respect and sympathy. She inspired still deeper feelings in two men named Toulan and Lepitre. They devoted themselves to her cause, planned escapes for the royal family, favoured their correspondences with their friends, and did all that the most passionate enthusiasm could inspire. This lasted for a considerable length of time, but the wife of Tison at length betrayed them, and Toulan was taken and executed. Oppressed with remorse, the wretched woman fell dangerously ill. The queen and Madame Elizabeth, touched at the excess of her grief, not only forgave her, but attended her during her illness. The hopes which the devotedness of Toulan—and his was not a solitary instance—had inspired for a moment, vanished in the heart of Marie Antoinette, as the trial of her husband came on. One thought alone now absorbed, haunted her mind. The serene resignation of the king, which compelled her to subdue the expression of her grief, added to its bitterness. Of a passionate and vehement nature, she was not made for an ever-silent agony. She sought not, like her husband, to check her sorrow: she only had power over its external tokens, and this inward and ceaseless struggle added to the fever which consumed her existence.

As long as the trial lasted, the royal family were forbidden to see the king; they would have learned none of the details of the trial itself but for the zeal and ingenious stratagems of Cléry: through his means they were even able to correspond with Louis XVI. With more grief than surprise they learned that he was condemned; and now their last despairing thought was, "should they see him once more?" They were not refused this final consolation. At half-past eight on the evening of the 20th January 1793, the king once more beheld his family. As the door of his apartment opened, the queen

and her son entered first, Madame Elizabeth and the young princess followed. They all four alternately clasped him in their arms with convulsive sobs and bursts of grief, which lasted for more than half an hour. The king at length sat down; the queen placed herself on his left, Madame Elizabeth on his right, and his children before him and between his knees. Although the room in which they sat had a glass door, through which commissaries could behold all that passed, they could not hear what the king said. He spoke purposely in a low tone, but the horrified gestures of Marie Antoinette shewed that the whole of the truth had not until then been revealed to her. The bearing of Louis XVI. was admirably calm, tender, and subdued, during the whole of this trying scene. An hour and three quarters had thus elapsed, when the king rose to part from his family. He slowly advanced with them towards the door. The queen and the dauphin were on his right. Madame Elizabeth leaned on her brother's left shoulder, Madame Royale held her father, clasped around the waist; they spoke not, but the whole room was filled with the sound of their tears and lamentations. "I assure you," said Louis, "that I will see you again at eight to-morrow morning." "You promise it?" they all exclaimed. "Yes, I promise," he replied. "Why not at seven?" asked the queen. "Let it be at seven, then," said her husband; "farewell!" he then added, in a tone so solemn and so deep, that his daughter, as if with a consciousness of the truth, fainted away at his feet. With one more embrace, the king tore himself from them.

The agony of that night was softened to Marie Antoinette by the thought that she should see her husband again on the morrow; but seven and eight o'clock struck, and she received no summons to meet the king: it was Louis himself that had declined the interview, lest it should prove too trying for those he loved. The whole of that dreadful day was spent by Marie Antoinette in long fainting fits, only interrupted by bursts of agonising grief. Time, which subdued the expression of her sorrow, could not change its nature. A sort of

despairing resignation took possession of her soul: she had ceased to hope, and she now felt like one for whom the struggle of life was henceforth over. Although the gaolers informed her that she could resume the walks in the garden, which had for some time been interdicted, she refused to do so. The mere thought of passing before the door of the king's apartment filled her with horror. Lest, however, the health of her children should suffer from this confinement, she consented, after several weeks' seclusion, to walk with them on the platform of the tower. It was immediately surrounded with high boards, in order that no friendly look might reach the queen even there.

The comparative leniency with which the royal family had been treated after the death of the king, ceased abruptly on the fall of the Girondists. It was then decided that the queen should be tried, and that the dauphin should previously be taken from her. The officers of the Convention who came to execute this barbarous order met with unexpected resistance. Casting away every feeling of queenly dignity or silent pride, the mother placed herself before the bed of her son, and vehemently declared that, though they might kill her, they should not touch her child. For two hours she defended him against all their efforts. They at length threatened to kill him in her arms if she resisted any longer. Upon this she embraced him, dressed him, and weepingly delivered him up. The unhappy and innocent child was handed over to the shoemaker, Simon: his mother never saw him again. Through the slits of the boards which surrounded the platform of her tower, she sometimes, after hours of watching, caught distant glimpses of him on the platform of the tower where he was confined, but that was all.

Although she did not know every detail of the tortures Simon inflicted on the young prince, the queen knew enough to render her life inexpressibly bitter. But her sufferings were drawing to a close. At two in the morning on the 2d of August, Marie Antoinette was abruptly wakened by the entrance into her apartment of two municipal officers, who

read her the decree of the Convention, authorising them to convey her to the Conciergerie, where she was to await her trial. She heard them without either sorrow or surprise; Madame Elizabeth and the young princess vainly entreated to be allowed to accompany the queen: their prayers and tears remained unheeded. Marie Antoinette was compelled to rise and dress before these men: they even searched her, taking away all the little jewels and trifling articles still in her possession. They only left her a pocket-handkerchief and a vinaigrette, in case she should faint whilst in their custody. It was with difficulty that she persuaded them to let her take a change of linen. When her preparations were over, she turned towards her sister and her child, embraced them tenderly, and bade them farewell. She recommended her daughter to the care of Madame Elizabeth, and requested Madame Royale to obey her aunt as if she were her mother. Not daring to trust herself with another look she then hastened down stairs; so rapidly that she forgot to stoop in passing beneath the low door, and struck her head with some force against it. One of the municipal officers asked if she had hurt herself. "Oh, no!" she mournfully replied, "nothing can hurt me now."

She entered the hackney-coach which waited for her in the yard, carrying under her arm the little bundle of things she had been allowed to take. The cell of the Conciergerie into which the queen was thrown on her arrival was the worst in the prison. General Custine, who preceded her to the scaffold, had been removed from it in order that it might be given to her: it was several steps lower than the yard, from which it received air and light, through a narrow grated window; a miserable bed, a deal table, a wooden box, and two straw-bottomed chairs, were all the furniture it contained. The damp stone walls, and the close atmosphere of this gloomy abode, made it resemble a cellar more than a place destined to receive any human being. Yet this was to be the last dwelling of a woman and a queen! This room was entered through an antechamber, in which two gendarmes with naked swords were placed; their orders were to keep the door which led

from one room into the other always open, and not to lose sight of Marie Antoinette even in her sleep. The gaolers of the Conciergerie, Richard and his wife,—notwithstanding the strictness of their orders,—treated the illustrious captive with much kindness. Instead of the coarse prison fare, Madame Richard gave the queen wholesome and delicate food prepared by herself; she introduced a little comfort into her cell, and, diverting the attention of the gendarmes by ingenious stratagems, secretly gave her news of Madame Elizabeth and her children. This worthy woman carried her devotedness so far as to seek to favour the queen's escape. She introduced, for this purpose, Michonis and the Chevalier de Rougeville into her prison. The chevalier gave Marie Antoinette a flower which contained a note offering her men and money; she was unfortunately surprised in the act of reading it. The two devoted men and Richard and his wife were immediately arrested and thrown into prison: with them vanished the queen's last hope of safety.

The dangerous office of softening the captivity of the queen was, nevertheless, eagerly sought by M. and Madame Bault, formerly gaolers of La Force. They rivalled the devotedness of Richard, whom they succeeded in the post of gaolers of the Conciergerie: although her orders were to give her prisoner only bread and water, Madame Bault, following the example of her predecessor, carefully prepared her food. Marie Antoinette never drank wine, but the Seine water did not agree with her; Madame Bault, accordingly, procured her the pure water of Arcueuil, which had been her favourite beverage in Trianon. Many persons from without, who were allowed to visit their imprisoned relatives, took this opportunity of forwarding little delicacies to the fallen queen; the women of the Halle, who had formerly been the purveyors of the royal family, privately sent her presents of their fruits and flowers. It was not without much peril to herself that Madame Bault procured her prisoner these indulgences: her husband was once severely reprimanded for having hung the damp walls of Marie Antoinette's dungeon with an old piece of tapestry; his daughter

was, however, allowed to help the prisoner to make her bed, and clear up her room; she also combed the captive's hair every morning, and mended the scanty supply of linen, and the two old gowns, to which the wardrobe of the queen of France was now reduced.

The two months which elapsed from the 2d of August to the 14th of October, when she appeared before the Revolutionary Tribunal, were spent by Marie Antoinette in passive endurance. Gifted with a mind of great energy, with more than common pride, and with the keenest susceptibilities to wrong and insult, how intense must have been the past sufferings which could reduce her passionate and impulsive nature to a state of comparative apathy. The gendarmes who watched her often saw her weeping, as she knelt in prayer at the foot of the bed; oftener still she sat listlessly near the high window, from which a faint ray of light came down on her pale face and emaciated figure: the mourning she wore made her look more wan and desolate still. But, though broken-hearted, the queen was not subdued; and this it is that justifies her pride and ennobles it into something sublime: for hers was not the pride to which rank, power, or circumstance gave birth, and which falls with them. Marie Antoinette valued these things whilst they were hers, but they formed no part of her nature: they left her, but she was herself still: she was the queen even in her dungeon; more truly royal within those gloomy walls than when surrounded by the splendours of Versailles.

On the 14th of October, Marie Antoinette was summoned before the tribunal, held in the adjoining Palais de Justice. She was meanly clad, but with evident attention to neatness and decency; her bearing was calm and dignified: she heard with indifference the long act of accusation read by Fouquier Tinville, who asserted that the crimes attributed to Messalina, Brunehault, Fredegonde, and Catherine of Medici, were far surpassed by those committed by the widow Capet. She was charged with having dilapidated the finances, with plotting against the nation, with having caused a famine, and various other political offences. Her replies were laconic and composed. Submit-

ting to events she could not control, she entered into no useless and indignant protest against the past; she also avoided compromising her own life and the safety of her friends by any imprudent defiance: to bear patiently had become her lot. One of her motives for taking this line of conduct was that such had been the course adopted by Louis XVI. Jealous of his honour, she did not wish to be contrasted with him to his disadvantage. The most infamous accusation against her was that of Hébert; who asserted that she had depraved her own child, the dauphin. Marie Antoinette disdained to make any answer. One of the jury having pressed her to reply, she turned towards the crowd, her countenance lit up by scorn and indignant majesty, merely saying, "I appeal to all the mothers present." The mothers who heard her then were the furious Tricotteuses, who daily accompanied victims to the scaffold; but even they had not so far given up all the feelings of womanhood as to remain insensible to such an appeal, and a murmur of horror and indignation against Hébert ran throughout the court. When all the accusations against her had been heard, Marie Antoinette was asked if she had anything to say: she answered, "I was a queen, and you took away my crown; a wife, and you killed my husband; a mother, and you deprived me of my children; my blood alone remains: take it, but do not make me suffer long." Chauveau de la Garde and Tronson du Coudray, her defenders, were then heard; but their noble and courageous efforts remained unavailing.

At four o'clock, on the morning of the 16th, she was condemned to die. She heard her sentence with that admirable dignity and self-possession which had never deserted her since the beginning of her trial on the 14th; although, with a barbarity worthy of them, her judges had refused to let her retire, even for one moment's rest, and scarcely allowed her any food, in the hope of subduing her courage with her physical strength. Once, feeling very thirsty, she asked for some water; no one dared to bring her any, until she repeated her request, when an officer of the gendarmes, unable to resist the impulse, brought her a glass: he lost his post for this simple act of humanity.

When the President of the Tribunal asked her if she had any objection to make to her sentence, the queen rose, disdaining to reply. The fierce applause which followed her out of the court could not disturb her proud composure. She retired to the Conciergerie, and, having obtained writing materials, addressed to Madame Elizabeth a last letter—which never reached her. In this letter she recommended her orphan children to her sister's care, fervently blessing them and her; protesting that she died in the faith of her fathers, and freely forgiving her enemies. She then threw herself on her bed, and slept for two hours. A constitutional priest was sent to her, but she declined his ministry.

"Your death," he began, "is going to expiate"—

"Faults, not crimes," she interrupted.

Two other constitutional priests who attended her proved equally unsuccessful. She refused to hear them, and prayed alone. After resting sufficiently, the queen rose, cut her hair, and dressed herself carefully. At eleven the executioner came, bound her hands, and led her to the cart. She submitted silently, heedless of all that passed around her, and of the representations of the priest at her side.

It is said, and on good authority,*—though the fact has not, we believe, been alluded to by any historian—that the men who had not thought the accusations of Hébert too infamous for the queen, conceived the project of degrading her death, by causing her to be judged and to perish between two courtesans confined in the same prison with her. They boasted of their plan until it came to the knowledge of the women concerned in it; who, degraded as they were, felt and resented the intended infamy: they both declared, with the greatest energy, that if the project were carried into effect, they would, even on the scaffold and in the face of the people, fall down at the feet of the queen, and publicly implore her forgiveness for being compelled to die with her. Alarmed at the effect such a scene might produce, the projectors of this infamous plan abandoned it reluctantly.

* Lemontey: Œuvres, vol. i., p. 280.

It was little more than eleven when the cart which contained the queen left the Conciergerie, yet she did not reach the Place de la Revolution until half-past twelve. During all that time she was subjected to the continued hootings and insults of the populace. Her firmness never forsook her; but the crimson flushes and the deadly paleness which rapidly succeeded each other on her cheeks, revealed the intense agony she endured. The cart was compelled to stop opposite the church of St Roch, in order that the dense crowd assembled on the steps might obtain a better view of their victim. Overcome by her feelings, the queen bowed down her head for a moment. It was observed that, as she passed along the Rue St Honoré, she looked at the republican inscriptions and tricolor flags of the houses with evident curiosity: another interpretation placed on this incident, is, that the queen was watching for a signal, which was to reveal to her the house where a non-juring priest awaited her passage, in order to give her absolution.

The countenance of Marie Antoinette exhibited the greatest emotion when, on entering the Place de la Revolution, she beheld the palace and gardens of the Tuileries: but she soon resumed her calmness, and, aided by the priest and the executioner, quickly ascended the scaffold. In doing so, she trod by chance on the foot of Sanson; he uttered an exclamation of pain. "Forgive me," she gently said. Her bearing in that solemn moment was an impressive union of calmness and dignity, as all the eye-witnesses of this scene—one of whom we know personally—have testified. She was attired in a narrow dress of white *piqué;* a close white cap could not entirely conceal her hair, long since blanched by grief. Scarcely any traces now remained of her once dazzling loveliness; but her features, though thin and pale, were still majestic; a deep red circle surrounded her eyes, and betrayed the ceaseless weeping of her latter years. Thus changed, from the gay, beautiful vision they had enthusiastically welcomed twenty-three years before, the widowed queen of France now stood on a scaffold before her people. She knelt and prayed for

a few seconds in a low tone, then rose and calmly delivered herself over to the executioner. When her head had fallen beneath the knife of the guillotine, he held it up, and walked round the scaffold shewing it to the people, and shouting in a loud tone, "Vive la Republique!" The crowd caught up the cry, which filled the whole place.

Thus perished, in her thirty-seventh year, the widow of the greatest king in Europe. The daughter of Maria Theresa, though less fortunate, was not less heroic than her mother. Her whole history, and the severest judgment against her, may be summed up in her own words—"Faults, not crimes." Her errors were those of her judgment, never of her heart. Had she survived the revolution, she would, however, have been judged with more severity. History would have asked her to account for her husband's fall and death, and she has only escaped this reproach by sharing his destiny. There are few tasks more difficult than that of speaking historically of Marie Antoinette. So much of all that the human heart pities and reveres is blended with her name, that those shades in her character which, from her position, produced consequences so fatal are well-nigh forgotten. We cannot speak of the light and frivolous queen, without thinking of the pale prisoner of the Temple and the Conciergerie: and it seems strange harshness to dwell on indiscretions of temper and conduct destined to be expiated by years of weeping anguish and death on a scaffold.

Whatever were the errors of Marie Antoinette, her enemies, by immolating her, have done much to efface them. Their stern policy might deem the death of the king necessary, but, from the moment she became a widow, the queen was a conquered foe, whom it was impolitic and base to sacrifice. Animated by an unworthy spirit of vengeance, they could not rest until they had obtained her life. The revolution felt truly that Marie Antoinette had been its most unrelenting opponent; and, for this, it doomed her to perish: so inveterate had been the struggle between them, that a whole nation did not disdain to avenge itself on a woman. But the vengeance,

thus cowardly taken, recoiled for ever, and is an eternal reproach to those who had not the magnanimity to forgive.

Nothing is more characteristic of Marie Antoinette than her attitude during her last hours. When they parted, her mother had said to her, "Think of me in the time of sorrow or danger." That time had come; and, mindful of her words, her daughter seemed to gather to her aid all the pride of her race. She wrapped herself in a silent reserve; disdaining to hold converse with those who might conquer, but could not subdue her. At the tribunal her fingers wandered idly over the arm of her chair, as if she were touching the keys of some musical instrument. She looked abstracted during the whole time: indifferent when her sentence was read. The constitutional priests could draw nothing save monosyllables from her. She was not haughty, defiant, or despairing: her bearing cannot be characterised as that of the queen or the woman. With worldly pomp or pride she had long done, and her mother's feelings slept in her heart far beyond human ken. She forgave her enemies; but more, perhaps, from proud disdain than because the heavenly peace of mercy had descended into her soul. A stern resolve to accomplish her fate unshrinkingly, sustained her through her last bitter trial. Perhaps the old thought: "History awaits us!" haunted her even then. She made not one effort to soften the crowd; she spoke not a word for her justification: she perished unyielding, and proudly silent to the last.

CHAPTER VII.

MADAME ROLAND: HER CAPTIVITY, TRIAL, AND DEATH.

As the heroines of the revolution pass before us in succession, it is sad to perceive how the great, the beautiful, and the gifted seem to have had but one destiny—the prison and the scaffold. Was that, then, the bourne to which the lofty heroism of Marie Antoinette, the sacrificial furor of Charlotte Corday, and the enthusiasm and genius of Madame Roland alike tended? Did heroism, beauty, and devotedness deserve no better fate?

But this similarity of destiny implied no similarity of feeling or character. Even Charlotte Corday differs widely from Madame Roland, herself so different from Marie Antoinette. The most opposite actions led to the same result: every page in the history of those evil times is equally stained with blood. We left Madame Roland as she entered the Abbaye, a captive; we have now to follow her to the scaffold.

Less affected by her arrest than by the fate of the party with whom she fell, Madame Roland was absorbed by the cries and tumult of the streets, which reached even her remote cell. She listened with a beating heart to every sound, and waited with feverish anxiety for the evening's news. It came, but brought no decisive tidings; overpowered with fatigue, she sank at length into a heavy slumber. The next morning she read in the journal which the gaoler brought her the decree of arrest against the twenty-two Girondists. The paper fell from her hands: "My country is lost!" she passionately exclaimed; and she bade a last and bitter farewell

to those hopes of happiness and sublime illusions which her soul had cherished so long.

But if she abandoned enthusiastic dreams, her faith in truth and virtue remained unshaken. No disaster could disturb the serenity of her soul—no fear subdue its energy. Her mode of life in her prison was regulated and composed: political agitation had vanished; she seemed to have gone back to the pure and happy days of her youth, securely spent beneath her father's humble roof. She made every necessary effort to procure her freedom: she wrote to the Assembly, protesting against her illegal arrest; she sent remonstrances to the sections; but when these efforts remained unavailing, she betrayed neither despondency nor surprise. Her first care was to procure a few books: Thomson, Plutarch, and Tacitus soothed and fortified her soul. When she felt wearied with thought and solitude, she relaxed her mind by drawing. Flowers, with which the few friends who still visited her in her adversity provided her, filled her gloomy cell with their fragrance and beauty, and appeased her captive's longing for that loveliness of nature which was never more to bless her yearning heart.

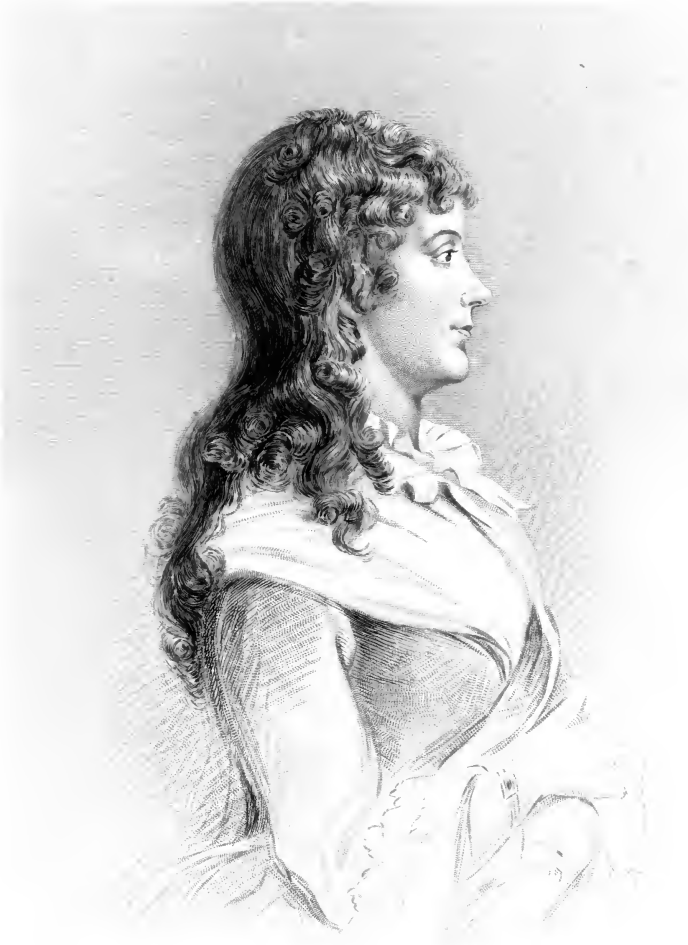
After a captivity of twenty-four days, Madame Roland was unexpectedly released. The order for her liberation stated that there was nothing against her. She left her cell in the Abbaye—which was afterwards tenanted by two kindred spirits, Brissot and Charlotte Corday—and hastened home with a heart full of joy. Scarcely had she passed the threshold of her dwelling when she was again apprehended. Her release was only owing to the persevering hatred of her enemies; her first apprehension being grossly illegal, they took this method of securing their victim. Madame Roland, without being even allowed to embrace her child, was immediately conveyed to Sainte-Pélagie, the prison usually awarded to women of dissolute life. The son of her landlady was afterwards sent to the guillotine for having protested against her apprehension. The shock she thus experienced proved at first too much for the fortitude of Madame Roland. Her soul for several days

remained overwhelmed with grief; but she gradually regained her composure, and felt almost indignant at her previous weakness. She now freely made the sacrifice of her life, which she perceived was forfeited to the hatred of her foes; but she resolved to use nobly whatever of it was still left, and with that independence of her faculties "which a strong soul preserves even in chains, and which disappoints the most eager foes."*

The sufferings of Madame Roland in her new prison were at first very severe. She was compelled to inhabit a narrow cell, where her ears were constantly assailed by the infamous language of the neighbouring prostitutes. The compassion of Madame Bonchaud, the gaoler's wife, softened her captivity. Her room was exchanged for another. She was allowed the enjoyment of comforts, and even of a few luxuries: a jessamine hid the bars of her window, and a hired piano beguiled the tediousness of her prison hours. But the kindness she experienced did not blind her to her ultimate fate: for that fate she now prepared, by beginning her "Memoirs" on the 9th of August 1793.

The enemies of Madame Roland had long assailed her private and public character with the coarsest and most calumnious imputations. She resolved to lay bare her life from childhood to the present hour, and thus solemnly appeal from the judgment of her contemporaries to that of posterity. Her Memoirs depict Madame Roland as no other pen can ever paint her. We see her there as she was: a beautiful, real being, heroic and serene, and bearing, through all her rashness and pride, the tokens of a soul so noble and so pure as will call forth the admiration and reverence of future ages. The charming ease and grace with which she retraces the history of her childhood, the sudden transition from those fresh and pure images of the past to the fearful gloom of the present, the burning eloquence of her indignation against the tyrants of France, the commanding strength of mind which she unconsciously displays, render these Memoirs almost unique: not, indeed, as a literary production, great as their merits are, but

* Memoirs, p. 202, vol. ii.



as a work destined to fasten with deep and irresistible power on the human heart.

These Memoirs possess, moreover, a dramatic interest, peculiar to themselves and to the circumstances under which they were written. When we read of the enthusiastic child poring over the old volume of Plutarch, we think of her who writes those pages, in a prison, with the scaffold awaiting its victim. She herself interrupts those pictures of her childhood to weep, not over her fate, but over her friends and her country. In the brief and passionate eloquence with which she draws the fearful picture of oppressed and degraded France, we perceive the source of her former power, and recognise the soul of the Gironde. The pages of those Memoirs, which she wrote and confided by stealth to her friend Champagneux, are occasionally broken off with mournful intimations that they may never be finished. On the 5th of September 1793, we find her writing thus, in a note to Champagneux—"I cut this copy in order to place what is written in the little box. When I perceive that a revolutionary army has been decreed, that new tribunals of blood are being formed, that the land is menaced with famine, and that tyrants no longer know what to do, I feel that they are going to make new victims, and that no one is assured of life."

Conscious of her approaching fate, she hurried over her task: the last pages of the Memoirs bear evident traces of the haste with which they were written. She expresses herself thus in October—"I have been interrupted, in order to be informed that I am comprised in the act of accusation with Brissot, and so many other deputies recently arrested. The tyrants think to fill the chasm open before them by casting in honest men; but they shall fall into it after them. I do not fear to go to the scaffold in such good company: there would be shame in living amongst guilty wretches. I shall send this copy and continue with another, if I am not prevented. Friday, 4th of October; birthday of my daughter, who is this day twelve years old."

The thought of her daughter was the only one that could

disturb her heroic serenity. Helen-Maria Williams has left the following account of a visit which she paid to Madame Roland in the prison of Sainte-Pélagie : "Her soul, superior to circumstances, retained its accustomed serenity, and she conversed with the same animated cheerfulness in her little cell as she used to do in the hotel of the minister. She had provided herself with a few books, and I found her reading Plutarch. She told me that she expected to die ; and the look of placid resignation with which she said it, convinced me that she was prepared to met death with a firmness worthy of her exalted character. When I inquired after her daughter, an only child of twelve years of age, she burst into tears ; and, at the overwhelming recollection of her husband and child, the courage of the victim of liberty was lost in the feelings of the wife and the mother."

With the exception of Vergniaud and a few more, the Girondists were not all aware of their destiny : Brissot considered his acquittal possible. Jealous of the honour of her friend, and unwilling that he should be led to betray any unworthy weakness, Madame Roland wrote to him from her prison, and stoically undeceived him. Nothing could shew in a stronger light the severe truthfulness of her friendship.

Towards the close of her imprisonment, Madame Roland received several offers of escape ; of which she refused to avail herself. One of those offers came from Madame Bonchaud, the gaoler's wife, who had conceived a warm attachment for her prisoner, and passionately entreated her to allow herself to be saved. No prayers could induce Madame Roland to comply. Henriette Cannet, one of the convent friends to whom she addressed the long correspondence recently published, visited her in her prison for the same purpose. Henriette, who was somewhat older than her friend, had been destined by her parents for M. Roland, whom she secretly loved ; she, however, approved his choice when he preferred and married Manon, and the harmony of their friendship was not once disturbed by this event. Madame Roland hurriedly alludes to the offer of Henriette towards the close of her Me-

moirs. It was thus related by Henriette herself to a friend: "I was a widow," said she, "and I had no children; Madame Roland, on the contrary, had a husband advanced in years and a lovely little girl: both needed her utmost care. What could be more natural than for me to expose my useless life in order to save hers, so precious to her family? I wanted her to exchange her attire for mine, and to endeavour to escape whilst I remained behind. But neither prayers nor tears availed. 'They would kill thee, my good Henriette,' she unceasingly repeated: 'thy blood would ever fall on me. Sooner would I suffer death a thousand times, than reproach myself with thine!' Seeing that nothing could move her, I bade her farewell: to behold her no more."

Madame Roland at first thought that she was to be tried with the Girondists; but the judges dreaded the effect of her beauty and eloquence, and she was not called forward even as a witness. The twenty-two Girondists heard their sentence, and met its execution without shrinking. Young, patriotic, and some of them gifted with surpassing eloquence, they perished on the fatal Place de la Revolution for having resisted the progress of the Reign of Terror. They acted in the spirit of the two noble lines of their friend, Condorcet:—

> "Ils m'ont dit: Choisis d'être oppresseur ou victime;
> J'embrassai le malheur, et leur laissai le crime."

And this it is that has purified and ennobled their memory. If they yielded too much to popular excesses, they heroically withstood the most fearful tyranny on record. Their resistance was sealed with blood; but the first shed was their own: when their errors are remembered, this will not be forgotten.

On the day of their execution, 31st of October 1793, Madame Roland was transferred to the Conciergerie, which they had just left for the scaffold, and thrown into a damp and gloomy dungeon. She had no bed, until one of the prisoners gave her up his; and, notwithstanding the severity of the weather, she was allowed no covering. Her room was close to that which Marie Antoinette had left a few days

before her arrival. There was a strange link between the destinies of those two women. Born within a few months of each other—one in the sheltering obscurity of the French bourgeoisie, the other on the steps of an imperial throne—they met in antagonism on the stormy path of the French revolution. Both were beautiful, ardent, and heroic, and helped to ruin, by their imprudence, the opposite causes to which they clung. In her republican ardour, Madame Roland hastened the fall of Marie Antoinette; but it was, after enjoying a brief triumph, to end by following the fallen queen in her dungeon, and to perish on the same scaffold. Opposed in life, the two rivals met in death: the revolutionary axe knew no distinction of victims.

In this her last prison, Madame Roland displayed her habitual firmness. On the day following her arrival, she was examined for three hours by the judge, David. Her eloquence and presence of mind did not once forsake her. She wrote to the last; as if it were beyond the power of external events to disturb her serenity. She often spoke at the iron grating which divided the part of the prison in which men were confined from that which she inhabited. Riouffe, one of the few amongst those who beheld her then, that survived the Reign of Terror, thus describes the effect she produced upon him: "Something more than what usually appears in the looks of woman painted itself in her large dark eyes, full of expression and sweetness. She spoke at the grating with the freedom and courage of a great man. We were all attentive around her, in a sort of admiration and amazement. Her discourse was grave, without coldness. She expressed herself with a purity, a harmony, and a prosody, that rendered her language a music with which the ear never became sated. She never spoke of the deputies who had perished, save with respect; but at the same time without effeminate pity: she even reproached them with not having taken sufficiently vigorous measures. She generally designated them as 'our friends.' She often called Clavière, in order to speak to him. Sometimes the feelings of her sex prevailed, and the traces of tears

shewed that she had been weeping at the thought of her child and her husband. This mixture of strength and weakness rendered her more interesting. The woman who attended her said to me one day,—'Before you she collects her strength, but in her own room she will sit three hours, sometimes, leaning on her window and weeping.'"

Although without a doubt of her ultimate fate, she took notes for her interrogatories, and prepared her defence from a feeling of duty; she addressed several farewell letters to those she had loved, amongst the rest to an attached female servant. "Remember thy mother," she wrote to her youthful daughter; "be worthy of thy parents: they leave thee great examples, and if thou knowest how to profit by them, thine shall not be a useless life. Farewell, beloved child. . . . . A time may come when thou shalt be able to judge of the effort I now make not to allow myself to be softened by thy gentle image. I press thee to my bosom. Farewell, Eudora!"

The day before her trial, Madame Roland was visited by her counsel, Chauveau de la Garde, the defender of Charlotte Corday and Marie Antoinette. She drew a ring from her finger, and said, "To-morrow, I shall be no more. I know the fate which awaits me. Your kind assistance cannot avail aught for me, and would but endanger you, without saving my life. I pray you, therefore, not to come to the tribunal, but to accept of this last testimony of my regard." Early on the following day she appeared before the revolutionary tribunal, attired in white as a symbol of her innocence. She had been refused the means of dressing her long dark hair, which fell in thick waves about her neck and shoulders, and down to her waist. Never had she looked more lovely. "She would have softened the hardest hearts," said Riouffe; "but had those monsters hearts?" Her trial was, like that of the Girondists, a mockery of all justice. She was not allowed to read her defence: the president interrupted her repeatedly, and when she appealed to the people, they answered with cries of "To the guillotine!" Insulting questions affecting her honour were addressed to her by Fouquier

Tinville. Tears of indignant shame rose to her eyes; but she answered him with such eloquent scorn that her replies were immediately checked, lest they should influence the jury. No injustice could, however, subdue her proud and dignified bearing. She gloried openly in that which her enemies made a subject of reproach. She declared herself proud of being the wife of Roland, and of having been the friend of the martyred Girondists. Her innocence was so evident, that, in order to be able to convict her of some ostensible crime, the judge was compelled to ask her to reveal the asylum of her husband. She refused to do so, declaring that she knew of no law by which she could be obliged to violate the strongest feelings of nature. This sufficed, and she was immediately condemned.

On hearing her sentence read, she rose, and said with mingled irony and dignity, "I must thank you for thinking me worthy of sharing the fate of the great men whom you have assassinated. I will endeavour to imitate their firmness on the scaffold." She left the hall of judgment, and returned to the Conciergerie with a light and rapid step that seemed to betoken a feeling of inward joy. All the prisoners were waiting to see her appear under the gloomy vault which was to give forth so many victims. Passing her hand across her neck, with a quick and significant gesture, she intimated that she had been condemned, and that the sentence was death. Though she had opium in her possession, she nobly disdained to commit suicide. She re-entered her room for a few hours, and then ascended the last of the carts which were that day, 10th of November 1793, going to the scaffold. Her pure white garments and dark-flowing tresses increased the chaste and spiritual character of her beauty. She was calm, but with a higher calmness than that of resignation. Hers was the serenity of a noble soul in its last and solemn triumph, when the struggle between life and death is past. She knew that martyrdom, even more so than genius, can confer fame: the scaffold was for her but the threshold of a glorious immortality.

Madame Roland was seated in the cart with an infirm old man named La Marche, who wept and testified the deepest dejection as they proceeded to the place of execution. The heroic-souled woman did not disdain to administer gentle consolation to her weak companion. She endeavoured to inspire him with her own serene and cheerful courage, and succeeded in making him smile several times during their progress. The scaffold stood on what was then the Place de la Revolution, a naked dreary space extending between the gardens of the Tuileries and the Champs Elysées. This spot, now known as the Place de la Concorde, is perhaps the most magnificent place in Europe. One of the two marble fountains with which it is adorned has been erected on the spot where the red guillotine formerly received the noblest blood of France, and the Egyptian obelisk rises where the clay statue of a hollow freedom looked down on the instrument of death.

The cart which bore Madame Roland and her companion stopped at the foot of the scaffold. La Marche was pale and trembling. A feeling of generous and sublime compassion filled Madame Roland's heart in this last moment. The privilege of ascending the scaffold first, and being thus spared the lingering torture of beholding her companion's death, had been granted to her as a woman: she resolved to waive her right in favour of the infirm and terrified old man. Turning towards him, she gently said, "Go first: let me at least spare you the pain of seeing my blood shed." The executioner, of whom she begged that this last indulgence might be granted to her companion, refused to accede to the proposed arrangement, telling her his orders were that she should die first. "But you cannot I am sure," she replied, with a serene smile, "refuse the last request of a lady." He still hesitated, but ended at length by complying with her desire.

When the execution of La Marche was over, Madame Roland ascended the scaffold in her turn: she gazed for a while on the statue of Liberty, which seemed to have been placed in bitter mockery near the guillotine, and bowing gravely before it, pronounced the memorable words, "Ah,

Liberty! how many crimes are committed in thy name!" With this last protest against the stern tyranny which had usurped the name of republican freedom, she delivered herself over to the executioner and accomplished her destiny.

It is said that on her way to the scaffold, and almost at the foot of the guillotine, Madame Roland asked for a pen and some paper, in order to write down the deep and unusual emotions which approaching death had awakened in her soul. The request was refused: it was a strange and solemn one to make at such an hour, when she stood on the very threshold of earthly life and eternity. Did she wish to continue her unfinished Memoirs to the last? Or to pour forth once more her burning eloquence against the tyrants of France? Never were her calm fearlessness of death itself, and her longing desire not to pass away from life without leaving some further record of her better part behind, more strongly displayed. What would not posterity now give for that unwritten page? Her thoughts would have flown calmly even then; for she had that serenity which is true courage; but the last breathings of that heroic spirit were not destined to be revealed on earth.

There is in the stoicism of Madame Roland something so extraordinary that many persons have been repelled by it from a closer study of her character. Women have often died with as much heroism, but few have met death so unshrinkingly. This feeling did not arise in Madame Roland from indifference to life: she knew how to value it rightly; but, if purchased at the cost of honour, she held it worthless. She had mourned over her premature fate, and wept for hours in her prison; she was serene and undaunted on the scaffold: the struggle was then past: for all strong minds—and they alone can feel deeply—the bitterness of a sacrifice lies not in the hour of its external accomplishment, but in that by which it has been preceded. Was it on the cross that the Saviour of mankind said, "O Father, take this cup from me;" or when, bending beneath the weight of His lonely agony, He watched and prayed on the Olive Mount?

The stoicism of Madame Roland has been regarded as a proof that she was unwomanly. She perhaps lacked that humility which exists in those souls alone who feel the nothingness of man before the infinite greatness of God: but men are seldom attracted by unfeminine women; and yet all the Girondists, and at first the Mountaineers, gathered around her, and, notwithstanding their mutual distrust, long remained bound by a spell they could not shake off. If she failed in the gentler virtues of woman, why was she so sincerely loved by those who approached her? Her faithful female servant, on learning the death of her mistress, was seized with a grief so deep, that, presenting herself before the revolutionary tribunal, she asked the sanguinary judges who had condemned Madame Roland to allow her to perish on the same scaffold: the violence of her despair caused them to dismiss her as insane. A man named Lecoq, who had been employed by Madame Roland in some menial capacity, and who had conceived for her the most devoted attachment, also appeared before the tribunal with a similar request; his prayer was granted: he was condemned, and immediately guillotined.

When the fugitive and remaining Girondists learned, in their retreat, the death of the beautiful and heroic woman around whom they had formerly gathered, and whose eloquence had so often cheered them, they were filled with sorrow and horror. Buzot remained for several days delirious: the depth of his grief revealed the fervour of the attachment he is asserted to have felt for Madame Roland.

She had foretold that Roland would not survive her: her prediction was fulfilled. His first intention, on learning her death, was to proceed to Paris, appear in the Convention, and there, after solemnly upbraiding the Mountaineers for the murder of his wife, either to perish by their hands or die on the scaffold. The consideration that his property would be forfeited to the state if he were judicially condemned, and that his only child would thus be left destitute, made him alter his decision and resolve on being the instrument of his own death. After bidding the friends to whose kindness he owed an asylum

a last farewell, he left them, and proceeded alone on the road, leading from Rouen to Paris. A few passengers found him the next morning seated at the foot of a tree, and reclining against the trunk. He had stabbed himself to the heart, and was quite dead: his whole attitude was calm and composed, like that of a man in a deep slumber: he had fastened to his dress a piece of paper, on which were written the following words, "Whoever thou mayst be, respect these remains; they are those of a virtuous man: on learning the death of my wife, I would not remain one day longer in a world stained with crimes."

The death of Madame Roland will remain as one of the greatest stains on the history of the revolution. And yet it is difficult to lament that death—

"After life's fitful fever, she sleeps well."

It is well for her to die thus, in the noonday of life; her pure and heroic dreams still fresh in her soul; her noble blood poured freely fourth for the cause she had loved; her name beyond the reach of reproach or doubt. She died young; but what would have been her fate if she had passed unscathed through the days of terror, and lived? To be contemned; to see her motives misunderstood; to be accused of vanity, insincerity, and pride; to be stigmatised as unwomanly in her conduct and feelings: such might have been her destiny, until, bowed down by years, she carried an obscure and unhonoured name to the grave. "To die at the right time," has been pronounced by Chateaubriand a condition of glory; that condition Madame Roland fulfilled: it was well for herself and for posterity: happiness and length of days are not the only objects of human life. To be faithful to the truth within us is far better, and more noble, than to live. A destiny like hers outweighed all suffering and all sorrow: she felt it, and this it was that upheld her to the last.

Hers is one of those names which, through all the differences of political and religious creeds, mankind should keep with reverent memory. If she erred, she erred nobly; for it

was through a fervent and exaggerated faith in freedom and humanity. Higher are such errors than the cold virtues the angel reproved through him of Patmos.*

It requires little knowledge of the revolutionary era to see at a glance, that, being cast on such times, Madame Roland could not have escaped her destiny. On a retrospective view of that great drama, it almost seems as though the parts of all the actors had been marked out in advance by fate. Hers was that of one who could not live in abject fear; behold deeds of blood, yet be silent: who must speak out, though the scaffold were in view; pour forth her indignant soul and die a martyr, if not to freedom, at least to truth. For in those days, so aptly named Days of Terror, it was the craven who lived, and the brave, whatever their political creed might be, who perished.

Eventful as is the history of the French revolution, it offers few pages so touching as those which relate to Madame Roland. Beautiful, heroic, devoted, and accomplished, she spent the greater portion of her life in obscurity, appeared in the world for a few brief moments, acted her part, and died on a scaffold. Fidelity to its own impulses is the test of a noble nature. Judged by that test, Madame Roland stands pure before us. Nor will her name pass forgotten. It is imperishably associated with some of the most stirring recollections of her country: with its noble, though vain, dreams of freedom, and the story of its brave and heroic men.

* Apoc. iii. 15, 16.

CHAPTER VIII.

WOMAN UNDER THE REIGN OF TERROR.

ALTHOUGH we have brought forward, and noticed separately, a few prominent heroines of the revolution, it must not be concluded that there was anything singular in the end of these illustrious victims, howsoever remarkable their character or destiny may have been otherwise. The scaffold on which they perished was daily stained with the blood of the lowly and the great. Crime or virtue, eminence or obscurity, met the same fate. The Reign of Terror had begun.

We have seen how, after the massacres of September, the Girondists commenced against the Jacobins that memorable struggle which ended with their fall. They foresaw the rule of blood which their antagonists wished to establish; they opposed it, and had the honour of perishing amongst its earliest victims. Madame Roland, who urged them on in their resistance, Charlotte Corday, who avenged them, both shared their fate. Had the Girondists succeeded, the blood of a widowed and defenceless queen would never have been shed, and crimes much darker still might have been spared to France.

The fall of this party on the 31st of May 1793, occurred at a period when the internal convulsions of France menaced the cause of the revolution on every side. La Vendée had risen, Lyons was in open revolt, and every province protested and murmured against the tyranny of Paris. A fanatic named Chalier endeavoured to renew at Lyons the scenes of blood which disgraced the capital. In the month of September 1792, a band of assassins murdered eleven officers confined in the fort of Pierre-Encise. The beautiful Mademoiselle

de Bellecice, daughter of the governor, heroically threw herself between the murderers and their victims, and was severely wounded in her vain attempt to save the prisoners. The Lyonnese, indignant at the sanguinary sway Chalier sought to fasten upon them, effected a reaction, and condemned him to perish: the first victim of the guillotine which he had brought and erected for his opponents. These events occurred precisely at the time when the Girondists were conquered at Paris by the Mountaineers.

The citizens of Lyons were too much committed to retract: encouraged by the fugitive royalists and Girondists, who had found a refuge in their city, they resolved to brave the Convention. They hoped and believed that similar insurrections would rise throughout all France. Some of them counted on the foreign troops promised by the exiled princes; and all felt that, were they even doomed to fall, it was better to perish in the defence of their city, than to yield themselves up without a struggle to the tyranny of the Jacobins. The siege of Lyons, which lasted two months, is celebrated even amongst the memorable and fatal events of the French revolution. The most indomitable heroism was displayed on one side, and the most persevering cruelty on the other. It was not until the town was nearly in ruins, and its defenders had been reduced to one-half of their original number, by death and famine, that the Lyonnese at length resolved to surrender. Terror immediately entered their walls with the triumphant Jacobins. The fury of the conquerors resembled insanity. They changed the name of Lyons, and decreed that it should be demolished. Fifteen millions were spent in destroying the finest buildings of this wealthy city. The prisons were crowded to suffocation; victims of either sex and every age were guillotined, until the waters of the Rhone became reddened with their blood; when this mode of death was not found sufficiently expeditious, rows of two hundred prisoners were cannonaded and shot at once, in the plains outside the walls.

The women of Lyons displayed a singular degree of heroism

during the whole time of the siege, and, after the surrender of the city, many fought with their husbands and brothers at the breach; and, like them, expiated their patriotism on a scaffold. Amongst them was a beautiful girl of seventeen, named Marie Adrian. The judges, touched with her beauty, and struck with her courageous replies, asked her what she would do if they were to grant her her life. "I would kill you, as the enemies of my country," replied the undaunted girl. She ascended the scaffold with a firm step. After her execution the following letter, written with blood, was found in her bosom. It came from her affianced lover, at whose side she had fought, and who had been shot a few days before, in the plain of the Brotteaux. "At this hour to-morrow," he wrote, "I shall be no more. I will not die without saying once more, I love thee. Were my pardon offered me to say the contrary, I should refuse it. I have no ink: I opened a vein to write to thee with my blood. Would that I might mingle it with thine throughout eternity. Adieu, my dear Marie, weep not: let the angels find thee as beautiful as I shall in heaven. I go to wait for thee: tarry not long."

Death became a boon eagerly sought for by those who survived the massacres around them. A young girl presented herself before the tribunal, and exclaimed, addressing the judges, "You have killed my father, my brothers, and my betrothed; you have left me nothing to live for: kill me now." Her request was refused, and in her despair she threw herself into the Rhone. Another girl brought before the tribunal displayed a contempt of life greater still; because it was not inspired by wounded affection, but by a fervent indignation against the oppressors of her countrymen. She was accused of refusing to wear the national cockade. "Why wilt thou not wear the sign of the people?" asked the president. "Because you wear it," she answered. The president wishing, nevertheless, to save her, made a sign to the gaoler behind her, who fastened the cockade in her hair; but she tore it away indignantly, preferring death to the dishonour of

wearing a badge which, from the rallying sign of freedom, had become that of tyranny.

But female heroism and devotedness were still more touchingly displayed in the prisons of Lyons, which were chiefly filled with the compromised defenders of the city. Every morning, crowds of women might be seen waiting at the prison gates to gain admittance. Threats or insults could not turn them away from their task of love. They obtained by bribery what the pity of the gaolers would have denied: the privilege of entering the prisons, clothing and feeding the inmates, often in a fearful state of destitution, attending on them in their sickness, cleaning their wretched cells, and favouring escapes at the peril of their own lives. Amongst the devoted Lyonnese women, none ought to occupy a more distinguished place than Mademoiselle Delleglace. Her father was arrested and ordered to be transferred from Lyons to Paris. His daughter requested to accompany him, but was inhumanly refused. She, nevertheless, resolved to follow him, and accordingly travelled on foot the distance of a hundred and nineteen leagues. When she reached Paris, her father was in the Conciergerie, and she was not permitted to see him. For three months she solicited his freedom from all the influential men of the day, and at length succeeded in accomplishing her object. M. Delleglace was liberated, and set out for Lyons with his overjoyed daughter. But the devoted girl was never more to behold the home she had won back for her father. The frail form which had heroically endured fatigues so great could not bear the slow progress of an easy journey. The superhuman strength by which she had been sustained until the purpose of her heart was won, vanished now that it was no longer needed for the accomplishment of her holy task. She fell ill on the way, declined rapidly, and died within a week of her father's liberation.

Happy were those who died, like Mademoiselle Delleglace, and who did not live to behold the misery and desolation of the land. Women, pious, pure, and lowly, were not more spared than if they had been wealthy and great. It almost

seemed as if it were a crime to live. At the time of the siege of Lyons, there dwelt in that city a single woman of great generosity and virtue, named Françoise Michallet, and who, like Dorcas in the apostolic times, was known by the good works and alms-deeds which she did. She was sent to prison for confessing her attachment to the proscribed faith: for such had Christianity now become. From the loathsome dungeon where she was confined, she wrote in the following terms to one of her friends: "When shall we leave this land of malediction and death: this land whence virtue is almost banished, and where crime is greeted into a divinity? O death, how blessed art thou to the heart that sigheth for its God!" Françoise was soon condemned by the tribunal; she slept on the night preceding her execution with more tranquillity than she had yet manifested. Before going forth to death, she divested herself of all the clothes with which she could dispense, and even took off her shoes and stockings, in order to distribute them amongst the poor. It was a damp and chill February morning, and one of the turnkeys observed to her that she would catch cold. "Not for long," was her calm and laconic reply. She was executed with eleven women and one man, a priest. Françoise Michallet asked as a favour to perish last, in order to exhort and encourage her companions to the end. When we see such great victims as Marie Antoinette and Madame Roland dying courageously, we may, without suspecting their firmness, believe that they were not indifferent to the judgment which posterity would pass on their last moments; but what had the obscure girl of Lyons to hope from fame, when she asked to see twelve heads fall before her own in order that she might accomplish her heroic and Christian task?

Similar scenes were enacted throughout all France. The representatives of the people sent by the Convention to the provinces exercised their unlimited power with unparalleled insolence and tyranny. They seized on the property of inoffensive citizens, sent them and their families to death, burned out whole villages, and devastated the country; as if, instead

of their own native land, it were the unfriendly soil of a conquered foe. Persons remotely suspected of royalism or federalism were, without remission, doomed to die. Wealth and talents became so many crimes worthy of death. Some perished because they were sad, others because they were too gay. Individuals were forbidden, as in Lyons, to weep for their murdered relatives: they were expected to rejoice when the head of one they loved had fallen beneath the knife of the guillotine. Amongst the great offences of those times was public or even private adherence to Christianity. It is true that constitutional worship was authorised by the state, but the Atheist faction, headed by Anacharsis Clootz and Hébert, succeeded in causing the churches to be closed, or desecrated by the impious adoration of the Goddess of Reason. As long as this state of things prevailed, and even for a longer period, nonjuring priests, nuns whose convents had been opened, and persons noted for their attachment to religion, were daily hurried to the guillotine.

Maignet, proconsul of the department of Vaucluse, whence he exercised a dictatorial sway over a considerable portion of the south of France, made the town of Orange the seat of his arbitrary power. With the approbation of the Committee of Public Safety, he established a revolutionary tribunal, free from the encumbrance of a jury; but held by five judges, who were to convict without proof whenever they felt satisfied of the guilt of the accused. Thirty-two nuns were amongst the victims which Maignet was thus enabled to immolate. On the 13th of May 1794, forty-two nuns of different orders were thrown at once into the prisons of Orange. They all determined, on the day which followed their incarceration, to adopt the same rule, and share with one another whatever they possessed, like the Christians in the primitive ages of the Church. In the space of two months, thirty-two of these nuns were led to death; ten survived the Reign of Terror. It was generally at nine in the morning that they were summoned, five or six at a time, before the tribunal. Previous to that hour the nuns, who in their prison led a life of monastic regularity,

assembled to read the prayers for the dying, and to renew their baptismal and religious vows. Those who were called away bade their sisters a farewell they knew to be the last. Whilst waiting the hour of their execution, they were placed in a court named the Circus, because, according to a popular tradition, it formed part of an arena where, in the days of Nero, Christians had formerly suffered for their faith. At six in the evening, the general hour of execution, the surviving nuns again read the prayers for the dying; they all prayed in silence, when loud cries from without, accompanied by the sound of the drum, announced the departure of the condemned for the scaffold. When all was over, they filled the prison with the solemn strains of the *Te Deum Laudamus*. Those who perished met their fate with all the enthusiasm of fervent religious conviction, and with that simplicity and resignation characteristic of their sex. Two of the nuns were one day called to the tribunal, somewhat later than the usual hour. "But," observed one of them, with ingenuous earnestness, to the gendarmes, "we have not said our vespers!" "We shall say them in heaven to-day," replied her companion. So far were they from dreading death, that one of them offered herself daily, and unasked, to the gendarmes who came to call her companions. She at last appeared before the tribunal with her sister, and was the only one condemned that day. "Alas!" mournfully cried her sister, "must you, then, go to martyrdom without me? What shall I do in this exile, when you leave me?" Her exile, as she termed it, did not last more than a week. Many of these enthusiastic nuns, on hearing their sentence, thanked the judges for the eternal happiness they were procuring them. Several devoutly kissed the guillotine as the blessed instrument of their martyrdom. The gendarmes who led them to the scaffold, looked upon them with undisguised wonder; and afterwards observed, "These nuns go to death as joyfully as if they went to a wedding."

What were the crimes of these women? That, in an age of unequalled profligacy and corruption, they remained apart, to lead a life of purity and peace, to pray for the erring and

relieve the wretched. That they repudiated the freedom which the revolution gave them, in order to remain faithful to the vows they had willingly embraced: for this they perished.

As severe as the religious persecutions were those which the proconsuls directed against the fugitive Girondists and their adherents. In the province which they had represented with so much courage and eloquence, the proscribed deputies of the Gironde could scarcely find a roof beneath which they might repose in safety. But whilst man shrank from them in fear, they found woman, with few exceptions, ever hospitable and kind. Madame Bouquey, sister-in-law of the Girondist Guadet, left Paris for Saint-Emilion, near Bourdeaux, on purpose to assist him and his friends. She first concealed him, with Salles, in the deep grottoes of Saint-Emilion; to one of which her house gave access through a sort of well thirty feet deep. Hearing of the miserable plight of Barbaroux, Louvet, and Valady, she immediately said, "Let them come." Not long after this, she received intimation of the fact that Buzot and Péthion had been compelled to change their asylum seven times within the space of a fortnight. "Ah! let them come too," exclaimed the kind-hearted woman. They came, and were received as though their presence were not fraught with death. Seven outlawed fugitives now dwelt beneath the roof of Madame Bouquey. Her chief embarrassment was to procure them food: so great was the scarcity which then prevailed, that the municipality only allowed her one pound of bread a day. Potatoes, and a supply of dried beans, accordingly constituted the chief food of her guests. They slept till twelve, in order to spare a breakfast. A vegetable soup formed their dinner. Towards twilight the Girondists left their retreat, and gathered round their kind protectress, who prepared for them as palatable a supper as prudence would allow her to procure, and which she seldom touched herself in order to leave the more for them. Whilst she behaved thus generously, the country was filled with emissaries of the Jacobins, who, conscious that the Girondists were concealed in

the vicinity, uttered the most fearful threats against them and those by whom they were sheltered. From her connexion with Guadet, Madame Bouquey was especially exposed to their persecutions and domiciliary visits. Although surrounded by persons whom the presence of the Girondists in her house inspired with the most lively alarm, she remained undismayed. "Let the inquisitors come," she gaily said to her protégés; "I am easy, provided it is not you who receive them. All I fear is, that they may arrest me, and then what will become of you?" She kept them a month; but at the end of that time the importunities of her friends prevailed, and, with many tears and bitter regrets, she parted from her guests. Of the seven men she had sheltered, six died on the scaffold; only one, Louvet, lived to narrate the romantic history of his misfortunes and escape. When Guadet was arrested in the house of his father, Madame Bouquey became involved in his ruin and that of his family. Indignant at the insulting questions of the president of the tribunal before which she appeared, she passionately exclaimed: "Yes, monsters!—Beasts of prey! if humanity, if family affection deserve punishment in your opinion, we all merit death." The generous and undaunted woman died with two of the men she had endeavoured to save.

When friendship and pity could inspire such deep and perilous devotedness in the heart of woman, love and conjugal affection might well lead her to brave not less heroically the anger of the oppressors. A woman of Lyons, hearing that her husband was on the point of being arrested, prevailed upon him, by her passionate entreaties, to effect his escape whilst she remained, clad in his attire, to take his place. A Madame Lefort, in one of the western departments, acted with like devotion. The representative of the people, discovering the cheat she had practised upon him, turned towards her, wrathfully exclaiming: "Woman! what have you done?" "My duty—do thine," was her brief reply. A citizen of Riom was transferred to Paris for judgment, and consequently for condemnation. His wife, though not included in the accusation

against him, persisted in accompanying him: they were both guillotined together. Another lady, not being allowed by the gaolers to go with her husband to the tribunal whither he was summoned, killed herself on the spot.

In every rank of life, and with little regard to political feelings, women adopted the most ingenious stratagems to save beloved objects, and often the merest strangers. A prisoner fell ill, and was sent to the hospital of Bourdeaux. The Sister of Charity whose task it was to attend upon him beheld him with interest, and sorrowfully reflected that his recovery would only be the signal for his death. Resolved to save his life, even at the risk of her own, she bade her patient, who was nearly well, feign convulsions, and then death. He obeyed; the nun hastily threw a sheet over his face, and, when the doctor came to pay his daily visit, informed him that the patient had that moment expired. He believed her, without ascertaining the truth of her assertion. In the evening the supposed corpse was conveyed to the dissecting-room. A surgeon in the confidence of the Sister of Charity provided the prisoner with a proper disguise. He left the hospital undetected, and ere long gained the Spanish frontier. His disappearance was perceived on the following day. The nun was questioned and confessed the truth. Her candour excited so much admiration and surprise, that her life was spared. It is also true that the Sisters of Charity were found so necessary in the hospitals of the republic, as to be seldom molested, even when they refused to take the constitutional oath.

M. Caussé, a rich merchant of Toulouse, was apprehended and speedily condemned for the crime of being one of the wealthiest citizens of his native city. The day being far advanced when his sentence was pronounced, the execution was deferred until the following morning. M. Caussé had a beautiful mistress, whom he had formerly loaded with gifts. On learning his condemnation, she sold all she possessed and bought an empty house adjoining the prison. There, in that one night, with the help of a faithful female servant, she

effected an opening through the wall to the cell where she knew that her lover was confined. The prisons were badly guarded, M. Caussé seconded her efforts, and ere long he stood, a free man, in the empty house; where he found a military disguise, provided by his thoughtful mistress. Long before his escape was suspected, he had reached, with her, a place of security, in which they waited the close of the Reign of Terror.

Incidents as strange, improbable, and romantic as those of the wildest fiction abounded in this period of revolutionary history. The long and heroic contests of the Vendeans and the Chouans against the whole republic, possess the hazardous adventure and tone of wild daring which would have delighted a Scott or a Fenimore Cooper; and in deeply thrilling interest they might indeed well bear a comparison with the wars of the Puritans and Jacobites of Scotland, or with the strange and varied scenes, stratagems, and chances of Border life, and hairbreadth escapes of the wild Indian warfare. Women were implicated in this memorable struggle, but without taking in it a leading or striking part. Those whose feelings and affections—the great political guides of women—led them to sympathise with the Vendeans, either perished with them or underwent almost unequalled sufferings, endured with calm and heroic resignation. It is possible, however, that the royalist ladies, who have left such interesting memoirs on this remarkable period of French history, might have acted a far more conspicuous part in the events which they narrate, if the great movement, though headed by nobles, had not been essentially a popular one in its origin.

La Vendée is a wide and secluded district, situated in the west of France, bounded by the Loire on one side, and by the Atlantic Ocean on the other. The chief portion of this tract of land is known by the name of Le Bocage. It is covered with low hills, narrow valleys, and innumerable streams, which traverse it in every direction. These streams, the chief paths of the country, are generally overhung and concealed with the low trees growing on their banks; this peculiarity

has given its name to the Bocage. The character of the Vendeans is simple, honest, truthful, and yet reserved. "Deeds, not words," was their practical maxim: no men promised less and effected more. They were a hardy, frugal race, patient though energetic, prejudiced, deeply religious, and averse to change. From the commencement they disliked the revolution. They already enjoyed as much freedom and happiness as they desired. They had not been bowed down by ages of oppression: they had no wrongs to avenge, no brand of slavery to efface, no thought of past or present abasement to awaken glorious aspirations towards liberty. They cherished the feudal system, so deeply and justly abhorred in the rest of France. It existed with them in all its primitive and patriarchal simplicity. The nobles treated their tenants with justice and kindness; the clergy were moral and pure. Secluded from the rest of France, contented, though ignorant and poor, the peasants neither knew nor understood the deep social evils which had brought on the revolution. They saw with abhorrence and disgust their own priests expelled, in order to make room for the constitutional clergymen; the execution of the king and the laws of conscription added to their indignation. Exasperated at the thought of being compelled to fight for a cause they hated, they rose in arms to fight—but against it. They urged their landlords to lead them to the field. The nobles, though they hoped nothing from this partial movement, thought themselves bound in honour not to recede. They joined and headed the insurrection. It soon acquired formidable proportions, and at one time threatened the existence of the republic itself.

The women of La Vendée shared in all the religious enthusiasm and attachment to past customs which had armed their brothers and husbands. In many villages they kept guard whilst the men were away fighting; they sometimes made prisoners, which they brought in triumph to the commanding officers. Several women took an active share in this eminently national struggle. Two sisters, of fourteen

and fifteen years of age, distinguished themselves by their courage. On the day before the town of Thouars was taken by the Vendeans, a soldier came up to General Lescure, confided to him that she was a girl in man's attire, and, asking him for a pair of shoes, assured him that when he had seen her fight on the following day, he would not think of sending her away. She kept her word, and fought constantly under the eyes of M. de Lescure. "General," she cried out to him several times in the heat of the battle, "you shall not pass me. I shall always be nearer to the *Blues* than you will." The name of *Blues* was that which the Vendeans gave to the republicans; who in return called them "Brigands." The daring girl received a wound in the hand, but she merely held it up, saying to the general: "This is nothing." Her recklessness proved fatal to her: dashing forward amongst the combatants, she perished in the thickest of the fight.

Of the peasant women who thus took up arms, only one survived the civil war: her real name was Jeanne Bordereau; she was generally called *L'Angevin*, from the province of Anjou, whence she came. She fought to avenge the death of her father, killed by the republicans, and performed prodigies of daring bravery. Several noble and royalist ladies displayed similar heroism. Madame de Beauglie, attired like an amazon, a carabine in her hand, commanded thirty cavaliers, equipped and salaried at her expense, on the coast of La Vendée. The young and handsome Madame du Fief, distinguished herself in the army of Charrette; who, without joining the great body of the insurgents, kept up a brisk and separate warfare on the sea-shore. "In the fight of La Bazilière, 1794," observes a historian of this eventful war, "Charrette beheld her, with surprise, rush on the foe, and give an example to the bravest." Madame du Fief survived the war in which she had taken so active a part, and, on the restoration of the Bourbons, was warmly thanked and eulogised for her services by one of the princes of the blood. Such amazonian ladies ranked, however, among the exceptions to the general rule. The Vendean women of every rank

thought far more of giving examples of courageous patience, than of indulging in a daring heroism foreign to their nature, and unsuited to their physical weakness. The pious and truly heroic Mademoiselle de la Rochefoucauld, who accompanied her father in the army of Charrette, and in that reckless general's most perilous expeditions, kept up the courage of the whole army by her unexampled patience and resignation. The memoirs of Madame de la Rochejaquelein and Madame de Bonchamps shew how unremitting and severe were the sufferings of the royalist ladies.

Besides the women who fought in the army, and those who, by their own gentle example, exhorted their friends to bear everything patiently, there was a third class, who, if they did not direct military operations, at least considerably aided the counsels of the Vendean chiefs by their address and devotedness. Mademoiselle Hamelin, of Rennes, consecrated herself to the perilous task of favouring the royalist correspondence. She crossed republican posts in disguise, procured intelligence, carried orders through a hostile country filled with spies, and often braved the dangers of a long journey and almost certain death, in order to negotiate for the Vendeans with the English agents on the coast.

The protracted war of the Chouans in Brittany, although carried on later and somewhat differently from that of La Vendée, was also a royalist and religious struggle against republican principles. It was first organised by the daring Marquis de la Rouarie, noted for his profligacy, his duels, and his wild adventures. Accompanied by his beautiful and devoted relative, Thérèse Moelien, to whom he was himself ardently attached, he went all over Brittany, braving every danger, in order to establish a vast and secret conspiracy. The authorisation given by the Count of Artois to La Rouarie was carried by Thérèse, sewed in her riding-habit; and it is said that, by her eloquence and beauty, she won not a few partisans to her lover's cause. The Marquis de la Rouarie died before his project could be carried into execution. On the eve of his death he gave to Thérèse a list of the conspirators; she

burned it, and was shortly afterwards executed, with a whole family who had buried in their garden important papers relative to the conspiracy.

Though thus checked in its commencement, the Chouannerie subsequently rallied, and emulated the daring heroism, but not always the generosity, of the Vendean warfare. Though prodigies of valour were performed by the insurgent peasants, and though, as in the Combat de Dol, women often rallied them back to victory, when they yielded to republican forces, they were so greatly inferior in numbers to their opponents, that it is their success, and not the defeat by which it was followed, which should astonish. The consequences of that defeat were most deplorable. The cruelties of the republican generals, and of the proconsuls in Brittany and in La Vendée, almost surpass belief. Never was humanity so deeply outraged: the massacres of Lyons do not equal the noyades or drownings of Nantes. If hundreds were immolated by Fouché and Collot d'Herbois, thousands perished by the orders of Carrier. Women and children were shot publicly. The Vendean General d'Elbée was taken by the republicans during the course of the war. His wife refused to leave him: he was shot before her eyes: a similar fate awaited her on the following day. Difference of opinion did not always imply a difference of fate. The republican general Quétineau was obliged to surrender to the Vendeans. They wanted him to join their cause; he refused, and requested to be liberated on parole, in order to justify himself from the imputation of treachery which had been cast upon him. The Vendean generals warned Quétineau of the danger he would thus incur; but his wife, who preferred her husband's honour to his safety, induced him to persist in his resolve. The request was granted: General Quétineau went to Paris, and was condemned to death, unheeded and unheard. The broken-hearted widow asked and obtained leave to share his fate.

Although they chiefly consisted of republicans, the inhabitants of Nantes suffered as much as the royalists, Bretons, and Vendeans, from the fury and cruelty of Carrier. Their devoted

city became the theatre of the most fearful and revolting executions. The Vendean peasants of both sexes met death with the courageous firmness of their race. The women seemed to think less of death itself than of the means of dying with decency: a consolation not often granted by their cynical tyrants. They generally went to death singing an old traditional hymn, of which the burden was that "those who die for God go to paradise." The calm resignation with which these victims of their fervent faith suffered martyrdom was termed fanaticism by their irritated oppressors. It was "fanaticism" which made delicately-reared women walk twelve leagues, through a dreary, marshy country, in a severe winter, in order to hear mass said in one of those retired places where the nonjuring priests had taken refuge: "fanaticism" which caused Marie Papin, a young Vendean peasant, to let herself be slowly massacred by republican soldiers, sooner than reveal the hiding-place of the fugitive "brigands," to whom she was taking food by stealth! Then, thanks to Heaven, such fanaticism was not rare: heroism, undaunted courage, and the love of better things than life and happiness, were not found on the side of the republic alone. Never was the Catholic religion, in all its pomp and glory, so purely, so devoutly followed as when obedience to its laws was death: never were the holy duties of hospitality so devotedly performed as when discovery would have doomed both host and guest to one inevitable fate. Those who talk merely of the debasing power of oppression, know not how it can elevate, how it can purify, the noble struggling soul: how it can awaken resistance, stern, unyielding, and which still triumphs over chains and death, even when to the narrow-minded it seems most subdued. If tyrants knew these things, they might, perchance, seek other methods of tyranny. It is when brute force seems most strong that the moral power of the weak first stands revealed. A nun named sister Saint Monica, but to whom the poor had given the name of their "mother," was brought before one of the revolutionary tribunals in the west of France. The Reign of Terror was at its height, and no counsel would undertake her

defence. "Thou must be very guilty indeed," said the President, banteringly, "since no one will even defend thee." "If I have no defender on earth," replied the gentle nun, looking upwards, "I have at least one in heaven." At the foot of the guillotine she gave to a few poor women, who followed her weepingly, all the garments she could spare, and refused, even under the knife, to save her life by taking the constitutional oath.

It would be difficult to enumerate the women who, throughout all France, braved and suffered death, for having, in spite of every prohibition, sheltered or assisted the proscribed priests. Four sisters were guillotined together at Dijon for this offence; and two sisters, Mademoiselles Barberon, schoolmistresses at Orleans, were sent to Paris for trial, with the priest whom they had vainly endeavoured to save. They both went to the scaffold glorying in their action, and singing in a loud and clear tone the 96th Psalm. M. Billiais, his wife and their two daughters, were condemned at Nantes for a similar action. The father was executed in January 1794, Madame and Mademoiselles Billiais were not guillotined until the month of March. The mother walked firmly to death between her two daughters: their veils were thrown back, and displayed the calm serenity of their features. One of the two maidens was remarkably beautiful. A republican officer beheld her on the way to the guillotine. Filled with pity, and with a sudden feeling of love, he stepped up to her, and offered to save her life if she would become his wife. She refused, preferring death with her mother and her sister. The three women embraced one another tenderly at the foot of the scaffold. Fervent maternal affection rising with the dread hour, made Madame Billiais asked to be the last guillotined, in order that her daughters might not behold her death! Many Vendean women might have escaped their fate, had they not preferred death to dishonour. The noyades, of which Carrier had borrowed the idea from Nero, consisted in having a certain number of victims crowded in a boat furnished with a large trap. On a given signal the trap opened, and the Loire received the con-

demned. These *noyades* were repeated until the waters of the river became corrupted, and spread pestilence in the city. Madame de Jourdain and her three daughters were taken, with a considerable number of other persons, to one of these boats. The beauty of one of the three girls attracted the notice of a soldier, who offered to save her on dishonourable conditions. In order to escape his pressing solicitations, she threw herself from the boat into the river. She fell on a heap of corpses, which prevented her from drowning. She called out for aid, but aid to die, and not to live. "Help me," she cried; "I have not enough water!" The executioners, who were always present to prevent victims from escaping, pushed her in further to a deeper spot.

The conduct of the young and beautiful Mademoiselle de Cuissard, who was led to death with an old female relative, offers another remarkable proof of female purity and unselfish devotedness. She was on the boat at Nantes with her friend, both patiently awaiting their fate, when a republican officer, enamoured of the young girl whom he wished to save, spent three hours, kneeling at her feet, and passionately entreating her to give him the power of delivering her by becoming his wife. He was young, handsome, and his manners and feelings were evidently those of a gentleman. Moved, in spite of herself, at his persistency, Mademoiselle de Cuissard asked, "If I marry you, can you also save my friend?" "Alas!" sadly replied the officer, "I can only save her whom I shall marry." "Then, farewell," replied the heroic girl; and from that moment all his entreaties proved vain: she perished with her relative. Instances are, however, recorded in which, without any compromise of womanly honour or dignity, life was preserved, and not wantonly sacrificed. The most barbarous have moments of shame and remorse.

Deceived by a false amnesty promised to the Vendeans, Agathe de la Rochejaquelein came to Nantes. Instead of thus securing her freedom, she was immediately arrested and taken before Lamberty, the friend and accomplice of Carrier. He was pleased with her appearance. "Are you afraid,

brigande?" he asked. "No, general," she replied. "Then when you feel fear, send for Lamberty." When Agathe apprehended that she was to be included in the noyades, she accordingly sent word to her protector. He took her out alone with him on the Loire in a little boat, with a trap, which he had obtained from Carrier for private murders. He wished to take a dishonourable advantage of her position, and, when she refused to listen to him, threatened to drown her. She ran to the side of the boat, and shewed him that she was ready to die. Struck with admiration at her courage, Lamberty exclaimed: "Your are a brave girl! I will save you." He accordingly concealed her in the bottom of the boat, which he hid amongst some rushes by the river side. For eight days and nights she lay there unperceived, but daily witnessing the executions of the condemned. A man of Nantes, named Sulivan, drew her from this perilous hiding-place, and took her home, in order to pacify his wife by saving a prisoner. This man had betrayed his own brother to the republicans; the horror his wife had conceived for him since then preyed upon his mind, and he wished to appease her, and expiate his crime by performing some good deed. To how much unknown good did the gentle and purifying influence of woman lead in those evil days! The second retreat of Mademoiselle de la Rochejaquelein was soon discovered; Lamberty was accused of the heinous crime of saving women from the noyades, and a friend of his, named Robin, took out Agathe on the river, in order to poniard her. She threw herself at his feet, and the charm of a pure, winning nature again prevailed. Robin, instead of killing her, brought her back, and hid her: she was, however, again detected in her place of concealment, and this time was only saved by the close of the Reign of Terror.

The town of Arras, then under the dominion of an apostate priest named Lebon, beheld scenes as fearful, met with courage as undaunted. Lebon converted the guillotine into a permanent institution. The executioner sat at his table and shared his orgies. When his friend was engaged in the duties of his

office, Lebon sat on a balcony, from which he viewed the executions on the place below, whilst a band, engaged for that purpose, played the Marseillaise or Ca Ira. Lebon frequently interrupted the executions, in order to prolong the tortures of the condemned, by reading to them the bulletin of the victories gained by the republican armies. He did so once when two young Englishwomen were ascending the scaffold. "Aristocrats like you," said he, addressing them, "must hear in their last moments the triumph of our armies." One of the two ladies, named Madame Plunkett, turned towards him, and exclaimed indignantly: "Monster! we, though women, shall die courageously, but thou shalt die like a coward." The excess of tyranny, in which Lebon indulged with impunity, may be conjectured from the following circumstance: He was coming home one evening along the silent streets of Arras, reflecting on evil news he had received from the army, when he heard a young girl singing in one of the private houses. Irritated at this token of freedom and joy, he caused her to be apprehended and sent to the guillotine, with her mother, on the following day. A woman, with a child in her arms, saw them pass on to death. "Thou art not more innocent than that poor young lady," said she, addressing the child, with an irresistible burst of pity and indignation. The remark was overheard, and reported to Lebon, who, without further judgment, sent the compassionate woman to share the fate of the victim she had so imprudently pitied.

When the terror reigned thus inexorably in the provinces, it may be imagined that it did not spare Paris; the seat of that dreadful tyranny which threatened to lay the country waste, and consign her most noble and most gifted children to the grave. But this oppressive power, which developed so much unsuspected evil in the human heart, also brought out the latent good. Madame le Jay, the grasping and apparently selfish mistress of Mirabeau, devoted herself to almost certain death, in order to save proscribed men. After the 31st of May, Condorcet, implicated in the ruin of the Girondists, found an asylum in the house of an obscure widow named

Madame Vernet. He remained with her eight months, during which his kind hostess constantly exerted herself to divert his melancholy, and sometimes playfully addressed him in little couplets, in which she exhorted him to bear his fate patiently. "I have never written any verses," said he to her one day; "but I think you will induce me to make the attempt." It was whilst residing beneath her roof that he composed an epistle, addressed to his wife, in which occur the two fine lines already quoted.* The beautiful Madame de Condorcet was now reduced to the necessity of painting the portraits of the terrorists in order to obtain a livelihood. It was only by stealth that she could visit her husband in his retreat. His thoughts and feelings were almost entirely absorbed by her and their only child, a little girl five years of age. The ardent revolutionist could never mention the names of his wife and daughter without shedding tears. In the "Avis d'un Père Proscrit," which he addressed to his daughter, he spoke to her with great tenderness of her mother's affection and superior mind.

On learning the decree of the Convention, which outlawed and included the proscribed and those who gave them a shelter in the same fate, Condorcet said to his hostess, "I must leave you: were I discovered here, this decree would place you beyond the pale of the law." "But not beyond that of humanity," replied this noble and undaunted woman. So urgent was she in her entreaties for him to remain, that Condorcet was obliged to escape from her house by stealth. He wandered for a few days about the country, but was soon discovered and imprisoned. He committed suicide with poison, which he always kept about him for that purpose. His wife was incarcerated soon after his death. Her first task, when the terror had ceased, was to collect and publish the writings Condorcet had composed during his seclusion. She survived him many years, living in poverty and retirement, and faithful to the last to the republican principles of her husband.

* Page 168.

It was this devoted zeal of woman which irritated the tyrants of France, because it every day snatched new victims from their grasp. When Louvet, after leaving Madame Bouquey, reached Paris, through innumerable perils, he was saved from certain death by the address and courage of the beautiful Lodoïska, who afterwards became his wife. None of his friends would receive him; he had no papers, no passport, no place in which he could lie concealed; the scaffold seemed his only destiny. Unaided, but supported by love, Lodoïska built him a hiding-place in a remote room, and so skilfully executed that it could never be detected by mere eyesight. Here, thanks to that asylum, he remained undiscovered, until a favourable opportunity occurred for him to make his escape to the frontiers.

"When the proscribed of every party met after the 9th of Thermidor," observes Charles de Lacretelle, "the name of woman was covered with universal benedictions."

One man alone, the cold, sceptical ennuyé Saint-Lambert, seemed to dissent from this general praise. Shortly after the cessation of the terror, he read to a circle of ladies a work in which he dealt somewhat severely with their sex. They reminded him of all that woman had done to soften the Reign of Terror. "Well, then, mesdames," he replied with a sneer, "I shall add to this chapter the remark, that women devoted themselves when it was the fashion to do so." So spoke, in his old age, the man who had been loved with so much fervour and constancy by Madame du Chatelet and Madame d'Houdetot.

The opinion of Louvet on this subject is of more worth. He had tested both the generosity and the harshness of woman. If Madame Bouquey had sheltered him, another woman (a friend of Guadet, by whom her honour and fortune had formerly been saved) refused him a glass of water when he sank in a swoon at her door. Yet, notwithstanding this, it is thus Louvet speaks: "Amidst all this degradation, it is consoling to declare, that even in France there still exist beings worthy of liberty. We found them especially amongst

persons of that sex called frivolous and timid. It was from women that we received the most touching attentions, and that courageous aid a generous compassion knows not how to refuse to unmerited misfortunes."

May women long deserve such noble praise!

CHAPTER IX.

WOMAN IN THE PRISONS.

NEVER, perhaps, did the capital of a civilised country offer a spectacle like that which the prisons of Paris presented during the Reign of Terror. Whilst fierce and fanatic men, often repulsively coarse, ruled the destinies of France, individuals most noble by birth, distinguished by station, or eminent by talent, were herded together in prisons, palaces, and private hotels, and thence daily sent in batches (*fournées*) to the guillotine. The number of incarcerated *suspects* at one time amounted to 11,400.

Princes of the blood, generals, statesmen, orators, handsome and fashionable ladies, nuns, men of letters, priests, actors, and dignitaries of the Church, met in these abodes of death, as ardently tenacious of former passions and privileges as they were carelessly indifferent to the present. It was only in a few external circumstances that this social world differed from the gay and frivolous circles of the eighteenth century. Women, regaining all the power so ruthlessly broken in their hands by the great drama of the revolution, once more gave the tone, and ruled coteries. The mania for sentiment had somewhat gone by; brilliant and caustic wit, literary discussions and Epicurean philosophy, recalled the palmy days and sway of Mesdames de Tencin and du Deffand. The imprisoned aristocracy of France laughed at the revolutionary scaffold; as, under royal rule, it had laughed at lettres de cachet and the Bastile: it trifled with death, as it was its wont to trifle with everything: the same daring and frivolous race whom no suffering could subdue or render grave. There was in reality as much pride as levity in this careless bearing: it

was the last haughty defiance of the conquered noble to his plebeian oppressor; and more plainly than with words did it to the exasperated terrorists seem to say, "Send us to death: do your worst; we can still brave both your power and you."

Certain knowledge of the fate to which the *suspects* were doomed, their great number, the difficulty of escape, and the rare instances in which it was attempted by captives to whom France had become a vast prison-house, rendered the gaolers easy and tolerant. The prisoners were permitted to meet freely, and to regulate their amusements and occupations. They generally elected presidents, who distributed the daily tasks, and saw that they were properly performed. Some lit the fires, others swept the rooms and made the beds; a few prepared their own food: the wealthy had their meals brought in to them from their houses, or sent in by a restaurateur; and large sums were spent by the captives in procuring for themselves the delicacies of the season. The poor were generally fed at the expense of their richer companions: the gaolers recommended needy sans-culottes to the care of opulent aristocrats, who generously provided for them. The wealth of a *ci-devant* was thus ascertained by the number of prisoners he maintained; and as much pride was displayed in this singular luxury as had been shewn in the laqueys, horses, and mistresses a noble formerly kept, chiefly for purposes of ostentation. The same spirit which had governed the saloons of the old régime ruled in the prisons of the new one. Aristocratic distinctions were rigorously kept up. The nobles addressed one another by their respective titles: unless in the presence of the gaolers, when they took care to use the consecrated terms of citoyen and citoyenne. They formed circles, from which the roturiers, with whom they might the very next day ascend the guillotine, were sedulously excluded. All the formalities of good breeding were carefully preserved: gentlemen gave up their seats, of which there was a scarcity, to the ladies, and stood, entertaining them gallantly; polite invitations to dinner were sent from Corridor Frimaire to Corridor Floreal.

There was even no dearth of amusements in this strange

world. It was generally in the afternoon that the prisoners met; when the court-yards of the Luxembourg, of Saint-Lazare, and several other prisons, exhibited almost as much gaiety as the most fashionable places of Parisian resort. In the palace of the Luxembourg, then converted into a prison, the captives often assembled in an antechamber commanding a view of the fine gardens below, where there friends and relatives daily gathered to obtain a distant glimpse of those they loved. The severity of the sentinels generally deprived the prisoners of this consolation; but grief or care had little power over this light-hearted race. The scene in the antechamber was animated and gay: ladies brought their work, old nobles sat apart in earnest conversation, while the young walked up and down the room, or gathered into laughing groups. At one end of the gallery three chairs were disposed so as to represent a guillotine; this was a game invented by the ladies of the Luxembourg. Surrounded by a circle of spectators, who blamed or applauded them according to their success, they imitated faithfully the last moments of the condemned; and, like the Roman gladiators, thus studied how to die gracefully. A similar game was invented and followed by the Girondists in the Conciergerie.

These images of death seemed to enhance the brief pleasures of the captives: it was because they were to die that they would enjoy existence to the last. Never were the voluptuous precepts of Horace more faithfully obeyed: the mock guillotine threw no damp on the mirthful scene around. Appointments were made for music and card-parties in the evening, for lectures on astronomy, chemistry, and other sciences, to be delivered by captive savants, or for literary readings, epigrams, boutsrimés, and acted charades. The ladies dressed for these soirées as carefully as their reduced wardrobes allowed, the gentlemen were assiduous and polite; open flirtations were carried on, and sincere affections often sprang up in these dens of terror. Some of the ladies, who had formerly ruled the gay world, now swayed in a prison their light sceptre. Sad Madame de Condorcet, in widow's weeds, cared

little for her former power; but the witty and caustic Madame de Coigny, the foe of Cardinal de Brienne and Marie Antoinette, failed not to exercise her capricious rule in Saint-Lazare. Near her appeared her daughter, whose grace and loveliness inspired the poet André Chénier with a fervent passion, which he expressed in the exquisite verses entitled "La Jeune Captive." He perished the day before the fall of Robespierre; Mademoiselle de Coigny survived the Reign of Terror.

The deaths of those around them interfered little with the pleasures of the prisoners: they were not selfishly indifferent; they only knew that their own turn would soon come: that to be guillotined was the common fate. Without this seemingly reckless spirit, how could they have endured the hours of their captivity—for horrible it was in reality—beheld their friends and relatives daily torn from them to be led to death, and yet have lived on and betrayed no weakness? It was generally when the prisoners were assembled together, when the scene of gaiety was at its height, when projects were making for the morrow, and the love of a day was being indulged, that some drunken gaoler came to read the long list of victims. A deep, hushed silence immediately prevailed: it seemed as though, on the approach of this herald of death, the breathing of life had suddenly become suspended. As he slowly spelled over every name, those who were thus summoned to trial—and they knew that trial signified death—calmly bade their friends farewell, and came forward. Others immediately took their places in the game or conversation left unfinished by their departure. A few delayed in order to write, on the table where they had partaken of their last repast, some poetical adieu. The most beautiful and touching of these effusions is that which the poet Roucher, the beloved friend of Mademoiselle de Lespinasse, addressed to his wife and children, on sending them his portrait drawn by a fellow-prisoner—

"Ne vous étonnez point, objets chéris et doux,
Si quelque air de tristesse obscurcit mon visage;

Lorsqu'une main savante dessina cette image,
L'échafaud m'attendait, et je songeais à vous."

The ignorance of the gaolers, the indifference, and often the generosity of the prisoners, led to constant mistakes of identity. A young man of twenty was guillotined "for having a son among the émigrés." The old dowager Duchess of Biron, and her daughter-in-law, the widow of the duke, formerly Count of Lauzun, and who has already been introduced in these pages as the Countess Amélie, perished instead of their steward. The two ladies were confined together in the Luxembourg; the gaoler received a list containing the name of Biron: "But there are two of them," said he to the gendarme waiting with the cart. "Then bring them both." The list had come at a later hour than usual; the old maréchale was at supper; she calmly concluded her meal whilst the other prisoners were preparing; when all was ready, she took up her book of devotion, and departed cheerfully, She was guillotined with her daughter-in-law the next day. A similar error gave the Countess of Maillé an opportunity of displaying her nobleness of mind. On hearing the name of Maillé called out by the gaoler, she stepped forth from the ranks of the prisoners, but observed, that though the surname which had been read was hers, the Christian name prefixed to it was not. She was asked to designate the person to whom it referred; silence was her only reply. On being pressed to say, at least, where that person—her sister-in-law—might be found, she answered, "I do not desire death, but I prefer it a thousand times to the shame of saving myself at the expense of another. I am ready to follow you." Struck with her magnanimity, the commissary who had come to fetch the prisoners away, spared her. This forbearance saved her life.

When gaolers, gendarmes, and prisoners, all were gone, when the rolling of the cart which bore the latter to death had subsided in the distance, the prisoners recovered from their momentary gravity. The light jest, the caustic repartee, the gay trifling were resumed, and the hum of conversation once more filled the hall, or the courtyard, whichever it might be.

Few regrets were given to the departed; those who had been spared to-day knew not whether their hour might not come on the morrow. After the introduction of the republican calendar, the tenth of every décade was consecrated to repose: no trials or executions took place on Décadi. When the prisoners, therefore, reached the day on which even the guillotine rested, they knew that they had at least twenty-four hours more to live. Years of life were never hailed with more joy than was this brief respite: throughout all the prisons of Paris, Décadi was kept as a day of festivity and gladness, as another resting-place between life and the scaffold.

At no epoch, during the whole of the eighteenth century, was female influence so clearly displayed, as at this period in the prisons, and over the aspect of prison life. The levity, the recklessness, the aim at effect, the heroism with which the prisoners met their fate, were not only distinctive attributes of the national character, but also traits strongly illustrating the influence which woman had ever exercised, and which she possessed over it still. This power was, as formerly, one of mingled good and evil: if it often led men to meet death with unbecoming levity, it also made them encounter it in a brave and undaunted mood. The peculiar heroism of woman—endurance—seemed imparted by her to all those near whom she came. This courage was at the same time theatrical and sincere. Women who asked Fouquier Tinville for death, provided themselves with rouge, in order not to look pale on the scaffold: this precaution was often adopted by prisoners of both sexes. Other ladies kept awake at night, lest, in case they were suddenly called to trial, they should betray any weakness. To suffer with true, calm courage was not enough: there was scorn of tricotteuses, and insulting Jacobins to brave, on the way to the guillotine; inquiring looks of fellow-prisoners to meet; a part to act before all.

This haughty levity was not, however, the only feature of female influence in the prisons. Many pure-minded women, who had kept themselves free from the corruption of the age, had found in holy knowledge truer lessons of death than those

to be derived from the game of the guillotine. Calm, resigned, affecting not more courage than their hearts could feel, they awed even professed sceptics into veneration. With words of gentle and eloquent persuasion, the widow of the Count of Clermont Tonnere subdued the proud spirit of the philosopher La Harpe. Convinced by her arguments and example, he became a fervent and sincere Christian; remaining so until his death, which did not occur until several years afterwards. The young and pious Countess of Noailles was generally called the angel of the prison. None of her fellow-captives could behold or approach her without emotion and respect. In her deep humility, she saw nothing of this. She was tried and condemned. Some one urged her to take some repose. "How can one sleep on the eve of eternity?" she replied. And she spent in vigil and prayer the last night of a life as pure as it had been brief. Whilst the worldly-minded gave themselves up to whatever dissipation their gloomy place of sojourn could afford, the piously-inclined assembled apart to pray. It was at four in the afternoon, the hour of the executions, that they met together to read the solemn prayers for the dying. In the course of the evening, they met again to pray for the souls of the dead, according to the ritual of the Catholic Church. Youths and maidens scarcely beyond childhood knelt there by the side of gray-headed old age, listening silently to the exhortation of the priest—some doomed captive like them—and who, whilst reminding them of those that were gone, failed not to bid them prepare for their own approaching fate. These religious rites, strictly forbidden to the free, were not interdicted by the gaolers to their captives. "We let him live," said Fouquier Tinville of the Abbé Emery, incarcerated in the Conciergerie, "because, by his gentleness and good advice, he checks more murmurs and more tumult in our prisons, than we could with the help of the gendarmes and the guillotine."

Thus, some with reckless levity, others with religious resignation, but all with courage, met their fate. The heroism of the women is universally acknowledged to have surpassed that

of the men. The levity to which we have alluded did not exclude the highest and most noble qualities. Of all the women who perished during the Reign of Terror, one only, Madame du Barry, knew not how to die courageously. She was safe in England, assisting the emigrated nobles, when she resolved to return to France, to possess herself of the treasures she had hidden at Luciennes; without which she could not continue her generous task. She came, was betrayed by her favourite negro Zamore, taken before the tribunal, and condemned. Horror-struck at her fate, she wept bitterly on going to the guillotine, and passionately entreated the people to save her. Heedless of the example and remonstrances of those who were going to die with her, she continued to wring her hands and to bewail her fate; she struggled with the executioner on reaching the scaffold, and filled the whole Place de la Revolution with agonising shrieks.

Would that many had died thus: would that the scaffold had not become a stage for victims to perish with courage so silent and so stern, that the crowd below saw not the horror of their fate. If tears and lamentations, like those of this weak woman, had come from the carts which daily rolled along the streets, bearing their load of victims: if shrieks and cries for mercy like hers had resounded from the scaffold, then the terror would have been known for what it was,—a butchery: then it would not, it could not, have endured so long. But there seemed to exist a secret struggle between the crowd and the condemned, as to who should be more relentless, and who more defying: beings most opposed in feeling and opinions, united all in the same instinctive and unbending contempt of death and their oppressors.

Nothing is more characteristic, in the aspect of the prisons of this period, than the rapid succession in which individuals of every rank of life, and every political creed, passed through them on their brief journey: all tending to the same bourne—the scaffold.

Two days after the execution of Madame Roland, Olympe de Gonges—a woman far inferior to her in character and

talent, but not without some political and literary notoriety—like her, left the Conciergerie for the guillotine. At the age of thirty-eight, when her beauty and the successes it had procured for her were both gone, Olympe de Gonges took the title of "woman of letters," and published several dramatic and political works. Seized with what may be called the revolutionary fever of the times, she covered the walls of Paris with *affiches* signed with her name. It is asserted, though the fact may well be doubted, that Olympe was so illiterate as not to know even how to read, and to be compelled to dictate her compositions to various secretaries. Her writings bear traces of a facility bordering on improvisation. Bursts of real eloquence are disfigured by evident want of taste, extravagance, and absurdity; but many of her reflections are just and sound, and shew both originality and power. She wrote on almost every subject; chiefly on the emancipation and political rights of women. Her views on the great events passing before her changed constantly. She violently opposed the king, and when he was brought to trial had the courage to propose to defend him: a task which fear had induced the celebrated counsel Target to decline. After the death of Louis XVI., Olympe de Gonges attached herself to the Girondists: the fall of this party exasperated her, and she attacked Marat, Robespierre, and the Jacobins, in the most daring manner. She was immediately arrested, and tried by the revolutionary tribunal. She defended herself with courage and dignity; but on hearing the verdict of the jury against her, her fortitude seemed to desert her, and she said, "My enemies shall not have the pleasure of seeing my blood shed: I am with child, and shall give a *citoyen* or *citoyenne* to the republic." This assertion was disbelieved at the time, and was ascertained to be false. On learning that her sentence would be carried into execution, Olympe recovered her firmness: "Children of the fatherland," said she, from the guillotine to the crowd below, "you will avenge my death."

Madame Roland and Olympe de Gonges were not solitary instances of women who perished, though noted for their at-

tachment to the revolutionary principles. The amiable Madame Laviolette had not only embraced with passionate ardour the doctrines of an era which she considered one of freedom and happiness for humanity, but she also devoted herself to the care of the soldiers wounded in defending the frontiers of France. Falsely accused—for what motive is not known—by her husband, she was brought before the tribunal of Paris, and soon condemned to death. She heard her sentence with feelings of relief: the bitter deceptions of her brief existence had rendered it odious to her. Calling one of the prisoners to her window, she said to him, on the evening of her condemnation: "Look at me; I am calm. Assure your friends that I shall die worthy of them."

Victims more touching than those of political opinion were frequently incarcerated for some generous deed or act of womanly love. When old General Custine appeared before the tribunal, a young and beautiful woman might be seen sitting at his feet, sustaining his courage, and, by her calm devotedness, softening even the judges of that tribunal of blood. This lady was Madame de Custine, daughter-in-law of the general; by whom she had often been harshly treated in the days of his prosperity. The threats of those who had resolved upon the death of the general, and who dreaded her influence, could not terrify her away. All her spare time was spent in visiting and soliciting the members of the tribunal, and of the committee of public safety. Her ardent zeal and presence of mind would have secured her father-in-law's acquittal, if it had then been possible for a man once accused not to be condemned. Madame de Custine was very nearly meeting the fate of Madame de Lamballe, on the spot where that unfortunate princess had perished. She had left the hall where the trial of her relative took place, and was descending alone the steps of La Force; a silent crowd, of menacing aspect, gradually closed around her; an exclamation, or even a token of fear, and she was lost: she bit her lips until the blood came, in order to prevent herself from turning pale. In her path was a hideous poissarde, with an infant in her arms: Madame

de Custine paused and admired it. The woman understood her: "Take it," said she, presenting the child; "you will give it back to me below." Madame de Custine obeyed, and, protected by that shield, descended the steps in safety: when she had reached the street, she returned the child to its mother, without daring to murmur thanks, which might have been dangerous to both.

The condemnation and death of her father-in-law were not the last trials of this devoted woman. Her husband was soon afterwards thrown into prison. Hopeless of an acquittal, she planned his escape. For the sum of thirty thousand francs in gold, and a pension of two thousand livres, a daughter of the gaoler, named Louise, was to let the prisoner escape. Their measures were all taken, when M. de Custine learned that Louise, by thus aiding him, would incur the penalty of death. From that moment nothing could induce him to accede to the proposed plan. His wife wept and entreated him in vain. Louise knelt at his feet, offering to give up the reward and follow him and Madame de Custine wherever they went; he remained inflexible, still preferring death to the shame of saving his life at the expense of another. Scarcely had Madame de Custine become a widow, when she was in her turn thrown into prison; but her beauty, her devotedness, and her misfortunes had given her a friend in one of the Jacobins who happened to be brought into contact with her. A mason named Jérome resolved to save her. He had free access to Fouquier Tinville's office. Every day for six months he failed not once to place her act of accusation the last on the list. He thus saved her life. After the fall of Robespierre, Jérome was compelled to hide, and Madame de Custine was set at liberty. She fell ill, and Jérome, who knew it, sent her servant money wherewith to support her mistress and her child. Events subsequently enabled Madame de Custine to favour the escape of her benefactor from the kingdom.

Such instances of generosity or kindness from the terrorists were by no means rare The author Bitanbé was treated with some leniency in his prison because one of the turnkeys, who

daily sent to the scaffold the prisoners he disliked, had read his tale of *Joseph*, which he said "made him weep." As the Reign of Terror progressed, even the men by whom it had been established began to look upon their work with dread and horror. The executions daily assumed a more revolting character. Fourteen young girls, the eldest of whom was not eighteen years of age, were sent to the scaffold at once. Their crime was having assisted at a ball given by their parents, the chief inhabitants of the town, when Verdun surrendered to the Prussians. For this the tribunal of Paris condemned them to die. They were incarcerated in the Conciergerie, where their youth and modest beauty interested all the other prisoners in their favour. The manner in which they spent the last day of their life confirms a remark applicable to the whole female sex; who, during the Reign of Terror, thought far less of their fate than of the means by which it might be met with decency. Guided by this "ruling passion strong in death," the maidens of Verdun, on the eve of their execution, calmly prepared their garments for the morrow, so that they might be spared a blush even on the scaffold. They were conveyed all in one cart to the guillotine. A murmur of pity arose in the crowd as they passed through it, modest and beautiful in their white garments, as if attired for a festival. They died with a serenity more touching than the sternest courage. The execution of these innocent victims created a deep feeling of horror in the prison they had left. "On the day which followed their death," observes the prisoner Riouffe, "the court of the women looked like a garden which a storm has bereft of its fairest flowers."

To a woman, pure, beautiful, and courageous, belongs the honour of the first protest raised against this infamous tyranny. The handsome and eloquent Lucile Duplessis poured into the soul of her husband, Camille Desmoulins, the fervent sympathy with the oppressed, and the hatred of their tyrants, which burned in her own. It was to the wife whom he so tenderly loved that Camille owed death, and a fame more pure than he had yet won. Guilty of having, in the eloquent pages

of the *Vieux Cordelier*, proposed the substitution of a tribunal of clemency for one of blood, he was sent to the Luxembourg, to share the fate of those he had wished to save. On entering his prison, he exclaimed, with a sigh, "I die for having shed a few tears over the unhappy." During his brief captivity, he thought of nothing save Lucile and their child. He spent his days in writing her the most touching letters—which still exist, with the traces of his tears—and in watching her in the gardens below. After his condemnation it was still of her fate that he thought: happy, even in his misery, not to suspect what that fate would be. He died clasping a lock of her hair, and uttering the name of Lucile. His blood still stained the revolutionary scaffold, when the prisoners whom he had left in the Conciergerie beheld his widow appear amongst them. Pale and drooping, but still surpassingly beautiful even in her agonising sorrow, she looked like one bowed down by an overwhelming calamity, and to whom the grave alone could yield repose. The prisoners gazed on her as she wandered over the prison with her unsettled looks, or sat apart sad and desolate, and they felt that for her at least it would be well to die. Gentle to the last, notwithstanding the bitterness of her grief, she endeared herself to all. She shunned no one, but avoided consolation. She consorted chiefly with a young nun, who, on the opening of the revolution, had left her convent and married Hébert, the infamous author of the "Père Duchesne." Before he perished himself, Camille Desmoulins had by his sarcasms ruined Hébert, and brought him to the scaffold.

The widows of the two foes now met in the court-yard of the prison, and, sitting down on the same stone, wept together over their misfortunes. The widow of Hébert foresaw her fate, but thought that Lucile Desmoulins, so innocent and so pure, could not be condemned. "You are happy," she often said to her; "there is nothing against you: you will be acquitted." Lucile knew this was impossible: "They will kill me as they have killed him," was her answer; "let them: I know the blood of woman has never been shed in vain."

She heard her condemnation with serenity, and, like most of the victims of that disastrous period, attired herself in white to go to the scaffold. She preserved a cheerful bearing, conversing with her companions, and particularly with the widow of Hébert, as she went along. Her courage and her youthful beauty filled all those who gazed on her with admiration and sorrow. "How beautiful she looks! what a pity!" were the exclamations which arose upon her path. At the foot of the scaffold she tenderly embraced the widow of Hébert, bade her other companions farewell, and submitted to her fate with meek resignation. A beautiful, touching victim of woman's holiest feelings—compassion and love.

The efforts Camille Desmoulins had made to stay the course of the Reign of Terror seemed only to accelerate its progress. Whole generations were swept away at once. The virtuous Malesherbes, then more than eighty years of age, the courageous defender of Louis XVI., the humane minister whose first act of power had been to deliver prisoners unjustly detained, was cast into prison, with his sister, his daughter, his son-in-law, his grand-daughter and her husband, M. de Chateaubriand, brother of the late celebrated author. The cheerful serenity of Malesherbes, and the devotedness of Madame de Rosambeau, his daughter, excited the admiration of all the prisoners in the Conciergerie, where this family were confined. Madame de Rosambeau seemed to have forgotten every earthly object save her aged father. As the family proceeded, with other prisoners, to the tribunal, they met M. de Sombreuil—who had been reincarcerated—leaning on the arm of his daughter. The first time this heroic girl had appeared before the other prisoners, every look became fixed upon her and filled with tears. On beholding her now, Madame de Rosambeau observed—"You have had the glory of saving your father; I shall have the consolation of dying with mine."

Amongst those who shared the fate of the Malesherbes family, were two celebrated political antagonists, Chapelier and D'Esprénuil, and two ladies of the old noblesse, the

Duchess of Grammont, sister of the minister Choiseul, and Madame du Chatelet, widow of the celebrated Madame du Chatelet's only son, who had been guillotined a few months before. When these two ladies appeared before the revolutionary tribunal, the haughty Madame de Grammont behaved with great firmness and courage. She was accused of having sent money and linen to the queen after the 10th of August; she disdained to deny this honourable circumstance: "I will not purchase my life at the cost of an untruth," was her only justification. Madame du Chatelet, a calm, gentle woman, sought not to make any defence, but awaited her fate in silent submission. Reckless of herself, Madame de Grammont thought only of her friend. "That you should seek *my* death," she passionately exclaimed, addressing her judges, "since I despise and hate you—since I would have roused all Europe against you, if I could—that you should send me to the scaffold, is only natural. But what did this angel," she added, pointing to her friend, "ever do to you?—she, who always bore everything without complaint, and whose whole existence has been marked by actions of kindness and humanity?" This courageous appeal proved vain; but it was not thrown away on the memory of Madame de Grammont: that "Amazonian, fierce, haughty dame," * over whose character this one little trait shed a noble and generous light. On the 22d of April 1794, Malesherbes, his family, the Duchess of Grammont, Madame du Chatelet, and several other individuals, fourteen in all, were conveyed in two carts to the place of execution. Madame de Rosambeau supported her father, near whom she was seated: she embraced him frequently, and, heedless of her own approaching end, wept over his fate. When the executioner parted them on the scaffold, she passionately exclaimed, "Wretch! would you murder my father?"

A few days after this barbarous execution, the Princess Elizabeth appeared before the revolutionary tribunal, and closed the list of royal victims. The almost unearthly serenity

* Walpole.

of her mind through every sorrow, her heavenly piety and calm loveliness, could not soften the tyrants of France. Free from ambition, from intrigue and weakness, she was stainless, even in the eyes of those who pronounced her condemnation. On the night of the 9th of May she was separated from her niece, and scarcely allowed time to bid her farewell. Her trial began at an early hour on the 10th. Twenty-four persons were tried with her; amongst them was the whole family of Brienne: with the exception of the cardinal, who committed suicide on being arrested. Madame de Montmorin and her son, and several courtiers and ladies of the aristocracy, were included in the act of accusation against Madame Elizabeth. "She need not complain," observed Fouquier Tinville, alluding to this circumstance; "surrounded by this faithful old noblesse she can, even at the foot of the guillotine, still fancy herself at Versailles." Madame Elizabeth answered her accusers with the calm dignity of her character. The aspect of death seemed to have made her resume the pride of rank, which she had always discarded in life. On being asked her name, she replied, "Elizabeth of France, sister of Louis XVI., and aunt of Louis XVII., your king." The judge called Louis XVI. a tyrant. An indignant flush overspread the features of the gentle princess. "If my brother had been a tyrant," she replied, "you would not be here; nor should I be judged by you to-day." She heard her sentence without emotion, and serenely prepared herself for death. One of the young women condemned with her not being provided with a suitable covering for her bosom, Madame Elizabeth tore her own fichu in two, and gave her half. Such was the universal veneration she inspired, that when her hair was cut off, the persons condemned with her, and even the executioners, took and shared it with one another, like some precious relic.

Amongst those who accompanied the princess to the scaffold was the Marchioness Crussol d'Usez d'Amboise; a weak, timorous woman, who could never sleep unless two waiting-women were in the same room with her, and whom

the sight of a mouse or a spider threw into agonies of fear. But the aspect of death, instead of terrifying this frivolous being, made her display a singular amount of firmness and courage. In the cart which led her to execution, she only thought of testifying to the princess her respect and attachment.

Madame Elizabeth, touched by this attention in such a moment, expressed to her the regret she felt at not being able to shew her sense of her kindness. "If your royal highness would condescend to kiss me," said the marchioness, "I should think myself most happy." "Very willingly, marquise," replied Madame Elizabeth, and she embraced not only her but all the condemned ladies, as they passed her one by one before ascending the scaffold. Her turn did not come until twenty-four heads had fallen beneath the knife; the executioner then approached her, and, as her hands were bound, removed the handkerchief which covered her bosom. A deep blush suffused the features of the modest princess: "In the name of your mother!" she said, with much emotion, "cover me." The man silently obeyed, and, without further remonstrance, she ascended the ladder, and submitted to her fate.

Of all the victims of the revolution, Madame Elizabeth was one of the most guiltless: her sole crime was the royal blood which flowed in her veins, and the devoted attachment she had ever felt for her unhappy brother.

As the Reign of Terror drew to a close, it assumed a more gloomy and fearful character. The law of the 22d of Prairial denied defenders to the accused, and authorised the jury to convict without evidence; the prisoners were treated with increased rigour: kind-hearted turnkeys were supplanted by men who had served as *égorgeurs* in the provinces; captives were transferred from one prison to another, in order to break whatever social ties they might have formed; they were no longer allowed to procure their own food, but were reduced to one wretched meal in the twenty-four hours. This repast, taken in common, was called the *gamelle*. Even the mode in which they were summoned to death invested their fate with new terrors.

The sight of so many victims daily conveyed from the various prisons of Paris to that last fatal one—the Conciergerie—at length raised pity in the hearts of the people. To avoid this, the hour of removal was changed. The trampling of horses, and the heavy rolling wheels of the long, covered carts, destined to convey them away, now roused the prisoners at dead of night. They awoke with a start, and listened with beating hearts to the harsh voices of the turnkeys, angrily resounding through every gallery and corridor, as they summoned the devoted ones to rise for their last journey. Husbands were thus torn from their wives, mothers from their children, without the indulgence of a last farewell. A hundred and sixty-nine prisoners were taken away in one night from the Luxembourg alone. It was not until the mournful procession had left, until the gloomy prison had once more relapsed into silence, that the surviving prisoners felt, with a sigh of relief, they had yet another day to live.

The introduction of spies amongst them completed the misery of the prisoners. An unsuccessful attempt which Lucile Desmoulins had made to effect the liberation of her husband was taken as the proof of a vast conspiracy existing against the republic in all the prisons. Informers, technically called moutons, were commissioned to detect this supposed plot, and make up lists of victims. Whenever Fouquier Tinville wanted what he termed a "new batch," a conspiracy was invented. The presence of these spies, who were soon known by their insolence, checked that freedom of intercourse the prisoners had hitherto enjoyed. Amusements were abandoned; all gaiety was gone; the prisoners walked about their abode with careworn aspect and looks of silent horror. They anxiously waited for the papers, to read with avidity, not the news for which the busy world might care,—with these they had done,—but the long daily list of the guillotined. Their fate when they were transferred to the Conciergerie for condemnation was more gloomy still. They were there herded in infectious dungeons, still stained with the blood shed in the massacres of September, and built around the wide court-yard; a portion

of which had remained unpaved since the stones were taken up for the murdered dead to be buried on the spot where they had fallen. Towards three in the afternoon, the long procession of the condemned descended from the tribunal, and passed, with a firm step and sedate bearing, beneath a long gloomy vault, on either side of which stood rows of their fellow-prisoners, watching them with eager and morbid interest. Thirty-five members of the parliament of Paris, thirty-two farmers-general, and twenty-five merchants of Sedan, passed beneath that vault on their way to the scaffold. Seventy victims were sent to death at once, under the pretence that they were all implicated in the imaginary conspiracy of Cécile Renaud. This young girl called one morning on Robespierre, and asked to see him; his landlady thought her manner suspicious; she caused her to be arrested, and a small knife was found in the basket she carried on her arm: she said that her object in asking to see Robespierre "was to see the shape of a tyrant." The knife found on her, and this reply, were taken as proofs of her design to assassinate the Dictator. Her parents, her brothers, old M. de Sombreuil, the family of Sainte Amaranthe, and other individuals, sixty-nine in all, were involved in her ruin. Madame de Sainte Amaranthe was a witty and beautiful royalist lady, whose daughter, more beautiful still, married M. de Sartines. They had passed safely through the worst part of the Reign of Terror, gathering around them whatever was left of the once brilliant Parisian world of fashion. The advice of a friend, and their own inclination, led them to court the intimacy of Robespierre, and to become initiated in the mystic sect of Catherine Théos; which, from his manifest leaning towards religious principles, he was supposed to favour.

Catherine Théos, "the mother of God," as she called herself, was a fanatic old woman, who, assisted by Dom Gerle, a monk of the Chartreuse, attempted to found a sect, and foretold the advent of a new Messiah. These visionaries and their disciples entertained the most profound respect for Robespierre.

The committee of public safety had beheld with disgust the

fête which Robespierre instituted in honour of the Supreme Being. The extravagant doctrines and strange ceremonies of Catherine Théos gave them an opportunity of covering him with ridicule. The old fanatic and her disciples were accordingly incarcerated, as accomplices of Cécile Renaud, whom they had never seen. Robespierre, who had displayed towards Madame de Sainte Amaranthe and her daughter a courteous admiration, verging on friendship, protested, but in vain, against their arrest. They endured their fate with courage and resignation. One day Madame de Sainte Amaranthe learned, falsely as it afterwards appeared, that M. de Sartines had been executed: going up to her daughter, she said, "Your husband is no more; we shall probably follow him to-morrow to the scaffold: no tears,—this is no time for softness,—we must prepare to meet with courage an inevitable fate." A day passed, and they were not summoned to the tribunal. At eleven o'clock on the following night, an usher entered her room, and told her she was wanted below. "And are we not wanted too?" anxiously asked her son and daughter. "Certainly," was the reply. They threw themselves into the arms of their mother, exclaiming, in a transport of joy, "Then, we shall all die together."

They appeared before the tribunal on the following day. There they saw M. de Sartines, who still lived; Cécile Renaud and her family; and M. de Sombreuil, saved in vain by his heroic daughter: old Catherine Théos had died in her prison. After a mock trial, the seventy victims were condemned. They were lead to death in the red chemise of murderers. This garment, intended to disfigure the young and lovely women thus barbarously immolated, seemed, as in the case of Charlotte Corday, to heighten their beauty. Exasperated at the courage with which they met their fate, Fouquier Tinville is said to have conceived the infamous project of causing future victims to be bled, and consequently weakened before execution. This idea was never carried into effect. Shortly after this fearful execution, sixteen nuns of Compiègne were guillotined for belonging to the sect of Catherine Théos, whom they had

never even had an opportunity of seeing. A kind subterfuge of the municipal authorities of Compiègne had led them to sign, unconsciously, their adherence to the constitutional oath. On learning this, the nuns wrote and signed a solemn retractation of what they considered a virtual apostasy. They were imprisoned, transferred to Paris, and placed in the Conciergerie for trial. At the bar of the tribunal their superior generously endeavoured to save her sisters by taking on herself the sole responsibility of their acts; but both the nuns and the judges exclaimed against this course. The victims heard their condemnation with serenity and joy. On the preceding day one of them, Mademoiselle de Crosy, had composed a parody of the Marseillaise, in five verses, of which this is the first :—

"Livrons nos cœurs à l'allégresse,
Le jour de gloire est arrivé–
Loin de nous la moindre faiblesse !
Le glaive sanglant est levé,
Préparons nous à la victoire ;
Sous les drapeaux d'un Dieu mourant,
Que chacun marche en conquérant;
Courons tous volons à la gloire :
Ranimons notre ardeur—
Nos corps sont au Seigneur !
Montons,
Montons à l'échafaud, et Dieu sera vainqueur."

They were sent to the scaffold on the morning of the 17th of July. In the cart where they sat together they repeated the prayers for the dying, and sang the *Te Deum Laudamus*, heard only in the solemn festivals of the Church. The long white robes and veils of their order, their calm bearing and sacred hymns, their years, varying from blooming youth to gray old age, their resignation and innocence, created a deep feeling of compassion in the crowd. No cries, no hootings rose upon their path : a silence deep and mournful accompanied them to the guillotine. At the foot of the scaffold the nuns all repeated, in a loud clear tone, the vows for which they were going to die. They then began the hymn to the Holy Ghost—*Veni, Creator*. Their superior had asked to die last, and the nuns passed before her as they ascended the

ladder, still singing the solemn strain; which was diminished, but not interrupted, with every fall of the knife. When fifteen heads were low, the aged superior delivered herself over to the executioner, and perished with the words of praise and joy still on her lips.

Eight nuns confined in Port-Royal gave up life in the same heroic spirit. They were accused of having, in spite of the prohibitions to the contrary, continued to lead a conventual life. "If your laws," they replied, "forbid solitude, friendship, prayer, and deeds of charity, we confess that we have broken them." The president called them fanatics. "Fanatics," they answered, "are those that kill. We pray for our enemies." The president at first only threatened them with deportation, and asked them where they would like to go. They said that they knew no country so unhappy as France, none which so much needed their prayers, and all the consolation it was in their power to give. "When people stay here, it is to die," he significantly replied. "Then let us die," was their unmoved answer. The interrogatory, always a mere matter of form, speedily concluded with their condemnation and death.

Such instances of calm heroism, however admirable they might be, had ceased to astonish. The mere endurance of death was nothing: so great had the disregard of life become, that many women cried out "Vive le Roi!" merely to be sent to the guillotine. They found death preferable to the torture of living in a land daily stained with the crimes of the evil and the blood of the just. The Polish Princess of Lubomirska, the friend of the Girondists, seized with horror at the scenes she witnessed in her prison, wrote to Fouquier Tinville to ask for death. It is needless to say the request was speedily granted. If fortitude in the last hours of life be a claim to fame, the sages and heroes who immortalised the past might well have envied the deaths of the most humble victims who perished then. Composed and serene amidst the hootings of the crowd, they seemed to repudiate life as unworthy of them; and, whilst yet standing on the threshold of erring humanity,

they already appeared environed with the calm sanctity of death.

Traits of touching and sublime devotedness, of superhuman courage inspired by love, illustrate the history of woman in the prisons of the terror. Many women, like the attendant of Madame de Narbonne, asked to perish with the mistresses whose captivity they had willingly shared. Many, when they appeared before the tribunal, forgot their own fate in that of some beloved friend. Reckless of herself, the Marchioness of Armentières defended and justified her friend the Princess of Chimay, with courageous though unavailing eloquence. Never was conjugal affection more touchingly displayed than at the close of that age of immorality. The ex-minister Clavière, implicated in the ruin of the Girondists, committed suicide in the Conciergerie. His wife, on learning his fate, swallowed a slow poison, settled her affairs, and parted from her children, with a composure and resolve which the prayers and lamentations of those around her could not disturb. "I am going to join him," was her sole thought: a thought which changed into joy the bitterness of death. The young and beautiful Madame de Lavergne, holding her child in her arms, accompanied her aged and infirm husband to the tribunal, in the vain hope of softening the judges. On hearing him condemned, she rose from her seat, and cried out, "Vive le Roi!" This was death, and she knew it well. The feelings of the wife prevailed, for a moment only, over those of the mother. "Is there a mother here," she asked, turning round, "who will take care of my poor child?" "I will," replied a woman of the people. She stepped forward and took the child from its mother's arms. Madame de Lavergne, condemned without trial, was sent to the scaffold with her husband. Frequent executions had not, at that time, blunted the sensibilities of the crowd, and many voices cried out on her passage, "Why is this? She has not deserved death!" "Friends, it was my fault," answered Madame de Lavergne from the cart; "I would die with my husband." Mademoiselle Gattey, on hearing her brother condemned also cried out, "Vive le Roi!" in order to

be sent to death with him; but the judges, unwilling to gratify her, did not pronounce her condemnation until the following day.

When old Marshal de Mouchy was apprehended, his wife calmly said, "Since my husband is arrested, I am arrested also." He was soon summoned before the tribunal. "Madame," said he to her, "it is the will of God; you are a Christian woman, I need say no more." She persisted in accompanying him. "If her husband must appear," she observed, "then she must appear likewise." The aged pair stood together at the bar; the marshal alone was condemned. But when the public accuser made her remark this, Madame de Mouchy replied in an unmoved tone, "Since my husband is condemned, then I am condemned also," and she entered the cart, and ascended the scaffold with him; faithful even unto death.

The young and handsome Madame de Bois-Bérenger had courageously remained in France, whilst her husband emigrated. She hoped, by not leaving the country, to preserve her property to her family. She lived in great retirement, and remained for a long time ignorant of M. de Bérenger's fate. Orders were at length issued for her apprehension. The gendarmes who came to arrest her produced their warrant, authorising them to seize on the person of "femme De Bois-Bérenger, widow of De Bois-Bérenger, executed for conspiracy." Seized with sudden horror, the unhappy woman sank down in a swoon at their feet. When she recovered, it was to utter a passionate protest of royalism. She was taken to the Conciergerie, where she found her father, M. de Malessy, her mother and her sister. The piety, resigned sweetness of temper, and beauty of these two amiable sisters, made one of their fellow-prisoners compare them to "angels ready to wing their flight for heaven." Madame de Bérenger became the nurse of all the sick women in the Conciergerie. Her father fell ill, and partly owed his recovery to her devoted care. Her chief task was, however, to sustain Madame de Malessy's drooping courage. The unhappy woman looked on her two daughters with mute, despairing glances: a terror, which was

not for her own fate, seemed to have taken exclusive possession of her soul. It was Madame de Bérenger who watched over her with maternal solicitude, who deprived herself of food in order that she might not want, and who surrounded her with that tenderness of love which the devoted mother bestows upon her child. The whole family were summoned to the tribunal on the same day. Madame de Bérenger was not at first included in the act of accusation; she wrung her hands and wept bitterly at the prospect of life. When her own act of accusation came, she received it with transports of joy. M. de Malessy calmly heard the sentence which sent them to death. Mademoiselle de Malessy, turning towards him, ingenuously observed: "My kind father, I shall keep so close to you, who are so honest and so good, that for your sake God will receive me, notwithstanding all my sins." Madame de Malessy burst into tears. "Be of good cheer," said Madame de Bérenger, embracing her; "we shall all die together. You need have no regret: your family accompanies you, and your virtues will soon be rewarded in the sojourn of innocence and peace." As she returned with her mother, whom she was tenderly supporting, from the tribunal, Madame de Bérenger perceived, in the gallery where other prisoners awaited the moment of appearing before the judges, an old man who wept bitterly. "What!" said she, going up to him, "your are a man, and you weep!" Shamed by her arguments, and her serenity, he promised to accept death in a more becoming spirit. On reaching the room where the *toilette* of the condemned took place, Madame de Bérenger cut off the hair of her parents and that of her sister, and then requested them to perform the same last office for her. She supported and consoled her mother to the last. "Be of good cheer," she repeated; "we all die together."

Another lady named Madame Malessy equally distinguished herself by her filial piety. Her mother, Madame de Lachabeaussière, was imprisoned in Saint-Lazare for having concealed a proscribed man. Madame Malessy was then a captive in one of the provincial prisons. Notwithstanding

her advanced stage of pregnancy, she immediately asked to be transferred to Paris. The request was granted. But when, after a long journey, the devoted daughter reached Saint-Lazare, she found that she could not see her mother, who had been placed in secret confinement. Despair affected her reason. She sat for hours on the floor near the spot where Madame Lachabeaussière was confined, repeating unceasingly, "My mother; my unhappy mother!" Notwithstanding her insanity, she neglected no means of adding to her mother's comfort. The meals of prisoners in secret confinement were often forgotten by the gaolers, she accordingly deprived herself of her own food, in order to have it conveyed to Madame de Lachabeaussière; and from this task of filial love the threats, refusals, and insults of the gaolers, could never deter her. These two interesting women survived the Reign of Terror, and Madame Malessy subsequently recovered her reason.

Love found not less devoted martyrs than filial or conjugal affection. M. Boyer and Madame C. conceived a passionate attachment for one another in the Conciergerie. Boyer was one day called before the tribunal; every look became riveted on his mistress; she seemed calm, and merely went up to her room to write a letter. A friend intercepted the missive; it was addressed to Fouquier Tinville, and contained a fervent confession of royalism. Not receiving any reply to this letter, she wrote another. "I know all," said she to the friends who concealed the papers from her. Seeing her courage, they revealed the truth to her. M. Boyer had been tried and executed. The whole of that day and the following night she spent in her cell weeping alone, and reading over the letters she had formerly received from her lover. When morning came, she placed them near her heart, and attired herself with great elegance. She was at breakfast with the other prisoners, when the bell which announced the approach of the commissaries, who daily read the lists of death, rang loudly. "They are coming for me," she joyfully exclaimed. "Farewell, my friends! Oh! I am so happy!" She cut off her

hair, divided it amongst the prisoners, gave a few articles of jewelry to the women present, and proceeded to the tribunal with a light and happy step. When Fouquier Tinville asked her if she were the author of the letter he had received: "Yes, monster!" she passionately replied. On reaching the scaffold, she merely exclaimed, "It is here that he perished," and joyously delivered herself over to the executioner.

The beautiful Princess of Monaco, the friend of Madame Necker and of the Countess Amélie, was one of the last victims of this reign of blood. When the agents of the terrorists came to arrest her, she succeeded in effecting her escape, and in finding a refuge in the house of a friend; but the dread of compromising her generous hostess induced her to leave this asylum. She was soon recaptured and thrown into prison. On being condemned by the tribunal she declared herself pregnant, in order to prolong her life; a subterfuge often resorted to by women similarly circumstanced. On the following day, however, she blushed at the untruth she had told, and wrote to Fouquier Tinville to disavow it. She prepared for death with great calmness, cut her hair off with a piece of broken glass, and asked her femme de chambre for some rouge, "in order," as she said, "that if she should turn pale no one might see it." As the princess passed in the court of the prison, she said to the prisoners whom she saw there, "I go to death with the calmness of innocence, and wish you, from my soul, a better fate." She delivered a packet containing her hair to one of the turnkeys, beseeching him, in the most earnest manner, to deliver it to her children. One of the women condemned to die with her betrayed the greatest grief. The princess spent her last moments in endeavouring to console her. "Take courage, my dear friend," said she to her, "it is the guilty alone who ought to fear." She perished on the 8th of Thermidor. On the 9th, the Reign of Terror ceased.

For some time previously to this memorable event, a considerable degree of fear and anxiety had pervaded the prisons of Paris. The eleven thousand prisoners considered their fate

as inevitable. Every day new victims were snatched from their ranks; every day they heard in the streets the long lists of the guillotined. The life they led was so thoroughly wretched that they learned to look upon its close as a blessing. It was not, therefore, death itself they feared, but the manner in which death might come. Sinister words had been uttered by the terrorists. "We must have an end," said one. "The prisons must be cleared," observed Henriot, in the court of the Luxembourg. From prison to prison there spread a rumour that the massacres of September were soon to be renewed. The prisoners had become reconciled to the guillotine; but the idea of the death struggle between them and their murderers filled them with unconquerable horror. They were no longer allowed to see the papers; they knew nothing therefore of the secret quarrel between Robespierre and the committees he had governed so long. On the morning of the 9th, the tocsin began to ring; the gaolers looked dark and threatening, and took away all knives and instruments of defence from their prisoners. Thus had the massacres of September begun. Confident that they were going to perish, the prisoners resigned themselves to their fate. During the whole of the day the drum continued to beat, and the tocsin to toll. These sounds seemed more terrific still in the hushed silence of the prisons. The women had gathered together to kneel in fervent prayer; priests gave their last benediction to their companions, and, as a warning of their approaching fate, prisoners repeated to one another: "Friends, we are now all ninety years old." At five in the afternoon the tumult in the streets and the terror of the prisoners reached their height. That some terrific struggle was then going on, and that the result of that struggle would be life or death for them, they knew. The decree against Robespierre, Couthon, and Saint-Just, was shouted in the streets; the distant signs of their relatives and friends filled the captives with astonishment and uncertainty. Was this but a change of tyrants, or were they to hope indeed?

At length missives and papers from without, purchased

from the gaolers at their weight in gold, told the whole truth. Robespierre had fallen! the Reign of Terror had ceased! A delirious joy seized on the prisoners. They wept convulsively, and embraced one another with transport; they mourned for the dead; they returned thanks to God. A deliverance so unexpected, so miraculous, seemed incredible. But yesterday they were doomed; to-day they were saved. They eagerly asked for details. How, through whom had this been done? Many rumours were afloat—one prevailed over the rest, "A woman," they were told, "a defenceless prisoner like themselves, but strong in the indomitable courage of a generous heart, had from her dungeon overthrown the tyrant." If there was exaggeration in this rumour, there was also much truth: the surpassing beauty and the heroism of Theresa Cabarrus mainly contributed to the fall of Robespierre. He fell; and with him passed away, not merely the Reign of Terror, but also the dream of republican freedom and greatness which France had indulged in at the cost of so many guiltless lives.

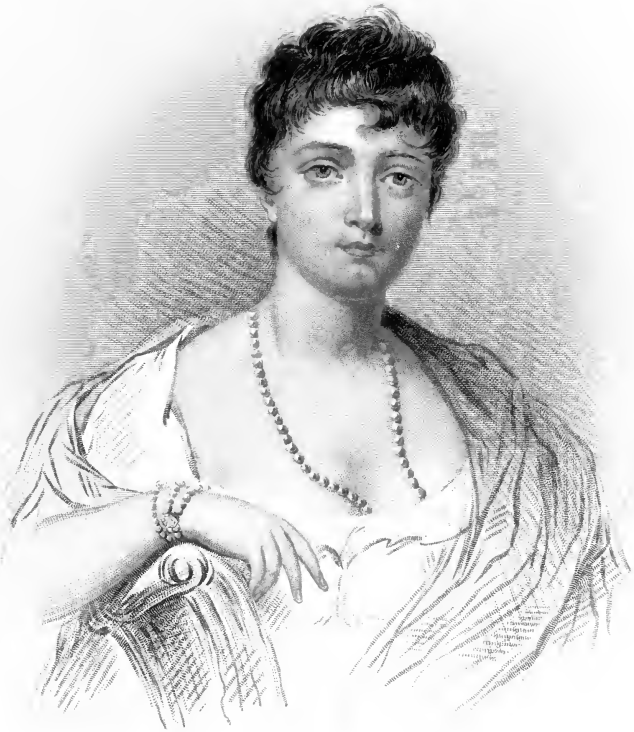
CHAPTER X.

THERESA CABARRUS—FALL OF ROBESPIERRE—REACTION—PAST AND ACTUAL STATE OF SOCIETY—MADAME DE STAEL—CLOSE.

In almost all the conspiracies on record, a woman will be found to have acted a conspicuous part; either as the victim of wrongs which the conspirators sought to avenge, or as the presiding spirit from whom they derived their inspiration. Women do not always stand on the side of democracy, or of popular movements: they are essentially conservative, because conservatism is the strength and safety of their homes; but they also abhor tyrants and tyranny: less from reasoning or conviction, than from a fervent sympathy with the wronged and the oppressed.

Such women as Madame Roland, who love freedom simply for its own sake, and are ready to suffer and die for a political principle, are very rarely met with: for one like her, there are a hundred like Lucile Desmoulins; courageous and pitying women, whose political principles are written in their hearts, and who would rather perish with those they love than behold cruelty in cowardly silence. It is this feeling of compassion, innate in woman's nature, that will ever render her dangerous to tyrants and arbitrary power. She cannot, if she would, remain unmoved. She cannot suppress the indignant and passionate eloquence with which pity so seldom fails to inspire her: an eloquence not the less deep for being native and untaught.

It was, perhaps, the active compassion thus manifested by women during the Reign of Terror that rendered the oppressors so relentless towards the whole of their sex; as if they felt instinctively that the beings whose hearts were ever open



to a generous and courageous pity ranked of necessity amongst their most dangerous opponents. It was, indeed, a woman who first gave the signal of a reaction; and another woman, more fortunate but not more fearless, whose energy mainly contributed to the fall of Robespierre.

This woman, the beautiful Theresa Cabarrus, is better known as Madame Tallien, who died Princess of Chimay. Her father, the Count of Cabarrus, was a French gentleman established in Spain, where he married a Spanish lady of great beauty. By her he had several children; amongst the rest Theresa, who was early united to a French magistrate named M. de Fontenay. Whilst the terror reigned at Bordeaux, this gentleman, then proceeding to Spain with his wife, was arrested and thrown into prison. Madame de Fontenay remained at Bordeaux, in the hope of effecting her husband's liberation. She was then very young, and of such surpassing beauty that many of those who beheld her for the first time were unable to restrain an exclamation of wonder. Her person seemed to combine attractions the most opposite. The classic elegance of her figure and the regular beauty of her features would have reminded the beholder of the pure outlines of some Grecian statue, but for the pale Spanish complexion and hair, and eyes of intense darkness, which, with the voluptuous and languid grace that pervaded all her movements, betrayed the daughter of a still more fervid sun. To the irresistible charm of the south she united the wit and elegance of the north. The expression of her glance, of her features, and especially or her smile, is described as having been one of mingled kindness and finesse. Love always blended in the admiration which she elicited; and, like all women whose beauty is not that of form alone, it was her destiny to inspire passions as fatal as they were fervent.

It was at Bordeaux that Tallien first beheld Madame de Fontenay. He was then persecuting the Girondists in their native province, and fulfilling the stern orders of the Convention. Tallien was not naturally cruel—few are; but he was void of all principle, and had voluntarily shared the re-

sponsibility of the deeds of September, and of every revolutionary excess. He no sooner beheld the lovely Donna Theresa than he became passionately enamoured. He was young, handsome, and all-powerful: Madame de Fontenay was frail enough to accept his homage. Her husband was liberated, and favoured in his retreat to Spain. Theresa remained behind, procured a divorce, and when the space of time exacted by the French law had elapsed married Tallien. This latter event did not, however, take place until after the 9th of Thermidor. In the meantime, the beautiful Spaniard reigned with her lover over Bordeaux. Attired in a Grecian costume, which enhanced her wonderful beauty, she everywhere appeared in public with Tallien, carelessly leaning on his shoulder, in the attitude then given by sculptors and painters to the goddess of liberty.

The mistress of the proconsul seemed anxious to efface, by the use she made of her power, the source from which it came. Generous and compassionate by nature, she beheld with horror the reign of the guillotine. Yielding to her gentle influence, Tallien became less cruel and relentless. Every day his beautiful mistress snatched new victims from the scaffold. From the moment that Madame de Fontenay possessed any influence in Bordeaux, few perished, with the exception of the Girondists, whom Tallien did not dare to spare. There was scarcely a family in the city but owed her the life of one of its members. When executions which he would not or could not forbid were to take place, Tallien carefully concealed all knowledge of them from his siren and pitying mistress. He knew her power and his own weakness too well not to fear yielding to her tears and gentle entreaties. A power which was never used but for acts of charity and goodness was not likely to be very severely stigmatised, even by the most rigid. In the town which her lover ruled, and where, in appearance at least, the terror was to reign, Theresa Cabarrus soon received the gentle and significant name of "Our Lady of Mercy!"

The leniency of Tallien was known and condemned at Paris. He was recalled from his mission, and Theresa, who now took

his name, was thrown into the prison of the Carmes, where so many priests had been massacred in September. Her lover could not succeed in procuring her liberation: she who had freed so many captives, and saved so many victims, now pined a prisoner in her turn, threatened with the axe and the scaffold.

In her prison Madame Tallien met the pious and resigned Madame de Custine, the handsome and royalist Duchess of Aiguillon, and the lovely creole, Josephine de Beauharnais, the future empress of France: she shared the apartment of the two last-mentioned ladies. There was but one room and one bed for three women of such different characters and destinies. Their names may still be found written side by side on the walls of their cell, and appear there with large red stains of blood left in September 1792. Madame Tallien and the Duchess of Aiguillon were, in courage at least, kindred spirits; but the weak and credulous Josephine wept unceasingly, and spent the greatest portion of her time in privately seeking, through the aid of a pack of cards, revelations of the future. This was the period of alarm in the prisons, when rumours of a new September were rife, and terrorists were heard to regret the insufficiency of their spies, and to dwell on the necessity of "inoculating" the prisons. The prospect of perishing in a midnight massacre excited more indignation than fear in the heroic soul of Madame Tallien. She felt herself reserved for a higher destiny: she longed to break at once the chain which held her captive, and bound all France in its iron links. The daring and generous thought of overthrowing a tyrannic power, was one well likely to seduce a spirit that loved to dwell on all that was great and striking in the eyes of mankind. From her prison she energetically urged Tallien to save her—to widen the breach between Robespierre and the Committee of Public Safety, and to deliver France from the Reign of Terror. Tallien scarcely needed her words to urge him on to prompt and decisive action. He was fully conscious of Theresa's danger and of his own; for he belonged to the class of men so much hated by the puritanic Robespierre, as having brought into the new

régime all the corruption and profligacy of the old aristocracy.

The causes which produced the 9th of Thermidor are now well known: it was a division among the tyrants, not a reaction in favour of humanity. Those who overthrew Robespierre were the most relentless of the terrorists: they never once intended to check the Reign of Terror itself. This thought may have entered the generous heart of Madame Tallien: her lover thought only of the danger she ran, and of his own head, then much in peril. The considerations which induced his associates to act were fully as selfish.

Robespierre has been, and will ever be, most diversely judged. He was certainly a man of strong principle, inflexible, severe, and self-denying: in many respects the Calvin of the French revolution, applying to this world stern dogmas, such as the Genevese reformer dealt out for the next. If the regeneration of France from the sink of immorality into which she had fallen was only to be had at the cost of human life, Robespierre was willing to pay the price. A deistic democracy was the ideal of his existence: he was neither cruel nor immoral; but he was cold, insensible, almost passionless, and a political pedant. For the same reason he was uncompromising, relentless, and almost inaccessible to the pity that far more guilty men could feel. Their motives were hatred, thirst for blood, or revenge; his were centred in the triumph of his system: let that prevail, and he would not ask for one drop of blood. It is difficult to judge such characters fairly. They are too often viewed as remorseless tyrants, or as high-minded men. Those who saw only his actions abhorred him; those who read his motives idolised Robespierre. Both were wrong. No man deserves praise whose deeds and words fail to agree; no man should be blamed unconditionally when it can be said of him that his motives are earnest and high. Robespierre was, perhaps, the most in earnest of the political men of his time. He is admirably characterised by the profound remark of Mirabeau, "That man will go far; he believes everything he says." But though political fanaticism may, like the same

excess in religion, seek its justification by pleading superabundance of faith, the human heart instinctively revolts against doctrines that lead to such deeds. There are two species of fanatics—those that kill and those that die. The former are abhorred, the latter are blessed and hailed as martyrs. There is in our own blood, freely poured forth for truth, a regenerative virtue which the blood shed by our hand, though in the same holy cause, can never possess. Will posterity, for the sake of a political principle, ever forgive Robespierre the deaths of his best friends—of Camille Desmoulins and his wife, so remorselessly abandoned and sacrificed, lest, by saving them, he should compromise his power, and with it the ideal of humanity towards which he tended?

But, revolting as are even his best qualities, Robespierre still demands justice. Why throw upon him the sole responsibility of the Reign of Terror? The men who overthrew him were more cruel and more guilty. They favoured atheism and profligacy; he was severe in his morals, and religiously inclined. Let it not be forgotten that he risked his popularity and hastened his ruin in order to check the progress of atheism, and cause the recognition of the Supreme Being and the immortality of the soul. He intended to arrest the progress of bloodshed. During the last months of the terror, he carried on a secret struggle with that fearful Committee of Public Safety, which provided Fouquier Tinville with victims. For six weeks before the 9th of Thermidor, he ceased to attend, or possess any influence over, its deliberations: yet it was during those six weeks that the executions were most active; that his friends the Sainte Amaranthes, the sixty-nine companions of Cécile Renaud, and the sixteen nuns of Compiègne, were sent to the scaffold; that Collot d'Herbois, one of those who worked his ruin, warned Fouquier Tinville to manage so that a hundred and fifty heads at least might fall every day. When these men perceived that it was Robespierre's intention to sacrifice them, they hastened the crisis, and forestalled him. The most active, because the most in danger, was Tallien. There was every motive to lead him to precipitate the outbreak:

his own safety and that of the woman he adored. From the prison where she pined, the beautiful Theresa communicated her own energy to her lover; incessantly urging him to overthrow Robespierre. A few days before the 9th of Thermidor, she found means to write and send him the following letter:—"The administrator of police has just left me: he came to announce that to-morrow I go to the tribunal; that is to say, to the scaffold. How different is this from the dream I had last night: Robespierre was no more, and the prisons were open. . . . . But, thanks to your cowardice, no one in France will soon be found to realise that dream." Tallien answered: "Be as prudent as I shall be courageous, and keep yourself calm."

The 9th Thermidor came: Robespierre was accused of aiming at dictatorship, forbidden to defend himself, outlawed, and on the 10th executed without trial. Twenty-two of his friends accompanied him to the scaffold. The curses of the people, who had never ceased to identify the reign of blood with his name, followed Robespierre to the guillotine. A woman broke through the crowd, clambered up the cart where he sat, and holding herself by one hand whilst she menaced him with the other, passionately exclaimed: "Monster! vomited out by hell itself, thou art punished now. It fills my heart with joy to see thee here." Robespierre roused from his stupor,—he was severely wounded, having attempted to commit suicide,—opened his eyes, and looked at her. "Go, wretch, that thou art!" she continued; "go to the grave: go, and bear along with thee the curse of every wife and mother."

The curse thus passionately pronounced has clung to the name of Robespierre. Had he overthrown the committee instead of the committee overthrowing him, the Reign of Terror would have ceased as soon, and he, though not less guilty, would have left another name. The terrorists knew not what they had done, until the intoxicating joy of the people shewed them that, Robespierre being gone, the tyranny upheld in his name must likewise depart. They prudently entered into the spirit of a reaction it was not in their power

to control, and threw the whole odium of the blood which had been shed on Robespierre and his friends. Although the subsequent history of the revolution offers abundant proof of their inhumanity, their interested assertions have been too readily believed.

The terror ceased at Paris on the fall of Robespierre, because there public opinion prevailed; but its reign continued in many of the provinces. In the town of Valenciennes alone sixty-seven victims perished for religious or political motives, from the 23d of September to the 13th of December 1794. The religious persecutions which Robespierre had sought to check were resumed with unabated vigour. Several nuns of Valenciennes left France in the beginning of the revolution, and established themselves at Mons, eight leagues from the frontier. When Valenciennes was taken by the Austrians, they returned to their native city. It fell once more into the power of the French: the nuns imprudently remained. They were soon taken before the revolutionary tribunal, and asked if they had ever emigrated. They might have escaped, by answering no: but they all preferred truth to life. On their confession of having left the country, they were accordingly condemned and executed. Though thus imperfectly displayed in the provinces, the reaction was very strong in Paris. It manifested itself chiefly in the altered aspect of society.

Never, perhaps, unless at the death of Louis XIV., had the French social world undergone such transitions as those which were figured by the political struggle of '89, the gloomy terror, and the disorderly reaction of Thermidor. According to Madame de Staël, French society remained in all its splendour from 1788 to 1791. The political discussions, which had not yet been changed into bitter quarrels and heart-burning animosities, gave this brilliant world an interest hitherto unknown. Everything was full of animation and hope. As the revolution progressed, party-spirit ran high, aristocratic society split into faction, and was broken for ever by the tide of emigration. Women had a great share in this important and ill-advised movement. The aristocratic ladies, who were

the most vehement philosophers and liberal in theory, could not endure the actual progress of equality and loss of privilege by which it was accompanied. They urged their husbands, brothers, and lovers, to leave a country which so little understood its interests as to contemn its ancient nobility. When their friends demurred and represented the impolicy of such a step, the women sent them distaffs, with the contemptuous intimation that these were the only arms fit for them.

Stung by these reproaches the young nobles left the land *en masse*. The women, little apprehensive of danger, remained behind. Those who tarried too long perished on the scaffold; others, more fortunate, made their escape from the country, and filled the little court of the exiled princes with their intrigues and repinings. One old countess, addressing a circle of nobles, observed with bitter and vindictive triumph: "Messieurs, you richly deserve what has happened to you. *I* foretold the ruin of the nobility from the moment I saw you abandoning women like us for girls of the third estate." The emigration favoured the revolutionary spirit in every sense; it gave an access of importance and power to commoners, and threw the influence hitherto wielded by aristocratic ladies into the hands of women of that "third estate" so much contemned by the old countess. Though sadly reluctant to leave her beloved Paris, Madame de Staël departed at length for Coppet. Madame de Genlis, Madame de Condorcet, Madame de Coigny, Madame Roland, Lucile Desmoulins, and Mademoiselle Caudeille, successively possessed the power, now both political and social, which was so soon to pass away from their sex. The discredit which gradually fell on the Orleans party compelled Madame de Genlis to seek refuge with her pupils in the army of Dumouriez on the frontiers. Her husband, who had of late affected to call her "Madame Livre," remained behind, and perished with the Girondists. All the tact, address, and ambition of Madame de Genlis seconded the intriguing Dumouriez in the attempted treason by which that general sought to give to the young Duke of Chartres the crown he was not to obtain until thirty-seven years had elapsed.

When the treason of Dumouriez was discovered, he fled in haste, accompanied by the prince. Madame de Genlis and the young princes found a refuge in Switzerland. They were after some time compelled to separate. Madame de Genlis wandered alone over all Europe, persecuted by the emigrated royalists, who abhorred her very name. She returned to France under the consulship of Napoleon, with a temper no little embittered by disappointed ambition; but with her intellect as active as ever. She wrote a few novels highly successful at the time; well-nigh forgotten now.

The rule of Mesdames de Coigny and de Condorcet proved as transient. Madame Roland and Lucile Desmoulins paid with their blood their brief political sway. Mademoiselle Candeille, a beautiful and accomplished actress, closely connected with the Girondist leaders, and with Dumouriez, escaped the general proscription; though she was coarsely, and even ferociously, assailed by Marat, in his *Ami du Peuple.* But after, and even before the death of Lucile Desmoulins, there was, properly speaking, no social world for woman to govern. Paris seemed transformed. Universal distrust checked all freedom of intercourse. No visits were paid or received. The theatres flourished, and were always full, precisely because society was no more. Men took refuge from the danger which surrounded every home, in a place of public resort where none were bound to speak. The individuals who had belonged to the elegant society of the old régime, and who still remained in France, lived in a state of perpetual apprehension. The most extraordinary concessions were daily made to fear. The once pretty Madame du Marchais, now Madame d'Angivilliers, and advanced in years, resided at Versailles. In order not to be inscribed on the list of the *suspects*, she made a solemn offering to the popular society of Versailles of a splendid bust of Marat. She thus passed safely through the reign of terror. Fear often led to compliance more degrading still. The women of Lyons did not blush to wear earrings and brooches made in the shape of a guillotine: little guillotines were given to children as toys to play with. One insane individual, in his

fervent admiration for the instrument of death, offered to settle a pension upon it. It was in the midst of this universal dread, when the names of the inhabitants of every house were written on the doorway, in order that the tyrants might know where to find their victims; when women were publicly chastised by the poissardes for refusing to wear the tricolor cockade, or not paying adoration to the manes of Marat; when the kings and queens of playing cards were effaced as dangerous to republican institutions; when the Place Vendôme, inhabited by financiers, was depopulated, and on every hotel of the aristocratic faubourg Saint-Germain might be read the words "National Property;" it was then that the people were ordered to rejoice, and hold a great fraternal banquet in the streets of Paris. Gaily ornamented tables were spread out before each door. Every one brought down his fare, and joined it to that of his neighbour. The most uneasy endeavoured to look delighted. One young girl, wearied of life, took the opportunity, at this fraternal banquet, to cry out "Vive le Roi!"

Abject fear was not the only feature of these times. There was also heroism as great and pure as has ever been recorded in history. A patriotic enthusiasm, which even the guillotine could not subdue, had seized on the whole nation at the approach of the foe. Two hundred and fifty-eight forges stood in Paris. Women sewed tents and coats for the soldiers; the children scraped lint. The men dug up their cellars for saltpetre. Their wives carried up the earth, and threw it in heaps before the doors of their houses. The cry of "The land is in danger!" had not been uttered or heard in vain.

It was, however, on the frontiers that most heroism was displayed. There women fought side by side with their husbands; not for glory, but to guard the sacredness of their home and native soil. The two sisters Fernig rank amongst the most remarkable and devoted of these heroines. Their father, a private gentleman of property, headed a troop of volunteers. His two eldest daughters, Félicité and Théophile resolved to assume male attire, and watch privately over the

safety of their parent. They did so for a long time unsuspected, but they were at length detected by General Beurnonville, who reported their heroism to the Convention. From that time they distinguished themselves by their daring valour in almost every engagement that took place. Félicité, at the risk of her life, once delivered from the hands of the enemy a young and wounded officer named Vanderwalen. He had seen her for a few moments only; but, filled with gratitude and love, he looked for her throughout all Germany, where she had followed Dumouriez in his flight. He found her at length in Denmark, married her, and brought her to Brussels, where she lived with him and her sister. Théophile did not marry, and died young. "She has left," observes an eminent judge of such matters, "poems full of manly heroism and womanly feeling, and well worthy of accompanying her name to immortality."

Whilst women thus shed their blood like men on the frontiers of the land, they sought to oppose their moral influence to the progress of atheism within. This was the time of the worship of the Goddess of Reason. Beautiful courtesans, voluptuously attired, were led in triumph to the principal churches, placed on the altars, and exposed to the supposed adoration of the crowd. The women always shrank with horror from these impious saturnalia. It was only by threats that Chaumette could induce Mademoiselle Maillard, the actress, to take the part of Goddess of Reason in the cathedral of Notre Dame. Momoro compelled his handsome wife to receive the same degrading honours in Saint-Sulpice, where she is said to have fainted away with shame. A young girl of sixteen died with grief and horror at the impieties in which she had been compelled to participate. It is not without reason that the Church has bestowed upon woman the name of "the devout sex." There is a faith in her soul, over which reasoning, or the specious sophistry too often called such, has no power. She believes because it is in her nature to look up to higher things than this world can give; and she neither asks nor needs any proof beyond that in her own heart

to tell her that God and providence are not idle words of human invention. This moral and religious influence of woman considerably checked the progress of atheism and materialism in France. No inquisition and no laws could prevent religious mothers from rearing up their children in the faith of God and the contempt of man's authority.

It was chiefly to the religious principles he professed that Robespierre owed the little circle of admiring women whom the atheistic Hébert and Chaumette ironically termed "the devotees of Robespierre." These ladies, who were often religious royalists, attached themselves to him with a sort of passion. Robespierre liked the society of elegant women. He was a man of cultivated manners, and shrank from the vulgarity affected by the other terrorists. He often promised his cortège of female admirers to re-establish freedom of conscience and the supremacy of religious opinions. The fête of the Supreme Being was but a consequence of his principles. This solemn act has been blamed and ridiculed; it is difficult to see why. Atheism had been formally established. The sacred name of the Divinity had been impiously blasphemed in the churches dedicated to His worship; schoolmasters had even been forbidden to pronounce it before their pupils. The inscription, "Death is Eternal Sleep!" had been engraved over the entrance of every cemetery. Relatives could not bury their dead with the customary ceremonies, but were compelled to see them thrown into the earth with indecent familiarity and haste. The fanaticism which was displayed in the promulgation of atheism was as unrelenting as any which ever disgraced the quarrels of Christian sects. It was this stain that Robespierre wished to efface from the cause of the revolution; with which it must not be confounded. The fête of the "Etre Suprême" exasperated the terrorists, and was hailed throughout France as the coming of a new era. The uninterrupted bloodshed by which it was followed effaced this impression. Few care to know that of that blood at least Robespierre was innocent: his name has gone down to posterity as the type of all the evil passions of democracy. Not-

withstanding the discrepancy between his principles and the deeds he silently suffered to be enacted, the devotees of Robespierre remained faithful to him and to his cause. Several sacrificed their fortunes and their connexions to their attachment. One lady expiated her friendship for him by a tedious captivity.

Women were, however, generally dissatisfied with the new part given them in society by the revolution. They had little anticipated being reduced to comparative insignificance by the political action of men. Such, however, was now the case. "What," very justly asked Olympe de Gouges of the women of her time, "what are the advantages you have derived from the revolution? Slights and contempts more plainly displayed." It was thus; women had lost their old influence, and they had obtained nothing in return. Fierce political passions had arisen, strangely altering national manners. Elegance and chivalrous respect for ladies had vanished with the old aristocracy. The republican severity that the new rulers of France wished to introduce threatened to curtail still further female privileges. Olympe de Gouges boldly asked for equality of the sexes: she made few proselytes, and was covered with ridicule.

It is often the fate of a good cause to suffer from the premature efforts made in its favour. That of woman may rank among the rest. It would be difficult to assert that the actual position of woman is what it ought to be: she is neither wholly independent, nor yet wholly protected. Political equality, granted to her in remote ages, amidst barbarous nations, and still existing in many savage tribes, is denied her in civilised society. Though often exposed to poverty and want, she is shut out from the wide field of exertion open to man. It is true she is no longer the mere domestic drudge she was once: she has risen in intellect and in power, and a lady's-maid is now more learned than many a princess of yore. There is no reason to suppose that women will not continue to progress with society itself. If they do not, it will be their own fault. When they have won their place, they will have it

without effort, and by the natural course of events. Olympe de Gouges and her partisans were too impatient: they attempted to seize at once on that which time alone could bestow: they sought, more imprudently still, to settle how the great change should take place, and to give laws to futurity. If there is one folly beyond all others in legislators, reformers, and theorists, it is the attempt to fasten their own ideas of truth and right on their descendants. The leading principle, when it happens to be a true one, posterity generally retains; but the form according to which that principle is promulgated it seldom or never adopts, because it is the form of a past age unsuited to present wisdom. Putting it aside, with a kindly smile at bygone presumption, posterity just chooses a path of its own.

Such were a few amongst the reasons which caused the failure of Olympe de Gouges. Had she been more gifted, she might have thrown a greater charm over her cause; she could not have rendered it more successful. Time must do its own work. Women far inferior to Olympe took up the same strain when she was gone. A handsome actress, named Rose Lacombe, whom Chaumette called "dangerous and eloquent," soon headed the female clubs founded by Olympe de Gouges. Eloquent, but cynical in her language, Rose Lacombe acquired great ascendency over the degraded women who made insurrections, and disgraced the Convention by the cries and tumult they constantly raised during its sittings. Though insolent and tyrannical to a singular excess, Rose Lacombe was not cruel: she often interceded for victims; but her power was limited, as may be concluded from the fact that two of her lovers were guillotined. When the female clubs were closed, in 1793, she sank into complete obscurity. The power of such women could not endure beyond the excesses from which it had arisen. It disappeared when the Reign of Terror vanished, and society resumed its rights.

When the first feeling of astonishment created by the 9th of Thermidor had subsided, French gaiety, which had prevailed in the prisons in spite of the guillotine, now trifled as recklessly

over the gloomy past. The share which Madame Tallien had had in the fall of Robespierre was soon known and magnified: the enthusiasm felt for her displayed itself in the theatres, where she frequently appeared, by loud bursts of applause. She became the queen of Paris, and ruled gracefully over the most promiscuous society France had yet witnessed. Men of the lowest class, enriched by lucky speculations, rose into sudden importance; fervent royalists, who had vanished whilst the guillotine held sway, now suddenly came forth, as if from underground. A good citizen had a valuable cook, an amnesty is proclaimed, and he suddenly discovers that he has been attended by a marchioness in disguise, who, to his infinite regret, now gives him warning; ladies who had turned shepherdesses for safety's sake, fearful lest they should be detected by the whiteness of their hands, resume their rank and aristocratic tone: disdaining not, however, to seek for influence through republican representatives of the people, who show themselves nothing loath to be sued by handsome *ci-devants*. The grave old hotels of the Faubourg Saint-Germain slowly begin to fill; finance reigns in the Chaussée d'Antin. The dead of the Reign of Terror are scarcely cold in their unanointed graves, when their friends give balls, at which none but near relatives of victims can dance. These "bals des victimes" have great success. The poor are starving, but the theatres thrive, and gaming-tables are crowded in rich saloons. Society is so imperfectly re-established, that no private balls are given: they are all public, and to these even the most exclusive must go. Divorce has become frequent and easy. Women change their names with wonderful rapidity: attired in a voluptuous Grecian costume, with a red shawl, fashionable since the red chemise of Charlotte Corday, and hair cropped close "à la sacrifiée," they throng the gardens of the Tuileries. A freedom and familiarity of manner, unknown to the old régime, mark this new world: the language itself is altered: the ear has become two much accustomed to the style of the Halles. Licence is as strong as of old, but it is far more gross and offensive: profligate books abound. The revolutionary fever

has subsided : blood is no longer shed, but corruption prevails : the nation has not benefited much by the change.

It is over this world the beautiful Madame Tallien reigns. She is idolised by the young men, with hair plaited, and turned up à la victime, green cravat, and crape bound round the arm, who, with stout sticks in their hands, fill the Palais Royal, singing the "Reveil du Peuple :" these pass by the various names of Merveilleux, Incroyables, Muscadins, or Jeunesse Dorée of Fréron. Fréron, once the most sanguinary of Terrorists, is now suddenly transformed into a vehement reactionary : the mission of this "golden youth" is to insult and oppress every gloomy-looking Terrorist he may meet in the street. Thus the victims of tyranny understand freedom when their turn is come. Hidden partisans of the Girondists come forward every day : Louvet, now married to his Lodoïska, reappears in the Convention ; but it is Tallien and the Thermidoriens who reign supreme. The old conventionalists who have aided in the overthrow of Robespierre begin to sigh, and think they might have done better.

Madame Tallien employed all her tact in mollifying these subdued Mountaineers : "You are so good, with all your abruptness of manner," she soothingly observed to stern Legendre. "Your heart is so generous," she said to Merlin de Thionville. "You have become the Achilles of honest people," was the remark the siren addressed to the handsome and profligate Barras : ex-noble and ex-terrorist, now her devoted admirer, never calling her but Aspasia, and not unwilling, it is said, to play the part of Pericles.

But these gentle arts did not succeed equally well with all. Some of the Terrorists consented to appear in Madame Tallien's drawing-room, and mingle with the fashionable assemblage gathered there ; but many held sternly aloof from the woman whom they contemptuously called the Cabarrus, and attacked her in the Convention itself. Tallien was at length obliged to come forward to justify her, and publicly acknowledge her for his wife. In society the defence of Madame Tallien was warmly taken up by the Thermidorien army of

young men formed under her auspices and those of her friend Josephine de Beauharnais. This army of Muscadins amounted to two or three thousand ; the young men who refused to join it were inevitably disgraced with all the women. Their exploits were at first confined to the breaking of Marat's busts in the public places ; increasing in boldness, they compelled the Jacobins to disperse, and shut up their famous club. The keys were brought to Madame Tallien, who, shewing them in triumph to her friends, laughingly said, " You see it was not so difficult."

The generous and humane influence of Madame Tallien prevented the Parisian reaction from taking a sanguinary form ; but in the provinces, where her power did not extend, it assumed an aspect almost as revolting as that of the Reign of Terror. Terrorists were daily assassinated in the streets of Lyons : seventy prisoners were in one day massacred or burned in their prison : eighty perished at Marseilles. Similar scenes disgraced almost every town which had suffered under the previous tyranny. Societies known as the " Children of the Sun," or " Companies of Jesus," were organised throughout the south, for the purpose of plundering and killing the foes before whom all had cowered in the days of their power.

As events progressed, the influence and popularity of Madame Tallien somewhat subsided. Tallien, leaving her in Paris, proceeded to Brittany, and distinguished himself by his cruelty in the tragedy of Quiberon. "Oh, why was I not there!" exclaimed Madame Tallien, in despair at what her husband had done : she felt and knew that Tallien, harsh as he was, could never have resisted her entreaties.

The revolution was then in the last convulsions of its brief existence. Royalist conspiracies and ultra-democratic movements marked the last years of its being ; the government became weak and corrupt : its vigour and earnestness seemed gone with the Jacobins. Whatever may have been their errors or their crimes, they were, at least, the men of the revolution. When they disappear from the scene, events seem to become insignificant and degraded, like the men at

the head of affairs, until Bonaparte appears to open the history of a new era. Barras, voluptuous, insolent, and despotic, one of the five directors who, since 1795, governed France, held a sort of court in the Luxembourg; another director, Laréveillère Lépeaux, attempted to establish a deistic faith, called Théophilanthropia, of which the principal observances were offerings of flowers to the Divinity; a third director, Neufchateau, presided, with his wife, over a little literary circle. The few individuals who remained of the old society looked on this new state of things with disgust. Even they were not what they once had been. Old Madame d'Angivilliers, attired in fashions thirty years old, gathered a few literary friends around her, and gave two dinners a week—one to her profane acquaintances, and the other to her confessor—in a close room filled with flowers and essences, by which the guests were almost stifled. These little absurdities, joined to others not mentioned here, left the native goodness of her heart undisturbed. It was discovered at her death that she maintained no less than thirty-four families of Versailles.

The only woman who could in reality represent the elegance and good-breeding of the past, united to the daring genius of the new era, was Madame de Staël. As soon as events permitted her, she left Coppet; where, during the whole time of the Reign of Terror, she only wrote one work: an eloquent and unavailing defence of Marie Antoinette. She came to Paris, and entered with ardour into the political contests of the times. Her saloon was thronged by the eminent men of every party; two men partly owed their elevation to her influence: Talleyrand and Benjamin Constant. The ambition of Madame de Staël was worthy of her generous character. She wished to consolidate the republican government by conciliating the parties at variance, and inducing them to act in concert. In this womanly task she unhappily failed. The royalists would yield none of their hopes for the future; the republicans scorned to profess the least repentance for the past; the directors remained aloof;

the so-called moderates shewed themselves as irreconcilable as the rest. Whilst all parties thus persisted in their obstinacy Bonaparte stepped forward, seized on the power, and crushed them, and the freedom which they had purchased with years of blood, but knew not how to preserve or defend.

Next to intellectual and independent men, Bonaparte detested intellectual and independent women. He liked talent, but only such talent as he could control. Madame de Staël soon became odious to him. He especially resented the freedom of discussion, which she loved herself, and encouraged in all those who came near her. He wanted to consider literature and art as abstract principles, and felt irritated to perceive their close connexion with every question of the day. The attempt he made to silence Madame de Staël shews how imperfectly Napoleon understood her high and independent character. "What does she want?" he impatiently observed to one of her friends; "will she have the two millions the state owes to her father?" "The question is not, what I want," said Madame de Staël, when this was repeated to her, "but what I think." Their mutual enmity soon rose high. Napoleon compelled Madame de Staël to leave Paris and Parisian society, which she idolised; but he could not subdue her spirit; and in that long, and for him disgraceful struggle, it was still the woman who triumphed. In the courts and select society of every land of her exile Madame de Staël carried her resentment with her. Everywhere she eloquently declaimed against the despotism of Napoleon, or mercilessly ridiculed the theatrical pageantry of his court. There were few important epochs in his reign, when the emperor was not made to feel the power and sarcasms of the woman of genius whom he had so unjustly and imprudently contemned.

With this woman, the greatest and most gifted in intellect her sex has yet produced, closed the social and political power of women in France during the eighteenth century. Let us look back and see the part they enacted during that ever-

memorable age. Madame du Maine and the Cellamare conspiracy, voluptuous Madame de la Verrue, and intriguing Madame de Tencin, reappear before us with the profligate days of the regency: they add to its deep corruption: whilst chastened by penitence, sorrowful Mademoiselle Aïssé dies, silently asserting, though she knows it not, the undying strength of woman's faith and purity. The name of learned Madame du Chatelet remains associated with that of Voltaire and his cold philosophy. Madame de la Popelinière, graceful and elegant as she is, is only the protectress of that degraded art which suits a degraded age, when four sisters became the mistresses of a king. The haughty favourite, Madame de Pompadour, has no power beyond that political power she wrings from her lover. The philosophic Madame d'Epinay; the good-natured Madame Geoffrin; Madame du Deffand, selfish, caustic, and ennuyée; and impassioned Mademoiselle Lespinasse, with so much that is generous and true in her erring nature, rule society under Louis XV. The abandoned old king dies; Louis XVI., young, pure, and weak, ascends the throne to reap the thorns his grandfather has sown. Women still govern society: Marie Antoinette, the gay and imprudent queen, the clever and supple Madame de Genlis, Madame Necker, sedate and grave, have their day. But this empty world is passing fast away. The storm which has gathered through centuries breaks forth. In that new contest, destined to ruin her power, woman still takes an active part. She rules parties, defends a monarchy with Marie Antoinette, or founds a republic with Madame Roland. We behold her avenging outraged humanity under the form of Charlotte Corday; teaching men how to suffer and die in every prison and on every scaffold; overthrowing the whole fabric of tyranny with the generous Madame Tallien, and defending the freedom of thought with the gifted daughter of Necker.

Profligacy, scepticism, daring wit, struggles of monarch and people, terror and reaction, would indeed have existed without her; but they could not have been what they are

now in the history of that age, had woman remained inactive and apart. If she did not do more good, let it be remembered that her power was conditional: it was confined within fixed limits, and submissive to that spirit of the times which both men and women obeyed. Yet it is sad to reflect how much that could have been effected was left undone. Morals might have been preserved more pure, and their purity is woman's own peculiar care; faith need not have fallen so low; a spirit of charity and peace might have been diffused instead of one of bitterness and strife. The passionate impulse which precipitated France in her career was partly owing to women: had they tempered instead of accelerated the fever of the day, so many dark and mournful pages need not have been found in the history of their country. As it was, their part was still great and striking. They gave more grace to wit, more daring to philosophy, more generosity to political contests, and more heroism to defeat and death. For those who know how to look beyond the mere surface of history, the action of woman in France during the eighteenth century will not soon be forgotten. She appears in that age —the most remarkable since that of the Reformation—connected with every important question. We behold her giving a stronger impulse to literature, aiding the development of philosophy and thought; and, like man, earnestly seeking, through all the mists and errors of human knowledge, to solve the great social and political problems which still agitate us in our day: the legacy of the past to the future.

END OF VOL. II.

Printed by T. and A. CONSTABLE, Printers to Her Majesty,
at the Edinburgh University Press.