Grace Dalrymple Elliott
From the portrait by Cosway
DURING THE REIGN OF TERROR

Journal of my life during the French Revolution

BY
Grace Dalrymple Elliott

With an Introduction and Notes Translated from the French by
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It was at this time that the Republicans began to talk of bringing the unfortunate King to trial; but the idea seemed so monstrous and infamous, that people could never imagine it possible they would dare to attempt such an act. However, everybody knows that that horrid crime was committed before the face of all France, and that the monsters carried their audacity and vengeance to the last extremity by bringing the most virtuous and best of kings to the scaffold, like a common criminal.

I must here mention my unfortunate friend the Duke of Orleans, over whose conduct from that period I could wish to throw a veil, for nothing earthly can excuse it; the more so as he had pledged himself to me in the most solemn manner that nothing should induce him to vote, unless it should be for the King's deliverance.

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Some days before the final decision as to the King's fate, the Duc de Biron called on me in the morning, and said that he was come to have his fortune told. I used often to fool and play with the cards, and pretended to tell fortunes. He was extremely superstitious, and really thought that I had told him some truths before he went to the army. I assured him that "I wished both the Duke of Orleans and he had believed more firmly the things I told them; for then the King would still have retained his crown, and they would have been surrounded with pleasure and comforts, instead of lurking about without daring to have a house or a carriage to cover their heads. I told him moreover that the King's trial was the most abominable, cruel event ever heard of, and that I wondered some brave Chevalier Français did not go and set fire to the house in which the Convention sat, and burn the monsters who were in it, and try to deliver the King and Queen from the Temple. He told me that he felt unhappy at the King's trial, but that the worst which could happen to him would be seclusion till things were settled;
that certainly some would vote for his death; but what gave him great comfort was, to be sure that the Duke of Orleans would not vote, as he had told him so.

I had never then mentioned this subject to the Duke, therefore I told the Duc de Biron that I wished the Duke of Orleans would vote for the King's deliverance. He assured me that he never would do that; that we must content ourselves by his not voting at all; as he feared, that if the King was sent out of France, he would engage the Powers to invade France, and that the Duke and all his friends would then be lost.

I assured him that I would sooner see even such an event, than that the Duke of Orleans should disgrace himself by voting for the seclusion of the King, little then imagining what would happen. The Duc de Biron said that he should like to meet the Duke of Orleans the next day at my house, as when he saw him at Madame de Buffon's he was always surrounded, and as he was to come in the course of the day, I appointed that it should be at two o'clock.
It was on a Thursday, the 17th of January, 1793, that they both came. I had seen little of the Duke of Orleans for some time before. On my asking him what he now thought of the wicked trial which was going on, and saying "that I hoped he did not go near such vile miscreants?" He replied that "he was obliged to go, as he was a deputy." I said, "How can you sit and see your King and cousin brought before a set of blackguards, and that they should dare to insult him by asking him questions?" adding that "I wished I had been at the Convention; for I should have pulled off both my shoes, and have thrown them at the head of the President and of Santerre, for daring to insult their King and master."

I was very warm on the subject. The Duke of Orleans seemed out of humor. The Duc de Biron then asked him some questions about the trial. I could not help saying, "I hope, Monseigneur, that you will vote for the King's deliverance?" "Certainly," he answered, "and for my own death."

I saw that he was angry, and the Duc de Biron said, "The Duke will not vote. The King has used him very ill all his life; but he is his cousin,
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therefore he will feign illness and stay at home on Saturday, the day of the Appel Nominal, which is to decide on the King's fate."

I said, "Then, Monseigneur, I am sure you will not go to the Convention on Saturday. Pray don't."

He said that he certainly would not go; that he never had intended to go; and he gave me his sacred word of honour that he would not go; that "though he thought the King had been guilty by forfeiting his word to the nation, yet nothing should induce him, being his relation, to vote against him." This I thought a poor consolation, but I could do no more, and the two dukes left me.

I saw nobody on the Friday. Every one seemed anxious for the termination of this abominable trial, though few expected that it would end as it did. How could any creature, indeed, dare imagine that such a crime was hanging over France?

On the Saturday I received a note from the Duc de Biron to beg me to come and pass the evening with him and Madame Laurent and Dumouriez, at the Hôtel St. Marc, Rue St. Marc, near the Rue de Richelieu; that there I should hear the news,
and that he had great hopes things would be softened. At this time the Duc de Biron had no house or home; he had been denounced to the army by one of the revolutionary generals called Rossignol, who was a murderer of the 2nd of September. The Duc de Biron, who was then called General Biron, had come to Paris at this period to exculpate himself with the War Minister, and he lodged during the short time he was there at this hôtel garni.

I went there at about half-past seven o’clock, and found the Duc de Biron and the party there assembled and very dismal. He had every half-hour a list sent him of the votes, and we all saw with agony that many had voted for the King’s death. He also heard that, at eight o’clock, the Duke of Orleans had entered the Convention, which surprised us all. I feared much that he was going to vote for the seclusion, for I never thought of worse. However, every list was more and more alarming, till at about ten o’clock the sad and fatal list arrived with the King’s condemnation, and with the Duke of Orleans’ dishonour.

I never felt such horror for anybody in my life
as I did at that moment at the Duke's conduct. We were all in deep affliction and tears; even poor Biron, who, alas! was a republican, was almost in a fit. A young man, who was the Duke's aide-de-camp, tore off his coat and flung it into the fire, saying that he should blush ever to wear it again. His name was Rutaux, and he was a native of Nancy. He was a noble and a very good young man, who had not emigrated out of affection for poor Biron, though his heart was always with the Princes. When my carriage came, I went home; but every place now seemed dreary and bloody to me. My servants all looked horror-struck. I did not dare sleep in my room alone. I desired my maid to watch with me all night, and we kept up a great light and prayed. I could not sleep. The image of the innocent King was constantly before me. I don't think that it was possible to have felt even a family calamity more than I did the King's death. Till that moment I had always flattered myself that the Duke of Orleans was misled, and saw things in a wrong light; now, however, all that illusion was over. I even threw the things he had given me which I had in my pockets and in my room out of
it, not daring to stay near anything that had been his.

Such at that moment was the vexation that I felt about a person for whom some time before I would have given my life. Nobody can have an idea of my sufferings; but, indeed, every honest person in Paris felt, I believe, as much as I did.

The next day, Sunday, I heard that the fish-women were to go in a body to the Convention, or to the Hôtel de Ville, to insist on the King's deliverance, as he was to be executed on the Monday. However, the monsters caused a proclamation to be read in the streets, declaring that if any women were found abroad on the Monday they would be outlawed, and might be fired on.

I now determined not to remain in Paris another hour, and getting a passport from my Section, I went with my own maid to my house at Meudon, that I might not breathe the same air as the King's murderers.

On the 21st, Monday morning, I hoped every instant to hear that the Parisians had risen, and delivered the King. Just at ten o'clock I heard a cannon go off. This I hoped was some tumult in
the King's favour; but, alas! that was the moment when his august head fell!

Meudon is on the mountain, and with a glass I could have seen the Place Louis Quinze, where this horrible murder was committed. I went out on the mountain to try and meet with somebody who had come from Paris, and who could tell me the King's fate. At last, about twelve o'clock I observed a man coming along the road, with a handkerchief in his hand steeped in blood. I knew the man: he had been one of the King's workmen, belonging to the Palace of Meudon, and much attached to his royal master. He related to me the dreadful event. He had gone, he said, to Paris, in hopes of being of use, had any attempt been made to rescue the King. He was under the scaffold, and pulled the handkerchief off his neck, dipping it in the King's blood as "a relic of St. Louis the Sixteenth." These were the man's own words. He gave me a small bit of it, and died about two months afterwards of grief, with the bloody handkerchief on his heart. Several of the game-keepers of the park of Meudon, who used to go a-shooting with the King, also died of grief.
The King was shooting at Meudon on the 5th October, when the mob went to force him to go to Paris. This was the last amusement which his Majesty took.

The day of the King's death was the most dreary day I ever saw. The clouds even seemed to mourn. Nobody dared appear, or at least look at each other. The cruel Jacobins themselves seemed to fear each other's reproach. I was shut up all day. I heard nothing from Paris, nor did I wish to hear. I dreaded the idea of ever going there again.

From that period everything bespoke terror. Robespierre became all powerful. People did not dare to speak above their breath. Two people, the most intimate, would not have dared to stop and speak. In short, even in your own rooms you felt frightened. If you laughed, you were accused of joy at some bad news the republic had had; if you cried, they said that you regretted their success. In short, they were sending soldiers every hour to search houses for papers of conspiracies. These soldiers generally robbed people, or made them
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give them money, threatening them in case of refusal to denounce them.

I wished to remain quiet at Meudon, but was soon found out, and never having been in favour with the republicans, they annoyed me in every way possible. They denounced me at the Jacobin club at Sèvres; said that I had hid Chansenets, and other emigrants; that I had flour hid in my house; and that I had entered into a conspiracy to get the Queen out of the Temple. In short, I hardly ever slept a night undisturbed by visits from the municipalities, not of Meudon, for they were kind to me, but of Sèvres and of Versailles, which were horrid. About six weeks after the King's death I was taken very ill, and was obliged to send to Paris for a physician. He was a Dr. Leroy, who had been one of the Court physicians.

The doctor had mentioned in Paris my being extremely ill; in consequence of which the Duke of Orleans sent an old and faithful valet-de-chambre of his (who was a good royalist), to see me, with a very affectionate letter regretting that "he did not dare to come to me, but entreating me to
see him when I was well, saying that all the world had given him up, and that he thought his unhappy situation would have made me forgive him, if I thought he had done wrong." In short, the Duke sent every day from Paris to Meudon to inquire after my health, and was kind and attentive to me. As at that moment I wished to get a passport to return to England, and thought that nobody could get me one but him, I fixed a day to go to him at the Palais Royal, intending to return to the country at night. Accordingly I went, and found the Duke's antechamber full of officers and generals; in short quite a levée. Romain, the Duke's good old valet-de-chambre, took me up to what was called *les petits appartements*. I was very much affected and agitated at the idea of seeing the Duke, as I had not seen him since he gave that horrid vote. Romain and I wept much, both of us, at the idea of the Duke's present situation. The poor old man loved the Duke like his own child, and had been in his service since the day the Duke was born at St. Cloud. He little expected ever to see him what he then was.

The Duke came up when I had been there about
an hour waiting. He was dressed in deep mourning, looked embarrassed and very grave. I was nearly fainting, and he made me sit down, and himself gave me a glass of water. "You look ill," he said, "but I hope you are quite recovered from your cold?" I told him that his black coat made me remember terrible events, and that I supposed he was, as I was, in mourning for the King. On this he forced a smile; and said, "Oh, no; I am in mourning for my father-in-law, the Duc de Penthïèvre."

"I suppose," I said, "that the King's death has hastened his; or perhaps the manner of his cruel trial, and your having voted for death?" Here I burst out into tears, and said, "I dare say that he died broken-hearted, and so shall I; but you, Monsieur, will die, like the poor King, on the scaffold."

"Good God!" said he, "what a situation you are in! I am sure I should not have made you come here, had I had an idea of all this. The King has been tried, and he is no more. I could not prevent his death." I then replied, "But you promised that you would not vote."
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On this he got up, observing, "This is an unpleasant subject. You cannot—must not judge for me. I know my own situation. I could not avoid doing what I have done. I am perhaps more to be pitied than you can form an idea of. I am more a slave of faction than anybody in France; but from this instant let us drop the subject. Things are at their worst. I wish you were safe in England, but how to get you out of France is what I cannot contrive. If money can procure you a passport I will give five hundred pounds. This is my last resource for you. The rulers like money, and I have hopes for you. I will do what I can with some of the leaders, but Robespierre, to whom I never speak, is all powerful."

The Duke wished me to make breakfast, and I drank some tea, but felt so very uncomfortable that I could say nothing to him, but about the horrors of the Revolution, a subject which did not seem to please him. He asked me if "I was going back to the country to dinner?" I told him that I was going to dine at my own house, and to order fires to be lighted for some days; that I should not stay at Meudon, because the Sections of Versailles and
Sèvres used me very ill. He said that if that was the case, I had better come to Paris, though he feared that the Section in which I lived was also very bad, and would plague me. He told me that people said I had been very imprudent during the Revolution; and he entreated me not to talk or tell people what I thought, or to say that I was in mourning for the King; adding, “If you like to wear mourning for him, in God’s name wear it, but say that it is for some of your relations, or you will get into a scrape, and I should never be able to get you out of it. I wish that you could have remained in the country, till you could obtain a passport for England. I wish that I had never left it, but now I can never see it again.”

I then took leave of the Duke, and went to my house in the Fauxbourg St. Honoré, telling them that I should return to Paris on the Sunday following, which I did.

I passed over the Place Louis Quinze on my road home to Meudon, and felt a shivering all over when I saw the spot where the unfortunate King’s head had fallen. Paris was then indeed dreary; no carriages were to be seen in the streets
but mine and two or three more. Everybody seemed afraid. No visits were paid or received. The playhouses were filled with none but Jacobins and the lowest set of common women. The deputies were in all the best boxes, with infamous women in red caps and dressed as figures of Liberty. In short, Paris was a scene of filth and riot, and the honest, sober part of the inhabitants were afraid of being seen or even dressed with common decency.

When I returned to Meudon, I found a note from Madame la Comtesse de Perigord, wife to Archambeau de Perigord, to say that she should take it as a great favor if I would see her; that she was much harassed; and that she had no hopes but in me, in whom she had the greatest confidence. I have her letter now before me. I wrote to her and appointed her to come to me on the Monday following at my house in Paris. When I saw her, she told me that she was the most miserable woman on earth; that her Section had found out that her husband had been hid in Paris; and that she did not know what would become of her and her children. She thought that I might be
able to get her, through the Duke of Orleans, the means of making her escape. She said that she wished to go to England; and that her aunt, Madame de Sennason, and her uncle, the venerable and virtuous Malesherbes, were miserable about her situation. She declared that she was terror-stricken; that she must and would fly, or destroy herself, for she could exist no longer. She said that being so very rich, they certainly would murder her; that she had jewels and some ready money, and that she would try to get to England, where her husband and eldest son then were. She went down on her knees to me, begging me to see and entreat the Duke of Orleans to assist her; for she thought him all-powerful. I informed her what he had told me about my passport. She then was in despair; rolled herself on my carpet, and I really feared that she had lost her senses.

She stayed with me some time; and when it was dark I, with my own maid, conducted her to her aunt Madame de Sennason’s house at the Porte St. Honoré, which was not far from me; and there I had the happiness of sitting two hours with the poor King’s friend Monsieur de Malesherbes, and
of hearing from himself an account of his last interview with the unfortunate Monarch. I was even blessed by Monsieur de Malesherbes, and he pressed me to his breast, praying God to bless me, and protect me! Poor man, I never saw him again! He was too good to be spared long by Robespierre, though he was long in prison.

I now sent to the Duke of Orleans requesting him to come to me the next day about my passport. He replied to me by telling me that "I must not now think of it; that he had done everything in his power, but had been desired by a person in power to advise me not to ask for it, or talk of England at that moment, but to bear my misfortunes like other people, and to keep very quiet." The Duke desired me to give Madame de Perigord the same advice; but she would not take it, and indeed she lost herself by not following that advice. The Countess de Jarnac called on me that same afternoon, and told me that she came from Madame de Perigord, who was at her house, which was near mine, quite distracted, and determined to get out of Paris at all events, and that she would see me, but Madame de Jarnac had prevented her
coming, for fear that she should expose herself to
my servants. I returned with her to her house,
and there we found Madame de Perigord, who was
determined not to sleep in Paris that night, even if
she slept in the fields.

I forgot to mention that a domiciliary visit was
to be made that night, which had frightened her.
She entreated me to take her and her children, a
boy and a girl (now Madame Juste de Noailles),
to my house at Meudon, only for that night. I
had an old woman there who kept my house while
I was away, and on whom I could depend. Order-
ing my carriage, therefore, directly, I, Madame de
Perigord, and the children went to Meudon, where
I left her as comfortable as was possible at such a
moment. As the people of my Section knew that
I was in Paris, they might have suspected something
had I gone away and not slept in my own house,
the more so as there was to be a domiciliary visit.
During that visit I was not all frightened. I had
then got used to it, and had nobody hid in my bed;
therefore I was not very civil to the intruders. I
had promised Madame de Perigord to go to her
the next day. Madame de Jarnac told me, that if
Madame de Perigord would come back to Paris, a person whom she knew was going to Calais, and would manage, with a false passport, to get her there. I did not approve of this scheme; but I brought Madame de Perigord and her children back to Paris, and kept her and them in my house for ten days or more.

This was, I think, in March, near the time when Dumouriez went out of France, accompanied by the Duke de Chartres, son of the Duke of Orleans. The Duke de Chartres, on his emigration, wrote his father a most harsh letter, which his father never forgave till the day of his death. His son upbraided him much with the King's death; I perfectly remember the letter, for I had it two days in my possession. The Duke burnt it in my room, the last time in his life that he came to my house. On this occasion he came accompanied by two gensd'armes in his coach. I was much shocked and surprised to see him in such a situation, but he laughed, saying that it was only because his son, the Duke de Chartres, had gone off with Dumouriez, and that he owed that obligation to him. The guards stayed in my antechamber. The Duke
asked me if I would give him a breakfast on the Sunday, when he hoped to come with less suite. I said that I would. He observed that as nothing now was certain, and that as his fate was more uncertain than that of anybody else, he did not feel at ease about the money I possessed, which I had placed on his estates. He thought, in case of his death, he could make arrangement for me which would secure the payment of my annuities in England; that he would arrange all the business and give me effects, which would be money to me when I could get to England. He assured me that I should be far from being a loser, and that if they paid his creditors after his death so much the better, for I should then be so much the richer. I own that it gave me pain to hear him talk so, as, indeed, I expected his fall every day.

He then went away. Madame de Perigord was in my house all this time; but she slept in my own maid's room up-stairs. She and I were sitting by the fire, talking about what had just passed, when my maid bounced into the room and said, "Madame, une visite des gardes!" Madame de Perigord had only time to get into a closet, where we
had before taken the shelves out for that purpose, when forty men came into my room. They stated that they came to inspect all my papers; and that I must give them my keys. It was twelve o'clock at night. I was frightened lest my friend should cough; but knew that the men could not find the closet, as it was between the two doors, and covered with paper, so that there was no keyhole, and the person who was in it could fasten the door on the inside.

I assisted them to search my papers; and those which were English they packed up. At last they found a sealed letter, directed to Charles Fox. Sir Godfrey Webster, who was then at Naples, had sent it to me by a French courier who came to Paris from Admiral Latouche Freville, who had been before Naples to make a manifesto in the name of the French nation. I knew very little of Sir Godfrey Webster; but he thought that I could get this letter sent to England. The people who made the visit to my house were ignorant men, who had heard of Mr. Pitt and Mr. Fox, but did not know anything of their politics. They thought that I
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should be sent the next day to the guillotine; and they were enchanted at the discovery they had made. They told me that they had long suspected me, but that now they had found out that I was in correspondence with the enemies of the Republic, and that I should pay dearly for it. I assured them that Mr. Fox was their friend; that he was in correspondence with the Comité de Surveillance, which was then their great tribunal. They stated that they had orders to put me under arrest that night; and they put their écharpes over their shoulders, and arrested me in the name of the République Française. They took all the papers they pleased, and hardly allowed me time to put a shawl over my shoulders, though it was very cold; and put their seals on my cabinets.

It may easily be conceived what poor Madame de Perigord must have suffered during this night. She thought that they would have put the seals on my room-doors; and, though my maid was to remain in my house, yet it was death to break a seal put on by them. It happened, however, that they were so pleased at getting me out of my own house,
and leading me, as they thought, to the scaffold, that they left my house without seals. On the next day I heard, with pleasure, that Madame de Perigord got safely that night to Madame de Jarnac's.
CHAPTER VI