

E L O I S E .

[Written for the "Canadian Illustrated News."]

I.

I'll call thee Eloise. Such eyes as thine
With fatal beauty marred
The peace of Abelard,
And dimmed with human love the light divine
That lingers near Religion's holy shrine!

II.

O pitiless eyes, you burn into my soul,
Each one a living coal
From off Love's altar! Fall, O silken lashes,
And shade me, like a screen, from their control,
Ere all my warm delight be turned to ashes!

III.

Oh, no! I cannot bear the shade; burn on,
And let me slowly perish with sweet fire,
Myself at once the victim and the pyre,—
I die of cold when that dear heat is gone.

JOHN READE.

THE BEAUTIFUL PRISONER.

AN HISTORICAL ROMANCE.

CHAPTER II.—Continued.

But Paris became a sojourn of terror. The friends of the released and divorced Madame de Fontenay, those soft Girondists and noble enthusiasts who strew flowers on the embers of the revolution—those poetic and valiant politicians—were either exiled and proscribed or had been executed. She must therefore go from Paris where the cruel men of terror ruled, and be away from that soil which at any moment might open and swallow another victim! On to Bordeaux, to which place her friends, the proscribed of Quiberon, are flying;—on to Bordeaux, the true capital of the Girondists, where they will gather and arm in revenge against the *Sans-culottes*!

Thérèse Cabarrus, Madame de Fontenay, hastened to Bordeaux. But Jacobinism was already there in vogue, the *Sans-culottes* being masters of the place and butchering without mercy Girondists, aristocrats and other suspected persons. From Bordeaux it is not far to Spain, and thither the young Senora, finding herself now without protection, wished to go; to the province of Aragon, to the city of Saragossa and to the house of her mother, there to nurse and console her.

One day her steps were dogged by a young man in clogs and with a red cap over his blonde locks. It was Gilbert Cardourel. The beauty of the young Spaniard had excited this young debauchee; he followed into her house and into her very room; there with horror she heard the vows of love from this *Sans-culotte*, and indignant at such an outrage ordered a servant of the house to turn him out. Gilbert swore vengeance at such an insult, and truly she had cause for being afraid of this villain. She hastened to leave Bordeaux and to escape to Spain, but before her back was turned to the city, this mad Gilbert Cardourel, with his confederates, had stopped her carriage. She was arrested and pointed out as suspected. From the fate of the executed she could guess her own, and when she entered the cell of the Ombrière, she knew that death was certain and fell sobbing on the bed, praying and crying that she so young and beautiful was doomed for the grave.

Anxious days passed. Every morning she heard from the court yard into which the window of her cell opened, the rattling of the cart on which the condemned were sent to the scaffold; she could see all those unfortunates, men and women, old and young, through her window when she stood upon the side of her bed. She herself was not called either to her trial, or to the headsman. But vain it would have been for her to hope!

Hope almost died within her when one morning the turnkey, a young lad who had been wounded in the left arm before Toulon, and who took great interest in her, had opened her door at an unusual hour, and there stood before her a young man in the uniform of a commissioner of the convention; his head, with bristling, reddish hair, was covered with a round hat surmounted by the tricolored feather; a tightly fitting dress-coat, a tricolored sash around his waist, sword and top-boots, completed his costume.

With his fierce eyes he cast a long and searching look upon her, then sharply asked her who was now deadly pale with fright, her name, her relations and crime, and bestowing upon her a piercing glance, left her without another word.

An hour afterwards Benoit, the turnkey, came to her cell; this was an unusual occurrence, and the more remarkable as he was much excited.

"What is the matter with you?" she asked,

"Am I called before the tribunal?"

"Ah," he cried with tears in his eyes, "I am afraid, you will not stay much longer with me, citizen! The commissioner who was here is Tallien; those he sees are doomed to die."

Thérèse Cabarrus sighed. She knew the name of the deputy of the convention, Tallien, in Paris, and his wild appearance had taught her that he would answer the trust the government of terror had placed in him, when he was sent to Bordeaux. But the words of the turnkey, the tone in which they were uttered, and the tears in his eyes, first arrested her attention.

"Why," she therefore asked, "do you take so much interest in my fate?"

Benoit blushed and confusedly answered:

"Who would not do so, citizen? You are so young, so beautiful. . . Oh! pardon me!"

Thérèse sadly smiled. She saw that the honest young turnkey loved her.

"My friend," she said taking his hand, "for the many kindnesses you have shown me I thank you. And if I am condemned to die the silver cross I wear on my breast shall be yours. It shall be a keepsake to you from your grateful prisoner."

With these words she drew forth a small cross which she had succeeded to conceal from her wardens when she was taken prisoner.

Benoit was beside himself with joy.

"Oh!" he ejaculated passionately, my place, my honour, and perhaps my life may be at stake! What does it matter! Command! and I shall obey; bid me go! and I shall go; say to me: die! and if necessary, I shall die!"

She made no answer. The zeal of this young man alarmed her. But after further reflecting upon it she came to the conclusion that she might, with his assistance, effect her escape, as Benoit had declared he would sacrifice everything for her.

Some days passed and Thérèse still avoided mentioning her desire to be free; she did not like to owe so much to the love of this man, and become the cause of his misfortune. She contented herself with letting him divine what she wished, and was not disappointed to notice that Benoit, of his own accord, was making the necessary preparations for her successful flight.

The day before these arrangements were completed, the door of her cell was again suddenly opened, and once more stood before her Tallien, the commissioner of the convention, the dreaded man who held life and death in his hands. He caught her unawares, and when she aghast jumped up and threw a shawl around her shoulders, he exclaimed—

"Wherefore, citizen! Do not distress yourself, I rejoice to see you yet alive."

Did he mean to mock her that he thus spoke? Or did he come with the intention to announce her death? But no,

with an expression of love and kindness, which caused Thérèse to realize that the tiger at this moment had turned a lamb. He hastily closed the door, leaving the turnkey outside, and whispered to her in an excited tone—

"I would wish to save you, beautiful Spaniard! Your fate is in your own hands, if you can comprehend me. I cannot return here a third time."

He then withdrew, and Benoit immediately locked the door. Thérèse stood as though she were in a dream. Was this the tyrant? No, she felt that love had subdued this man of terror.

She tried to clearly comprehend what he meant, and what she now had to do. He had said that he would save her, and certainly it was in his power to do so.

But why had he ordered the door to be closed again upon her? Why had he not granted her at once her liberty as he had the authority to do?

Instead of this he had left her to decide for herself; this hopeful moment was fraught with pain. How was she to decide when she had only these few words with their uncertain and suspicious meaning? Thérèse was too sensitive not to understand the full scope of these words. She should deliver herself up to Tallien; as a price for her liberty she should belong to this monster, who, in her presence, had lost his nature and become a man of feeling and passion. She shuddered. "Rather death," she thought, "than decide to be his."

Had she not the honest love-sick Benoit, who would open all the locks by a word from her? Did he not give by his love as much as the all-powerful Tallien could give, and did he not give it without a price?

Benoit came as usual in the evening to enquire after the wants of his prisoner. He was shy and down-cast, his cheeks were pale, and his dark eyes gloomy. The Spaniard perceived that he was not the same Benoit as formerly. "My friend," she said when he was about to leave her, "you are much changed since morning. You distress me."

"Oh no, citizen," he replied constrainedly, "I am still the same."

"Something troubles you, Benoit. Tell me."

Retaining his answer for a while, he said at last—

"I heard every word the commissioner of the convention has told you."

"Well?" asked Thérèse, blushing involuntarily. She wondered what interpretation of Tallien's words Benoit would give.

"The commissioner is very kind to you. He will pardon and acquit you."

"And this causes you sorrow, my friend?"

"Not this exactly; but I am sorry for what you will do."

"And what shall I do? In truth, I do not know it myself! What citizen Tallien has said to me, is yet a riddle to me."

"Oh, you will solve it at the right time. You have heard him saying that he will not come back to you, and this means that you have to decide soon, or he will not save you."

"Do you think so, Benoit?" asked Thérèse not without alarm.

"When he went away," continued the turnkey, "he gave me permission to fetch you paper, pen, and ink, if you should wish it, and in case you should write him a letter, to forward it to him. Do you understand now?" She shuddered inwardly.

"I understand," whispered she, and then Benoit quitted her cell.

Thérèse was now left to her own thoughts and irresolution.

Thoroughly she understood what Benoit had said and what the commissioner of the convention desired and expected from her; she was to write that he was understood, and that she was to give him her love for his mercy. Heart and pride of this beautiful woman revolted at this idea. How detestable this man of terror was, and what a sanguinary monster had he proved himself! And Thérèse Cabarrus, Madame de Fontenay, should deny her taste so far as to become his beloved? Not for one day, not for one hour.

How different she thought was Benoit's timid, respectful love! She had to confess that his affection was of an enthusiastic and romantic nature, and quite adapted for exercising in her present condition a great charm over her. With a mixture of sympathy and pity she received the address of this poor turnkey—what else could she do? Benoit felt grieved, almost hurt at the visible benevolence which the all-powerful commissioner of the convention evinced for her. He appeared jealous at the boon which another and great man was willing to grant out of mercy, while he was ready to bestow it as evidence of his love. He seemed offended at the idea that the object of his love might sell herself for the sake of life to his rival, the prince of terror of Bordeaux. Would Benoit still work for her rescue? Would he still be willing to sacrifice himself for her?

With these thoughts Thérèse Cabarrus had fallen asleep.

Next morning at the usual hour Benoit came to her cell to attend to his duties. He was silent, but before quitting the cell he stopped at the door and cast a wistful and enquiring glance upon her, then asked:

"Citizen, do you require anything?"

"Nothing, my friend," she replied with a sigh; still she did not look sad. She almost smiled as though all danger for her had past, and that she was anticipating a triumph rather than a defeat.

Benoit left her shaking his head; then Thérèse indulged in that play of fancy and meditation in which we have seen her.

However quick and changing the pictures of her life passed before her mind's eye, the thread of her thoughts spun further and further, interweaving the perplexing problem of what would be best for her to do, if it should not be already too late. Benoit or Tallien—to which of them should she owe the rescue both offered her?



The Beautiful Prisoner.—"Throw this pile of accusations into the fire there, and I will believe you to be worthy the love of a woman."

there was something in the way he spoke these words that reassured her, and gave her new hope.

"Citizen," she replied, gazing upon him half-frightened, half-curiously, "what brings you here?"

"Oh, I perceive that you are not such a hardened aristocrat as you are accused of being. Do you consider yourself a guilty citizen?"

"Why should I be guilty?" she said in a mild, angelic voice. "I am not aware of having committed a crime."

"I wished you were a good patriot, though you have been the wife of an emigrant," said Tallien half aloud, as though speaking to himself, at the same time his eyes rested on her