

Literature, &c.

From the Ladies' Companion.
THE DEATH OF MARAT.
BY ROBERT HAMILTON.

THE CAUSE.

THE dawn of a summer's morning had slightly streaked the verge of the horizon, when the heavy bell of Notre Dame was heard sending its deep and solemn tones over the towers of Paris. The citizens were seen hastily hurrying from their homes and crowding towards La Place Louis Quinze. In its centre was placed the black and blood encrusted scaffold of the guillotine, that terrific symbol of Jacobin fury. As yet, no guard surrounded that shrine of Moloch, no headsman stood waiting to accomplish the sacrifice, but an almost breathless and trembling crowd looked anxiously towards the scaffold, and surmising in their hearts for whom the death knell was then sounding. Suddenly a low murmur was heard and a movement in the crowd was perceptible. In the distance appeared the large and heavy cart of the executioner, who, with his victim and a friar of the Cistercian order were its only occupants. The latter was busily employed in endeavoring to impart instruction and consolation to the condemned, who, however, appeared unwilling to listen to him, while ever and anon he bent his head as if in the act of recognition to some friend or acquaintance among the fast increasing crowd.

He was a young man of apparently twenty three years of age, his features were elegantly and correctly formed, his head, which was uncovered, presented a profusion of dark glossy hair falling in graceful tresses down his back, while his throat, already laid bare for the axe, gave to the view a neck and bosom white as the Parian marble, thick moustaches covered his upper lip, which, with the tuft upon his chin, completed a head fit for the chisel of a Canova or the pencil of a Rubens. The executioner, who was habited in the frightful and disgusting dress of his office, exhibited a singular contrast in physiognomy and apparel to his victim. His low brow, which receded abruptly, was partly shaded by coarse brown hair, his small grey eyes were deeply sunk beneath the same, his cheek bones were high and sharp, his nose short and dilated, while a mouth, around which played a mixture of sarcasm and stupidity, completed the cabut of 'La Main Sanglante.' His body was encased in a jerkin of slate colored cloth, while over the breast was placed a greasy and blood-bespattered apron, his shirt sleeves carefully folded up to the shoulders, displayed a pair of long and sinewy arms, which, as he occasionally stretched towards the prisoner, strongly reminded you of a tiger about to pounce upon his prey.

On and on came the chariot of slaughter, when, having reached the bottom of the scaffold, it was in an instant surrounded by a squadron of armed men, whose weapons of warfare gleamed like a forest of steel in the beams of the morning. The first who presented himself on the altar of death was a tall and aged man, his countenance was pale and ghastly, and he looked like a tenant of the tomb, who had risen to witness the sacrifice of Jacobin destruction. He gazed maliciously and exultingly upon the prisoner, who in return cast upon him the fiercest looks of contempt and revenge. The old man saw and felt them, and in a state of apparent exhaustion from internal agony of spirit, leaned upon the barricading of the scaffold, then beckoning to the executioner, who approached him, he muttered something brief and revengeful, which seemed to expedite the work of destruction.

The executioner proffered his assistance to the prisoner, which he respectfully declined, then stepping to the verge of the scaffold, in a loud and distinct voice exclaimed: 'Frenchmen, I die a martyr to the cause of freedom! My blood be on the head of the murderer Marat!' The old man, for such was the name of the denounced, trembled violently, he waved his hand to the troops that surrounded the scaffold, a loud burst of martial music drowned the voice of the speaker, he smiled and bowed to the populace, then retired to the block, a brief and breathless pause ensued, the heavy and crashing fall of the axe fell upon the ears of the spectators, and the next moment, the executioner holding on high the bleeding and quivering head of his victim, showed that Frederic Beauchamp was no more.

THE ARREST.

At the hour of twelve on the 20th of July, 1793, in a large and gloomy apartment in one of those ancient mansions

with which the church of Notre Dame is surrounded, were seated, some of the principal heads of the Convention, of that fearful and eventful period.—The wine had circulated freely, still however, distrust and suspicion were strongly impressed upon each countenance—for patriotism was but a cloak for deeds of murder and anarchy, and no one knew who was then his friend or foe. At the head of the table was placed Monsieur De Beriot, a bold and fearless patriot; his dark eyes glancing mistrustfully around him, while his ear was occasionally turned to the door of the apartment, as if listening for some expected sound—opposite sat Duperré, a principal leader of the Jacobin faction; whilst Barbareux, Doumouriez, Clauson, Perrotier Verginaud, completed the party. Although the jest broke the monotony of the meeting, yet again the cloud of apathy returned. What had become of Marat? Why to night was his presence withheld and no apology sent or cause assigned. Could he have been detained by some sudden and important business. Was he ill? Could he have been surprised and destroyed by the rival myrmidons of blood and ambition. Or what was worse, could he have become faithless to their visionary cause of freedom. Doubt, surmise, and uneasiness completely enveloped the party, and the first hour of morning had arrived before they thought of departing for their various homes. De Beriot arose, and filling his goblet, drank to the triumph of their cause. They were in the act of separating when a loud knocking at the outer gate accompanied by the heavy and measured tramp of men, told them that no good was betokened by such sounds and at so unseasonable an hour. Terror and confusion took possession of the party, when the door of the apartment was quickly opened, and an officer of gens d'armes, with six men, intruded themselves to the surprise of De Beriot and his guests.

'Who are you, and what seek you here?' asked De Beriot.

'In the name of the Republic I arrest Messieurs Barbaroux and Verginaud as traitors to the cause of liberty,' replied the officer.

Astonishment seized on all, while the accused individuals quietly submitting to the order of arrest, slowly and as if already in the grasp of destruction departed for the Conciergerie. The next morning they were the victims of the guillotine.

THE INTERVIEW.

Day after day thus fled on the wings of murder and massacre, he who in the morning awoke sanguine in hope and happiness, ere nightfall, was perhaps a cold and headless corpse. No home, no sanctuary, was safe from the spies and tyrants of the code of blood. One universal chasm pervaded all sects and society, while the visionary creed of the Jacobins tended to create and keep alive all the bad passions and feelings 'that human flesh is heir to.' Life with them was considered but as a necessary link of the illimitable chain of matter—and a hereafter was but a false and mercenary creation of churchmen, to rifle and dispossess the community of their rights and property. Such tenets, carefully disseminated, and possessing the minds of the populace, was it to be wondered at, if morality was disregarded and vice and anarchy prevailed? But to return to the mansion of De Beriot.—Stupefaction had seized upon the remaining guests; vacantly they gazed upon each other while suspicion at once, and with general concurrence fixed upon Marat as their betrayer. Doumouriez was the first to break silence—'We are betrayed!' he breathlessly exclaimed, and in terror fled from the mansion of De Beriot.

With more firmness, but yet in the thrall of fear, Perrotier, Duperré, and Clauson, followed, and De Beriot stood alone in the gloomy apartment with the lights fast waning. His eyes were fixed and motionless, a thousand surmises were floating in his mind, while the guillotine and its horrors were bright in the prospective. Unconsciously he sank into a chair, his head dropped upon his bosom, and he felt as one on whom the hand of death was irrevocably placed.

Thus abstracted and almost powerless, he was suddenly aroused from his reverie by the sound of a female voice, inquiring if she stood before Monsieur De Beriot. In alarm he started to his feet, for he already imagined that the minions of Marat had come to drag him to the tribunal of blood, and he was at least agreeably surprised to find that it was a young and lovely girl who stood in his presence.

'I am De Beriot,' he exclaimed; 'to what, at such an untimely hour, am I to attribute this interview?'

The young female, with a countenance in which beauty and determination were finely blended, in a voice of the sweetest melody, replied—

'Revenge on the tyrant of the Republic.' 'And who is he?' inquired De Beriot.

'Can De Beriot ask?' said the female: 'Look around the streets of Paris—who seeks to widow the wife and mother, who slays the son and the lover? thoughts of purity and words of innocence are the marks for destruction, and the stream of blood is increasing hourly. Yet exists no hand to stop the source of the current, and broader and deeper will it flow till the green fields of France are turned to crimson, and her children will weep in sackcloth and ashes! and as she spoke, she drew from her bosom a poniard, and held it above her head, her left hand was placed upon her bosom, her hair had fallen loosely upon her shoulders, while in the centre of the circle that encompassed her brow, gleamed a bright and dazzling jewel representing the emblem of liberty, a superhuman radiance lighted up her countenance, and as she gazed towards heaven she looked like the goddess of Retribution, armed for the blow. De Beriot beheld her with awe and admiration, and again inquired the name of the destroyer.

'Marat,' she replied in a voice of thunder; 'Marat that old and heartless tyrant, with him blood is but as water—reflections are but as ice; but the angel of justice now rides on the wings of the whirlwind and the murderer shall die the death of the wolf.'

'And who dare act such a part?' asked De Beriot.

'I dare,' she replied; and drawing the dagger between the finger and thumb of her left hand, as if in the act of wiping from it the blood of Marat, whom, in her enthusiasm, she already contemplated as dead, she smiled and looked earnestly upon De Beriot.

'Foolish girl, you are but visionary—an enthusiast of some unknown sect who deem, as all do now, their principles to be the most correct and hesitate not even to wade through blood to attain their accomplishment. Go, such a deed, even if Marat deserved it.'

'If,' exclaimed the impassioned girl, 'he has—he does deserve it, and God so help me, De Beriot he or I must fall. You think him your friend—you are deceived—he is your enemy—even now, he is concerting plans for your destruction the object of which is—' while her whole frame was violently convulsed, then suddenly pointing to a portrait, which hung against the wall shrieked aloud—'There there.'

'Holy Virgin,' exclaimed De Beriot; 'mean you my daughter.'

'Yes,' replied she, 'your daughter, that blue eyed young and beautiful maiden is already in the fascination of the snake—thy existence alone is the barrier to his wishes. Thou once removed, his folds are entwined around her, and in the morning of her youth and beauty she will perish.'

'Woman; art thou indeed sincere.'

'Let God bear witness that I am.'

'And how, how, can I save her?' asked the frantic father, the tears streaming down his manly countenance.

'By aiding me in the prosecution of my purpose. Gain for me an interview with Marat—I ask no more, I will answer for the completion of the deed.'

'Impossible, you know that access to his presence is entirely forbidden. He will see no one, but his friends and Colleagues of the Convention.'

'Then you refuse me,' she inquired in a tone of despair and disappointment.

'I do! I do! my child; and the old man sank back in his chair and wept bitterly.'

The female seized the opportunity to quit the apartment by the same way in which she had entered—having followed in the wake of the gens d'armes, and secreted herself in a small recess of the corridor till such time as they departed, when the interview we have just narrated took place.

Lost in the intensity of his feelings, the old man neither saw nor heard her departure; and when he looked up, he could scarcely believe but that the past scene was some illusion of the brain, and not the words and acts of reality. He cast his eyes upon the picture of his daughter; a thousand horrible figures were presented to his imagination; he felt sick at heart, he rushed to the window to breathe the morning breeze that was now rustling among the gardens of Paris, and cresting the blue and silent waters of the Seine. The grey dawn was sitting on his misty throne, on the summits of the mountains, while one by

one where fading the tapers of the night—the lark was thrilling his lay in the heavens, and all the earth was awaking in its mantle of beauty and fragrance—he gazed vividly upon the scene, but the cool air felt to him as a furnace, he gasped for breath; every object grew dim before his vision, and he sank on the floor, hopeless, helpless and alone.

THE DENOUEMENT.

The morning which dawned was the Sabbath, but no marks were visible to denote the same. No priest was seen to bend his steps to the house of prayer. Instead of the trim dressed citizen, was beheld the soldier with his implements of war and blood. Groups of unwashed and haggard artisans were hurrying to their professions—the sound of labor everywhere struck upon the ear. The wine house, the hells of gaming, and temples of amusement were all thrown open, and contributed to banish from the mind of man the day that the Lord had set apart for his praise. One bell alone which fell heavily on the ear told that the work of slaughter had commenced. As we have said, the victims of that sacred morning were Barbaroux and Verginaud—their trial had immediately followed their arrest—the evidence was summary—they were convicted, and their blood helped to swell the human tide that daily and hourly rolled around that tribunal of terror and death.

On this morning, immediately after the execution, a young female called at the house of Marat, and presented a letter, requesting an interview. Her application was unsuccessful. She was told that no interview could be granted. Sick and despondent, she retraced her steps to the Hotel du Providence, and in the silence of her chamber, sat meditating how she could accomplish the sole object of her existence—a personal interview with the minister of terror. In her hand she held a miniature, which she bathed with her tears, and covered with her kisses. A gentle knock at the door apprised her of the presence of some visitor, and placing the miniature in her bosom, and wiping the tears from her eyes, in a calm and collected voice she bade him enter. The door opened, and a tall and cadaverous person, in the capacity of Capitaine du Surveillance stood before her.

'Your business sir?' demanded she.

'I come, citizenship,' answered the officer, 'in the name of the Republic, to receive what intelligence you have to communicate to citizen Marat.'

'It is to him alone, replied the female, that I can disclose strong and important facts; with you sir, I can hold no communication, and courtseying, she was about to retire into an inner apartment.

'Your pardon, citizenship, I am ordered not to lose sight of you 'till I am in possession of those facts,'—while, at the same moment, he attempted to interrupt her passage to the door to which she was retreating.

With the agility of a deer, she bounded past him, and seizing a small pistol which lay on the chimney piece, held him at bay. 'Attempt to intercept me,' she exclaimed, 'and that moment will be your last.' She entered the apartment—the door was closed and bolted in an instant, while the minion of authority departed, abashed, chagrined, and disappointed.

The evening of that day had arrived, heavy clouds were gathering in the heavens, and the distant hurting of thunder foretold that a tempest was fast approaching. The citizens had sought their homes for shelter, and a death-like stillness pervaded all around. Darker and darker grew each moment, 'till at length, one deep, impenetrable veil of night enveloped the heavens and the earth, and the voice of the elements burst forth in terrific fury. It seemed as if the Supreme Judge were denouncing his anathema against the blood-polluted walls of Paris. At that hour of storm and tempest a solitary female was seen threading the dark and intricate streets of the city. Nothing appaled by the darkness of the hour, she boldly pursued her course, 'till at last she entered the Rue De Saint Dennis. With caution she glanced around her, then hastily ascending the steps of the mansion of Marat, she applied the iron knocker with much vehemence; that the whole street echoed from the sound. After a considerable pause a figure presented itself at an upper casement and demanded the reason of so furious a summons. 'I wish to speak with citizen Marat,' was the answer.

'Tis impossible,' replied the person at the casement, and was about to withdraw.

'Tis an affair that concerns the safety of the Republic. I came from Caen,