

THE GUNSMITH OF PARIS.

On the afternoon of the 23d of June, 1789, a large mob collected around the blazing palace of the Count St. Almer, in Paris, all armed, and obstinately determined to prevent any one endeavoring to stop the conflagration. Shouts succeeded shouts, as the burning rafters, one by one, fell in, and it was not until the entire building was level with the ground that they dispersed.

In the Rue St. Joseph's, but a few rods from this scene of outrage, was the workshop of Pierre Martel, the Gunsmith of Paris. It was a low, ten foot building, with nothing remarkable enough in its exterior to recommend it to notice, save the fact of so mean a building being situated so near the princely palace of the proud and haughty Count St. Almer, the favorite of the King. On the afternoon which is referred to, heedless of the tumult without, Pierre, and his apprentice Antoine, were quietly at work in the little shop. Government had employed him to furnish a stand of arms within a certain period, and upon this work he was now engaged. Every shout of the mob was distinctly heard by the Gunsmith, still the hammer rung upon the anvil, as if he wished its clinking might drown the uproar; but from the frequent glances which the apprentice cast toward the window, it was evident that he, at least, had rather be at liberty to join the crowd than at work.

"Your mind is absent, boy," said Martel, looking up—"Go if you wish, and learn a lesson Frenchmen never should forget."

Fresh bursts of applause, and shouts of "Vive la république" filled the air, and the apprentice of Martel, gladly availing himself of this privilege, took his cap and left the shop. For another hour Martel worked on in silence; he was then interrupted by the entrance of a neighbor.

"Most glorious news, Martel," cried the new courier, "but how is this—why are you at work when all Paris is alive with rejoicing?"

"What has happened, Briel?" inquired Martel, calmly.

"Are you an idiot?" exclaimed Briel. "Do you pretend to say you have not heard the news?"

"Nay, good Briel," replied Martel, "I am but a poor mechanic, and can ill afford to lose my time for every show that comes along."

"Well then, the story is simply this," said Briel.

"Be as brief as possible," interrupted Martel, "my work is at a stand while I am talking with you."

"A mob of citizens," continued Briel, "attacked the palace of the haughty Count St. Almer, the King's favorite, and levelled it with the ground. But what is better, two companies of the Royal Guards, which were ordered out, refused to fire upon the mob—"

"And the Count," exclaimed Martel, eagerly.

"Escaped during the confusion in the disguise of a monk."

"Heaven be praised," said Martel, "he is yet reserved to feel my vengeance!"

"You, Martel?"

"Yes. I've sworn an oath, a horrid oath—the Count shall die a violent death."

"How has he offended you," said Briel.

"Swear by the mother of him who died upon the cross never to divulge without my consent what I may now impart."

"I swear."

"Many years ago," said Martel, the Count St. Almer, by reason of his enormous crimes, was forced to embrace the Church or perish upon the scaffold. Of course, he chose the first, became a monk, and afterwards confessor. I had a daughter then, a sweet flower just budding into womanhood. She was the very image of her sainted mother, and as I watched her dawning beauties, day by day, I fancied I had a solace for my old age. She was accustomed to confess to St. Almer—a double dealing villain as he was—or as he was styled, Father Jerome, who from the first moment he saw her, laid a plan for her destruction. Too well did he succeed—what means he used—what fiend he summoned to his aid I know not, but my poor girl fell a victim to his infernal arts. She is now dead of a broken heart, and he stalks unharmed a favorite of the King. But a day of retribution is at hand. In less than one short month the anniversary of her death will come round—let the Count look to himself!"

"How happens it," said Briel, "if the Count took the cowl he is still a noble?"

"When the present Louis ascended the throne of France," replied Martel, "he petitioned the See of Rome to restore St. Almer to his titles—it was granted."

"But think, Martel," said Briel, "think of