Chauvelin had taken sure aim when he shot this tiny shaft. Marguerite's fresh young cheeks became a thought more pale and she bit her under lip, for she would not let him see that the shaft had struck home.

'That is beside the question,' she said at last with indifference. 'I can defend myself, but I refuse to do any dirty work for you—or for France. You have other means at your disposal; you must use them, my friend.'

And without another look at Chauvelin, Marguerite Blakeney turned her back on him and walked straight into the inn.

'That is not your last word, citoyenne,' said Chauvelin, as a flood of light from the passage illumined her elegant, richly-clad figure, 'we meet in London, I hope!'

'We meet in London,' she said, speaking over her shoulder at him, 'but that is my last word.'

She threw open the coffee-room door and disappeared from his view, but he remained under the porch for a moment or two, taking a pinch of snuff. He had received a rebuke and a snub, but his shrewd, fox-like face looked neither abashed nor disappointed; on the contrary, a curious smile, half sarcastic and wholly satisfied, played around the corners of his thin lips.

Chapter 9

The Outrage

A beautiful starlit night had followed on the day of incessant rain: a cool, balmy, late summer's night, essentially English in its suggestion of moisture and scent of wet earth and dripping leaves. The magnificent coach, drawn by four of the finest thoroughbreds in England, had driven off along the London road, with Sir Percy Blakeney on the box, holding the reins in his slender feminine hands, and beside him Lady Blakeney wrapped in costly furs. A fifty-mile drive on a starlit summer's night! Marguerite had hailed the notion of it with delight…Sir Percy was an enthusiastic whip; his four thoroughbreds, which had been sent down to Dover a couple of days before, were just sufficiently fresh and restive to add zest to the expedition, and Marguerite revelled in anticipation of the few hours of solitude, with the soft night breeze fanning her cheeks, her thoughts wandering, whither away? She knew from old experience that Sir Percy would speak little, if at all: he had often driven her on his beautiful coach for hours at night, from point to point, without making more than one or two casual remarks upon the weather or the state of the roads. He was very fond of driving by night, and she had very quickly adopted his fancy: as she sat next to him hour after hour, admiring the dexterous, certain way in which he handled the reins, she often wondered what went on in that slow-going head of his. He never told her, and she had never cared to ask.

At 'The Fisherman's Rest' Mr Jellyband was going the round, putting out the lights. His bar customers had all gone, but upstairs in the snug little bedrooms, Mr Jellyband had quite a few important guests: the Comtesse de Tournay, with Suzanne, and the Vicomte, and there were two more bedrooms

ready for Sir Andrew Ffoulkes and Lord Antony Dewhurst, if the two young men should elect to honour the ancient hostelry and stay the night.

For the moment these two young gallants were comfortably installed in the coffee-room, before the huge log-fire, which, in spite of the mildness of the evening, had been allowed to burn merrily.

'I say, Jelly, has everyone gone?' asked Lord Tony, as the worthy landlord still busied himself clearing away glasses and mugs.

'Everyone, as you see, my lord.'

'And all your servants gone to bed?'

'All except the boy on duty in the bar, and,' added Mr Jellyband with a laugh, 'I expect he'll be asleep afore long, the rascal.'

'Then we can talk here undisturbed for half an hour?'

'At your service, my lord…I'll leave your candles on the dresser…and your rooms are quite ready…I sleep at the top of the house myself, but if your lordship'll only call loudly enough, I daresay I shall hear.'

'All right, Jelly…and…I say, put the lamp out—the fire'll give us all the light we need—and we don't want to attract the passer-by.'

'All ri', my lord.'

Mr Jellyband did as he was bid—he turned out the quaint old lamp that hung from the raftered ceiling and blew out all the candles.

'Let's have a bottle of wine, Jelly,' suggested Sir Andrew.

'All ri', sir!'

Jellyband went off to fetch the wine. The room now was quite dark, save for the circle of ruddy and fitful light formed by the brightly blazing logs in the hearth.

'Is that all, gentlemen?' asked Jellyband, as he returned with a bottle of wine and a couple of glasses, which he placed on the table.

'That'll do nicely, thanks, Jelly!' said Lord Tony.

'Good-night, my lord! Good-night, sir!'

'Good-night, Jelly!'

The two young men listened, whilst the heavy tread of Mr Jellyband was heard echoing along the passage and staircase. Presently even that sound died out, and the whole of 'The Fisherman's Rest' seemed wrapt in sleep, save the two young men drinking in silence beside the hearth.

hero! Ah! there was a man she might have loved, had he come her way: everything in him appealed to her romantic imagination; his personality, his strength, his bravery, the loyalty of those who served under him in the same noble cause, and, above all, that anonymity which crowned him, as if with a halo of romantic glory.

'Find him for France, citoyenne!'

Chauvelin's voice close to her ear roused her from her dreams. The mysterious hero had vanished, and, not twenty yards away from her, a man was drinking and laughing, to whom she had sworn faith and loyalty.

'La! man,' she said with a return of her assumed flippancy, 'you are astonishing. Where in the world am I to look for him?'

'You go everywhere, citoyenne,' whispered Chauvelin, insinuatingly, 'Lady Blakeney is the pivot of social London, so I am told…you see everything, you *hear* everything.'

'Easy, my friend,' retorted Marguerite, drawing herself up to her full height and looking down, with a slight thought of contempt on the small, thin figure before her. 'Easy! you seem to forget that there are six feet of Sir Percy Blakeney, and a long line of ancestors to stand between Lady Blakeney and such a thing as you propose.'

'For the sake of France, citoyenne!' reiterated Chauvelin, earnestly.

'Tush, man, you talk nonsense anyway; for even if you did know who this Scarlet Pimpernel is, you could do nothing to him—an Englishman!'

'I'd take my chance of that,' said Chauvelin, with a dry, rasping little laugh. 'At any rate we could send him to the guillotine first to cool his ardour, then, when there is a diplomatic fuss about it, we can apologise—humbly—to the British Government, and, if necessary, pay compensation to the bereaved family.'

'What you propose is horrible, Chauvelin,' she said, drawing away from him as from some noisome insect. 'Whoever the man may be, he is brave and noble, and never—do you hear me?—never would I lend a hand to such villainy.'

'You prefer to be insulted by every French aristocrat who comes to this country?'

organised and effected by this society of young English jackanapes, headed by a man whose brain seems as resourceful as his identity is mysterious. All the most strenuous efforts on the part of my spies have failed to discover who he is; whilst the others are the hands, he is the head, who beneath this strange anonymity calmly works at the destruction of France. I mean to strike at that head, and for this I want your help—through him afterwards I can reach the rest of the gang: he is a young buck in English society, of that I feel sure. Find that man for me, citoyenne!' he urged, 'find him for France!'

Marguerite had listened to Chauvelin's impassioned speech without uttering a word, scarce making a movement, hardly daring to breathe. She had told him before that this mysterious hero of romance was the talk of the smart set to which she belonged; already, before this, her heart and her imagination had been stirred by the thought of the brave man, who, unknown to fame, had rescued hundreds of lives from a terrible, often an unmerciful fate. She had but little real sympathy with those haughty French aristocrats, insolent in their pride of caste, of whom the Comtesse de Tournay de Basserive was so typical an example; but, republican and liberal-minded though she was from principle, she hated and loathed the methods which the young Republic had chosen for establishing itself. She had not been in Paris for some months; the horrors and bloodshed of the Reign of Terror, culminating in the September massacres, had only come across the Channel to her as a faint echo. Robespierre, Danton, Marat, she had not known in their new guise of bloody justiciaries, merciless wielders of the guillotine. Her very soul recoiled in horror from these excesses, to which she feared her brother Armand—moderate republican as he was—might become one day the holocaust.

Then, when first she heard of this band of young English enthusiasts, who, for sheer love of their fellow-men, dragged women and children, old and young men, from a horrible death, her heart had glowed with pride for them, and now, as Chauvelin spoke, her very soul went out to the gallant and mysterious leader of the reckless little band, who risked his life daily, who gave it freely and without ostentation, for the sake of humanity.

Her eyes were moist when Chauvelin had finished speaking, the lace at her bosom rose and fell with her quick, excited breathing; she no longer heard the noise of drinking from the inn, she did not heed her husband's voice or his inane laugh, her thoughts had gone wandering in search of the mysterious

For a while no sound was heard, even in the coffee-room, save the ticking of the old grandfather's clock and the crackling of the burning wood.

'All right again this time, Ffoulkes?' asked Lord Antony at last.

Sir Andrew had been dreaming evidently, gazing into the fire, and seeing therein, no doubt, a pretty, piquant face, with large brown eyes and a wealth of dark curls round a childish forehead.

'Yes!' he said, still musing, 'all right!'

'No hitch?'

'None.'

Lord Antony laughed pleasantly as he poured himself out another glass of wine.

'I need not ask, I suppose, whether you found the journey pleasant this time?'

'No, friend, you need not ask,' replied Sir Andrew, gaily. 'It was all right.'

'Then here's to her very good health,' said jovial Lord Tony. 'She's a bonnie lass, though she *is* a French one. And here's to your courtship—may it flourish and prosper exceedingly.'

He drained his glass to the last drop, then joined his friend beside the hearth.

'Well! you'll be doing the journey next, Tony, I expect,' said Sir Andrew, rousing himself from his meditations, 'you and Hastings, certainly; and I hope you may have as pleasant a task as I had, and as charming a travelling companion. You have no idea, Tony…'

'No! I haven't,' interrupted his friend pleasantly, 'but I'll take your word for it. And now,' he added, whilst a sudden earnestness crept over his jovial young face, 'how about business?'

The two young men drew their chairs closer together, and instinctively, though they were alone, their voices sank to a whisper.

'I saw the Scarlet Pimpernel alone, for a few moments in Calais,' said Sir Andrew, 'a day or two ago. He crossed over to England two days before we did. He had escorted the party all the way from Paris, dressed—you'll never credit it!—as an old market woman, and driving—until they were safely out of the city—the covered cart, under which the Comtesse de Tournay, Mlle. Suzanne, and the Vicomte lay concealed among the turnips and cabbages. They, themselves, of course, never suspected who their driver was. He drove them right through a line of soldiery and a yelling mob, who were screaming,

"À bas les aristos!" But the market cart got through along with some others, and the Scarlet Pimpernel, in shawl, petticoat and hood, yelled "À bas les aristos!" louder than anybody. Faith!' added the young man, as his eyes glowed with enthusiasm for the beloved leader, 'that man's a marvel! His cheek is preposterous, I vow!—and that's what carries him through.'

Lord Antony, whose vocabulary was more limited than that of his friend, could only find an oath or two with which to show his admiration for his leader.

'He wants you and Hastings to meet him at Calais,' said Sir Andrew, more quietly, 'on the 2nd of next month. Let me see! that will be next Wednesday.'

'Yes.'

'It is, of course, the case of the Comte de Tournay, this time; a dangerous task, for the Comte, whose escape from his château, after he had been declared a "suspect" by the Committee of Public Safety, was a masterpiece of the Scarlet Pimpernel's ingenuity, is now under sentence of death. It will be rare sport to get *him* out of France, and you will have a narrow escape, if you get through at all. St Just has actually gone to meet him—of course, no one suspects St Just as yet; but after that…to get them both out of the country! I'faith, 'twill be a tough job, and tax even the ingenuity of our chief. I hope I may yet have orders to be of the party.'

'Have you any special instructions for me?'

'Yes! rather more precise ones than usual. It appears that the Republican Government have sent an accredited agent over to England, a man named Chauvelin, who is said to be terribly bitter against our league, and determined to discover the identity of our leader, so that he may have him kidnapped, the next time he attempts to set foot in France. This Chauvelin has brought a whole army of spies with him, and until the chief has sampled the lot, he thinks we should meet as seldom as possible on the business of the league, and on no account should talk to each other in public places for a time. When he wants to speak to us, he will contrive to let us know.'

The two young men were both bending over the fire, for the blaze had died down, and only a red glow from the dying embers cast a lurid light on a narrow semicircle in front of the hearth. The rest of the room lay buried in complete gloom; Sir Andrew had taken a pocket-book from his pocket, and drawn therefrom a paper, which he unfolded, and together they tried to read it by

'Heard of the Scarlet Pimpernel?' she retorted with a long and merry laugh, 'Faith, man! we talk of nothing else…We have hats "à la Scarlet Pimpernel"; our horses are called "Scarlet Pimpernel"; at the Prince of Wales' supper party the other night we had a "oufflé à la Scarlet Pimpernel."…Lud!' she added gaily, 'the other day I ordered at my milliner's a blue dress trimmed with green, and bless me, if she did not call that "à la Scarlet Pimpernel."'

Chauvelin had not moved while she prattled merrily along; he did not even attempt to stop her when her musical voice and her childlike laugh went echoing through the still evening air. But he remained serious and earnest whilst she laughed, and his voice, clear, incisive, and hard, was not raised above his breath as he said,—

'Then, as you have heard of that enigmatical personage, citoyenne, you must also have guessed, and known, that the man who hides his identity under that strange pseudonym, is the most bitter enemy of our republic, of France… of men like Armand St Just.'

'La!…' she said, with a quaint little sigh, 'I dare swear he is…France has many bitter enemies these days.'

'But you, citoyenne, are a daughter of France, and should be ready to help her in a moment of deadly peril.'

'My brother Armand devotes his life to France,' she retorted proudly; 'as for me, I can do nothing…here in England…'

'Yes, you…' he urged still more earnestly, whilst his thin fox-like face seemed suddenly to have grown impressive and full of dignity, 'here, in England, citoyenne…you alone can help us…Listen!—I have been sent over here by the Republican Government as its representative: I present my credentials to Mr Pitt in London to-morrow. One of my duties here is to find out all about this League of the Scarlet Pimpernel, which has become a standing menace to France, since it is pledged to help our cursed aristocrats—traitors to their country, and enemies of the people—to escape from the just punishment which they deserve. You know as well as I do, citoyenne, that once they are over here, those French *émigrés* try to rouse public feeling against the Republic… They are ready to join issue with any enemy bold enough to attack France… Now, within the last month, scores of these *émigrés*, some only suspected of treason, others actually condemned by the Tribunal of Public Safety, have succeeded in crossing the Channel. Their escape in each instance was planned,

taking of snuff a convenient veil for disguising the quick, shrewd glances with which he strove to read the very souls of those with whom he came in contact.

'No wonder,' he repeated, with the same gallantry, 'that the most active brain in Europe is troubled with *ennui*.'

'I was in hopes that you had a prescription against the malady, my little Chauvelin.'

'How can I hope to succeed in that which Sir Percy Blakeney has failed to accomplish?'

'Shall we leave Sir Percy out of the question for the present, my dear friend?' she said drily.

'Ah! my dear lady, pardon me, but that is just what we cannot very well do,' said Chauvelin, whilst once again his eyes, keen as those of a fox on the alert, darted a quick glance at Marguerite. 'I have a most perfect prescription against the worst form of *ennui*, which I would have been happy to submit to you, but— '

'But what?'

'There *is* Sir Percy.'

'What has he to do with it?'

'Quite a good deal, I am afraid. The prescription I would offer, fair lady, is called by a very plebeian name: Work!'

'Work?'

Chauvelin looked at Marguerite long and scrutinisingly. It seemed as if those keen, pale eyes of his were reading every one of her thoughts. They were alone together; the evening air was quite still, and their soft whispers were drowned in the noise which came from the coffee-room. Still, Chauvelin took a step or two from under the porch, looked quickly and keenly all round him, then, seeing that indeed no one was within earshot, he once more came back close to Marguerite.

'Will you render France a small service, citoyenne?' he asked, with a sudden change of manner, which lent his thin, fox-like face singular earnestness.

'La, man!' she replied flippantly, 'how serious you look all of a sudden… Indeed I do not know if I *would* render France a small service—at any rate, it depends upon the kind of service she—or you—want.'

'Have you ever heard of the Scarlet Pimpernel, Citoyenne St Just?' asked Chauvelin, abruptly.

the dim red firelight. So intent were they upon this, so wrapt up in the cause, the business they had so much at heart, so precious was this document which came from the very hand of their adored leader, that they had eyes and ears only for that. They lost count of the sounds around them, of the dropping of crisp ash from the grate, of the monotonous ticking of the clock, of the soft, almost imperceptible rustle of something on the floor close beside them. A figure had emerged from under one of the benches; with snake-like, noiseless movements it crept closer and closer to the two young men, not breathing, only gliding along the floor, in the inky blackness of the room.

'You are to read these instructions and commit them to memory,' said Sir Andrew, 'then destroy them.'

He was about to replace the letter-case into his pocket, when a tiny slip of paper fluttered from it and fell on to the floor. Lord Antony stooped and picked it up.

'What's that?' he asked.

'I don't know,' replied Sir Andrew.

'It dropped out of your pocket just now. It certainly did not seem to be with the other paper.'

'Strange!—I wonder when it got there? It is from the chief,' he added, glancing at the paper.

Both stooped to try and decipher this last tiny scrap of paper on which a few words had been hastily scrawled, when suddenly a slight noise attracted their attention, which seemed to come from the passage beyond.

'What's that?' said both instinctively. Lord Antony crossed the room towards the door, which he threw open quickly and suddenly; at that very moment he received a stunning blow between the eyes, which threw him back violently into the room. Simultaneously the crouching, snake-like figure in the gloom had jumped up and hurled itself from behind upon the unsuspecting Sir Andrew, felling him to the ground.

All this occurred within the short space of two or three seconds, and before either Lord Antony or Sir Andrew had time or chance to utter a cry or to make the faintest struggle. They were each seized by two men, a muffler was quickly tied round the mouth of each, and they were pinioned to one another back to back, their arms, hands, and legs securely fastened.

One man had in the meanwhile quietly shut the door; he wore a mask and now stood motionless while the others completed their work.

'All safe, citoyen!' said one of the men, as he took a final survey of the bonds which secured the two young men.

'Good!' replied the man at the door; 'now search their pockets and give me all the papers you find.'

This was promptly and quietly done. The masked man having taken possession of all the papers, listened for a moment or two if there were any sound within 'The Fisherman's Rest.' Evidently satisfied that this dastardly outrage had remained unheard, he once more opened the door and pointed peremptorily down the passage. The four men lifted Sir Andrew and Lord Antony from the ground, and as quietly, as noiselessly as they had come, they bore the two pinioned young gallants out of the inn and along the Dover Road into the gloom beyond.

In the coffee-room the masked leader of this daring attempt was quickly glancing through the stolen papers.

'Not a bad day's work on the whole,' he muttered, as he quietly took off his mask, and his pale, fox-like eyes glittered in the red glow of the fire. 'Not a bad day's work.'

He opened one or two more letters from Sir Andrew Ffoulkes' pocket-book, noted the tiny scrap of paper which the two young men had only just had time to read; but one letter specially, signed Armand St Just, seemed to give him strange satisfaction.

'Armand St Just a traitor after all,' he murmured. 'Now, fair Marguerite Blakeney,' he added viciously between his clenched teeth, 'I think that you will help me to find the Scarlet Pimpernel.'

had found a friend who exhaled the breath of Paris, who knew Armand well, who could talk of all the merry, brilliant friends whom she had left behind. So she lingered on under the pretty porch, while through the gaily-lighted dormer-window of the coffee-room came sounds of laughter, of calls for 'Sally' and for beer, of tapping of mugs, and clinking of dice, mingled with Sir Percy Blakeney's inane and mirthless laugh. Chauvelin stood beside her, his shrewd, pale, yellow eyes fixed on the pretty face, which looked so sweet and childlike in this soft English summer twilight.

'You surprise me, citoyenne,' he said quietly, as he took a pinch of snuff.

'Do I now?' she retorted gaily. 'Faith, my little Chauvelin, I should have thought that, with your penetration, you would have guessed that an atmosphere composed of fogs and virtues would never suit Marguerite St Just.'

'Dear me! is it as bad as that?' he asked, in mock consternation.

'Quite,' she retorted, 'and worse.'

'Strange! Now, I thought that a pretty woman would have found English country life peculiarly attractive.'

'Yes! so did I,' she said with a sigh. 'Pretty women,' she added meditatively, 'ought to have a good time in England, since all the pleasant things are forbidden them—the very things they do every day.'

'Quite so!'

'You'll hardly believe it, my little Chauvelin,' she said earnestly, 'but I often pass a whole day—a whole day—without encountering a single temptation.'

'No wonder,' retorted Chauvelin, gallantly, 'that the cleverest woman in Europe is troubled with *ennui*.'

She laughed one of her melodious, rippling, childlike laughs.

'It must be pretty bad, mustn't it?' she said archly, 'or I should not have been so pleased to see you.'

'And this within a year of a romantic love match!…'

'Yes!…a year of a romantic love match…that's just the difficulty…'

'Ah!…that idyllic folly,' said Chauvelin, with quiet sarcasm, 'did not then survive the lapse of…weeks?'

'Idyllic follies never last, my little Chauvelin…They come upon us like the measles…and are as easily cured.'

Chauvelin took another pinch of snuff: he seemed very much addicted to that pernicious habit, so prevalent in those days; perhaps, too, he found the

then realising the loneliness of the road and the fast gathering gloom round her, she quickened her steps…the next moment she perceived a stranger coming rapidly towards her. Marguerite did not look up: she was not the least nervous, and 'The Fisherman's Rest' was now well within call.

The stranger paused when he saw Marguerite coming quickly towards him, and just as she was about to slip past him, he said very quietly:

'Citoyenne St Just.'

Marguerite uttered a little cry of astonishment, at thus hearing her own familiar maiden name uttered so close to her. She looked up at the stranger, and this time, with a cry of unfeigned pleasure, she put out both her hands effusively towards him.

'Chauvelin!' she exclaimed.

'Himself, citoyenne, at your service,' said the stranger, gallantly kissing the tips of her fingers.

Marguerite said nothing for a moment or two, as she surveyed with obvious delight the not very prepossessing little figure before her. Chauvelin was then nearer forty than thirty—a clever, shrewd-looking personality, with a curious fox-like expression in the deep, sunken eyes. He was the same stranger who an hour or two previously had joined Mr Jellyband in a friendly glass of wine.

'Chauvelin…my friend…' said Marguerite, with a pretty little sigh of satisfaction. 'I am mightily pleased to see you.'

No doubt poor Marguerite St Just, lonely in the midst of her grandeur, and of her starchy friends, was happy to see a face that brought back memories of that happy time in Paris, when she reigned—a queen—over the intellectual coterie of the Rue de Richelieu. She did not notice the sarcastic little smile, however, that hovered round the thin lips of Chauvelin.

'But tell me,' she added merrily, 'what in the world, or whom in the world, are you doing here in England?'

She had resumed her walk towards the inn, and Chauvelin turned and walked beside her.

'I might return the subtle compliment, fair lady,' he said. 'What of yourself?'

'Oh, I?' she said, with a shrug of the shoulders. '*Je m'ennuie, mon ami,* that is all.'

They had reached the porch of 'The Fisherman's Rest,' but Marguerite seemed loth to go within. The evening air was lovely after the storm, and she

Chapter 10

In the Opera Box

It was one of the gala nights at Covent Garden Theatre, the first of the autumn season in this memorable year of grace 1792. The house was packed, both in the smart orchestra boxes and the pit, as well as in the more plebeian balconies and galleries above. Glück's *Orpheus* made a strong appeal to the more intellectual portions of the house, whilst the fashionable women, the gaily-dressed and brilliant throng, spoke to the eye of those who cared but little for this 'latest importation from Germany.'

Selina Storace had been duly applauded after her grand *aria* by her numerous admirers; Benjamin Incledon, the acknowledged favourite of the ladies, had received special gracious recognition from the royal box; and now the curtain came down after the glorious finale to the second act, and the audience, which had hung spell-bound on the magic strains of the great maestro, seemed collectively to breathe a long sigh of satisfaction, previous to letting loose its hundreds of waggish and frivolous tongues.

In the smart orchestra boxes many well-known faces were to be seen. Mr Pitt, overweighted with cares of state, was finding brief relaxation in to-night's musical treat; the Prince of Wales, jovial, rotund, somewhat coarse and commonplace in appearance, moved about from box to box, spending brief quarters of an hour with those of his more intimate friends.

In Lord Grenville's box, too, a curious, interesting personality attracted everyone's attention; a thin, small figure with shrewd, sarcastic face and deep-set eyes, attentive to the music, keenly critical of the audience, dressed in

immaculate black, with dark hair free from any powder. Lord Grenville—Foreign Secretary of State—paid him marked, though frigid deference.

Here and there, dotted about among distinctly English types of beauty, one or two foreign faces stood out in marked contrast: the haughty aristocratic cast of countenance of the many French royalist *émigrés* who, persecuted by the relentless, revolutionary faction of their country, had found a peaceful refuge in England. On these faces sorrow and care were deeply writ; the women especially paid but little heed, either to the music or to the brilliant audience; no doubt their thoughts were far away with husband, brother, son maybe, still in peril, or lately succumbed to a cruel fate.

Among these the Comtesse de Tournay de Basserive, but lately arrived from France, was a most conspicuous figure: dressed in deep, heavy black silk, with only a white lace kerchief to relieve the aspect of mourning about her person, she sat beside Lady Portarles, who was vainly trying by witty sallies and somewhat broad jokes, to bring a smile to the Comtesse's sad mouth. Behind her sat little Suzanne and the Vicomte, both silent and somewhat shy among so many strangers. Suzanne's eyes seemed wistful; when she first entered the crowded house, she had looked eagerly all around, scanned every face, scrutinised every box. Evidently the one face she wished to see was not there, for she settled herself down quietly behind her mother, listened apathetically to the music, and took no further interest in the audience itself.

'Ah, Lord Grenville,' said Lady Portarles, as following a discreet knock, the clever, interesting head of the Secretary of State appeared in the doorway of the box, 'you could not arrive more *à propos*. Here is Madame la Comtesse de Tournay positively dying to hear the latest news from France.'

The distinguished diplomatist had come forward and was shaking hands with the ladies.

'Alas!' he said sadly, 'it is of the very worst. The massacres continue; Paris literally reeks with blood; and the guillotine claims a hundred victims a day.'

Pale and tearful, the Comtesse was leaning back in her chair, listening horror-struck to this brief and graphic account of what went on in her own misguided country.

'Ah, Monsieur!' she said in broken English, 'it is dreadful to hear all that—and my poor husband still in that awful country. It is terrible for me to be sitting here, in a theatre, all safe and in peace, whilst he is in such peril.'

hear—amongst her own coterie—that the St Cyrs were in treasonable correspondence with Austria, hoping to obtain the Emperor's support to quell the growing revolution in their own country.

In those days one denunciation was sufficient: Marguerite's few thoughtless words anent the Marquis de St Cyr bore fruit within twenty-four hours. He was arrested. His papers were searched: letters from the Austrian Emperor, promising to send troops against the Paris populace, were found in his desk. He was arraigned for treason against the nation, and sent to the guillotine, whilst his family, his wife and his sons, shared this awful fate.

Marguerite, horrified at the terrible consequences of her own thoughtlessness, was powerless to save the Marquis: her own coterie, the leaders of the revolutionary movement, all proclaimed her as a heroine: and when she married Sir Percy Blakeney, she did not perhaps altogether realise how severely he would look upon the sin, which she had so inadvertently committed, and which still lay heavily upon her soul. She made full confession of it to her husband, trusting to his blind love for her, her boundless power over him, to soon make him forget what might have sounded unpleasant to an English ear.

Certainly at the moment he seemed to take it very quietly; hardly, in fact, did he appear to understand the meaning of all she said; but what was more certain still, was that never after that could she detect the slightest sign of that love, which she once believed had been wholly hers. Now they had drifted quite apart, and Sir Percy seemed to have laid aside his love for her, as he would an ill-fitting glove. She tried to rouse him by sharpening her ready wit against his dull intellect; endeavoured to excite his jealousy, if she could not rouse his love; tried to goad him to self-assertion, but all in vain. He remained the same, always passive, drawling, sleepy, always courteous, invariably a gentleman: she had all that the world and a wealthy husband can give to a pretty woman, yet on this beautiful summer's evening, with the white sails of the *Day Dream* finally hidden by the evening shadows, she felt more lonely than that poor tramp who plodded his way wearily along the rugged cliffs.

With another heavy sigh, Marguerite Blakeney turned her back upon the sea and cliffs, and walked slowly back towards 'The Fisherman's Rest.' As she drew near, the sound of revelry, of gay, jovial laughter, grew louder and more distinct. She could distinguish Sir Andrew Ffoulkes' pleasant voice, Lord Tony's boisterous guffaws, her husband's occasional, drawly, sleepy comments;