

## CHAPTER XIV.

## IN PRISON.

SINCE France had become a democratic republic, since the differences in rank were abolished, and liberty, equality, and fraternity alone prevailed, the aristocracy was either beyond the frontiers of France or else in the prisons. Outside of the prison were but *citoyens* and *citoyennes*; inside of the prison were yet dukes and duchesses, counts and countesses, viscounts and viscountesses; there, behind locks and bars, the aristocracy was represented in its most glorious and high-sounding names.

And there also, within these walls, was the proud, strict dame, whom Marie Antoinette had once, to her misfortune, driven away from the Tuileries, and who had not been permitted to possess a single foot of ground in all France—there, within the prison with the aristocrats, lived also Madame Etiquette. She had to leave the Tuileries with the nobility, and with the nobility she had entered into the prisons of the Conciergerie and of the Carmelite Convent. There she ruled with the same authority and with the same gravity as once in happier days she had done in the king's palace.

The republic had mixed together the prisoners without any distinction, and in the hall, where every morning they gathered together to attend to the roll-call of the condemned who were to report for the guillotine; in the narrow rooms and cells, where they passed the rest of the day, the republic had made no distinction between all these inmates of the prison, dukes and simple knights, duchesses and baronesses, princesses of the blood and country nobility of inferior degree. But etiquette was there to remedy this unseemliness of fate and to re-establish the natural order of things—etiquette, which had enacted rules and laws for the halls

of kings, enforced them also in the halls of prisons. Only for the ladies of the most ancient nobility, the duchesses and princesses of the blood, in the prison-rooms, as once in the king's halls, the small stool (*tabouret*) was reserved, and they were privileged to occupy the rush-bottomed seats which were in the prisons, and which now replaced the *tabouret*. No lady of inferior rank would consent to sit down in their presence unless these ladies of superior rank had expressly requested and entitled their inferior companions of misfortune to do so. When, at the appointed hour, the halls were abandoned for the general promenade in the yards of the Conciergerie, or in the small cloistered gardens of the Carmelites, this recreation was preceded by a ceremony which shortened its already short hour by at least ten minutes: the ladies and the gentlemen, according to their order, rank, and nobility, placed themselves in two rows on either side of the outer door, and between them passed on first in ceremonial order of rank, as at a court-festival, the ladies and gentlemen who at court were entitled to the high and small levees, as well as to the *tabouret*, and to the kissing of the queen's hand. As they passed, each bowed low, and then, with the same due observance of rank, as was customary at court, the ladies and gentlemen of inferior titles followed two by two, when the higher nobility had passed.\*

It was yet the court-society which was assembled here in the rooms and cells of the prison; only this court-society, this aristocracy, had no more King Louis to do homage unto, but they served another king, they bowed low before another queen! This king to whom the nobility of France belonged was Death; this queen to which proud heads bowed low was the Guillotine!

It was King Death who now summoned the aristocrats

\* "Souvenirs de la Marquise de Créqui, vol. v.



to his court; the scaffold was the hall of festivity where solemn homage was made to this king. It would therefore have been against all etiquette to crowd into this hall of festivity with beclouded countenance; this would have diminished the respect due to King Death, if he had not been approached with full-court ceremonial, and with the serene, easy smile of a courtier. To die, to meet death was now a distinction, an honor for which each almost envied the other. When at ten o'clock in the morning the gathering took place in the large room, the conversation was of the most cheerful and unaffected easiness; they joked, they laughed, they speculated on politics, though it was well known that in a few minutes yonder door was to open, and that on its threshold the jailer would appear, list in hand; that from this list he would call out with his loud, croaking voice, as Death's harbinger, the names of those whose death-warrants had been yesterday signed by Robespierre, and who would have immediately to leave the hall, to mount the wagons which were already waiting at the prison's gate to drive them to the guillotine.

While the jailer read his list, suspense and excitement were visible on all faces, but no one would have so deeply lowered himself as to betray fear or anguish when his name fell from the lips of the jailer. The smile remained on the lip, friends and acquaintances were bidden farewell with a cheerful salutation, and with easy, unaffected demeanor they quitted the hall to mount the fatal vehicle.

To die gracefully was now considered as much *bon ton* as it had been once fashionable gracefully to enter the ball-room and do obeisance to the king; contempt and scorn would have followed him who might have exhibited a sorrowful mien, hesitation, or fear.

One morning the jailer had read his list, and sixteen gentlemen and ladies of the aristocracy had consequently to leave the hall of the Conciergerie to enter both wagons now

ready at the gate. As they were starting for the fatal journey a second turnkey appeared, to say that through some accident only one of the wagons was ready, and that consequently only eight of the sentenced ones could be driven to the guillotine. This meant that the accident nullified eight death-warrants and saved the lives of eight sentenced persons. For it was not probable that these eight persons would next morning be honored with an execution. Their warrants were signed, their names had been called; neither the tribunal of the revolution nor the jailer could pay special attention whether their heads had fallen or not. The next day would bring on new condemnations, new lists, new distinctions for the wagons, new heads for the guillotine. Whoever, on the day appointed for the execution, missed the guillotine, could safely reckon that his life was saved; that henceforth he was amongst the forgotten ones, of whom a great number filled the prisons, and who expected their freedom through some favorable accident.

To-day, therefore, only eight of the sixteen condemned were to mount the wagon. But who were to be the favored ones? The two turnkeys, with cold indifference, left the choice to the condemned. Only eight could be accommodated in the wagon, they said, and it was the same who went or who remained. "Make your choice!"

A strife arose among the sixteen condemned ones—not as to who might remain behind, but as to those who might mount into the wagon.

The ladies declared that, according to the rules of common politeness, which allowed ladies to go first, the choice belonged to them; the gentlemen objected to this motion of the ladies on the plea that to reach the guillotine steps had to be ascended, and as etiquette required that in going up-stairs the gentlemen should always precede the ladies, they were also now entitled to go first and to mount the steps of the scaffold before the ladies. At last all had to



give way to the claims of the Duchess de Grammont, who declared that at this festival as at every other the order of rank was to be observed, and that she, as well as all the gentlemen and ladies of superior rank, had the undisputed privilege now, as at all other celebrations, to take the precedence.

No one ventured to oppose this decision, and the Duchess de Grammont, proud of the victory won, was the first to leave the room and mount the wagon.

Another time the turnkey began to read the list: every one listened with grave attention, and at every call a clear, cheerful "Here I am!" followed.

But after the jailer, with wearied voice, had many times repeated a name from his list, the accustomed answer failed. No one came forward, no one seemed to be there to lay claim to that name and to the execution. The jailer stopped a few minutes, and as all were dumb, he continued, indifferent and unmoved, to call out the names.

"We will then have only fifteen heads to deliver to-day," said he, after reading the list, "for there must have been a mistake. One of the names is false, or else the person to whom it belongs has already been delivered."

"It is probably but a blunder of the pen!" exclaimed a handsome young man who, smiling, stepped out of the crowd of listeners and passed on to the side where the victims stood. "You read Chapetolle. There is no such name here. The hand of the writer was probably tired of writing the numerous lists of those who are sentenced to death, and he has therefore written the letters wrong. My name is Chapelotte, and I am the one meant by Chapetolle."

"I do not know," said the jailer, "but it is certain that sixteen sentenced ones ought to go into the wagons, and that only fifteen have reported themselves in a legal way."

"Well, then, add me in an illegal manner to your fifteen,"

said the young man, smiling. "Without doubt it is my name they intended to write. I do not wish to save my life through a blunder in writing, and who knows if another time I may find such good company as to-day in your chariot? Allow me then to journey on with my friends."

The jailer had no reason to refuse him this journey, and he had the satisfaction besides of being thus able to deliver sixteen sentenced prisoners to the guillotine.

Such was the society of the aristocrats, among whom Josephine lived the long, dreary days of her imprisonment. The cell she occupied was shared by two companions of misfortune, the Duchess de Aguilon and the beautiful Madame de Fontenay, who afterward became Madame Tallien, so distinguished and renowned for her beauty and wit. Therese de Fontenay knew, and every one knew, that she was already sentenced, even if her sentence was not yet written down and countersigned. It was recorded in the heart of Robespierre. He had sentenced her, without any concealment. She had but a few weeks more to endure the martyrdom, the anguish of hope and of expectation. She was his secure victim; Robespierre needed not hasten the fall of this beautiful head, which was the admiration of all who saw it. This beauty was the very crime which Robespierre wanted to punish, for with this beauty, Therese de Fontenay, who then resided in Bordeaux with her husband, had captivated the old friend and associate in sentiments of Robespierre, the fanatical Tallien; with this beauty she had converted the man of blood and terror into a soft, compassionate being, inclined to pardon and to mercy toward his fellow-beings.

Tallien had been sent as *commissionnaire* from the Convention to Bordeaux, and there with inexorable severity he had raged against the unfortunate merchants, from whom he exacted enormous assessments, and whom he sentenced to the guillotine if they refused, or were unable to pay.



But suddenly love changed the bloodthirsty tiger into a sensitive being, and the beautiful Madame de Fontenay, who had become acquainted with Tallien in the prison of Bordeaux, had worked a complete change in his whole being. For the first time this man, who unmoved had condemned to death King Louis and the Girondists, found on his lips the word "pardon;" for the first time the hand which had signed so many death-warrants wrote the order to let a prisoner go free.

This prisoner was Therese de Fontenay, the daughter of the Spanish banker Cabarrus, and she rewarded him for the gift of her life with a smile which forever made him her captive. From this time the death-warrants were converted into pardons from his lips, and for every pardon Therese thanked him with a sweet smile, with a glowing look of love.

But this leniency was looked upon as criminal by the tribunal of terror in Paris. They recalled the culprit who dared pardon instead of punishing; and if Robespierre did not think himself powerful enough to send Tallien as a traitor and as an apostate to the scaffold, he punished him for his leniency by separating from him Therese de Fontenay, who had abandoned the husband forced upon her, and who had followed Tallien to Paris, and Robespierre had sent her to prison.

There, at the Carmelites', was Therese de Fontenay; she occupied the same cell as Josephine; the same misfortune had made them companions and friends. They communicated one to the other their hopes and fears; and when Josephine, with tears in her eyes, spoke to her friend of her children, of her deep anguish, for they were alone and abandoned in the world outside of the prison walls, whilst their unfortunate pitiable mother languished in prison, Therese comforted and encouraged her.

"So long as one lives there is hope," said Therese, with

her enchanting smile. "Myself, who in the eyes of you all am sentenced to death, hope—no, I hope not—I am convinced that I will soon obtain my freedom. And I swear that, as soon as I am free, I will stir heaven and earth to procure the liberty of my dear friend Josephine and of her husband the Viscount de Beauharnais, and to give back to the poor orphaned children their parents."

Josephine answered with an incredulous smile, and a shrugging of the shoulders; and then Therese's very expressive countenance glowed, and her large, black eyes flashed deeper gleams.

"You have no faith in me, Josephine," she said, vehemently; "but I repeat to you, I will soon obtain my freedom, and then I will procure your liberty and that of your husband."

"But how will you obtain that?" asked Josephine, shaking her head.

"I will ruin Robespierre," said Therese, gravely.

"In what do your means of ruining him consist?"

"In this letter here," said Therese, as she drew out of her bosom a small paper folded up. "See, this sheet of paper; it consists but of a few lines which, since they would not furnish me with writing-materials, I have written with my blood on this sheet of paper, which I found yesterday in the garden during the promenade. The turnkey will give this letter to-day to Tallien. He has given me his word, and I have promised him that Tallien will recompense him magnificently for it. This letter will ruin Robespierre and make me free, and then I will procure the freedom of the Viscount and of the Viscountess de Beauharnais."

"What then, in that letter is the magic word which is to work out such wonders?"

Therese handed the paper to her friend.

"Read," said she, smiling.

Josephine read: "Therese of Fontenay to the citizen



Tallien. Either in eight days I am free and the wife of my deliverer, the noble and brave Tallien, who will have freed the world from the monster Robespierre, or else, in eight days, I mount the scaffold; and my last thought will be a curse for the cowardly, heartless man who has not had the courage to risk his life for her he loved, and who suffers for his sake, for his sake meets death—who had not the mind to consider that with daring deed he must destroy the bloodthirsty fiend or be ruined by him. Therese de Fontenay will ever love her Tallien if he delivers her; she will hate him, even in death, if he sacrifices her to Robespierre's blood-greediness!"

"If, through mishap, Robespierre should receive this letter, then you and Tallien are lost," sighed Josephine.

"But Tallien, and not Robespierre, will receive it, and I am saved," exclaimed Therese. "Therefore, my friend, take courage and be bold. Wait but eight days patiently. Let us wait and hope."

"Yes, let us wait and hope," sighed Josephine. "Hope and patience are the only companions of the captive."

## CHAPTER XV.

### DELIVERANCE.

MEANWHILE the patience of the unfortunate prisoners of the Carmelite convent were to be subjected to a severe trial; and the very next day after this conversation with Therese de Fontenay, Josephine believed that there was no more hope for her, that she was irrevocably lost, as her husband was lost. For three days she had not seen the viscount, nor received any news from him. Only a vague report had reached her that the viscount was no longer in the

Carmelite convent, but that he had been transferred to the Conciergerie.

This report told the truth. Alexandre de Beauharnais had once more been denounced, and this second accusation was his sentence of death. For some time past the fanatical Jacobins had invented a new means to find guilty ones for the guillotine, and to keep the veins bleeding, so as to restore France to health. They sent emissaries into the prisons to instigate conspiracies among the prisoners, and to find out men wretched enough to purchase their life by accusing their prison companions, and by delivering them over to the executioner's axe. Such a spy had been sent into that portion of the prison where Beauharnais was, and he had begun his horrible work, for he had kindled discord and strife among the prisoners, and had won a few to his sinister projects. But Beauharnais's keen eye had discovered the traitor, and he had loudly and openly denounced him to his fellow-prisoners. The next day, the spy disappeared from the prison, but as he went he swore bloody vengeance on General de Beauharnais.\*

And he kept his word; the next morning De Beauharnais was summoned for trial, and the gloomy, hateful faces of his judges, their hostile questions and reproaches, the capital crimes they accused him of, led him to conclude that his death was decided upon, and that he was doomed to the guillotine.

In the night which followed his trial, Alexandre de Beauharnais wrote to his wife a letter, in which he communicated to her his sad forebodings, and bade her farewell for this life. The next day he was transferred to the Conciergerie—that is to say, into the vestibule of the scaffold.

This letter of her husband, received by Josephine the

\* "Mémoires du Comte de Lavalette," vol. i., p. 175.



next day after her conversation with Therese de Fontenay, ran thus:

"The fourth Thermidor, in the second year of the republic. All the signs of a kind of trial, to which I and other prisoners have been subjected this day, tell me that I am the victim of the treacherous calumny of a few aristocrats, patriots so called, of this house. The mere conjecture that this hellish machination will follow me to the tribunal of the revolution gives me no hope to see you again, my friend, no more to embrace you or our children. I speak not of my sorrow: my tender solicitude for you, the heartfelt affection which unites me to you, cannot leave you in doubt of the sentiments with which I leave this life.

"I am also sorry to have to part with my country, which I love, for which I would a thousand times have laid down my life, and which I no more can serve, but which beholds me now quit her bosom, since she considers me to be a bad citizen. This heart-rending thought does not allow me to commend my memory to you; labor, then, to make it pure in proving that a life which has been devoted to the service of the country, and to the triumph of liberty and equality, must punish that abominable slanderer, especially when he comes from a suspicious class of men. But this labor must be postponed; for in the storms of revolution, a great people, struggling to reduce its chains to dust, must of necessity surround itself with suspicion, and be more afraid to forget a guilty man than to put an innocent one to death.

"I will die with that calmness which allows man to feel emotion at the thought of his dearest inclinations—I will die with that courage which is the distinctive feature of a free man, of a clear conscience, of an exalted soul, whose highest wishes are the prosperity and growth of the republic.

"Farewell, my friend; gather consolation from my

children; derive comfort in educating them, in teaching them that, by their virtues and their devotion to their country, they obliterate the memory of my execution, and recall to national gratitude my services and my claims. Farewell to those I love: you know them! Be their consolation, and through your solicitude for them prolong my life in their hearts! Farewell! for the last time in this life I press you and my children to my heart!—ALEXANDRE BEAUHARNAIS."

Josephine had read this letter with a thousand tears, but she hoped still; she believed still in the possibility that the gloomy forebodings of her husband would not be realized; that some fortunate circumstance would save him or at least retard his death.

But this hope was not to be fulfilled. A few hours after receiving this letter the turnkey brought to the prisoners the bulletin of the executions of the preceding day. It was that day Josephine's turn to read this bulletin to her companions. She therefore began her sad task; and, as slowly and thoughtfully she let fall name after name from her lips, here and there the faces of her hearers were blanched, and their eyes filled with tears.

Suddenly Josephine uttered a piercing cry, and sprang up with the movement of madness toward the door, shook it in her deathly sorrow, as if her life hung upon the opening of that door, and then she sank down fainting.

Unfortunate Josephine! she had seen in the list of those who had been executed the name of General Beauharnais, and in the first excitement of horror she wanted to rush out to see him, or at least to give to his body the parting kiss.

On the sixth Thermidor, in the year II., that is, on the 24th of July, 1794, fell on the scaffold the head of the General Viscount de Beauharnais. With quiet, composed coolness he had ascended the scaffold, and his last cry, as he laid his head on the block, was, "Long live the republic!"



In the wagon which drove him to the scaffold, he had found again a friend, the Prince de Salm-Kirbourg, who was now on his way to the guillotine, and who had risked his life in bringing back to Paris the children of Josephine.

His bloodthirsty enemies had not enough of the head of General Beauharnais; his wife's head also should fall, and the name of the traitor of his country was to be extinguished forever.

Two days after the execution of her husband, the turn-key brought to Josephine the writ of her accusation, and the summons to appear before the tribunal of the revolution—a summons which then had all the significancy of a death-warrant.

Josephine heard the summons of the jailer with a quiet, easy smile; she had not even a look for the fatal paper which lay on her bed. Near this bed stood the physician, whom the compassionate republic, which would not leave its prisoners to die on a sick-bed, but only on the scaffold, had sent to Josephine to inquire into her illness and afford her relief.

With indignation he eagerly snatched the paper from the bed, and, returning it back to the jailer, exclaimed: "Tell the tribunal of the revolution that it has nothing more to do with this woman! Disease will bring on justice here, and leave nothing to do for the guillotine. In eight days Citoyenne Beauharnais is dead!"\*

This decision of the physician was transmitted to the tribunal, which resolved that the trial of Madame Beauharnais would be postponed for eight days, and that the tribunal would wait and see if truly death would save her from the guillotine.

Meanwhile, during these eight days, events were to pass which were to give a very different form to the state of

\* Aubenas, "Histoire de l'Impératrice Josephine," vol. i., p. 235.

things, and impart to the young republic a new, unexpected attitude.

Robespierre ruled yet, he was the feared dictator of France! But Tallien had received the note of his beautiful, fondly-loved Therese, and he swore to himself that she should not ascend the scaffold, that she should not curse him, that he would possess her, that he would win her love, and destroy the fiend who stood in the way of his happiness, whose blood-streaming hands were every day ready to sign her death-warrant.

On the very same day in which he received the letter of Therese, he conversed with a few trusty friends, men whom he knew detested Robespierre as much as himself, and who all longed for an occasion to destroy him. They planned a scheme of attack against the dictator who imperilled the life of all, and from whom it was consequently necessary to take away life and power, so as to be sure of one's life. It was decided to launch an accusation against him before the whole Convention, to incriminate him as striving after dominion, as desirous of breaking the republic with his bloody hands, and ambitious to exalt himself into dictator and sovereign. Tallien undertook to fulminate this accusation against him, and they all agreed to wait yet a few days so as to gain amongst the deputies in the Convention some members who would support the accusation and give countenance to the conspirators. On the ninth Thermidor this scheme was to be carried out; on the ninth Thermidor, Tallien was to thunder forth the accusation against Robespierre and move his punishment!

This enterprise, however, seemed a folly, an impossibility, for at this time Robespierre was at the height of his power, and fear weighed upon the whole republic as a universal agony. No one dared oppose Robespierre, for a look from his eye, a sign from his hand sufficed to bring death, to lead to the scaffold.



The calm, peaceful, and united republic for which Robespierre had toiled, which had been the ultimate end of his bloodthirstiness, was at last there, but this republic was built upon corpses, was baptized with streams of blood and tears. And now that the republic had given up all opposition, now that she bowed, trembling under the hand of her conqueror, now, Robespierre wanted to make her happy, he wanted to give her what the storms of past years had ravished from her—he wanted to give the republic a God! On the tribune of the Convention, on this tribune which was his throne, rose Robespierre, to tell with grave dignity to the republic that there was a Supreme Being, that the soul of man was immortal. Then, accompanied by the Convention, he proceeded to the Champ de Mars, to inaugurate the celebration of the worship of a Supreme Being as his high-priest. But amid this triumph, on his way to the Champ de Mars, Robespierre the conqueror had for the first time noticed the murmurs of the Tarpeian rock; he had noticed the dark, threatening glances which were directed at him from all sides. He felt the danger which menaced him, and he was determined to remove it from his person by annihilating those who threatened.

But already terror had lost its power, no one trembled before the guillotine, no one took pleasure in the fall of the axe, in the streams of blood, which empurpled the *Place de la Révolution*. The fearful stillness of death hung round the guillotine, the people were tired of applauding it, and now and then from the silent ranks of the people thundered forth in threatening accents the word "tyrant!" which, as the first weapon of attack, was directed against Robespierre, who, on the heights of the tribune, was throned with his unmoved, calm countenance.

Robespierre felt that he must strike a heavy, decisive blow against his foes and annihilate them. On the eighth Thermidor, he denounced a plot organized by his enemies

for breaking up the Convention. Through St. Just he implicated as leaders of this conspiracy some eminent members of the committees, and requested their dismissal. But the time was past when his motions were received with jubilant acclamations, and unconditionally obeyed. The Convention decided to submit the motion of Robespierre to a vote, and the matter was postponed to the next morning's session.

In the night which preceded the contemplated action of the Convention, Robespierre went to the Jacobin Club and requested assistance against his enemies in the Convention. He was received with enthusiasm, and a general uprising of the revolutionary element was decided upon, and organized for the following morning.

The same night, Tallien, his friends and adherents, met together, and the mode of attack for the following day, the ninth Thermidor, was discussed, and the parts assigned to each.

The prisoners in the Carmelite convent did not of course suspect any thing of the events which were preparing beyond the walls of their prison. Even Therese de Fontenay was low-spirited and sad; for this day, the ninth Thermidor, was the last day of respite fixed by her to Tallien for her liberty.

This was also the last day of respite which had saved Josephine from the tribunal of the revolution, through the decision of her physician. Death had spared her head, but now it belonged to the executioner. The captives feared the event, and they were confirmed in this fear by the jailer, who, on the morning of the ninth Thermidor, entered the room which Josephine, the Duchess d'Aiguillon, and Therese de Fontenay occupied, and who removed the camp-bed which Josephine had hitherto used as a sofa, to give it to another prisoner.

"How," exclaimed the Duchess d'Aiguillon, "do you



want to give this bed to another prisoner? Is Madame de Beauharnais to have a better one?"

The turnkey burst into a coarse laugh. "Alas! no," said he, with a significant gesture, "Citoyenne Beauharnais will soon need a bed no more."

Her friends broke into tears; but Josephine remained composed and quiet. At this decisive moment a fearful self-possession and calmness came over her; all sufferings and sorrow appeared to have sunk away, all anxiety and care seemed overcome, and a radiant smile illumined Josephine's features, for, through a wondrous association of ideas, she suddenly remembered the prophecy of the negro-woman in Martinique.

"Be calm, my friends," said she, smiling; "weep not, do not consider me as destined to the scaffold, for I assure you I am going to live: I must not die, for I am destined to be one day the sovereign of France. Therefore, no more tears! I am the future Queen of France!"

"Ah!" exclaimed the Duchess d'Aiguillon, half angry and half sad, "why not at once appoint your state dignitaries?"

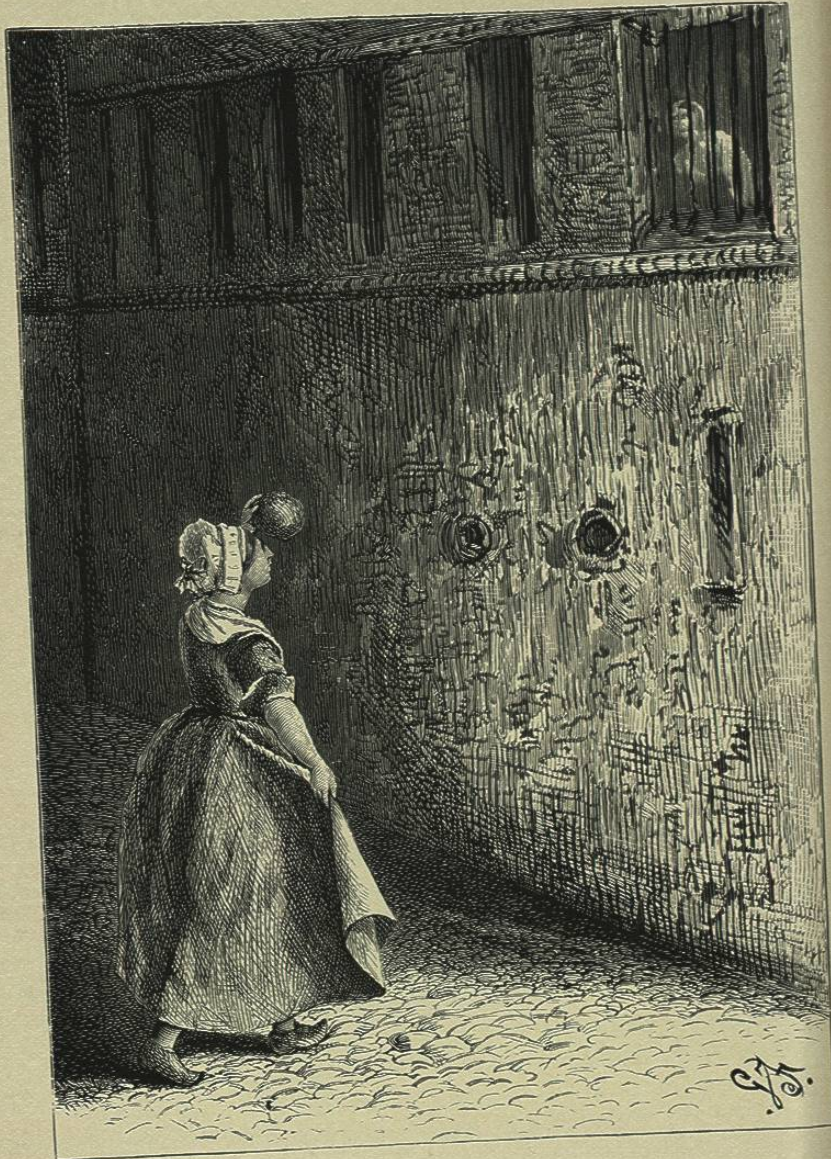
"You are right," said Josephine, eagerly; "this is the best time to do so. Well, then, my dear duchess, I now appoint you to be my maid of honor, and I swear it will be so."

"My God! she is mad!" exclaimed the duchess, and, nearly fainting, she sank upon her chair.

Josephine laughed, and opened the window to admit some fresh air. She perceived there below in the street a woman making to her all manner of signs and gestures. She lifted up her arms, she then took hold of her dress, and with her hand pointed to her robe.

It was evident that she wished through these signs and motions to convey some word to the prisoners, whom perhaps she knew, for she repeatedly took hold of her robe with one hand, and pointed at it with the other.





" ROBES-PIERRE EST MORT."

"Robe?" cried out Josephine interrogatively.

The woman nodded in the affirmative, then took up a stone, which she held up to the prisoner's view.

"Pierre?" ask Josephine.

The woman again nodded in the affirmative, and then placed the stone (*pierre*) in her robe, made several times the motion of falling, then of cutting off the neck, and then danced and clapped her hands.

"My friends," cried Josephine, struck with a sudden thought, "this woman brings us good news, she tells us *Robespierre est tombé.*" (Robespierre has fallen.)

"Yes, it is so," exclaimed Therese, triumphantly; "Tallien has kept his word; he conquers, and Robespierre is thrust down!"

And, overpowered with joy and emotion, the three women, weeping, sank into each other's arms.

They now heard from without loud cries and shouts. It was the jailer, quarrelling with his refractory dog. The dog howled, and wanted to go out with his master, but the jailer kicked him back, saying: "Away, go to the accursed Robespierre!"

Soon joyous voices resounded through the corridor; the door of their cell was violently opened, and a few municipal officers entered to announce to the Citizeness Madame Fontenay that she was free, and bade her accompany them into the carriage waiting below to drive her to the house of Citizen Tallien. Behind them pressed the prisoners who, from the reception-room, had followed the authorities, to entreat them to give them the news of the events in Paris.

There was now no reason for the municipal authorities to make a secret of the events which at this hour occupied all Paris, and which would soon be welcomed throughout France as the morning dawn of a new day.

Robespierre had indeed fallen! Tallien and his friends had in the Convention brought against the despot the accu-



sation that he was striving for the sovereign power, and that he had enthroned a Supreme Being merely to proclaim himself afterward His visible representative, and to take all power in his own hands. When Robespierre had endeavored to justify himself, he had been dragged away from the speaker's tribune; and, as he defended himself, Tallien had drawn a dagger on Robespierre, and was prevented from killing the tyrant by a few friends, who by main force turned the dagger away. Immediately after this scene, the Convention decided to arrest Robespierre and his friends Couthon and St. Just; and the prisoners, among whom Robespierre's younger brother had willingly placed himself, were led away to the Luxemburg.\*

The prisoners welcomed this news with delight; for with the fall of Robespierre, had probably sounded for them the hour of deliverance, and they could hope that their prison's door would soon be opened, not to be led to the scaffold, but to obtain their freedom.

Therese de Fontenay, with the messengers sent by Tallien, left the Carmelite cloisters to fulfil the promise made by her to Tallien in her letter, to become his wife, and to pass at his side new days of happiness and love.

She embraced Josephine tenderly as she bade her farewell, and renewed to her the assurance that she would consider it her dearest and most sacred duty to obtain her friend's liberty.

In the evening of the same day, Josephine's camp-bed was restored to her; and, stretching herself upon it with intense delight, she said smilingly to her friends: "You see, I am not yet guillotined; I will be Queen of France." †

\* The next day, on the tenth Thermidor, Robespierre, who in the night had attempted to put an end to his life with a pistol, was executed with twenty-one companions. His brother was among the number of the executed.

† "Mémoires sur l'Impératrice Josephine," ch. xxxiii.

Therese de Fontenay, now Citoyenne Tallien, kept her word. Three days after obtaining her liberty, she came herself to fetch Josephine out of prison. Her soft, mild disposition had resumed its old spell over Tallien, whom the Convention had appointed president of the Committee of Safety. The death-warrants signed by Robespierre were annulled, and the prisons were opened, to restore to hundreds of accused life and liberty. The bloody and tearful episode of the revolution had closed with the fall of Robespierre, and on the ninth Thermidor the republic assumed a new phase.

Josephine was free once more! With tears of bliss she embraced her two children, her dear darlings, found again! In pressing her offspring to her heart with deep, holy emotion, she thought of their father, who had loved them both so much, who had committed to her the sacred trust of keeping alive in the hearts of his children love for their father.

Encircling still her children in her arms, she bowed them on their knees; and, lifting up to heaven her eyes, moist with tears, she whispered to them: "Let us pray, children; let us lift up our thoughts to heaven, where your father is, and whence he looks down upon us to bless his children."

Josephine delayed not much longer in Paris, where the air was yet damp with the blood of so many murdered ones; where the guillotine, on which her husband had died, lifted yet its threatening head. She hastened with her children to Fontainebleau, there to rest from her sorrows on the heart of her father-in-law, to weep with him on the loss they both had suffered.

The dream of her first youth and of her first love had passed away, and to the father of her beheaded husband Josephine returned a widow; rich in gloomy, painful experiences, poor in hopes, but with a stout heart, and a determination to live, and to be at once a father and a mother to her children.