

[Written for the "Canadian Illustrated News,"]

## UNUS ABEST.

I.  
A group of merry children played;  
The smiling sun to watch them stayed;  
A cloud came by with deadly shade;  
"Unus abest."

II.  
Bright faces glow 'mid dance and game;  
Hush! some one named a well-known name.  
But dance and song go on the same;  
"Unus abest."

III.  
A father joins his children's mirth;  
A mother mourns an awful dearth;  
"Ashes to ashes, earth to earth;"  
"Unus abest."

IV.  
One sits before a lonely fire,  
Watching the flame's unsteady spire  
Wasting with suicidal ire;  
"Unus abest."

V.  
Thus, day by day, in house or street,  
We miss some form we used to meet;  
Some human heart has ceased to beat;  
"Unus abest."

VI.  
The years pass on; our hair is gray;  
A few years more we'll pass away,  
Each leaving to his friend to say  
"Unus abest."

VII.  
So may we live that when the call  
Of the Great Trumpet wakes us all,  
These words from God's high throne may fall:  
"Nihilus abest."

JOHN READE.

## THE BEAUTIFUL PRISONER.

AN HISTORICAL ROMANCE.

## CHAPTER V.

GILBERT CARDOUREL.

GILBERT CARDOUREL had now in fact assumed an office in Bordeaux which gave him considerable power. Though the revolutionary committee had constituted themselves from the Jacobin clubs and possessed no official character, they exerted a moral influence, not only through the power which the well-organized Jacobin body exercised in the country, but also by their members receiving a daily remuneration of two francs, and these committees were respected by all the organs of the government of terror. Such a revolutionary committee acted as the mediator between the sovereignty of the people and the government with regard to the practice of the system of terror, and while the committee of the public welfare and the convention in Paris had appointed Tallien the executioner of the laws of blood for Bordeaux, the Jacobins and their revolutionary committee had made Cardourel the warden over these laws.

It was a matter, of course, dictated by considerations of mutual interest, that the commissioner of the convention and the president of the committee should be in close official connection with each other, relying upon which Cardourel, since his election as president, had laid his plot. He was by no means without intellect or political capacity, but his whole nature, as shewn in his dissolute, idle life, seemed bent on mischief. He who had lost his moral support seeks to extend his inner desolation upon others, and finds satisfaction in doing evil. The fear of inflicting needless sorrow upon others, characteristic of noble minds, was supplanted in Cardourel by a malign desire to give pain and trouble. He only obeyed his unruly passions, and being of a domineering disposition, his irritability was often made the excuse for his actions.

He had become a zealous Jacobin, not from conviction and fanatical patriotism, but because Jacobinism, which was a product of those times, suited his whole nature. He could persecute, do harm and mischief, and all this earned for him reputation, praise, and a kind of civic virtue. With his election as president of the revolutionary committee, whose member he had been, he had great satisfaction in feeling that the power thus acquired would enable him to indulge without restraint in all these propensities which accorded so well with Jacobin notions. The desire of being revenged upon Thérèse Cabarrus, who had so seriously offended him, and had fortunately escaped the first stroke aimed at her, filled his heart with a new vehemence; at the same time his domineering spirit was roused to oppose and threaten the commissioner of the convention, who had become too mild and indulgent, and whom he also hated as his successful rival with the beautiful Spaniard.

Both these aims roused his whole energy, and in the greatest excitement he longed for the moment when he could realize his new activity. Above all, it was necessary to reach the commissioner of the convention in a manner that he could no longer withstand his influence. He felt himself able to control Tallien, without intending to hurt him by doing so. He still stood in so much awe of the all-powerful man that he hesitated bringing upon himself his hate—unless he had found sufficient support and ground to threaten Tallien's power. For this reason he had first called a private meeting of the revolutionary committee, at which he wished to lay down his plans, and to receive the support of the most influential Jacobins.

It was noon when Cardourel left the "Red Cap" to repair to the meeting. He took with him the clerk Timm, though the latter did not belong to the committee, but in truth he was his private adviser and indispensable to him. Early in the morning Gilbert had talked over his plans with Timm, whose devotion, springing partly from fear, partly from servility, pleased him, as he complied willingly, even obligingly, with all his whims and demands; Timm not only had enthusiastically approved of his plans, but had assisted him in developing his views about the means of executing them, which appeared to him very acceptable. Timm thought, he could not recommend himself better to his patron than by flattering his excessive pride, and comparing his intentions with the endeavours of a crafty diplomatist who was doing his State a great service.

Gilbert Cardourel, therefore, brought before the revolutionary committee the position of affairs and his own plans. He declared he was bound to justify with the highest patriotic zeal, the confidence the committee had placed in him by electing him their chairman, and that, therefore, he intended to use all means of making himself respected by the commissioner of

the convention, Tallien, in order that the prevailing indulgence and weakness be replaced by the old energy.

Everyone in the committee gave his assent, as a matter of course, and declared his willingness to support Gilbert Cardourel in every respect.

"But," continued Gilbert more energetically, "this alone is not sufficient, and something more must be done to obtain success. Tallien is a powerful man; he is ensnared by the aristocrat Cabarrus, and will not easily suffer himself to be dictated to, or his actions controlled by others. I put my head at stake, friends—it is no more than just that I should have power to make resistance. Timm nodded his warmest assent, as the ideas Cardourel professed were his own. Being introduced and admitted as secretary, he now placed, with great importance, the quill upon the thick, grey paper, scrawled down the substance of what his patron spoke, and gave it at once the form upon which they had before agreed, so as to gain the character of an authentic document. Cardourel, by a nod, gave him also to understand that he counted on his services.

"How is this possible, patriot?" added he. "It can only be done by my receiving the necessary support to oppose, in case of need, the commissioner, with all energy. He must know that I act not for myself alone, but by the authority and will of the committee; he must, plainly speaking, be afraid of me. I, therefore, propose that a complaint and accusation against Tallien be sent to Paris, in case I am convinced that the end can be attained in no other way—a complaint and accusation addressed to the committee of the public welfare, in the name of the revolutionary committee and all good patriots of Bordeaux."

Cardourel stopped to observe the effect of this motion. Great excitement was visible in the society, and a lively debate took place about the advisability of such a measure. They generally agreed, however, that Cardourel deserved praise and support, and that if Tallien did not respond to his patriotic demands, a complaint should be directed to Paris. Cardourel now asked the members to sign the document which Timm had read to them, and which was drawn in such a form that it represented a mandate from the committee to Gilbert, to make his complaint to Paris against Tallien, if he deemed it necessary. The Jacobins hesitated signing a document, the detection of which would give them over to the vengeance of Tallien; but when Gilbert represented that he was the first that would be threatened in such a case, and that for this reason he would not betray the existence of the mandate till the vengeance of the commissioner was no more to be dreaded, they resolved to sign.

Cardourel triumphantly placed the mandate in his breast-pocket, and went with Timm to his dwelling, to confer with him on the further steps to be taken. The question was, when and in what manner Cardourel should call on the commissioner of the convention to lay before him the delicate communication that in future his actions would be under control. Both at last agreed upon doing without loss of time what had to be done; Timm displayed all his eloquence to show Cardourel how to act in this difficult undertaking, so that the latter with great self-confidence was induced to start at once on his errand.

"Timm," said he when they parted, "if I were a minister and you my private secretary—we should know how to rule."

Timm laughed, and replied,

"We don't know, citizen, what may happen."  
"I will meet you to-night at the 'Red Cap'; you shall drink at my expense as much as you please—I will reward you in some way! But I shall find you something better, a good office—for you deserve it. Then you shall marry Lucie, just to vex the old couple—we will arrange every thing if we only keep up the guillotine. In the meantime the fun with the little black girl does not interest me so much as to lose my time over it. I have now indeed a great deal more to think of and to do."

"Oh! there is no hurry," the little clerk said consolingly; he could not understand why his patron troubled himself so much with his marriage of which he himself had never thought. "I don't care so much about it."

"Fool," answered Gilbert jestingly. "Did you not tell me that you love Lucie? Well, the woman you love will be your wife. And as one of these days my uncivil cousin Tourguet will get married to Miss Guillotine instead of marrying this crowd of girls—what obstacles would there be left? Do not be so timid, little Timm—I will arrange the matter for you; it gives me pleasure, much pleasure, and you shall have proofs that I am your friend."

Timm seized his proffered hand, pressing it warmly to show the depth of his gratitude for the kindness of Cardourel. The president in jacket and clogs then stepped across the street to the gloomy building of the Ombrière, with the intention of presenting himself to the commissioner of the convention, and attending to his new duties.

The *Sans-culotte* in the ante-room informed him of the commissioner's order, not to announce to-day any one except in case of need.

"That is just my case," cried Cardourel in a haughty tone. "Announce the president of the revolutionary committee." It was done. The *Sans-culotte* returned with the message that the commissioner expected him.

Gilbert who had already advanced to the door of Tallien's reception-room, quickly entered it. He saw before him the young commissioner, visibly out of humour on account of being disturbed; and Thérèse Cabarrus just in the act of leaving the room, looking more beautiful than ever.

She turned round, and recognising Cardourel, muttered audibly with an expression of the greatest contempt: "The wretch."

She then left the apartment, as though she could not quick enough rid herself of the presence of the Jacobin, who smiled sneeringly after her.

Tallien had overheard how his beloved saluted this man. He knew Cardourel personally, but did not understand to what circumstance the contemptuous epithet Thérèse Cabarrus had bestowed upon him referred. However he at once comprehended that they must have met before; it may have been, that even without this circumstance Gilbert Cardourel would have made a disagreeable impression upon him, but now his sullen face expressed how ungraciously he would receive the disturber.

Gilbert himself felt disconcerted by this reception. The young deputy with his red hair could even by his look terrify more courageous natures. One might almost feel in his presence as though he stood before a demon who with one nod could bring destruction.

"You are the president of the revolutionary committee, citizen?" at last asked Tallien in an energetic tone. "Your name?"

"My name is of no consequence, citizen commissioner," replied Gilbert, who had regained his self-possession, and whose indignation was called forth by Tallien's imperious address. "But if you wish to know it, I have no reason for withholding it. I am called Cardourel."

Tallien fixed a piercing glance upon Gilbert Cardourel, then resumed: "Your business is urgent?"

"It is as urgent as it is important, citizen commissioner. But I cannot discuss it as though standing upon my trial. You must therefore allow me to tell you more precisely the purpose of my visit; I am only sorry that I have not come to you at a more opportune time."

There was a maliciousness in these last words which did not escape Tallien; who began to realize that he would have to deal with an affair in which he was particularly interested. His mien became more sullen, his looks indicated a storm which might break out at any moment.

"Speak!" demanded he of Gilbert. "I shall then be able to see the nature of your urgent business."

Gilbert now fell into a civil, fawning tone, which Timm had advised for this critical occasion.

"Citizen commissioner," said he, "I consider myself a zealous patriot, who wishes to protect the welfare of the republic to the best of his abilities. My zeal and undoubted devotion for the cause of liberty have earned for me the confidence of all true *Sans-culottes* in Bordeaux; they have chosen me to be one of the revolutionary committee, and truly I believe that I have sent, as it was my duty, every enemy of the republic before the tribunal. I knew, and still know no forbearance, when the welfare of the country is at stake, and it is certain that all aristocrats, and other suspicious and bad citizens, must be struck by the terror of blood and death, if the republic and liberty shall attain their glory. You see, citizen, that the committee has acknowledged this by yesterday electing me their president. They not only know that I would do my duty energetically, and accuse, without mercy, all criminals, but they have desired me to act with the greatest severity and vigour, because the patriots have lately seen with indignation that too many criminals have found grace, and, with it, an opportunity for further hostilities against the republic."

Tallien impatiently stamped his foot.

"To the point!" commanded he. "To what do these digressions tend?"

"Your pardon, citizen commissioner, it was necessary to make these introductory remarks. I am well acquainted in Bordeaux, and know how many of these criminals and suspected are still living in the city, and beginning again to feel secure. Has Bordeaux not been the head-quarters of these cursed Brissotins and Girondists? You are aware yourself how much trouble and expense it has cost to rid the city of the Girondist faction, and making it appear worthy of the republic. I assure you that the city is still crowded with bad citizens, who, if the severity of persecution and punishment relaxes, will soon come out of their hiding places, deride the authorities, and finally take the reins in their own hands; such a leniency may easily imperil the republic. So I think, so thinks the revolutionary committee, so thinks the Jacobin Club, and so think all good patriots. Bordeaux must have a severe jurisdiction, or we will see the city soon become disloyal."

"What else can we do?" asked Tallien angrily. "Will you set fire to Bordeaux at its four corners? I perceive your motive—not blood enough has been shed to satisfy you, water still flows in the Garonne, not blood."

"Ah, citizen," replied Cardourel, "you misunderstand the import of my words. We do not desire cruelty and slaughter, but justice and rigour against those whom the law brands as the enemies of the republic. Too many are now spared, too many are withheld from justice by your leniency, and leave the prisons to mock justice, the government and the committee, who, faithful to their duty, had informed on them. I have been sent, and have come, citizen, to request you not any longer to acquiesce in this ill-placed forbearance and leniency."

"This is arrogance," burst forth Tallien. "I am not responsible to you, but to the convention for my actions. No criminal is withheld by me from just punishment; but I am no slayer of innocent and harmless weaklings, who are known in masses. I think I have proved that I know how to administer justice to criminals. This answer may satisfy you, citizen Cardourel."

Gilbert shrugged his shoulders and remarked: "There is no doubt, citizen commissioner, that your intentions are truly patriotic. But I dare to tell you, because it is my duty, that latterly many criminals and decidedly suspected persons have been liberated."

"Who?" asked Tallien in wrath. "Who? Name them!"

"Why, citizen? Is not the Spaniard Cabarrus one of them?"

The serpent's sting visibly pained the young deputy, and Gilbert felt delight in his fury till it burst forth in a blaze.

"Ah!" cried Tallien. "This is the portent of your visit! Let us be brief, my friend! I recognize no judge above me but the convention. I will not allow your interference with my office. That is sufficient—I can now understand why Thérèse Cabarrus called you a wretch."

"What that woman may say has no weight with me. She deserved death."

"Begone, begone!" roared Tallien in a towering passion, rushing to the bell-pull suspended over his desk in the middle of the room.

"Stop, citizen," said Gilbert, trembling with fear and passion; "listen to one thing more before you have me turned out."

Tallien involuntarily hesitated pulling the bell which should bring the *Sans-culottes* into the room.

"If you reward my zeal in this way, you will compel me to lodge a complaint against you in Paris."

"I have no fear, and shall not prevent you from doing so."

"My complaint would not be without weight, citizen commissioner; I am president of the revolutionary committee; I am backed by the mother society in Paris, where Robespierre's most trustworthy friends gather."

Gilbert perceived that the name of Robespierre caused Tallien uneasiness. Anger and indignation disappeared from his countenance and were replaced by gloomy reflection. To be threatened with Robespierre, this all-powerful, incorruptible and merciless man of terror, was sufficient to make the bravest quail, and Tallien, conscious of his guilt, which consisted in his late leniency, was the more anxious, as he had