

they embraced each other before they both quitted Paris on diverging roads.

Alexandre de Beauharnais went to Valenciennes, where commanded Marshal Rochambeau, to whom he had been commissioned adjutant.

Josephine hastened with her children toward Fontainebleau, so at least to be there united with her husband's father, and to live under his protection until the return of her husband.

CHAPTER XI.

THE TENTH OF AUGUST, AND THE LETTER OF NAPOLEON BONAPARTE.

SINCE the death of Mirabeau, the last defender of the monarchy, since the failure of the contemplated flight, royalty in France had no chance of existence left; the throne had lost every prop upon which it could find support, and it sank more and more into the abyss which the revolution had dug under its feet.

Marie Antoinette was conscious of it; her foreboding spirit foresaw the coming evil; her proud soul nearly broke under the humiliations and griefs which every day brought on. She had hitherto courageously and heroically struggled against adversity; she had concealed tears and anguish, to smile at that people which hated her and cursed her, which insulted and reviled her constantly. But a day was to come in which the smile would forever depart from her lip—in which Marie Antoinette, the daughter of the Cæsars, so deeply humbled and trodden down in the dust, would no more lift up her head, would no more rise from the terrible blow.

This day was the 10th of August, in the year 1792. The

terrible storm, which so long had filled the air with its mutterings, and had shaken the throne with its thunderings, was on this day with terrific power to be let loose and to dash in pieces the monarchy. The king furnished the occasion for this eruption by dismissing his Girondist ministry, by not signing the decree for the organization of a national militia, and for the exile of the priests.

This refusal was the flash which broke open the heavy clouds that so long had hung over his head—the flash which caused the tempest to burst forth.

Since that day Paris was in a state of rebellion; fresh disturbances took place every day; and finally, on the morning of the 10th of August, bands of people rushed to the palace of the Tuileries and surrounded it with wild howlings and shouts. A portion of the National Guards endeavored to force the people into a retreat; the other portion united with the people in fierce assaults upon the Tuileries, and on its defenders the Swiss. These were massacred by the people armed with pikes; with jubilant howlings the armed masses rushed over the corpses of the fallen into the king's palace.

The Procurator-General Roderer implored the king to save himself with his family by taking refuge in the National Assembly, for there alone was safety for him and the queen.

Louis hesitated; but Marie Antoinette felt once more the pride of a queen awake within her; she felt it was nobler and worthier to die as the loyal Swiss had done, to die sword in hand, than to meet pardon and disgrace, than to bow her head under the yoke. She entreated the king to remain with the loyal National Guards and to fight with his soldiers and die in the palace of his fathers. She spoke to the successor of Henry IV., to the father of the dauphin, for whom he should maintain the inheritance received; she appealed to the heart, to the honor of Louis; she spoke with flaming eyes, and with the eloquence of despair.

But Louis listened not to her, but to the solicitations of Roderer, who told him that he had but five minutes to save himself, the queen, and his children; that in five minutes more all would be lost.

"It cannot be helped," muttered the king; and then with louder voice he continued: "It is my will that we be conducted into the Legislative Assembly; I command it!"

A shriek of terror broke forth from the breast of the queen; her proud heart resisted, once more her husband's weakness, who, for his own and for her misfortune, was not made of the stuff which moulds kings.

"Sire," cried she, angrily and excited—"sire, you must first command that I be nailed to the walls of this palace! I remain here. I stir not from this spot!"*

But Madame Elizabeth, the Princesses de Lamballe and de Tarent, begged her with tears to consent; the good king fixed on her sad, weeping eyes, and Roderer entreated her not to abandon, by her delays, to the approaching executioners, her husband, her children, and herself.

Marie Antoinette offered to her husband her last and her greatest sacrifice; she bowed her proud head to his will; she consented to accompany the king with her children into the Assembly.

She took the dauphin in her arms, Madame Therese by the hand, and, at the side of the king, followed by the Princesses Lamballe and Tarent, walked out of the palace of the Tuileries to go to the Convent des Feuillants, where the Legislative Assembly held its sessions.

What a martyrdom in this short distance from the Tuileries to the Feuillants—what dishonor and fears were gathered on this path! Between the deep ranks of Swiss grenadiers and National Guards was this path; the queen stares fixedly on the ground, and she does not see that her thin

* The very words of the queen.—See "Mémoires Secrètes et Universelles," par Lafont d'Aussone.

silk shoes will be torn by the hard, fallen leaves of the trees under which they are moving.

But the king sees every thing, notices every thing. "How many leaves," said he, gazing forward—"they fall early this year!"

Now at the foot of the terrace the advance of the royal family is stopped by a multitude of people, who, with wild howlings, swing their pikes and clubs, and in their madness shout: "No, they must not enter the Assembly!—they are the cause of all our misery! Let us put an end to all this! Down with them!—down!"

The queen pays no attention to these shouts; she sees not that the National Guards are clearing a way by force; she walks forward with uplifted head, with a countenance petrified like that of Medusa at the sight of evil.

But as a man approaches her, seizes the dauphin and takes him in his arms, the transfixed queen is aroused, and, with all the anguish of a mother's despair, grapples the arm of the man who wants to rob her of all she now possesses, her child!

"Be not afraid," whispered the man, "I will do him no harm, I am but going to carry him;" and Marie Antoinette, her eyes fixed on the child, moves forward. At their entrance into the hall of the Assembly the man gives her back the dauphin, and she makes him sit down near her on the seats of the ministers.

A rough voice issues from the midst of the Assembly: "The dauphin belongs to the nation; place him at the side of the president. The Austrian is not worthy of our confidence!"

They tear away from the queen the weeping child, who clings to her, and who is carried to the president, at whose left hand the king has seated himself.

Again a voice is heard reminding the Assembly of the law which forbids them to deliberate in the presence of the king.

The royal family must leave the lower portion of the hall, and are led into a small room, with iron trellis-work, behind the president's chair.

The royal family, with their attendants, pressed into the small space of this room, can here at least, away from the gaze of their enemies, hide their dishonored heads; at least no one sees the nervousness of despair which now and then agitates the tall figure of the queen, the tears trembling on her eyelids when she looks to the poor little dauphin, whose blond curly head lies in her bosom, asleep from exhaustion, hunger, and sorrow.

No one sees the king and the queen, but they see and hear every thing. They hear from without the howlings of the mob, the cannon's roar, the reports of the rifles, telling them that a bloody fratricidal strife, a terrible civil war, is raging. They hear there in the hall, a few steps from them, the fanatical harangues of the deputies, whose words, full of blood, are like the hands of the murdering *Marseillais* there without. Marie Antoinette hears Vergniaud's motion, "to divest the king at once of his power and rank," and she hears the acclamations of the Assembly in favor of the motion. She hears the Assembly by their own power reinvesting the Girondist ministers, dismissed by the king, with their dignity and power! She hears the Assembly decide "to invite the French people to form a national compact."

She hears all this, and the cold perspiration of anguish and horror covers her brow while she has yet strength enough to force back her tears into her heart. She asks for a handkerchief to wipe her forehead. Not one of the attendants around can furnish a kerchief which is not stained with the blood of the victims fallen at their side in protecting the royal family with their lives.*

At last, at two o'clock in the morning, is this painful

* "Mémoires inédites du Comte de la Rochefoucauld."

martyrdom ended, and the royal family are led into the upper rooms of the convent, where hastily and penuriously enough a few chambers had been furnished.

The howlings of the crowd ascend to their windows. Under those of the queen's room groups of infuriated women sing the song whose horrible burden is, "*Madame Veto avait promis de faire égorger tout Paris.*" Between the sentences other voices shout and howl: "The queen is the cause of our misery! Kill her! kill the queen, the murdereress of France! Kill Madame Veto! Throw us her head!"

Three days after, the royal family are led to the Temple. The rulers of the state are now state prisoners. But the queen had already found the peace which misfortune generally brings to strong souls; and as she walked to the Temple, and saw her foot protruding from the extremity of her shoe, she said with an affecting smile, "Who could have believed that one day the Queen of France should be in want of shoes!"

With the 10th of August began the last act of the great tragedy of the revolution. Its second scene had its representation in the first days of September, in those days of blood and tears, in which infuriated bands of the people stormed the prisons to murder the captive priests, aristocrats, and royalists.

Under the guillotine fell during this month the head of the queen's friend, the Princess de Lamballe, who was followed in crowds by the king's faithful adherents, sealing their loyalty and their love with their death.

This loyalty and love for the royal family was during this month branded as an unpardonable crime, for the National Convention, which on the 21st of September had taken the place of the Constituent Assembly, on the 25th declared France to be a republic, and the royalists became thereby criminals, who had sinned in the respect and love which they owed to the "republic one and indivisible."

The new republic of France celebrated her saturnalia in the following months, and unfurled her blood-stained standard over the nation. She was not satisfied with having brought to the guillotine more than ten thousand aristocrats and royalists, to terrify the faithful adherents and servants of the throne. She required, moreover, the death of those for whose sake so many thousands had perished—the death of the king and of the queen.

On the 5th of December began the trial of Louis Capet, ex-King of France, now accused by the Convention. The pages of history have illustrated this stupendous and tragical event in all its shapes and colors. Each party has preyed upon it, the poets have sung it, and made it the central point of tragedy and romance; but none have painted it in so telling, in so terse, masterly traits, none have so fully comprehended and expressed the already stupendous event, as Lieutenant Napoleon Bonaparte, the future Emperor of France.

He happened to be in Paris during these days of terror. He had, with all the energies of his soul, given himself up to the new state of things, and he belonged to the most upright and zealous faction of the republicans. He acknowledged himself won over to their ideas, he participated in their celebrations, he was the friend of many of the most influential and conspicuous members of the Convention, and he was rarely absent from their meetings; but in the presence of the awful catastrophe of the king's accusation and execution his proud and daring soul shrank back, and, full of misgivings, shuddered within itself. The young, enthusiastic republican, to his own great horror, found in the depths of his soul a holy respect and awe in the presence of this royalty which he so often in words had despised, and the fall of the king, this enemy of the republic, moved his heart as a calamity which had fallen upon him and upon all France. He himself gave to one of his friends in Ajaccio a

very correct description of these days. After narrating the events of the first days of the trial of the king, he continues:

“The day after I heard that the advocate Target had refused to undertake the king's defence, to which he was privileged by virtue of his office. This is what may be called, in the strictest sense of the word, to erase one's name from history. What grounds had he for such a low cunning? ‘His life I will not save, and mine I dare not risk!’ Malherbes, Tronchet, Deseze, loyal and devoted subjects, to imitate them in their zeal would be impossible for me; but were I a prince I would have them sit at my right hand—united together in the most strenuous efforts to defend the successor of St. Louis. If they survive this deed of sublime faithfulness, never can I pass by them without uncovering my head.

“Business detained me unavoidably in Versailles. Only on the 16th of January did I return to Paris, and consequently I had lost three or four scenes of this tragedy of ambition. But on the 18th of January I went to the National Convention. Ah, my friend, it is true, and the most infuriated republicans avow it also, a prince is but an ordinary man! His head will as surely fall as that of another man, but whosoever decrees his death trembles at his own madness, and were he not urged by secret motives, his vote would die on his lips ere it was uttered. I gazed with much curiosity at the fearless mortals who were about deciding the fate of their king. I watched their looks, I searched into their hearts. The exceeding weightiness of the occasion had exalted them, intoxicated them, but within themselves they were full of fear in the presence of the grandeur of their victim.

“Had they dared retreat, the prince had been saved. To his misfortune, they had argued within themselves, ‘If his head falls not to-day, then we must soon give ours to the executioner's stroke.’

"This was the prominent thought which controlled their vote. No pen can adequately portray the feelings of the spectators in the galleries. Silent, horrified, breathless, they gazed now on the accused, now on the defenders, now on the judges.

"The vote of Orleans sounded forth—'Death!' An electric shock could not have produced deeper impression. The whole assembly, seized with an involuntary terror, rose. The hall was filled with the murmurs of conflicting emotions.

"Only one man remained seated, immovable as a rock, and that one was myself.

"I ventured to reflect on the cause of such indifference (as that of Orleans) and I found that cause grounded on ambition, but this cannot justify the conduct of Orleans. It is only thus that I could account for his action: he seeks a throne, though without any right to it, and a throne cannot be won if the pretender renounces all claims to public respect and virtue.

"I will be brief, for to unfold a mournful story is not my business. The king was sentenced to death; and if the 21st day of January does not inspire hatred for the name of France, a glorious name at least will have been added to the roll-call of her martyrs.

"What a city was Paris on that day! The population seemed to be in a state of bewilderment; all seemed to exchange but gloomy looks, and one man hurried on to meet another without uttering a word. The streets were deserted; houses and palaces were like graves. The very air seemed to mirror the executioner. In a word, the successor of St. Louis was led to the scaffold through the ranks of mourning automatons, that a short time before were his subjects.

"If any one is at your side, my friend, when you read this, conceal the following lines from him, even were he your father. It is a stain on the stuff of which my character

is made—that Napoleon Bonaparte, for the sake of a human being's destruction, should have been deeply moved and compelled to retire to his bed, is a thing barely credible, though it is true, and I cannot confess it without being ashamed of myself.

"On the night before the 21st of January I could not close my eyes, and yet I could not explain to myself the cause of this unusual excitement. I rose up early and ran everywhere to and fro where crowds had gathered. I wondered at, or much more I despised, the weakness of those forty thousand National Guards, of which the nineteenth part were practically the assistants of the executioner. At the gate of St. Denis I met Santerre; a numerous staff followed him. I could have cut off his ears. I spat down before him—it was all I could do. In my opinion, the Duke d'Orleans would have filled his place better. He had set his eyes on a crown, and, as every one knows, such a motive overcomes much hesitancy.

"Following the Boulevards, I came to the *Place de la Révolution*. The guillotine, a new invention, I had not yet seen. A cold perspiration ran over me. Near me stood a stranger, who attributed my uneasiness and pallor to some special interest on my part for the king's fate. 'Do not be alarmed,' said he, 'he is not going to die; the Convention is only glad to exhibit its power, and at the foot of the scaffold the king will find his letters of pardon.' 'In this case,' said I, 'the members of the Convention are not far from their own ruin, and could a guilty man have more deserved his fate than they? Whoever attacks a lion, and desires not to be destroyed by it, must not wound but kill on the spot.'

"A hollow, confused noise was heard. It was the royal victim. I pushed forward, making way with my elbows, and being pushed myself. All my efforts to come closer were fruitless. Suddenly the noise of drums broke upon

the gloomy silence of the crowd. 'This is the signal for his freedom,' said the stranger. 'It will fall back on the head of his murderers,' answered I; 'half a crime in a case like this is but weakness.'

"A moment's stillness followed. Something heavy fell on the scaffold. This sound went through my heart.

"I inquired of a gendarme the cause of this sound. 'The axe has fallen,' said he. 'The king is not saved then?' 'He is dead.' 'He is dead!'

"For ten times at least I repeated the words 'He is dead.'

"For a few moments I remained unconscious. Without knowing by whom, I was carried along by a crowd, and found myself on the *Quai des Théatines*, but could say nothing, except 'He is dead.'

"Entirely bewildered, I went home, but a good hour elapsed before I fully recovered my senses."*

CHAPTER XII.

THE EXECUTION OF THE QUEEN.

THE king's execution was the signal-fire which announced to the horrified world the beginning of the reign of terror, and told Europe that in France the throne had been torn down, and in its stead the guillotine erected. Yes, the guillotine alone now ruled over France; the days of moderation, of the Girondists, had passed away; the terrorists, named also men of the Mountain, on account of the high seats they occupied in the Convention, had seized the reins of power, and now controlled the course of events.

Everywhere, in every province, in every city, the blood-

* See "Edinburgh Quarterly Review," 1830.

red standard of the revolution was lifted up; might had become law; death was the rule, and in lieu of the boasted liberty of conscience was tyranny. Who dared think otherwise than the terrorists, who presumed to doubt the measures of the Convention, was a criminal who, in the name of the one and indivisible republic, was to be punished with death; whose head must fall, for he had cherished thoughts which agreed not with the schemes of the revolutionists.

How in these days of agitation and anguish Josephine rejoiced at her good fortune, that she had not to tremble for her husband's life; that she was away from the crater of the revolution which raged in Paris, and daily claimed so many victims!

Alexandre de Beauharnais was still with the army. He had risen from rank to rank; and when, in May, General Custine was deposed by the Committee of Public Safety from the command of the Northern army, Alexandre de Beauharnais, who was then chief of the general's staff of this army, was appointed in his place as commanding general of the Army of the Rhine; and the important work now to be achieved was to debar the besieging Prussians and Austrians from recapturing Mayence. The Committee of Public Safety had dismissed General Custine from his post, because he had not pressed on with sufficient speed to the rescue of Mayence, according to the judgment of these new rulers of France, who wanted from Paris to decide all military matters, and who demanded victories whilst too often refusing the means necessary for victory.

General de Beauharnais was to turn to good what General Custine, according to the opinion of these gentlemen of the Convention, had failed to do. This was an important and highly significant order, and to leave it unfulfilled was to excite the anger of the Committee of Safety; it was simply to deserve death.

General de Beauharnais knew this well, but he shrank