

## Charlotte Maria-Anne D'Armont Corday.

(By Emma E. Everist. Photograph from original painting in Corcoran Gallery, Washington, D.C.)

In a tiny thatched roof cottage in the village of Saint Satternin des Lignerets, on the morning of July 28, 1768, there opened its eyes to the light of this world, a little baby girl.

Had the horoscope of that little stranger been cast at the moment of its birth, it would have foretold a future so fateful that the parents might well have wished that it would close its eyes in everlasting sleep; but nothing of the kind occurred, and the little mite, unconscious of the drama it was

younger son of this line. Her mother, too, boasted of gentle blood, but Jacque Corday was poor, so poor that he envied many of the peasants among whom he lived; the cottage, with a little strip of ground which he cultivated with his own hands, was his only possession.

Charlotte was the fourth child. She was deprived at a very early age of the tender love and careful training of a mother. Her father then committed her to a convent—the Abbaye aux Dames—where she remained until the beginning of the Revolution, when the convent was closed.

From the sacred precinct of that convent wall there came out into the world a beautiful young girl, who is described as a 'vision of dazzling loveliness,' with a complex-

Her father about that time wrote some pamphlets in favor of the Revolution. A girl of so susceptible a nature as Charlotte must have been much influenced by reading words like those from her parent's pen. But it was not until the fall of the Girondists upon that memorable 31st of May, 1793, that she resolved to give active shape to her thoughts. The Girondists sought refuge at Caen. Charlotte blamed Marat entirely for their proscription, and upon him she determined to avenge her ill-fated country and her people. She was not aware that Marat was but a tool in the hands of Danton and Robespierre.

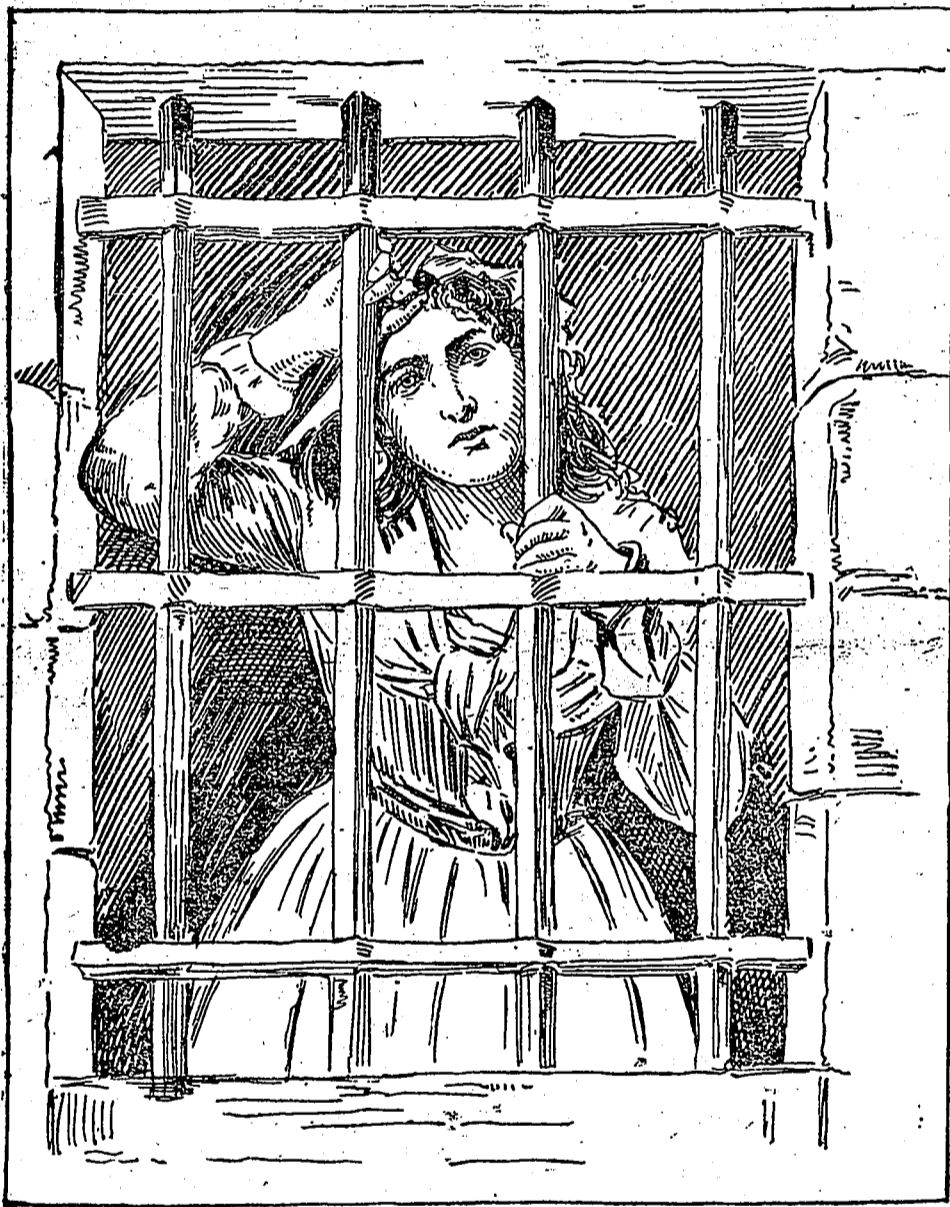
One verse from the Bible haunted her strangely. She could not forget the words. She kept repeating them over and over to herself: 'The Lord had gifted Judith with a special beauty and fairness.' Charlotte was much admired for her beauty and could have had many lovers, but her mind was occupied with more serious things. She had neither the time nor yet the inclination for love. Among the offers of marriage made to her was one from a young Girondist, Mons. de Franquelin. He was one of her most ardent admirers. He loved her so dearly that, upon hearing of her fate later on, he died of grief. His last request was that her picture and some letters she had written him might be buried with him.

It was on July 9, 1793, that Charlotte left her aunt's home secretly, for that fated trip to Paris. She was much annoyed on the way by some Jacobin fellow-travellers, one of whom made her an offer of marriage. She refused him as gracefully as she could, saying:

'You will know who and what I am at some future period.' This was the only incident of her journey. Arrived at Paris, she went at once to the Hotel de la Providence, situated in the Rue des Vieux Augustins, not far from the dwelling of Marat. There, in a miserable attic room, with scarcely a ray of light to illumine its darkness, Charlotte, with a copy of her beloved Plutarch, which she read again and again, passed several days of terrible in-quietude.

She called upon the Girondist, Duperret, to whom she had a letter, relative to her supposed business in Paris. Her real reason for calling was to find out where she could see Marat. A festival to celebrate the taking of the Bastille, was in course of preparation. She determined to strike her victim there, but the festival was postponed. She then decided to seek him at the Convention, but Duperret informed her that Marat was too ill to attend the National Assembly. She then concluded that the only way to reach him would be at his own home.

On the morning of July 16 she prepared herself for this visit by purchasing a knife at the Palais Royal, which, together with a written note, she took with her to the house. Being denied the interview she sought, she left the note, and most reluctantly retired from the premises. She had hardly arrived at the hotel when she wrote a second and more pressing letter than the first, in which she represented herself as being persecuted for the cause of freedom. She could not await an answer to these letters, but on the same evening at 7.30, she made a second attempt to see Marat. This time, as history records, she was but too successful. Arrived at the old house in the Rue des Cordeliers, the porter saw a flying



CHARLOTTE CORDAY IN PRISON.

destined to enact upon the stage of life, grew up, fulfilled its impressive mission, and left to posterity a name which, like that of Jeanne d'Arc, has become immortal not only to the French people, but to the world.

Like Jeanne d'Arc, Charlotte Corday was filled with an enthusiastic passion for her country and her people. Like her, too, she felt that she had been selected as the instrument through which her beloved France should be liberated, and like that other greatest of all heroines, she sacrificed her pure young life upon the altar of fanaticism, alias patriotism.

Charlotte Corday was the last descendant of a noble Norman family, one of her ancestors was the great Corneille, and Fontenelle was a near relation. Her father, Jacque of Corday and of Armont, was a

ion of transparent purity; eyes of a gray so deep that they were often mistaken for black. Dark, well-arched eyebrows, clustering curls of a beautiful brown, that fell about the lovely head and arms. Such was Charlotte Corday.

In her dress she was severely simple, the low cap of white lace which she always wore upon her head, was extremely becoming. This cap still bears the name of Charlotte Corday. After the closing of the convent Charlotte made her home with her aunt, Madame de Bretteville Gouville, a Royalist lady, who lived in an ancient house situated upon one of the principal streets of Caen. She remained with this aunt for several years, spending her time principally in silent brooding over the misfortunes of her country, as she watched the progress of the Revolution.