

The poor Benoit, if he effected her escape, must sacrifice his office, perhaps his life—how could she take upon herself so great a responsibility? Should his love for her, which was already so hopeless, be his ruin? And even if Benoit parried all the dangers with which he would be threatened through his devotion, there would such an obligation devolve upon her that could only bring him sorrow and misery. No, she should not give Benoit such a claim on her gratitude, if there was any other resource left. The other resource, the more she reflected on it, had something tempting; the road on which it led was mysterious, which pleased her adventurous spirit. If she accepted Tallien's mercy and gave him room to hope for her love, could not female ingenuity find a large field for usefulness? Thérèse inwardly measured her strength for such a game, and concluded that victory would be all but certain. The man of terror might be overcome when he fancied he was triumphing. Tallien in her eyes no longer appeared so formidable, and she now felt no horror for this man of bloodshed. She recollected the soft, longing gaze he had cast on her, the loving words he had whispered, and reasoned that this Tallien could not be a man of cool judgment, but rather a man of passions. If Thérèse succeeded to rule his sentiments and passions, if she could elevate his love for her to such a height and strength so as to influence his whole being, what bright days might yet dawn upon her after her long night of misery! Sensual love only enfeebles man, but if love draws its strength from the soul, it ennobles. Thus reflected the high-minded prisoner. The smile of triumph played on her finely chiselled lips, in her thoughts seeing the prince of terror as her slave, the man of blood changed into a man of clemency. And if not, what was to be lost by this game, that was not already lost?

Our heroine had now taken her resolution. She sprang from her bed and nervously paced her cell, then knocked at the door and called the turnkey. Benoit came and opened her cell; he anticipated what she was about to say.

"Benoit," said she imploringly, "I wish to write a letter."

The turnkey sadly nodded his head.

"I thought so, citizen," he replied; "it is a letter to the commissioner Tallien."

"Yes, my friend; I have decided to avail myself of this mode of escape."

"He will watch over you safely," he sighed, and retired to fetch the writing materials.

Soon after he returned with them and said in a trembling voice, "here, citizen."

"Benoit," she replied, "I fear I have grieved you in taking this step for my delivery."

"Not so, citizen; I only regret that I may not meet you again."

"What, if I were condemned to die?"

"Oh, you would not have died; I should have saved you."

"Noble friend, and through me you might have perished yourself."

"What would it matter," said he nervously.

Thérèse wrote a single line and showed it to the turnkey.

"Read, my friend. This is all I have written: Citizen Commissioner! Grant me an interview! Thérèse Cabarrus."

"It is sufficient," he replied.

She then folded the note, addressed it and gave it to him.

"I shall immediately deliver it, though this service for you will cause me misery."

Then poor Benoit retired and locked the cell.

CHAPTER III.

THE MAN OF TERROR.

Nor an hour had passed since Thérèse had written the note to Tallien, when Benoit came to inform her that she was expected by the commissioner, and that he was to conduct her to him. Meanwhile she had spent her time in growing impatience, and had studied the conversation she was to hold with this terrible man, so as to be prepared for every contingency at the interview. But both the uncertainty and the stake she risked in this new game, made her violently quiver at the very moment when she was called to his presence.

Benoit cast a serious look upon her while in haste she was arranging her toilet, showing, in so doing, that she intended to please. She looked charming to perfection, when she had folded a white cashmere shawl around her person, and thrown a large black lace veil over her face, the waxy complexion of which produced a most striking effect. Her dark eyes sparkled, scorn and delight played around her lips, and her cheeks glowed with inward excitement.

"Let us go," she at last said to the turnkey, "I am ready."

Benoit was going to open the door, when he hesitated.

"Citizen!" he exclaimed with painful emotion, "do you think you will come back?"

She looked alarmed, almost ashamed at this question.

"My poor friend," she replied with great sympathy, "I comprehend how painful it is for you to lose your prisoner. Here," she added, drawing forth the small silver cross and presenting it to him, "is the keepsake I have promised you."

Benoit hesitated taking it, but stared at it with tears in his eyes. Though he had a great desire for it, a kind of delicacy made him fear that the acceptance of this keepsake would humble his love for the beautiful prisoner.

"Well?" continued she in a cheerful tone, "you will not take it? Ah, Benoit, I wish to give it you as you are good and honest. If I gain my freedom, this cross shall be to you a sign of my gratitude! Should you only wish to take it if I were condemned to die?"

"To die!" he exclaimed. "To die! You shall not die!"

"Who can pretend to know it? This hour will give me either liberty or death."

"You are right," answered Benoit. "Either is the same to me. Your pardon, citizen. I am a fool!" Then taking the cross which she still held in her hand, he pressed it to his lips and fervently kissed it. "You have so much kindness for a poor simpleton as to leave him this keepsake?" added he. "Oh, I thank you. You will soon have forgotten me, but I shall never forget you."

He then opened the door and preceded her through the long corridor which led to the main building, and by mounting a flight of stairs, to the office of the all-powerful commissioner of the convention, Tallien. In the large ante-room they met a few *Sans-culottes* with their red caps on their heads, who acted as orderlies for the ruler of Bordeaux. Benoit delivered to them his prisoner, and turning round, was about to leave the room, when Thérèse called him back, her tone expressing gratitude, as well as anxiety for the step she was about to take.

After he had approached her, she extended her hand, and his look of pleasure showed the consolation he felt at this last act of sympathy.

"Good-bye, citizen," said she. "Ah, these men here—how much afraid I am of them! Tell them that the commissioner wishes to speak to me."

"They know it," replied the turnkey, adding in a whisper—"Be cautious and prudent! Your life will depend on it."

He then withdrew, when one of the red caps approached her, crying aloud:—

"This is the aristocrat! You are a beautiful woman, and no one can blame you for begging for your life. Come, citizen—that door there takes you to the commissioner."

He conducted her, who was now trembling violently, to the door.

"Do not spare your tears," he added good humoredly; "it may help you in the end, you beautiful witch."

The door which he opened led to a large apartment, in the middle of which a huge, old-fashioned desk was placed. Before it, in a carved wooden chair, sat the man of terror, the deputy of the convention, Tallien, who was sent to Bordeaux to administer dreadful justice upon all criminals and suspected; he was like a king in power, employed by the kings of the convention to execute their will, a gloomy Pluto in his place, by whose anger and nod the guillotine mowed down heads. He was still young, scarce above four-and-twenty, but was already a very successful politician. He had been destined for a lawyer, but the revolution had employed his literary talents. In the "Moniteur" he had assisted to record the progress of the revolution, and afterwards edited a paper of his own, the "Citizen Friend," which published in 1791, daily, all the government matter. Huguenin, the president of the revolutionary common-council, appointed him, in the following year, his secretary, and with his advancement his power grew. The more wildly the tide of the revolution rushed on, the more the passions of this young and ambitious man influenced his mind. He was elected to the convention where the maddest Jacobins became his associates, and the day on which the king was executed, he was made their president. He, with deputy Carra, were then sent to the mutinous department of the west, where the first terror of his name was spread, thereby removing any and every doubt that there was any clemency in his character. Thus he became the leading man of Bordeaux, the seat of the Girondists, where he, with his colleague, Lambeau, were to clear the field and cultivate the soil for the last harvest of the revolution. With terror he ploughed the land, with blood it was manured, and soon it should lose its old nature and be then gained for the future.

Thérèse entered; Tallien remained sitting in his high chair. He looked up but did not disturb himself in his work. Her heart violently beating, she waited for a few moments near the door and gazed, not without horror, on this tall young man, whose head with bristling red hair depicted his wild energy, and whose freckled but pale and delicate face had not lost its fine features. He was writing. What could he be writing, but the names of those who were doomed to death, or reports giving testimony of the efficacy of his reign of blood? Thérèse found her courage and self-possession deserting her; at this moment she sought for both in vain. At last Tallien cast his piercing eyes upon her. "Citizen," said he, "approach!"

Hesitatingly she complied with his command, which was not uttered without politeness in the tone.

"You have understood me," continued he, resting his ardent gaze on the youthful beauty. "You are aware what I expect of you if I save you?"

The cheeks of the Spaniard became crimson, her pride was roused, and she now recovered her self-possession. "I do not understand you, citizen," replied she with indignation.

Tallien smiled and rose from his seat, taking her hand which she did not venture to withdraw, and saying, with a cordiality that surprised her:

"Beautiful woman, can you not understand that I love you?"

He wished to draw her towards him, but she freed herself, and reluctantly overcame by the unexpected gentleness of his words, replied haughtily:

"With what right do you dare to talk thus to me? It is my misfortune and defenceless condition that induce you to offend me?"

"To offend you?" quietly replied he. "Does my love offend you?"

"Independent of your deeds which outrage female delicacy, are you a human being that can speak of love? Does a wolf love a lamb which he frightens before tearing it to pieces?"

"Am I like a wolf to you? And why?"

"Why should I tell you what your deeds prove a hundred-fold?"

He again seized her hand, and looking earnestly in her face said: "Woman, you talk as if you had not passed through a great revolution which inexorably carries out its law, though single individuals may try to hinder it. He who has become the executioner of the law of necessity, is but a limb of a scorpion seeking victims for its dreadful work. Do I not remain a man though I am the executioner of the law?"

"A man of blood," exclaimed she in a tone of horror, "cursed with malediction!"

"Be it so," replied he, more passionately. "I shall be so for others, for the whole world—but not for you, beautiful woman, who are exercising over me an unknown charm. For you I wish to be the man that is free from the duty of terror, for you the man that opens all gates to his heart, that sacred passions may break forth and receive back from you all that glows in your heart. I do not deny, I am ensnared by your charms and that I will save you, to love you."

Thérèse now perceived the advantage she had gained; the man of terror was already caught in her net. But she assumed an air of indifference, while in reality the words of Tallien showing the sincerity of his sentiments had made a strong impression upon her, and frowning with anger, said:

"I could have begged for my life—but your love is more terrible to me than death!"

"My office shocks you; but I do not despair that you will find the man worthy of your love."

"How can I separate the man from what he is? He is judged by his deeds, and if these are detestable, so is he. And by your deeds you deserve to be called the most dreaded of the terrible. Not only have you accepted an office which is fit only for the most heartless and insensible nature—no, you have administered it with such a sanguinary disposition as to make you appear the accomplice of your headmen. Say, can

you sleep without dreaming of blood and seeing before you the heads of all the executed who accuse you not only before men but also before God?"

She stopped short, as if frightened at the impression her words had made on Tallien.

The commissioner shrugging his shoulders, said: "I condemn no one; it is the tribunal that does it."

"Yes, the tribunal which is intimidated by you and is obliged to condemn all those you have accused. And you whose thoughts are of blood, and whose deeds form a chain of crimes—you dare to speak of love? What a contradiction in nature? The hyena also loves, but loves its own. Am I like you that you expect to find with me reciprocity of your feelings? Oh, these passions of yours rise all out of the same abyss; the demon which you are when you rule, you are also when you love."

Tallien did not appear to be much touched by this description.

"That you talk this way, proves that you do not know me. You are an enemy of the republic, and I am not surprised at your judgment. I am sorry, Thérèse Cabarrus, to find you of a worse disposition than I had imagined."

"Citizen," she replied, not without dread that Tallien's political passions might get the ascendancy over his better feelings, "I am not an enemy of the republic, of which I am as fond as of liberty; no woman in France has hailed it with more enthusiasm than I have; none can be more French, more patriotic than I am, who am a daughter of Spain. The revolution, even in its passionate excesses, is to me a sublime spectacle, and seems to resemble a river into which the waters from the mountains wildly rush, so that it not being able to receive them in its bed, overflows and breaks banks and dikes, and inundates in majestic and destructive grandeur far and wide the rich and blooming land. But can he who tries by flight to save himself from the death-carrying flood be reviled at, or accused of cowardice and treachery? And this is the crime for which I have languished in prison, for which my life is given into your hands that you may have me drowned in the deep waters, if I am too proud to become your slave. For though, as a matter of course, the excited waves have transgressed their bounds and become destructive, I nevertheless despise the heartless man who, instead of damping the flood, in his malignity and cruelty attempts to extend it farther, that he may rejoice over its victims to his heart's content?"

"And do I really appear to you such a monster?" asked he.

"Can you be surprised at it? Do you not intend to be the man of terror? What is amiable in you who are still so young? Where are your noble qualities, which could be admired by a woman, if she was not ashamed of her own nature? What else can your love be but an impure desire?"

"And you tell me all this, because I have wished to save you?" asked Tallien, partly in a threat, partly crushed by the accusations of this young woman, whose beauty the more strongly captivated him, the more this excitement animated her eyes and flushed her cheeks. "Is it for this reason that you have asked an interview with me, while I presumed that you had accepted my help and would show yourself grateful for it? Truly, the way I have acted towards you gives the lie to your accusations, and you ought to have reason to find me amiable."

"Give me proofs that you are sincere, and I will believe you," exclaimed she with vivacity, drawing near to him.

"You ask for proofs? Is not my sincerity sufficiently proved by having opened the door of your cell, if you in gratitude for it will be my beloved, my wife? I ask from you nothing degrading. Here," continued he, taking from his desk a pile of papers, in which he turned over the leaves, and extracting one from among them: "here is your accusation. I will destroy it and you will be free—will this proof be sufficient?"

"Oh, by no means," replied she. "You will destroy a single leaf, not for the object of saving my life, but of satisfying one of your whims."

"Can you reproach me if I claim your affection as the price for my deed?" asked he.

"You would not have so much humanity if I refused you my affection. It is no proof of your generosity, on the contrary."

"Woman, what more do you want? Did I compel you to love me? No, but I ventured to hope for your love, because I wished to obtain a claim to it. I save your life and you do not thank me?"

Thérèse seized his arm, exclaiming enthusiastically—"Throw this pile of accusations into the fire there, and I will believe you to be worthy the love of a woman."

(To be continued.)

The following is of course quite true. It has, at least, gone the rounds:—Notwithstanding the strike of the shopmen, or perhaps from that very reason, there was a large number of customers at the Magasins du Louvre yesterday. This is the commencement of the winter season, and the female thieves are perfectly aware that this is the period most propitious to their operations. All at once some piercing cries were heard from the midst of the crowd. Every one hastened to the spot, but the terror was changed to amusement as soon as the cause of the emotion was discovered to be a superb living crayfish clinging to the fingers of a woman who had attempted to take a portmanteau from a pocket—not her own. Madame R—then told the persons present that having been robbed last year, she had thought of this means of catching the culprit.

A correspondent at Pesth says:—"Seldom has a Sovereign led so simple a life as the Empress Elizabeth of Austria, and in her castle at Godollo she has ample opportunities of gratifying her rural taste. She goes daily for a solitary walk in the park, which on ordinary days is open to the public, and her children frequently make excursions into the villages and converse familiarly with the people. The Crown Prince, Archduke Rudolph, usually rides a fiery hunter, and the Archduchess Gisela a Spanish mule. The Empress herself is passionately fond of riding, and in her habit of black velvet, with a black kolpack (Hungarian cap) on her head, she gallops across ditches and rivers so broad that the most daring of her suite sometimes hesitate to follow her. She also has a great liking for agricultural pursuits. She works in her own garden, and the other day appeared with a sickle in her hand, to assist at the mowing in a field of oats, with the produce of which she feeds her horse."