

CHAPTER X.

DEATH OF THE KING OF FRANCE.

AFTER that melancholy affair of the tenth of August, the king and royal family were shut up in the Temple, the Republic was proclaimed, the royal authority put down in every thing, even to the fleur-de-lis struck off from the gates and walls; and every thing wearing the most serious and alarming aspect. And though I had been accustomed to many alarms, yet my mind seemed harassed and worn out. To look back was horror; to look forward, all was dark and uncertain. I saw no end to our continual fears and changes. Every day the state of the country was getting worse and worse, and the specimen they had already given us of Republican principles, was not at all to our liking, and we thought if there was any possibility of getting out of the country, that the sooner we did it the better; but we were informed that no permission to leave

the country could be obtained but by personal application in Paris.

Under this idea we arranged all our affairs, and set off for Paris in the month of January, 1793, and arrived on the 17th, the very day on which the Assemble National had voted the death of *Louis Seize*—(here was a new scene for us, who were endeavouring to fly from it.) All Paris was astonished and confounded (but she had not then risen to that pre-eminence in crime she afterwards attained.) On the night before the death of the king, my husband was stopped, at ten o'clock, by six men, demanding of him to what party he belonged? "Gentlemen," said he, "I am of no party—I am an Englishman." "Oh! pass, Monsieur." (What a dreadful question, when put to a Frenchman at such a moment.) We had taken lodgings in the Rue St. Honoré, not far from the Palais Royal. The dreadful morn arrived of the 21st of January—the drums beat to arms—the cannons rolled along the streets—a dead silence was observed by every one that passed. I had wrapped myself up warm, and was seated outside of the window on the balcony, to observe and contemplate the passing scene. The consternation of the people exceeded all description; the shops were not

permitted to be shut ; no one was suffered to leave his work ; every thing was to go on as if nothing was amiss. Even the very theatres were not suffered to be closed, but they were very thinly attended. The people went into the shops, and from what I could see from my post, came out again without making a purchase. In short, the whole of the scene before me, brought forcibly to my mind the description given by Hubert to king John, of the death of Prince Arthur, and to that I must refer my readers ; but I saw realised, that which Shakespeare saw in his mind's eye only. There were about forty thousand men in Paris that day, who carried arms in favour of the king. Had he been permitted to speak to his subjects, surely there could not be a man amongst them who could have withstood his king on a scaffold, pleading to them for *protection* and *mercy*. The moment he was about to address them, that *wretch* SANTARE—that *brewer* of small *beer* and *mischief*, ordered the drums to beat, and the executioner to do his duty—in an instant the *deed* was *done* passed *all human recall*. The night before the death of the king one of the deputies of the Convention was assassinated, Lepeltier St. Fargaux (and I believe in my conscience one of the best amongst them.) The day after the death of

the king, by way of taking off the attention of the Parisians, for fear they should think too much of their murdered sovereign, Lepeltier was carried openly along the streets on a bed of repose, with a garland of laurel round his head, the sheet turned down below the stomach, exhibiting a sabre wound under the left breast, of the length of my middle finger. The scheme succeeded to their wish, and the thoughts of the *thoughtless multitudes* were turned from one object to another. The people had been told, that it was the king's party that had put that good man to death, which made them cry "Shame! shame! on the perpetrators of so foul a deed!" "So I say, it was a foul deed, but no one shall ever make me believe that it was not done by those most in power; the police of Paris is too good for such a thing to escape its vigilance, and the man or men were never found out who did it.

You will say we had not much mended our quarters; that is true, but we lived in hopes of getting our passport; but time passed away, and we were no better off. Various changes and revolutions took place; and we were often called up in the middle of the night to shew our papers; and to see if the account which we gave of ourselves

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at different places, agreed one with another. Indeed, no one could live in Paris, or any part of the kingdom, without a sort of personal protection, which you were obliged to carry about with you, describing your height, your age, the colour of your hair and eyes, and so exact, that no one could mistake one person for another.

About this time we went one evening to the play at Lapetit Montensieur, (a small play-house in the Palais Royal) when we were much surprised on coming out to find that we were prisoners. The gates of the Palais Royal were all shut, and we were obliged to remain there till our papers were examined by the proper authorities. We did not give them much trouble; they set their marks upon them, and we were told to pass on, and though we lodged not two hundred yards from the place, we did not get home till past two in the morning (*Vive la Liberte!*) But we left numbers behind us, who were not so fortunate as ourselves; and, indeed, I am much afraid many who never saw their homes again, as there were more than eight hundred persons taken up that night, and sent to the different prisons, who were no doubt of the number of those unfortunate victims, who suffered on the first and second of September following. In the course

of those two days upwards of four thousand persons suffered on the scaffold, known by the name of the "Septembresuers," or *emptying the prisons*, as it was called.

We still remained in Paris making daily applications for our passports, but to no purpose; they still kept guillotining the people in all directions! I remember going out one morning in particular, when having occasion to cross the Place de Carousal. I went on, not knowing there had been an execution that day, though there was only a small street between us (but such was the frequency of those things, that we knew nothing about it till it was all over) and they were *sweeping* and *strewing* the ground with *saw-dust* to *hide appearances*. They were grown so expert at it, that the day I am speaking of, they had guillotined *sixteen* people in *fourteen* minutes!

Then came the famous 31st of May (when the Jacobins got the better of the Rowlandins, and the Bresotonians, and when the decree was carried by a great majority against the thirty-one Deputies who would not sign the death of the king: they were to be sent into exile to an island in the South Seas.) I never went to bed that night; I passed the whole of it on the bal-

cony. I was afraid to go to bed, as no one knew how it might end.

The whole of the Guard National were under arms, parading up and down the street, two and two on both sides, the cannon rolling in the middle with lighted match, ready for action, till the signal was given about six o'clock in the morning that they were no longer necessary: for by this time the *Assemblée National* (soon afterwards denominated the *Convention*) had carried their votes against the *Deputies*, and had secured their persons. I also saw go by to suffer, the famous *Charlotte Cordy*. * She showed a courage that would have done honour to the most valiant hero of antiquity.

We went so constantly for our passports, that at length we tired them out, and they told us they would give us one for any part of France, but not to leave the country. In consequence finding we could not get away, we fixed upon *Amiens*, and we left *Paris* on the 24th of *June*, 1793, consoling ourselves with having got somewhat nearer to *England*, but for the power of reaching it, we might as well have been at the *North Pole*.

* Who assassinated *Marat*.