

even if Consolata herself would consent, and I've never told her I love her, yet!" The old gentleman would regard what the young sir had done for them as quite a natural loyal service due to Royalty, and requiring no reward. The old gentleman would not be likely to regret his own share in the Comte's ending. Had not a king the power of dispensing death? "He'll be peacocking more than ever now—now that a poor wretch has paid the penalty of high treason!"

Then Stewart winced and burned, as he thought of the last and worst cause for his hopelessness of ever winning Consolata's hand. How could a Consolata de Grandemaison, not to say an Antoinette-Marie-Consolata de Bourbon, Madame Royale de France, consent to wed a Mr. George Stuart—he had concealed his true name at the trial, so that his friends in England might not know—a Mr. Stuart found guilty of homicidal assault and sent for fourteen months to Limoges gaol? Fourteen months! Fourteen days or fourteen hours, it was all the same in one respect; he had been tried, condemned and imprisoned, an indelible mark of shame. That he had been acquitted of murder itself meant little; that the autopsy had shown the real cause of the Comte's death to be epilepsy and failure of the heart did not remove him from the reach of the law or exonerate him from the prisoner's shame. He had been tried, sentenced, and imprisoned. "I'm a gaol-bird," he muttered now. "Consolata de Grandemaison could never marry a gaol-bird! She'll be thinking of me with horror now, no matter how she thought of me and thanked me before I was taken to gaol."

Fourteen months! Lucky he had been to get off with so little, Leroux had told him, for there is no distinction drawn between murder and manslaughter in France. He had been found guilty of homicidal assault, on his own confession of it, and the assault had been found guilty of expediting and aggravating the Comte's attack of epilepsy, and of instigating, so to speak, the death. Fourteen years the sentence might have been, but for the efforts of Archange and Bodinton and their insistence on the evidence of the autopsy. Fourteen months! And only seven of the months gone yet.