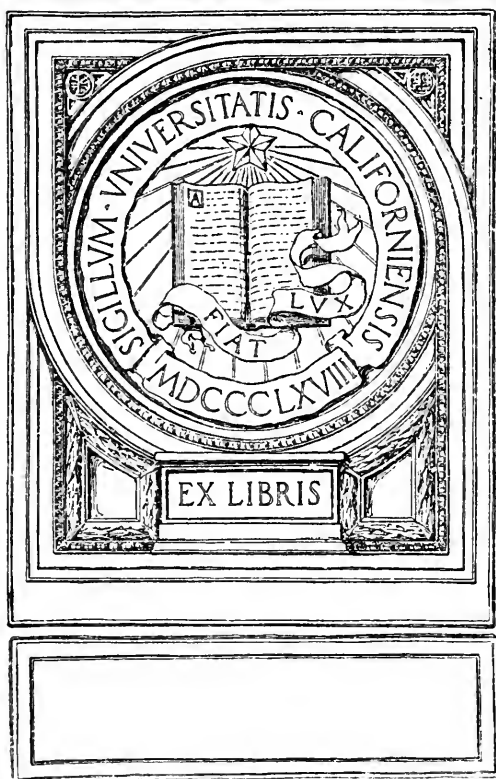


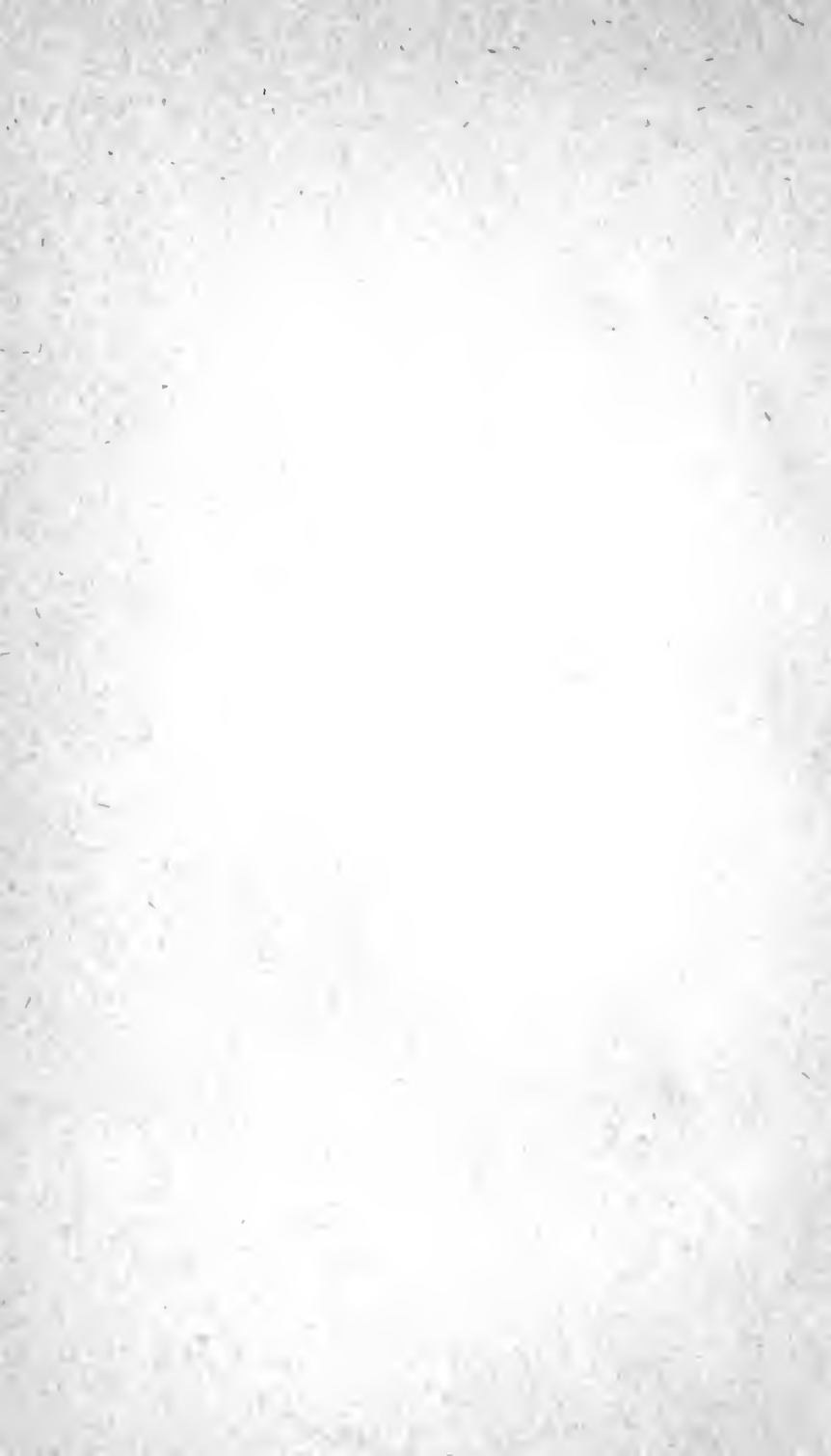
# The New France



W. S. Lilly











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# THE NEW FRANCE

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# THE NEW FRANCE

BY

WILLIAM SAMUEL LILLY

HONORARY FELLOW OF PETERHOUSE, CAMBRIDGE

“L'identité des formes d'esprit est surprenante entre les sophistes sanglants de '93 et leurs successeurs plus bénins, et plus dangereux peut-être, d'aujourd'hui.”—BOURGÈT.

LONDON  
CHAPMAN & HALL, LTD.

1913



TO  
S. RUSSELL WELLS, M.D.

MY DEAR RUSSELL WELLS,

A considerable portion of the contents of this book was written during the weary months, which your daily visits did so much to brighten, of a painful and protracted illness. Speaking *ex humano dic*, I owe to your vigilant care and never-failing skill, my rescue from that Valley of the Shadow of Death. I write your name here, with your kind permission, as a memorial of the debt of gratitude thus laid upon me, and as a tribute to a deeply valued friendship of many years.

Most sincerely yours,

W. S. LILLY.

May 1, 1913.





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# SUMMARY

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*The First Chapter of this book is reprinted, with additions and omissions, from a work entitled "Chapters in European History," which has been long out of print. The greater part of the rest of it is reclaimed from the Quarterly Review, the Dublin Review, the Fortnightly Review, and the Nineteenth Century, by the kind permission of the respective proprietors and editors of those magazines, which I desire here to acknowledge, with due thanks.*

W. S. L.

# THE NEW FRANCE

## CHAPTER I

### THE PRINCIPLES OF 1789

#### I

THE great Revolution of 1789 brought into existence a New France. It meant a change not merely in the accidental arrangements, but in the very basis of civil society. It was a daring attempt to recreate a nation. The attempt largely succeeded. Balzac truly says, "the Revolution is implanted in the soil, written in the laws, living in the popular mind" of the country. In the present volume I propose to deal with some of the more noticeable aspects of this New France, as exhibited in politics and literature. I do not pretend to offer to my readers a homogeneous work. I shall merely put before them studies which, written from different points of view, have this in common, that they are informed by the same ethos, and point to the same conclusions. Possibly in the hurly-burly of twentieth-century

life, when "half our knowledge we must snatch not take," these separate but not isolated discussions may be of special utility. They may assist towards a right judgment, ingenuous and inquiring minds possessing neither time nor taste for protracted and precise investigation of a subject so encyclopædic as the New France. They may help such readers to discern the true character of the relations between the revolutionary spirit and religion, to seize the real significance of the careers of some representative men, to appreciate rightly the existing condition, moral and intellectual, of the third Republic.

## II

But it is desirable to begin with the beginning and to understand the foundation on which the makers of the New France raised their political and social edifice: to apprehend correctly those "principles of 1789," often so ignorantly talked about. There is really no excuse for such ignorance, for the legislators of the Constituent Assembly embodied their dogmas in that famous *Declaration of the Rights of the Man and the Citizen* which von Sybel has well termed "a mighty landmark between two ages of the world." Fortunately it is not a lengthy document, and I shall proceed to present it in its entirety. It will, of course, be remembered that the object of the Constituent Assembly was to make a *tabula rasa*

## 1] *DECLARATION OF THE RIGHTS OF MAN* 3

of the past, to reconstruct civil society upon the basis of pure reason : and this *Declaration* is the result of their prolonged labours.<sup>1</sup>

“ The representatives of the French people constituted in National Assembly, considering that ignorance, forgetfulness, or contempt of the rights of man, are the sole cause of public misfortunes and of the corruption of governments, have resolved to set forth, in a solemn Declaration, the natural inalienable and sacred rights of man ; that this Declaration being constantly present to all the members of the body social, may unceasingly recall to them their rights and their duties ; that the acts of the legislative power, and those of the executive power, being capable of being every moment compared with the end of every political institution, may be more respected ; that the claims of the citizens, being founded, in future, on simple and incontestable principles, may always tend to the maintenance of the Constitution, and the general happiness.

---

<sup>1</sup> “ Je me rappelle,” says Dumont, “ cette longue discussion qui dura des semaines, comme un temps d’ennui mortel ; vaines disputes de mots, fatras métaphysique, bavardage assommant ; l’Assemblée s’était convertie en école de Sorbonne.” Quoted by Taine, in *Les Origines de la France Contemporaine*, vol. i. p. 162. Of the method pursued by the Assembly, Taine writes as follows :— “ C’est de parti-pris qu’ils renversent le procédé ordinaire. Jusqu’ici on construisait ou l’on réparait une Constitution comme un navire. On procédait par tâtonnements ou sur le modèle des vaisseaux voisins ; on souhaitait avant tout que le bâtiment pût naviguer ; on subordonnait sa structure à son service ; on le faisait tel ou tel selon les matériaux dont on disposait ; on commençait par examiner les matériaux ; on tachait d’estimer leur rigidité, leur pesanteur et leur résistance.—Tout cela est arriéré, le siècle de la raison est venu, et l’Assemblée est trop éclairée pour se traîner dans la routine. Conformément aux habitudes du temps, elle opère par deduction à la manière de Rousseau, d’après une notion abstraite du droit de l’Etat et du Contrat Social. De cette façon, et par le seule vertu de la

“ For these reasons, the National Assembly recognizes and declares, in the presence and under the auspices of the Supreme Being, the following rights of the Man and the Citizen :—

“ I. Men are born and continue free and equal in rights. Social distinctions can be founded only on common utility.

“ II. The end of every political association is the preservation of the natural and imprescriptible rights of man. These rights are liberty, security, and resistance to oppression.

“ III. The principle of all sovereignty resides essentially in the nation ; no body, no individual, can exercise authority which does not expressly emanate from it.

“ IV. Liberty consists in the power of doing whatever does not injure another.

“ V. The law ought to prohibit only actions hurtful to society. What is not prohibited by the law should not be hindered, and no one can be constrained to do what it does not order.

“ VI. The law is the expression of the general will. All citizens have a right to concur, either personally or by their representatives, in its formation. It should be the same for all, whether it protects or punishes. All citizens being equal in its eyes, are equally eligible to all honours, places, and public employments, according to their capacity, and without other distinction than that of their virtues and talents.

“ VII. No man can be accused, arrested, or held in confinement, except in cases determined by the law, and according to the forms it has prescribed. All who solicit, promote, execute, or cause to be executed, arbitrary orders, ought to be punished ; but every citizen summoned or apprehended by virtue of the law ought immediately to obey ; he renders himself culpable by resistance.

“ VIII. The law ought to impose no other penalties than such as are absolutely and evidently necessary ; and no one

---

*géométrie politique, on aura le navire idéal ; puisqu'il est idéal, il est sur qu'il naviguera, et bien mieux que tous les navires empiriques. Sur ce principe ils légifèrent.” Ibid. p. 161.*



ought to be punished but in virtue of a law established and promulgated before the offence, and legally applied.

“IX. Every man being presumed innocent till he has been found guilty, whenever his detention becomes indispensable, all rigour towards him, beyond what is necessary to secure his person, ought to be severely repressed by the law.

“X. No man ought to be molested on account of his opinions, not even on account of his religious opinions, provided their manifestation does not disturb the public order established by the law.

“XI. The unrestrained communication of thoughts and opinions is one of the most precious rights of man. Every citizen, therefore, may speak, write, and print freely, provided he is responsible for the abuse of this liberty in cases determined by the law.

“XII. A public force being necessary to give security to the rights of the Man and the Citizen, that force is instituted for the advantage of all, and not for the particular benefit of the persons to whom it is entrusted.

“XIII. A common contribution is indispensable for the support of the public force, and for the expenses of government ; it ought to be assessed equally among all the citizens, according to their means.

“XIV. All citizens have the right, either by themselves or their representatives, to determine the necessity of the public contribution, freely to consent to it, to supervise its employment, to determine its apportionment, assessment, collection and duration.

“XV. The community has a right to demand of every public agent an account of his administration.

“XVI. Every community in which the guarantee of rights is not assured, nor the separation of powers determined, has no constitution.

“XVII. All property being an inviolable and sacred right, no one can be deprived of it, save where the public necessity evidently requires it, and on condition of a just and previous indemnity.”

Such is the famous *Declaration of the Rights of the Man and the Citizen* : perhaps the most curious medley of truisms and sophisms, fragments of philosophy and of criminal procedure, literary commonplaces and rhetorical bravuras the world has ever seen. Its immediate results are best exhibited in Taine's great work, which throws such a flood of light upon the actors and events of the French Revolution.<sup>1</sup> The author pictures to us, in his graphic way, the effect produced by these "rights," as proclaimed by the orator of the club or the streets. Every article of the *Declaration*, he observes, was a poignard directed against human society. It was only necessary to push the handle in order to drive the blade home. For example, among "the natural and imprescriptible rights" of the Man and the Citizen, is mentioned "resistance to oppression." The Jacobin missionary assures his hearers that they are oppressed, and invites them—nay, it is not he, it is the preamble of the *Declaration* which invites them—to judge for themselves the acts of the legislative and executive power, and to rise in arms. Again, it is laid down as the right of the community to demand of every public agent an account of administration. The populace obey the invitation, and proceed to the *hôtel de ville* to interrogate a lukewarm or suspected magistrate ; and, if the fancy takes them, to hang him on the

<sup>1</sup> *Les Origines de la France Contemporaine*. I have before me as I write, pp. 275, 276 of vol. i.

nearest lamp-post. Or, once more there is the proposition that “the law is the expression of the general will.” A mob then, as the living law, may supersede the *lex scripta*. All this is not mere play of the imagination. These deductions from the *Declaration* were actually drawn and put into practice throughout France, the result being what Taine calls a universal and permanent *jacquerie*. Everywhere in the forty thousand sovereign municipalities into which the country had been divided, “une minorité de fanatiques et d’ambitieux accapare la parole, l’influence, les suffrages, le pouvoir, l’action, et autorise ses usurpations multipliées, son despotisme sans frein, ses attentats croissants, par la Déclaration des droits de l’homme.”<sup>1</sup> *Exitus acta probat*. These fruits of the *Declaration* are a significant commentary upon it. But let us turn to the document itself.

### III

It is not my intention to comment upon the articles of the *Declaration* one by one. To do so would take me too far ; nor, as I venture to think, would such an undertaking be worth the pains that would have to be bestowed upon it. Not, indeed, that I wish to deny or ignore how much there is in the *Declaration* that is unquestionably good ; for example, its proclamation of equality before the law, of “la carrière ouverte aux talens,”

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.* p. 279.

of the death of privilege ; its enunciation of the truth—recognized in the Middle Ages as a prime political axiom,<sup>1</sup> but trampled upon by three centuries of Renaissance Cæsarism—that government exists for the benefit of the governed, and that rulers are responsible to the ruled ;<sup>2</sup> its police regulations presenting so favourable a contrast to the savage criminal jurisprudence which it superseded, with the hideous *question préparatoire* and other horrors : its vindication, as admirable as inoperative, of the sacredness and inviolability of property. Nor do I deny that other portions of it, dubious as they stand in the text, may be accepted as true, partially, or under conditions. Thus the definition of liberty in Art. IV. may pass, perhaps, if civil liberty alone is meant.<sup>3</sup> But it is obviously an imperfect account of freedom, taken in general, and in all the different senses of the word. Better is the doctrine of George Eliot : “ True liberty is nought but the transfer of obedience from the rule of one or of a few men to that

<sup>1</sup> Thus the well-known dictum of St. Thomas Aquinas, “ Civis regitur in commodum suum, non in commodum magistratus.” See also the passage from the *Summa*, quoted on the next page.

<sup>2</sup> On this subject Suarez, in a chapter which expresses the teaching of the schools, observes, *inter alia* : “ Si rex justam suam potestatem in tyrannidem verteret, illa in manifestam civitatis perniciem abutendo, posset populus naturali potestate ad se defendendum uti : hac enim nunquam se privavit.”—*Defensio Fidei Catholicæ*, lib. iii. c. iii.

<sup>3</sup> Bentham, writing from a different point of view from mine, has severely criticised this definition. See Dumont’s *Traité de Legislation*, p. 80 (London University reprint).

will which is the norm or rule for all men.”<sup>1</sup> The philosophers of the Constituent Assembly lost sight of the fact that obedience is an essential need of human nature. Again, the definition of law in Art. VI. as “the expression of the general will” is extremely lame: is open, indeed, to precisely the same objection which St. Thomas Aquinas makes to the servile maxim of the Roman juriconsults: “Quod principi placuit legis vigorem habet”;—namely, that unless the will of the legislator be regulated by reason, “magis esset iniquitas quam lex.”<sup>2</sup> And, once more, the right of resistance to oppression, just and salutary within proper limits,<sup>3</sup> if stated in the naked way

<sup>1</sup> *Felix Holt, the Radical*, chap. xiii.

<sup>2</sup> It is well observed by Coleridge, “It is not the actual man, but the abstract reason alone that is the sovereign and rightful lawgiver. The confusion of two things so different is so gross an error, that the Constituent Assembly could hardly proceed a step in their Declaration of Rights without a glaring inconsistency.”—*The Friend*, Essay iv.

<sup>3</sup> It seems to me difficult to conceive of juster views on this subject than those expressed by St. Thomas Aquinas, which I subjoin. He teaches that a tyrannical government is not a lawful government, and that a general rising against such a government is not sedition, provided it does not involve evils greater than those which it seeks to remedy. He also points out that where the ruler bears sway in virtue of a constitutional pact (and such was the case in most medieval governments, as the Coronation offices—our own, for example—sufficiently witness), breach of that pact entitles his subjects to depose him. His words are as follows: “Regimen tyrannicum non est justum, quia non ordinatur ad bonum commune, sed ad bonum privatum regentis, ut patet per philosophum; et ideo perturbatio hujus regiminis non habet rationem seditionis, nisi forte quando sic inordinate perturbatur tyranni regimen, quod multitudo subjecta majus

in which we find it in Art. II., seems perilously like the proclamation of a general right of insurrection. But these, and other provisions, upon which I need not linger, whether good absolutely, or good with limitations and explanations, are—if I may so speak—not of the essence, but of the accidents of the *Declaration*, and are vitiated by the demonstrably false principles which underlie it. It is in the Preamble and in the first three articles that these principles find expression, and they may be summed up in the two following propositions.

I. That the true conception of mankind is that of a mass of sovereign human units, by nature free, equal in rights, and virtuous.

detrimentum patitur ex perturbatione consequenti quam ex tyranni regimine. Magis autem tyrannus seditiosus est, qui in populo sibi subjecto discordias nutrit et seditiones, ut tutius dominari possit; hoc enim tyrannicum est, cum sit ordinatum ad bonum proprium præsentis cum multitudinis nocumento.”—*Summa*, 2, 2, q. 42, a. 2 ad 3. “Secundum illud Ezech. 22, Principes ejus in medio illius, quasi lupi rapientes prædam ad effundendum sanguinem. Et ideo, sicut licet resistere latronibus, ita licet resistere in tali casu malis principibus, nisi forte propter scandalum vitandum.”—*Ibid.*, q. 69, a. 4.

“Et quidem si non fuerit excessus tyrannidis utilius est remissam tyrannidem tolerare ad tempus, quam contra tyrannum agendo multis implicari periculis, quæ sunt graviora ipsa tyrannide.”—*De Regimine Principum*, lib. i. c. 6. “Si ad jus multitudinis alicujus pertineat sibi providere de rege, non injuste ab eadem rex institutus potest destrui, vel refrenari ejus potestas, si potestate regia tyrannice abutatur. Nec putanda est talis multitudo infideliter agere tyrannum destituens, etiamsi eidem in perpetuo se antesubjecerat, quia hoc ipse meruit in multitudinis regimine se non fideliter gerens, ut exigit regis officium, quod ei pactum a subditis non reservetur.”—*Ibid.*

II. That civil society rests upon a compact entered into by these sovereign units.

These are the two main propositions upon which the whole *Declaration* hangs. Let us consider them a little, and see what they amount to. They are, of course, derived from the doctrine of Rousseau, the political gospel generally received and believed throughout France in 1789. And it is to the writings of that speculator, and in particular to his *Contrat Social*, that we must go in order to ascertain their true intent.

Rousseau starts, then, from what he calls "a state of Nature," and a hypothetical man in such a state is the unit of his theories: not man in the concrete as he existed in the last century, or as he has existed in any known period of the annals of our race, a member of a living society through which he is bound by manifold obligations, weighted by multiform duties, shaped and moulded by longeval history and immemorial traditions; but man in the abstract, belonging to no age and to no country; unrelated, and swayed only by pure reason; lord of himself, and no more able to alienate this sovereignty, than he is able to divest himself of his own nature. Civil society, Rousseau insists, is purely conventional, the result of a pact between these sovereign individuals, whence results in the public order the collective sovereignty of all. He postulates, as a primary condition of the Social Contract, "*l'aliénation totale de chaque associé avec tous ses droits à toute la*

communauté.”<sup>1</sup> He insists, “chaque membre de la communauté se donne à elle au moment qu’elle se forme, tel qu’il se trouve actuellement, lui et toutes ses forces, dont les biens qu’il possède font partie.”<sup>2</sup> He will allow no limits to the authority of this republic of equals. He ascribes to it a universal and compulsory power to order and dispose of each part of the body politic in the manner which it judges to be most advantageous to all. “As Nature,” he writes, “gives to each man absolute authority over his own members, so the social pact gives to the body politic an absolute authority over all its members, and it is this same power which, directed by the general will, bears the name of sovereignty.”<sup>3</sup> Hence all rights, that of property among them, exist only by the sufferance of the community, and within the limits prescribed by it. “The right that the individual has over his own possessions (*sur son propre fonds*), is subordinate to the right that the community has over all.”<sup>4</sup> And this collective sovereignty, like the individual sovereignty of which it is the outcome, is inalienable. In practice it is exercised through certain delegates, to whom in its fulness it is confided; and these delegates are chosen by all the sovereign units—that is, by a majority of them—and are alike the legislators and the administrators of the community, for sovereignty is indivisible. They wield all the powers of the

<sup>1</sup> *Du Contrat Social*, lib. i. c. 6.      <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, c. ix.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, lib. ii. c. 4.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, lib. i. c. 9.



sovereign units who, in obeying a government, thus deriving its authority from themselves, are, in fact, obeying themselves. Such is Jean Jacque's receipt for making the constitution and redressing the woes of humanity. And it must be taken in connection with what Lord Morley of Blackburn calls "the great central moral doctrine," held by him, as by the Revolutionary theorists generally, "that human nature is good, and that the evil of the world is the fruit of bad education and bad institutions."<sup>1</sup> Enlighten man as to his "natural and imprescriptible rights," obscured since the days of the state of Nature, restore him to his true position of liberty and equality and sovereignty, and general happiness would result. The whole French Revolution was an endeavour to apply this theory of man and society, to work the world upon it. And in the decomposing political soil into which it was cast, the new doctrine quickly developed. The truest and most consistent disciples of Rousseau were the Jacobins; and it was the emphatic proclamation of the sovereignty of the individual in the *Declaration of Rights* which so endeared that document to them. Marat and Robespierre regarded it as the only good thing achieved by the Constituent Assembly, and the Jacobin orators generally harangued in the same strain. "Le peuple connaît aujourd'hui sa dignité," cried Isnard. "Il sait que d'après la Constitution la devise de tout Français doit être

<sup>1</sup> Morley's *Diderot*, vol. i. p. 5.

celle-ci-vivre libre, l'égal de tout et membre du souverain." And so Chaliar: "Sachez vous que vous êtes rois et plus que rois? Ne sentez-vous pas la souveraineté qui circule dans vos veines?" Utterances of this sort were the commonplaces of the Jacobin rhetoricians, "the phrases of pedants," M. Taine judges, "delivered with the violence of energumens." "All their vocabulary," he goes on to observe, "consists of some hundred words, all their ideas may be summed up in one—that of man in the abstract (*l'homme-en-soi*): human units, all alike, equal, independent and contracting for the first time—such is their conception of society."

#### IV

And now let us survey a little more closely these great principles of 1789 regarding man and society, and consider upon what grounds they rest. Rousseau, indeed, and his Jacobin disciples, regarded them as axiomatic and self-evident, and so as standing in no need of proof. And it must be owned that they were received in this unquestioning spirit by the men of his own generation, and that they are still so received by a vast number of Frenchmen. But it has not been the habit of us Englishmen to take upon trust the doctrines which are to guide us in the grave and important concerns of life. We are accustomed, as Heine noted, to test them by facts. Let us apply this test to the principles of 1789.

And, first, of the cardinal principle of the sovereignty of the individual. Are freedom, equality, and virtue his natural heritage? That there is a sense in which it may, with perfect truth, be affirmed that men are born free, I should be the last to deny. But it is a sense very different from that in which the proposition is found in the speculations of Rousseau, and in the *Declaration of the Rights of the Man and the Citizen*. It is a familiar position in the writings of the Fathers and the Schoolmen of Christianity that slavery is an unnatural state. "Take man as God at first created him," says St. Augustine, "and he is slave neither to man nor to sin."<sup>1</sup> And again, "the name of slave had not its origin from Nature."<sup>2</sup> In this sense, the proposition that man is born free, is perfectly true; in this sense, but surely in no other. Stated broadly, as Rousseau states it at the opening of the *Contrat Social*—"Man is born free, and is everywhere in chains"—it is opposed, as flatly as is well conceivable, to the most obvious facts of life. Man is born in a state of more entire subjection than any other animal. And by the necessity of the conditions in which his life is passed—I speak of man as he everywhere exists in civil society from its most complex to its simplest states—he is throughout his life subservient, in greater or less measure, to the will of others, from the tutors and governors who sway his childhood and guide

<sup>1</sup> *De Civitate Dei*, lib. xix. c. 15.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

his youth, to the nurses and physicians who rule his decrepitude, and preside over his dissolution. I need not enlarge upon so familiar a topic. It must be obvious to all men who will consider the commonest facts of life that man is not born free, and does not continue free.

Not less manifestly false is the assertion that men are born and continue equal in rights. That men exist in a quite startling inequality, whether of natural or adventitious endowments, is one of the things which first force themselves upon the wondering observation of a child; and, certainly, as we go on in life, experience does but deepen our apprehension of that inequality, and of the difference in rights resulting from it, as necessary constituents in the world's order. The natural equality of man, ranging as he does from the Baris of tropical Africa, "abject animals," as Sir Samuel Baker judges, or the Eskimo, described by Sir John Ross as "without any principle or rational emotion," to the saints and sages who are the supreme fruit of spiritual and moral culture! But we need not travel to the Tropics or the Arctic regions for a *reductio ad absurdum* of this thesis. A glance into the streets is sufficient to refute it. No doubt, every individual unit of the motley crowd, as it passes by, has some rights. But who that is not blinded by *a priori* theories will maintain that all have the same rights? Are the rights of the father the same as those of the son? Of the mill owner the same as those of the factory

hand? To look into the streets was indeed the last thing which Rousseau thought of doing. Occupied with the abstractions of the state of nature, he turned away from the consideration of humanity in the concrete. Still, he might have learnt from the lumbering periods of his master, Locke, that "there is a difference in degrees in men's understandings, apprehensions and reasonings, to so great a latitude, that one may, without doing injury to mankind, affirm that there is a greater difference between some men and others in this respect, than between some men and some beasts." <sup>1</sup> And does the difference in these endowments produce no difference in rights? History, it may be confidently affirmed, contains no more signal example of human credulity than that so startling a paradox as this of man's natural equality, should have been eagerly received by whole nations upon the *ipse dixit* of a crazy sentimentalist. But, indeed, hardly less startling is the doctrine of the unalloyed goodness of human nature. Not a shred of evidence is adducible in support of it. It is certainly not true of man as we find him, at his best, in any period of the world's history of which we have knowledge, and under the conditions of life most favourable to the culture and practice of virtue. Facts, unfortunately, are against the optimist view of humanity, and not only external but internal facts. The assertion that "the base in man" is

<sup>1</sup> *Essay concerning Human Understanding*, book iv. c. 20.

“the fruit of bad education, and of bad institutions” is a perfectly arbitrary and crude hypothesis. There is an overwhelming mass of proof that the *radix mali* is within. External influences may develop or repress it ; but it is always there. As a fact, men are no more born good, than they are born equal and free. The theory of their natural sanctity is as baseless as the theory of their natural sovereignty.

So much as to the great principles of 1789 regarding the individual. Let us now pass to the doctrine of the Revolutionist regarding civil society. Is the public the result of a contract between a multitude of unrelated units ? To put the question is to answer it. There is no instance on record, in any age, or in any country, of a number of men saying to one another, “Go to ; let us enter into a social contract and found a state.” Pacts there may be in abundance in the public order. For example, as I have observed, the monarchies of medieval Europe usually rested upon pacts ; which, indeed, is natural enough, seeing that they were, for the most part, the outcome of the elective sovereignty described by Tacitus as prevailing among such of the Teutonic tribes as had kings. But of civil society the true account is “*nascitur, non fit.*” It is not a cunningly devised machine, but an organism, not the hasty fabrication of crude theorists, but the slow growth of countless centuries. I shall have to touch upon this point again. Here, it is enough

to say that the conception of Rousseau and of the older speculators from whom he so largely “conveyed” as to the contractual nature of civil society, is historically false. It is only in a very limited and restricted sense that a pact can properly be spoken of as the foundation of the public order ; in such a sense, for example, as that in which St. Augustine uses the word when he speaks of “obedience to rulers” as being “the general pact of society.”<sup>1</sup> It is true when employed thus, in a figure. It is false in the literal sense in which it was used by Rousseau and the Jacobins. Wholly false, as involving a negation of the great truth that civil society is the normal state<sup>2</sup> of men, and not the result of convention.

## V

But it may be urged that the principles of 1789, though false in fact, are serviceable fictions ; that the doctrine of individual sovereignty, if not true, may be accepted as a convenient starting point in the science of politics ; that men, if not in strictness free and equal and good, may, for

<sup>1</sup> “Generale quippe pactum est societatis humanæ obedire regibus suis.” *Confess.* lib. iii. c. 8. I do not know whether Lord Tennyson had this passage in view when he wrote in the *Morte d'Arthur*—

“Seeing obedience is the bond of rule.”

<sup>2</sup> Thus Aristotle calls man ζῷον πολιτικόν, a phrase not easily translated into English in the present degradation of the word “politics.”

practical purposes, be so accounted. It may be well to consider this argument. No philosophical student of human institutions would now deny that, in a certain stage of legal or political development, fictions are useful, nay, as it would seem, indispensable expedients for the progress of society. Are the fictions known as "the principles of 1789" of this kind?

To answer that question, let us consider what the progress of European society really is. It may be described as consisting in the evolution of the individual. Among our Aryan ancestors, in the earliest stages known to us of their social organization, we find neither personal liberty, nor its most characteristic incident, single ownership. The unit of the public order is not the individual, but the family, whose head exercises despotic power over its members. Not several, but common possession, is the form in which property is held. For long ages the unemancipated son differed nothing from a slave. The history of Western civilization, whatever else it may be, is certainly the history of the growth of personal liberty and of private property. And the two things are most intimately connected, for property is but liberty realized. This has been admirably stated by a distinguished French publicist, with whom it is always a pleasure to me to find myself in agreement. "Property, if you go back to its origin," writes M. Laboulaye, "is nothing else than the product of a man's activity, a creation



of wealth which has taken nothing from any one else, and which, therefore, owes nothing to any one else, and belongs only to him and his descendants, for it is for them that he works.”<sup>1</sup> And again: “Liberty and property are like the tree and the fruit.” As a matter of fact, it is certain that the two things rose and developed together, under the fostering protection of the civil order. It has been profoundly observed by Kant, that “in society man becomes more a man.” Or, as Spinoza puts it, more exactly to the present purpose, “the end of the State is liberty, that man should in security develop soul and body, and make free use of his reason.” It is towards the attainment of this “far off event” that the public order has moved through countless ages. And nothing has more subserved its onward march than the employment of fictions, the object of which is that existing institutions should be accommodated to fresh exigencies; that the new should succeed the old without solution of continuity; that “the change which comes” should “be free to ingroove itself with that which flies.” To Sir Henry Maine belongs the credit of having been the first among English thinkers to bring out clearly this great truth. And he has expressed it with a force and authority peculiarly his own. “It is not difficult,” he writes, “to understand why fictions in all their forms are particularly congenial to the infancy of Society. They satisfy

<sup>1</sup> *Le Parti Liberal*, p. 33.

the desire for improvement, which is not quite wanting: at the same time they do not offend the superstitious disrelish for change which is always present. At a particular stage of social progress, they are invaluable expedients for overcoming the rigidity of the law; and indeed, without one of them, the Fiction of Adoption, which permits the family tie to be artificially created, it is difficult to understand how Society would ever have escaped from its swaddling clothes.”<sup>1</sup> Certainly not less valuable, I may observe, as an instrument of progress was the fictitious triple sale resorted to at so early a period in the history of Rome for getting rid of the *patria potestas* and emancipating the *filius familias*. But I must not dwell upon this subject. Enough has been said to indicate the true goal of the progressive societies of the Western world—the evolution of the individual—and the nature and importance of the part played in the process by fictions.

But the fictions embodied in the teaching of Rousseau, and in the principles of 1789, are by no means of this kind. They are not “assumptions which conceal, or affect to conceal, the fact that a rule of law has undergone alteration, its letter remaining unchanged, its operation being modified”: economical expedients whereby the innate conservatism of human nature is conciliated towards inevitable innovations; wise condescensions to men’s feelings and prejudices in order to

<sup>1</sup> *Ancient Law*, p. 26.

the peaceful reconciliation of permanence with progression. They are something very different from this. They are what Le Play justly called them, "false dogmas": they are a set of lies presented as truths, to serve as the basis for a total reconstruction of the public order. And their practical effect is not to carry on the progress of human society, but to throw it back indefinitely: not to develop the work which has been the slow growth of so many centuries, but to lay the axe to the root of it: not, in a word, to promote the evolution of individuality, but to destroy it. This may sound a hard saying. I am convinced that it is a true one. I proceed to show why.

And, first, let me say, roundly, that these principles of 1789 are fatal to liberty. They make the individual nominally free and a king, it is true. They mean, in fact, the unchecked domination of the State. A multitude of independent and equal units—equal in rights and equal in political power—obviously is not a nation. It is a chaos of sovereign individuals. It is the State which, by virtue of the fictitious social contract, welds them into a community. And the State invested with their full sovereignty, becomes omnipotent. This, as we have seen, is insisted upon by Rousseau, who no sooner salutes the "Man and the Citizen" as king, than he proceeds to impose upon him a blind abnegation of all the powers of royalty, and replaces individual action by the action of the State. The consolation of

the man and the citizen is to be found in the reflection, that if the State is above him—the State and its functionaries, for of course the State is a mere abstraction—no one else is ; and that, by virtue of his nature, he is a member of the sovereign despotic authority whose sovereignty is, in effect, his sovereignty. It is a poor consolation, even on paper. It is poorer still in practice. For, in practice, this doctrine of popular sovereignty is the sovereignty of “the majority told by the head,” as Burke expresses it—the very class to which ancient and medieval democracy denied any political power whatever—whom all men are required to believe and confess to be their perpetual, natural, unceasing, indefeasible ruler. But this really means the untempered sway of the delegates of the majority ; or, to get a step farther, of the wire pullers who are not usually among the “choice specimens of wisdom and virtue” that adorn our race. Let us clear our minds of cant, for to do so is the beginning of political wisdom, and consider the sovereign units as life actually presents them : as we know them by the evidence of our senses. The world is not peopled by the wise and virtuous abstractions of Rousseau’s theories, but by beings whose inclinations towards good are, at the best, but weak and intermittent : whose passions are usually strong, and who are prone to gratify them at the expense of others : who are, for the most part, feeble in reasoning power, even to perceive the things that are most excellent,

feebler still in will to follow after such things : “ bibulous clay ” too often : good judges, possibly, of the coarser kinds of alcoholic stimulants, but not skilled in discerning between good and evil in higher matters, to which, indeed, the “ one or two rules that in most cases govern all their thoughts ” (as Locke speaks) do not extend. I do not know who has better characterized “ the masses,” as the phrase is, than George Eliot, in what, perhaps, of all the works given to the world by her inimitable pen, is the richest in political wisdom :—

“ Take us working men of all sorts. Suppose out of every hundred who had a vote there were thirty who had some soberness, some sense to choose with, some good feeling to make them wish the right thing for all. And suppose there were seventy out of the hundred who were, half of them, not sober, who had no sense to choose one thing in politics more than another, and who had so little good feeling in them that they wasted on their own drinking the money that should have helped to clothe their wives and children ; and another half of them who, if they didn’t drink, were too ignorant, or mean, or stupid, to see any good for themselves better than pocketing a five-shilling piece when it was offered them. Where would be the political power of the thirty sober men ? The power would lie with the seventy drunken and stupid votes ; and I’ll tell you what sort of men would get the power, what sort of men would end by returning whom they pleased to Parliament. They would be men who would undertake to do the business for a candidate, and return him ; men who have no real opinions, but who pilfer the words of every opinion, and turn them into a cant which will serve their purpose at the moment ; men who look out for dirty work to make their fortunes by, because dirty work wants little talent and no

conscience ; men who know all the ins and outs of bribery, because there is not a cranny in their own souls where a bribe can't enter. Such men as these will be the masters wherever there's a majority of voters who care more for money, more for drink, more for some mean little end which is their own and nobody else's than for anything that has been called Right in the world." <sup>1</sup>

No one possessing any actual knowledge of the classes which form the great majority in every country, as they are, and as—human nature being what it is—they will probably ever be, can honestly say that the picture of them thus drawn by Felix Holt is too darkly coloured.<sup>2</sup> No one who has attentively considered the actual working of universal suffrage in the world can fail to discern (however loth he may be to make the confession) that the description of "the sort of men" who "get the power" by means of it, is simply true. It was long ago pointed out by Aristotle that the tyrant, whether one or many headed, is the natural prey of his parasites : "demagogues and Court favourites are the same and correspond." And, he further observes, "the ethos of monarchical despotism and of mob despotism is identical ; both are tyrannously repressive of the better sort." <sup>3</sup> Moreover, the instrument whereby this tyranny is exercised is the same in both cases—a

<sup>1</sup> *Felix Holt, the Radical*, c. xxx.

<sup>2</sup> Mill goes much further. "Consider," he writes, "how vast is the number of men in any great country who are little better than brutes."—*The Subjection of Women*, p. 64. Aristotle said precisely the same thing two thousand years ago.

<sup>3</sup> *Pol.*, lib. vi. c. 4.

hierarchy of functionaries, a highly centralized administration. Absolute equality is impossible. The voice of human nature spoke by the mouth of that Irishman, who, in answer to the stump orator's appeal, "Is not one man as good as another?" called out, "Yes, and much better, too." And, when all other superiorities are wanting, official superiority gives rise to the most odious of privileged orders; an order possessing all the vices of an aristocracy, and none of its virtues. Burke remarks, with profound wisdom, "The deceitful dreams and visions of equality and the rights of man end in a base oligarchy"—of all oligarchies most fatal to liberty. One has but to look at France for an example. It is now more than a century since the principles of 1789 were formulated there. But in no country, not even in Russia, is individual freedom less. The State is as ubiquitous and as autocratic as under the worst of Bourbon or Oriental despots. Nowhere is its hand so heavy upon the subject in every department of human life. Nowhere is the negation of the value and the rights of personal independence more absolute, more complete, and more effective. Rivarol observes that his countrymen judged liberty to lie in restricting the liberties of others. And Gambetta is reported to have declared, upon a memorable occasion, that it is "one of the prerogatives of power." The declaration is in full accord with the constant teaching of the Jacobin publicists, who have ever maintained that

the will of the majority is the rule of right, and that dissent from it is a crime ; and have branded with the name of " Individualism " all that is most precious in what we call " civil and religious liberty." Centralization, the fanaticism of uniformity, the worship of brute force, and contempt of all that Englishmen understand by the venerable phrase, " the rights of the subject "—in a word, the effacement of the individual—such is the natural, the inevitable outcome of the principles of 1789, whether in the stage of ochlocracy or in the stage of Revolutionary Cæsarism, which is only ochlocracy crowned. If ever there was a safe truth, it is this: that the enforced and unnatural equality of Rousseau and his disciples is the death of personal liberty.

But this is not all. Something still remains to be said about the working of this fiction of equality, or rather equivalence, which, as Heine's keen eyes discerned, is the real ruling principle of the Revolution. It has been pointed out by the great master of the political wisdom of antiquity, whose doctrine, based as it is upon a profound knowledge of human nature, is " not of an age, but for all time," that those who are equal in political power soon come to think that they should be equal in everything else.<sup>1</sup> They very soon come to think so. And the inequality most deeply felt is that of property. Of what avail to tell the Man and the Citizen that he is equal in

<sup>1</sup> *Pol.*, lib. viii. c. 1, 2.



rights to the greatest potentate on earth, when he is sansculottic and empty? Surely the Jacobins were well warranted in declaring that equality was a delusion so long as the majority of Frenchmen possessed nothing. "Either stifle the people, or feed them," urges Marat in the *Ami du Peuple*, pleading, as he was wont to do, for the "re-establishment of the holy law of Nature." So Chauvette: "We have destroyed the nobles and the Capets, but there is still an aristocracy to be overthrown, the aristocracy of the rich." Tallien, in like manner, proposed that the owners of property should be "sent to the dungeons as public thieves." While Armand (de la Meuse), going further, demanded mental equality, without stating, however (unless my memory is at fault), how he proposed to enforce it. St. Just constantly denounced opulence as a crime. Barrère greatly distinguished himself by invectives against "the pretended right of private property." And it was upon the motion of Robespierre that the four famous Resolutions affirming the necessity of limiting by law the amount of individual possessions, were passed by the Jacobin Club. "La propriété est le vol" is the necessary corollary of the proposition that men are born and continue equal in rights. Babeuf and Proudhon are the legitimate successors and continuators of Rousseau and his disciples, the legislators of 1789. As we have seen, it is laid down in the *Contrat Social* that every one entering into the fictitious pact which is postulated as the

basis of the public order gives himself to the community of which he is to form one, wholly ; “ lui et toutes ses forces dont les biens qu’il possède font partie ” ; the effect being that henceforth his title to his possessions is derived from the State, which legitimates what had been before mere usurpation.<sup>1</sup> And Rousseau adds that “ the right which each individual has to his own property (*sur son propre fonds*) is subordinate to the right which the community has over all ” ; and that “ *the social state is of advantage to men only so long as all have something, and no one too much.* ”<sup>2</sup> Babeuf declares that this last proposition is the elixir of the *Contrat Social*. But it does not stand alone. It may be paralleled from other writings of Rousseau ; from the *Discours sur l’Inégalité* for example, in which the famous passage occurs, “ The first man who, having enclosed a piece of ground, ventured to say, ‘ This is mine,’ and found people simple enough to believe him, was the true founder of civil society. From what crimes, what wars, what murders, what miseries, what horrors would not any one have delivered the human race, who, snatching away the stakes, and filling up the ditches, had cried to his fellows, ‘ Don’t listen to that impostor ; you are lost if you forget that the

<sup>1</sup> “ La communauté ne fait que leur en assurer la légitime possession : changer l’usurpation en un véritable droit et la jouissance en propriété.”—*Du Contrat Social*, lib. i. c. 9.

<sup>2</sup> “ L’état social n’est avantageux aux hommes qu’autant qu’ils ont tous quelque chose, et qu’aucun d’eux n’a rien de trop.”—*Ibid.*

produce of the soil belongs to everybody, and the soil to nobody.'” I am well aware that saner views, irreconcilable with these, are from time to time expressed by Rousseau, whose speculations, indeed, are as full of inconsistencies and contradictions as the ravings of a lunatic. But my present point is that these views are closely, nay, necessarily, linked to the doctrine of equality. For equality of rights ought to result in equality of fact. Mere equality before the law is maintained by Babeuf—and with reason, if the principles of 1789 are to be accepted—to be “a mere conditional equality, a hypocritical pretence, a sterile fiction.” Thus we are landed in Socialism, Communism, Nihilism—systems which, under the pretence of abolishing “the slavery of labour,” make all men slaves alike. The individual is effaced. Art and science, anathematized by Rousseau as the curses of mankind, and all the essential constituents of civilization, disappear together with the inequality of which they are the fruit. And the human race is thrown back to a condition lower than that in which we find it at the dawn of history. It is the triumph of Materialism in the public order: “chaos come again.”

## VI

So much may suffice regarding the principles which are of the essence of the *Declaration of the Rights of the Man and the Citizen*, as distinguished

from the provisions, salutary or questionable, which may be regarded as the accidents of that document. The liberty which they bestow upon the world is a hollow pretence,

“ the name  
Of Freedom graven on a heavier chain.”

The equality is, as has been happily said, *une égalité par voie d'abaissement*, absolutely fatal to human progress. But there is another great principle, usually ascribed to the year 1789, that has been added to Liberty and Equality, to make up a sort of sacramental formula, the principle of Fraternity, concerning which I ought perhaps to say a word. In strictness, indeed, this shibboleth belongs to a later period. It was not, I think, until late in 1791 that it became current. It appears to have been put in circulation by the Abbé Fauchet, the orator of the *Cercle Social*, a Club of Freemasons, who desired, as they professed, to promote “ the universal federation of the human race,” and who, with a view of hastening that consummation, published a journal called *La Bouche de Fer*. For some two years the Abbé discoursed in this newspaper, and at the meetings of the *Cercle*, “ upon the mysteries of Nature and Divinity,” especially devoting himself to the elucidation of Rousseau’s proposition, that “ all the world should have something, and nobody too much.” He was guillotined in 1793 and seems to have considered Catholicism a better religion to die in than Freemasonry, for we are

informed that "he made his confession, and heard the confession of Sillery, Comte de Genlis, who was executed at the same time with him." But his catch-word, as we all know, has survived him, and at the present day does duty as the third article of the Revolutionary symbol. It must be allowed to be a sonorous vocable, which surely—as the world goes—is something considerable. The old Marquis de Mirabeau remarks, in his character of Friend of Man, I suppose, "*Ce sont deux animaux bien bêtes, que l'homme et le lapin, une fois qu'ils sont pris par les oreilles.*" The Jacobins have ever understood this truth; and have, from the first, been great proficient in the art of leading men by the ears. And the French people have displayed an extreme aptitude for being so led. Fraternity has served admirably to round off the Revolutionary formula. But I do not remember ever to have seen a clear account of what it is taken to mean. Looking at man as a mere sentient animal apart from transcendental considerations, which, of course, is the Jacobin point of view, there is exactly the same ground for talking of human brotherhood as of canine or equine. Thus regarded, it does not appear to be of much moment, or fitted to elicit much enthusiasm. Nor, if we consider it as practised by the Jacobins, is it a thing to win or to exhilarate us, resembling as it does, very closely, the fraternity of Cain and Abel, according to the testimony of Chamfort, who tasted of it in its first fervour. There is a

somewhat grotesque passage in one of Taine's volumes which may serve to show how it was apprehended by the masses. At Ribérac, we read, the village tailor acted as the Director of the mob who were engaged in sacking the neighbouring *chateaux*. Drawing from his pocket *The Catechism of the Constitution*, he proceeded to confute therewith the Procureur-Syndic, and to prove that the marauders were only exercising the rights of the Man and the Citizen. "For, in the first place," he argued, "it is said in the book that the French are equal and *brothers*, and ought to help one another. Ergo, the masters ought to share with us, especially in this bad year. In the second place, it is written that all goods belong to the nation, which was the very ground upon which the nation appropriated the goods of the Church. But the nation is composed of all Frenchmen. Whence the conclusion is clear." "In the eyes of the tailor," as Taine observes, "since the goods of individual Frenchmen belonged to all the French, he, the tailor, had a right to his share."<sup>1</sup> This example may serve sufficiently to show the practical working of the doctrine of Fraternity. But before I pass on, I would make another remark upon it. Its originator, the Abbé Fauchet, was an apostate priest. And, no doubt, we have it in an echo of the Catholic doctrine which he had taught during the earlier portion of his life, and to which he turned for consolation

<sup>1</sup> *Les Origines de la France Contemporaine*, vol. i. p. 383.

in the face of death. The dogma of the brotherhood of Christians is at the very foundation of the idea of the Catholic Church. Every baptized person is held to be gifted with a divine sonship, and that common spiritual generation is regarded as the bond of the Christian family, and supplies an argument whereon the duty of charity to our neighbour is especially grounded. Property is conceived of in Catholic theology as being rather a trust than a possession. St. Edmund of Canterbury, in his *Mirror*, one of the most popular religious works in medieval England, lays it down broadly that the rich can be saved only through the poor. And the well-known saying of the great Apostle of "holy poverty," St. Francis of Assisi, when bestowing a cloak which had been given him upon a poor man, "I had a right to keep it only until I should find some one poorer than myself," expresses forcibly the way of looking at worldly wealth prevalent in the Middle Ages. "Humanum paucis vivit genus," is the stern law of life, as it has ever been, and ever must be. But never has its sternness been so tempered as by the Catholic doctrine of Fraternity. So, too, Liberty and Equality are strictly Christian ideas. Men who, in fact, are not free, nor equal in rights, by birth, are, according to the Catholic conception, invested with the tributes of freedom and equality by the faith of Christ. "Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is Liberty."<sup>1</sup> "There is neither Jew

<sup>1</sup> *Second Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians*, c. iii. v. 17.

nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female, for ye are all one in Christ." "Ye are all the children of God."<sup>1</sup> Hence results a theory of the sovereignty of the individual Christian, and something more indeed, for *sacerdotium* is attributed to him as well as *imperium*. He is held to be both a priest and a king.<sup>2</sup> I need not dwell further upon this matter. I touch upon it to indicate the source whence Rousseau really derived the notions which blend so strangely and incongruously with the naturalism, and, if I may so speak, sublimated materialism, that are of the essence of his speculations. In the gospel according to Jean Jacques, Man takes the place of God, for I suppose no human being ever believed in the *Etre Suprême* therein proclaimed; not even in that culminating hour of the new Deity's career, when Robespierre, after causing his existence to be solemnly decreed by the National Convention, pontificated at his Fête, "in sky-blue coat, made for the occasion, white silk waistcoat brodered with silver, black silk breeches, white stockings, and shoebuckles of gold." It is true that the legislators of 1789 made a sort of bow to him in their *Declaration*. It was under his "auspices," whatever that may mean, that they placed the rights of the Man and the Citizen. But we hear little more about him from that time until the great day of the Robespierrean function.

<sup>1</sup> *Epistle of St. Paul to the Galatians*, c. iii. v. 28, 29.

<sup>2</sup> *Apocalypse*, c. i. v. 6.



The Abbé Fauchet roundly declared, in a moment of lyrical enthusiasm,

“L’homme est Dieu : connaît-toi ! Dieu, c’est la vérité.”

So Anacharis Clootz, “the Orator of the Human Race” : “The people is the Sovereign of the world, it is God.” Hence it is, I suppose, that some writers have reckoned Atheism among the principles of 1789. I shall have to discuss the attitude of the Revolution to Christianity in subsequent Chapters. Here it must suffice to say that the Jacobin doctrine of the sovereignty of the people unquestionably leads to the apotheosis of the mob, and to the application to it of the maxim “Vox populi, vox Dei.”

## VII

I think, then, I may claim to have shown that the fundamental principles of 1789 are neither great truths nor serviceable fictions, but palpable lies fraught with the most terrible mischief ; neutralizing what there is of good in the famous *Declaration* in which they are authoritatively embodied, and rendering it what Burke pronounced it to be, “a sort of institute or digest of anarchy.” It is a remark of Rousseau’s—one of the luminous observations which from time to time relieve, as by a lightning flash, the dreariness of his sophisms—“If the legislature establish a principle at variance with that which results from

the nature of things, the State will never cease to be agitated until that principle has been changed, and invincible Nature has resumed her empire." These are the words of truth and soberness. And the whole history of France—and of the countries of Europe most largely influenced by France—from the day they were written until now, supplies a singularly emphatic corroboration of them.

## CHAPTER II

### THE REVOLUTION AND RELIGION

#### I

ONE of the most striking facts of contemporary history is the contest, which for long years has been carried on in France, between the politicians dominating that country and Catholicism, which there is virtually synonymous with Christianity. Exception might, indeed, be taken to the word "contest" on the ground indicated by the Latin poet: "*Si rixa est ubi tu pulsas, ego vapulo tantum.*" The French Church has been obliged passively to endure one persecution after another. She has been deprived of her religious communities, ousted from her official position, shorn of the miserable pittance doled out to her in lieu of her ancient revenues, despoiled even of the houses of her chief pastors, while mere attendance at her public offices is recognized as a sufficient disqualification for the service of the State. To which must be added that the primary education of the country has been withdrawn from her: she has been bidden to stand aside and look helplessly

on while the children of France are brought up in atheism, even the very name of God being banished from their school books. Probably few English readers really realize these facts. The foreign correspondents of our principal newspapers are, for the most part, in close sympathy with the anti-Christian movement in European politics, and do their best to serve it in this country by veiling from British eyes its true character. But no one who has lived in France, or who has associated much with French people, can honestly question the correctness of the statement which I have just made. The object of the party, or rather sect, now in power there is to decatholicise, to dechristianise, that country. I propose in this present Chapter to explain *why* this is so.

## II

It has been tersely and truly remarked by Taine : “ L’ancien régime a produit la Révolution et la Révolution le régime nouveau.” For the explanation of the present position of Church and State in the New France, we must go back for more than a century to the time when Catholicism was confronted with the great Revolution which, in Alexis de Tocqueville’s phrase, has engendered the other Revolutions. Let us proceed to consider first, what the Catholic Church in France then was, and next, what the Revolution was,

and how the conflict arose which has lasted ever since—and of which the end is not yet.

Now, as a mere matter of history, it is certain that the Catholic Church in France was anterior to the French State. The Frankish monarchy, with all its appendant institutions, was created by the ecclesiastical hierarchy of the fifth and sixth centuries. This was one of the achievements by which the Church, “great mother of majestic works,” earned her prominent place in the social order. It was her task to train the nascent nationalities of Europe, and to inform them with a new spirit. To quote Taine’s words, “In a world founded on conquest, hard and cold as a machine of brass,” she taught the higher virtues whereby man erects himself above himself: patience, kindness, humility, self-sacrificing charity. She saved what could be saved of antique civilization, and she transformed it. Of course, the chief agents in this beneficent work were the monks. I need not dwell upon what is unfolded at length in Montalembert’s brilliant pages, which merely invest hard facts with poetic glamour. It was around the monasteries that villages, towns, and cities grew up—new centres of agriculture and industry and population. To the monks we owe most of the institutions whereby we now live as civilized men. That is the debt of the modern world to them. The debt of the men of that far-off age was greater still. In a time when brute force prevailed, it was their office and ministry “to

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furnish man with inducements to live, or, at the very least, with the resignation which makes life endurable"; to point to an existence beyond the present, where justice should be rendered, where justice should be requited, where Lazarus, after his evil things, should be comforted, and Dives, after his good things, tormented. This was the work of the clergy for the nascent nationalities, and Taine well observes, "of the greatness of the debt of gratitude which it laid upon the world, we may judge from the greatness of the reward which the world bestowed." Popes, for two hundred years, were the supreme judges, we might say the dictators, of Christendom. Bishops and abbots became sovereign princes. "The Church held in her hands a third of the land, half the revenue, and two-thirds of the capital of Europe." To speak of France only, when the Revolution broke out, the clergy owned a fifth of the soil of the country. Their possessions were estimated at four milliard livres.<sup>1</sup> Their tithes amounted to about an eighteenth of the produce of the soil; and their total income was not far short of one-fourth of the whole revenue of the nation.

"Do not suppose," Taine justly adds, "that man is grateful for nothing, that he gives without adequate motives: he is too egoist, too covetous for that. Whatever may be the establishment, ecclesiastical or secular, whatever may be the

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<sup>1</sup> Of course, the difference between the value of money then and now must be remembered. We must multiply by two at least; possibly by three.

clergy, Buddhist or Christian, contemporaries whose observation extends over forty centuries are not bad judges. They do not surrender their volitions and their goods except for proportionate services : and the excess of their devotion may serve to indicate the vastness of their obligations.”<sup>1</sup>

The Church is in the world, as its befriending, corrective opposite. But the world is in the Church, shaping, in many respects, its action, whether for good or for evil. It has been truly remarked that no man can influence his age who is not of his age. The dictum holds good of institutions, religious as well as secular. The work of the Church in moulding the civilization of the new nationalities was done in an epoch of feudalism : and in doing it the Church necessarily used the feudal system, and took her place therein. It was the dissolution of the old order, when the Roman Empire had crumbled away, which called that system into existence. Taine puts it tersely,

“ In this age of permanent war, only one species of rule is of use, that of a military company confronting the enemy ; and such is the feudal system. Judge, then, of the perils which it wards off, and of the services to which it is bound.”<sup>2</sup>

The feudal aristocracy earned their privileges : they were the champions and saviours of the social order ; the protectors of the peasant who, thanks to their strong arm, could till, sow and reap in safety. “ On vit donc, ou plutôt on recommence à vivre, sous la rude main gantée de

<sup>1</sup> *Les Origines de la France Contemporaine*, vol. i. p. 8.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 10.

fer qui vous rudoie, mais qui vous protège.” The feudal dues were originally a recognition of that protection, and were given not grudgingly or as of necessity, but gladly—“too little payment for so great a debt.” The lordship, county, duchy, was a true country, and the Lord, Count, or Duke and his vassals, serfs, burghers, were bound together in one great family, not only by the tie of a common interest, but by that living instinct of loyalty, which to men of these days seems fantastical and unreal. And from these small feudal countries arose that great national country—all the seigneurs under one seigneur, the King, chief of his nobles; a consolidating process which began under Hugh Capet and went on for eight hundred years. But to follow its career, even in the most shadowy outline, would take me too far; nor, indeed, is that my subject. My present point is that the Church became, of necessity, intimately associated with, nay, we may say, incorporated in, the feudal organization. Bishops, abbots, canons, possessed fiefs in virtue of their ecclesiastical functions: it was the only way in which a definite and congruous place in the social system could be assigned to them. The convent was invested with the lordship of the village which had grown up round it, and exercised all the prerogatives of a seigneur. Like him, it had its judicial functions, its rights of *corvée*, of tolls on fairs and markets; it had its own kiln, its mill, its wine-press, its bull, for the service of its vassals.



### III

“Our little systems have their day.” Feudality served its hour in the world’s history and then crumbled away. In England it began to disappear in the seventeenth century and, gradually, a transformation of its institutions, to suit the new wants of a new time, was peacefully accomplished. Not so in France. The forms of the old order remained after its spirit had vanished. During the Middle Ages liberty largely existed in that country, not indeed in abstract propositions, but in actual practice. Gradually, the Sovereign dealt it a fatal blow by usurping the right of taxation which had belonged originally to the three estates. The old maxim was “N’imposte qui ne veut.” Originally, the King lived on the revenue of his domains, and as Forbonnais remarks, “Comme les besoins extraordinaires étaient pourvus par des contributions extraordinaires, elles portaient également sur le clergé, la noblesse et le peuple.”<sup>1</sup> But the clergy and the nobles acquiesced in the taxation of the *tiers état* by the King, provided they themselves escaped it. Commynes sagaciously observed on the gravity of this royal error: “Charles VII., qui gagna ce point d’imposer la taille à son plaisir, sans le consentement des états, chargea fort son âme et celle de ses successeurs et fit à son royaume une plaie

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Alexis de Tocqueville’s *L’Ancien Régime et la Révolution*, p. 154.

qui long temps saignera.”<sup>1</sup> And while the burden of taxation was thus thrown upon those least capable of bearing it, the antique franchises, the cherished liberties of which local institutions had been the fortresses, were, one after another, absorbed by the royal prerogative. Louis XI. largely restricted municipal immunities, through fear of their democratic tendencies. Louis XIV. put them “en offices,” as the phrase was: that is to say, he trafficked in them. He would confiscate them by an arbitrary act, and then sell them to the cities and towns willing to buy them back, or confer, for a money gratification, upon a certain number of the inhabitants, the right in perpetuity to govern the rest. The provincial states became mere shadows, the greater portion of their prerogatives being transferred to the Parliaments, an association of the judicial with the administrative power very prejudicial to public affairs.

In feudal times the nobles were charged with the chief duties of provincial administration. They it was who ministered justice, maintained order, succoured the feeble, directed the public business of their neighbourhood. The policy of the French monarchy since Louis XI. withdrew from them these functions, and set up a vast system of bureaucracy. The royal council (*concile du roi*) directed the administration of the country. The management of interior affairs, public works,

<sup>1</sup> *L'Ancien Régime et la Révolution*, p. 154.

finance, commerce, was entrusted to a controller-general, under whom there was, in each province, an intendant. There were thirty of these functionaries, and, as Law told the Marquis d'Argenson, they it was who governed France. The nobles, thus shorn of their administrative functions, retained their privileges. But privileges which have no longer a reason for existing are iniquities. Rights divorced from duties become wrongs. Feudalism, which had ceased to be a political institution, cumbered the ground as a civil and social institution. To which, without pausing to speak of the vast personal expenditure of the monarch, it must be added that the huge possessions of the nobility were augmented by profuse pensions and scandalous sinecures granted, apparently, on the principle "Whosoever hath, to him shall be given." "*Les plus opulents tendent la main et prennent,*" Taine observes. And it was really from the underfed and overworked poor that the money for this profligate expenditure was wrung. Such was the decadent and decayed feudal system in France on the eve of the Revolution. It was, not unnaturally, an object of intense popular hatred. And the Church, which was intimately associated with that system—whose prelates, indeed, were taken with hardly an exception from the privileged caste—was involved in this hatred. Even the *curé*, almost always a man of the people, did not escape it: for was he not closely bound to the noble hierarchy?

## IV

We may say, then, that the Catholic Church in France presented itself to "the men of 1789" as a portion of the old outworn social order, an unfit survival, an antiquated fortress of irrational privilege. And if we go on to look at it in itself, who can deny that as an institution it was full of flagrant and utterly indefensible abuses? Its wealth, we have seen in a previous page, was enormous. The distribution of that wealth was scandalous. The emoluments of the higher clergy, the eighteen archbishops, the one hundred and seventeen bishops, the grand vicars, the canons, the abbots, and the rest, were vast. The forty thousand parish priests were, with few exceptions, in abject poverty. Charles IX. had fixed their annual stipend at 120 livres;<sup>1</sup> Louis XIII. in 1634 raised it to 200 livres; Louis XIV. in 1686 to 300; and Louis XV. in 1768 to 500 livres. On the other hand, the Archbishopric of Alby was worth 120,000 livres, the Archbishopric of Cambrai 200,000 livres, the Archbishopric of Narbonne 160,000 livres, the Bishopric of Beauvais 96,000 livres; while the revenues of the See of Strasbourg—the richest in the kingdom—amounted to 400,000 livres.<sup>2</sup> But even such great prizes were

<sup>1</sup> A livre was almost identical in value with a franc.

<sup>2</sup> The aggregate of the episcopal incomes is stated at 56,000,000 livres; in addition to which the Bishops received 1,200,000 livres *in commendam*.

insufficient to satisfy the prelates who obtained them. By the abominable system known as "commendam," the revenues of religious houses<sup>1</sup> were plundered to swell their coffers. They were nominated by the King to the headship of rich monastic communities which they never even so much as visited, their duties being discharged by priors claustral whom they appointed.<sup>2</sup> The whole of the great ecclesiastical patronage of France had been vested in the Sovereign by the Concordat of Bologna, made in 1516 between Leo X. and Francis I., which converted the Church from an independent power, bold, should occasion arise, to speak of the divine testimonies before kings, into a dependent of the State and a preserve of the nobility,<sup>3</sup> from the protector of the poor into the accomplice of the rich. But this is not the whole of the indictment against the higher clergy. As was natural, they were largely imbued with a tone of thought prevailing in the class from which they were taken. Taine judges—and gives good

<sup>1</sup> It is true that many of them were almost empty. The religious life had greatly declined in France during the eighteenth century.

<sup>2</sup> Thus, to give only two examples, Loménie de Brienne, who, as Archbishop of Sens, had a revenue of 70,000 livres, held five great abbeys *in commendam*. His ecclesiastical income amounted to 680,000 francs—£27,000. Again, Cardinal Bernis, Archbishop of Alby, a preferment worth 120,000 livres, had four abbeys, the richest of which, Saint Médard de Soissons, gave him 40,000 livres.

<sup>3</sup> Noble birth was regarded as an indispensable qualification for all the bishoprics except five, which were known as *évêchés de laquais*.

reason for his judgment—"Never has there been a society more detached from Christianity than that class." "In its eyes a positive religion is nothing else but a popular superstition, good for children and simpletons, not for *les honnêtes gens*"—I must keep this phrase in the original French—"and great personages. If a religious procession should pass, you owe it the tribute of raising your hat : but you owe it nothing more."<sup>1</sup> And this laxity of thought was accompanied by a corresponding laxity of life, especially as regards the relations of the sexes <sup>2</sup>—all of which was done in the name of Reason, or in the name of Nature. The great Apostle of Reason was Voltaire, who conceived of that faculty as a weapon wherewith to combat superstition : and who, for sixty years, employed his incomparable *esprit* in waging an unceasing war of flouts and gibes against the Catholic religion, from the first chapter of Genesis to the last Papal Bull. Then came Rousseau, the Prophet of Nature, whose spurious optimism

<sup>1</sup> Taine continues :—"Sans doute presque tous et toutes alliaient à l'indépendance des idées la convenance des formes. Quand une femme de chambre annonce, 'Madame la duchesse, le bon Dieu est là ; permettez-vous qu'on le fasse entrer ? Il souhaiterait d'avoir l'honneur de vous administrer,' on conserve les apparences. On introduit l'importun : on est poli avec lui. Si on l'esquive, c'est sous un prétexte décent, mais si on lui complaît, ce n'est pas que par bienséance."—*Les Origines*, &c., vol. i. p. 381.

<sup>2</sup> Many piquant details on this subject are given by Taine, and more in the MM. Goncourt's book, *La Femme au dix-huitième siècle*.

was even more unethical than Voltaire's real cynicism; and as the eighteenth century drew towards its close, the upper classes of the French laity were deeply infected by the sophisms and sentimentality of that filthy dreamer.<sup>1</sup> There can be no doubt that among the higher clergy there were some whose way of thinking was much the same as that of the upper classes of the laity, and whose way of living was as corrupt. It is, of course, impossible to arrive at accurate statistics in such a matter: but a lurid light is thrown upon it by the remark attributed to Louis XVI., when asked to confer the See of Paris upon Loménie de Brienne, a prelate whose life and conversation gave much scandal: "No, no; it is still necessary that an Archbishop of Paris should believe in God." No inconsiderable number of the bishops resided little in their cathedral cities: they preferred spending their ample revenues at Paris or at Versailles. Taine's account of the higher clergy generally—among whom must be reckoned fifteen hundred commendatory abbots—on the eve of the Revolution is: "They were men of the world, rich, well bred, not austere, and their episcopal palaces or abbeys were country houses which they restored or decorated for their occasional

<sup>1</sup> I borrow the phrase from the somewhat pungent rendering of St. Jude's *ἐννομιάζόμενοι* in the authorized version. It appears to me to describe Rousseau most accurately. M. Albert Sorel speaks truly of "the subtle poison of sensuality" by which his writings are contaminated.—*L'Europe et la Révolution Française*, vol. i. p. 237.

residence there, with the company whom they invited.”<sup>1</sup>

It must not, however, be forgotten that while too many rich dignitaries were of this kind, the inferior clergy, living in apostolic poverty, lived also in apostolic purity and simplicity.

“I do not know,” Alexis de Tocqueville writes, “whether, take them as a whole, and in spite of the conspicuous vices of some of its members, there has ever been in the world a clergy more remarkable than the Catholic clergy of France, when the Revolution took it by surprise: more enlightened, more rational, less entrenched in merely private virtues, better equipped with public virtues, and, at the same time, more penetrated by religious faith—as the persecution which arose sufficiently proved. I began the study of that ancient society full of prejudice against them. I ended it full of respect.”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> *L'Europe et la Révolution Française*, p. 154. I incline to think that Taine (*Les Origines*, &c., vol. i. p. 381) generalizes too sweepingly regarding the unbelief of the higher clergy. “Les prélats qui causent et sont du monde ont les opinions du monde.” But those “opinions” were doubtless, in many instances, very loosely held, and very indeliberately uttered; they were not real convictions. The action of the great bulk of the episcopate—of all, indeed, but five—as regards the Civil Constitution of the clergy would seem strong evidence that this was so; and when the Archbishop of Narbonne attributed that action, in most cases, not to faith, but to a feeling of honour, his claim to speak on behalf of the episcopate generally is by no means evident; he seems to have assigned to them the motive which actuated himself. “Concluons des mœurs aux croyances,” Taine says. But that is by no means a safe method of ratiocination. “A very heathen in the carnal part, but, still, a sad good Christian at her heart,” says Pope; and the case is not uncommon. A man may have real faith and *not* show it, by his works, in daily life. But often persecution will bring it out. For many, it is much easier to die for a religion than to live by it.

<sup>2</sup> *L'Ancien Régime et la Révolution*, p. 176.



But, unfortunately, the “vices éclatants”—the phrase is not too strong—of one cleric occupying a high position, do more to influence public opinion than the humble virtues of a multitude of poor parish priests. Is it possible to over-estimate the harm wrought to the reputation of the spirituality of France by even a single great beneficiary like Loménie de Brienne? Nor must it be forgotten that prelates such as he were foremost in urging the religious persecutions which, as the eighteenth century drew near its last decade, shocked and outraged the humanitarian sentiment then dominant. He, indeed, it was who in 1775 admonished the young king to “finish the work which Louis the Great had taken in hand; to give the last blow to Calvinism in his dominions.” And among the most furious foes of Jansenism there were ecclesiastical dignitaries of whom we may well doubt, as of him, whether it was religious zeal which prompted their severities—Archbishop de Tencin may serve as a specimen of them. Of course, it cannot be denied that these severities were congenial to the clergy generally, few of whom disapproved even of that monstrous iniquity, the revocation of the Edict of Nantes.<sup>1</sup> Nor is

<sup>1</sup> A striking, a melancholy, page in Taine exhibits how one fresh severity after another was obtained by the Assembly of the Clergy from the Crown in exchange for money gratifications. “Telle loi contre les protestants en échange d’un ou deux millions ajoutés au don gratuit . . . en sorte que si le clergé aide l’Etat, c’est à condition que l’Etat se fera bourreau. Pendant tout le dix-huitième siècle l’église veille à ce que l’opération continue.” *Les Origines*, &c.,—vol. i. p. 80.

that to be wondered at. It must be remembered that in France, as indeed elsewhere throughout Europe, Church and State were co-extensive. The laws of the Church were laws of the State. The secular arm upheld the national creed. The quite modern principle of toleration was nowhere admitted. Since then it has been established, more or less firmly—at all events in theory—in most European countries. But in France it has never obtained a real hold. Rousseau, who, we shall see presently, supplied the inspiration of the Revolutionary legislation, expressly rejects it; and the leaders of the Revolution, most assuredly, did not practise it. Nor, indeed, do their successors. “Liberty,” the late M. Gambetta declared, “is one of the prerogatives of power.” And this view is not confined to politicians of the school to which Gambetta belonged. It seems to be common to his countrymen generally. I was reading lately a paper of M. Faguet’s, in which he observes: “A Frenchman will always prefer to renounce any liberty rather than see his antagonist in possession of it.” He adds, “Republican France ranks foremost among those countries where liberty and liberalism are unknown.”

This by the way. My present point is, that while, externally, the Catholic Church in France presented itself to the eyes of men, when the Revolution came, as a feudal institution, internally it was full of the most flagrant abuses. It had, however, yet another characteristic which

we might, at first sight, suppose should have recommended it to the revolutionary legislators, but which, as will be explained later on, only served to increase their animosity against it. Alone of the three estates of the realm, the Church had preserved not merely the forms but some of the substance of freedom. The clergy were a corporate body, whose representatives met in General Assembly every five years to treat of matters pertaining to religion, and specially of their own rights and privileges—for the origin of which they went back to the *Capitularies* of Charlemagne—and to make to the King a subsidy which was termed a free gift, *don gratuit*. This Assembly consisted of sixty-eight delegates, four from each of the ecclesiastical provinces called “French.” Of these four, two belonged to the first order, the episcopate; two to the second, the priesthood. During the intervals of their sessions, their powers were deputed to two Agents-General, who were elected every five years by each of the ecclesiastical provinces in succession. These Assemblies were real guarantees of a certain amount of liberty, externally, that is to say, *quoad* the regal authority. Nor did arbitrary rule prevail, internally, in the pre-Revolutionary French Church. Episcopal power was limited and defined, and had to be exercised canonically. The inferior clergy were by no means at the mercy of their superiors. They were not a regiment bound to march at the command of the bishop. The priests knew their

rights, and knew, too, how to maintain them against tyranny. Nor must it be forgotten, as Alexis de Tocqueville points out, that the prelates, belonging, as they did, to the noble caste, brought with them into the Church the pride (*fierté*) and indocility of their condition. Their feudal rank and attributes, prejudicial to their moral influence, gave them, individually, a spirit of independence in relation to the civil power. We must not judge of the French clergy of the eighteenth century by their successors of the nineteenth. We must remember that Napoleon brought the spirituality of France into a state of abject submission by his fraudulent Organic Articles, which went far beyond the so-called "Gallican Liberties" as an instrument of servitude; and that it was the settled policy of every government which succeeded his to maintain them in their abject condition. Alexis de Tocqueville puts it forcibly, and I will quote his own words:

"Les prêtres qu'on a vus souvent depuis si servilement soumis dans les choses civiles au souverain temporel, quel qu'il fût, et ses plus audacieux flatteurs, pour peu qu'il fit mine de favoriser l'Église, formaient alors l'un des corps les plus indépendants de la nation, et le seul dont on était obligé de respecter les libertés particulières."<sup>1</sup>

Such was the Catholic Church in France when it found itself confronted with the Revolution: an institution identified in the public mind with the outworn feudal system on which it had been

<sup>1</sup> *L'Ancien Régime et la Révolution*, p. 171.

engrafted ; enjoying irrational privileges ; disfigured by accumulated abuses and abominable anomalies ; possessing immense wealth distributed in a manner shocking to common sense ; tainted by persecution, sanguinary in the case of Protestants, shabby in the case of Jansenists ; stained by the vices of many of its prelates, though adorned by the virtues of the inferior clergy ; and alone of the three estates of the realm retaining a corporate character and a measure of independence. Such was the Church. What was the Revolution ?

## V

No doubt, as Lord Acton has indicated,<sup>1</sup> the Revolution was, primarily, a revolt against privileges. They all went in a mass, so to speak, on that famous night of August 4th, when, as he pithily puts it, "the France of history vanished, and the France of the new Democracy took its place."<sup>2</sup> But after destroying, the members of the National Assembly had to rebuild. It would perhaps have been impossible—it certainly would have been extremely difficult—to find a corresponding number of men, if Europe had been ransacked, less competent to engage on such a task. Unquestionably, some of them were possessed of great capacity—Mirabeau, for example, and Talleyrand

<sup>1</sup> In his *Lectures on the French Revolution*.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 100.

—but these were very few, and their influence depended upon their adroitly flattering the mass of their fellow legislators, of whom it is impossible to exaggerate the incapacity. The great majority of the members of the National Assembly, ignorant of the actual conduct of public affairs, unversed in political science, unspeakably disdainful of history, derived their conceptions of statecraft exclusively from the sophisms of Rousseau; sophisms which, at first received gladly by the upper classes, gradually—such is the way of movements of opinion—penetrated the *bourgeoisie*, and then sank into the mind of the populace. Taine tells us of a traveller who, on returning to France at the beginning of the reign of Louis XVI., after an absence of some years, was asked what change he had remarked in the nation, and replied, “None, except that what used to be said in the salons is now repeated in the streets.”<sup>1</sup> And “what was repeated in the streets,” Taine adds, “was the teaching of Rousseau, his *Discourse on Inequality*, his *Social Contract*, amplified, vulgarised, and reiterated.” It was an agreeable teaching for the masses, who had hitherto been nothing in the State. They heard gladly the prophet who told them that they ought to be everything, and whose sophisms, very easy of apprehension, seemed to them capable of being converted offhand into fact. And so the sages of the National Assembly proceeded “to make the

<sup>1</sup> *Les Origines*, &c., vol. i. p. 413.

constitution." It was in vain to point out to them that France had already institutions merely requiring reforms and additions to adapt them to the country's needs—or, as Burke puts it in his *Reflections*, "the elements of a constitution very nearly as good as could be wished." No; as he went on to complain, they chose "to act as if they had never been moulded into civil society, and had everything to begin anew." They believed what Barrère told them: "Vous êtes appelés à recommencer l'histoire"; and they addressed themselves to that gigantic task with no kind of misgiving.

Their method, as I observed in the last Chapter, was to translate into institutions the doctrines of Rousseau, who may be regarded as the revolutionary Lycurgus.<sup>1</sup> Rousseau, altogether put aside facts. He took "the high priori road,"<sup>2</sup> the unit of his speculations being not man as moulded by history and presented by life, but an abstract man who never has existed and never will exist. His system has been aptly described as a sort of political geometry. As we saw, it starts with four postulates which he presents as axioms, and

<sup>1</sup> M. de Pressensé well remarks:—"Rousseau eut le funeste honneur de faire à son image la révolution française. Il règne sans contestation sur sa période la plus puissante et la plus dévastatrice. . . . C'est à son *Contrat Social* qu'il faut demander la formule la plus précise."—*L'Église Catholique et la Révolution*, p. 18.

<sup>2</sup> I am far from denying that *a priori* conceptions have their use in politics: I am speaking of their abuse.

upon which he rears his wordy edifice ; that man is naturally good ; that man is essentially rational ; that freedom and sovereignty are his birthright ; that civil society rests upon a contract between these free and equal sovereign units, in virtue of which each, while surrendering his individual sovereignty, obtains an equal share in the collective sovereignty and so, in obeying it, as exercised by the majority of the units, obeys only himself. And to this collective sovereignty he allows no limits. He adopts the theory of the State which Louis XIV. formulated, and which, indeed, the French mind would seem to regard as something like self-evident. Taine pithily observes :

“For the sovereignty of the King, the *Social Contract* substituted the sovereignty of the people. But the new sovereign is still more absolute than the old. In the democratic convent which Rousseau constructed, the individual is nothing, the State is everything.”<sup>1</sup>

Yes, *everything* ; it claims to dominate even that interior monitor whose judgments of right and wrong Christianity<sup>2</sup> regards as of supreme

<sup>1</sup> *Les Origines*, &c., vol. i. p. 321.

<sup>2</sup> Christianity is, unfortunately, a vague term, but there can be no question that this is the doctrine of the Catholic Church. It has been forcibly stated by Cardinal Newman, in a well-known passage of his *Letter to the Duke of Norfolk*, from which I will borrow a few sentences :—“ I have already quoted the words which Cardinal Gousset has adduced from the Fourth Lateran Council, that ‘ He who acts against conscience loses his soul.’ This dictum is brought out with singular fulness and force in the moral treatises of theologians. The celebrated school known as the Salmanticenses, or Carmelites of Salamanca, lays down the broad proposition that conscience is ever to be obeyed, whether it



authority—"Quidquid fit contra conscientiam ædificat ad Gehennam." Mayor Bailly expressed this claim forcibly, but quite accurately, upon a memorable occasion: "When the law speaks, conscience should be silent." "*L'état fait des hommes ce qu'il veut*," was the *credo* of those first Revolutionists, as it is the *credo* of their twentieth-century successors: and it is notable that this doctrine of Rousseau was asserted nakedly by some of them who would not have owned themselves his disciples. Thus Camus, the zealous Jansenist: "We have assuredly the power to change religion"; and so Grégoire, an ultra Gallican: "We could change the religion of the State if we wished, but we do not wish." Men breathe the intellectual atmosphere of their time: and the influence of Rousseau was then all-pervading.

Animated by these sentiments, the National Assembly turned their attention to the Catholic Church in France. The curés, who were among the representatives, had displayed unbounded sympathy with the popular cause, and awaited

tells truly or erroneously, and that whether the error is the fault of the person erring or not. They say that this opinion is certain, and refer as agreeing with them to St. Thomas, St. Bonaventure, Caietan, Vasquez, Durandus, Navarre, Cordoba, Layman, Esobar, and fourteen others. Two of them even say this opinion is *de fide*. Of course, if he is culpable in being in error, which he could have escaped had he been more in earnest, for that error he is answerable to God; but still he must act according to that error while he is in it, because he, in full sincerity, thinks the error to be truth."

eagerly ecclesiastical reforms. It appears clearly from the *Cahiers* of 1789, that there was a general demand among the clergy throughout the country for a thorough correction of abuses: for the abolition of pluralities and of the system of *commendam*, for the suppression of the degenerate mendicant orders, largely composed of able-bodied vagabonds who could dig, and were not ashamed to beg; for the recision of the Concordat of Bologna; for the introduction, in some measure, of the ancient *suffragium de persona* in the appointment of curés, and even of bishops; for the reduction and redistribution of episcopal incomes; for the augmentation of the stipends of the inferior clergy; for the commutation or redemption of tithes; for the enforcement of residence by all spiritual persons among their flocks. But these demands, far-reaching as they were, by no means represented the views of the majority in the National Assembly. Not reformation but transformation was their object. They had before their eyes the teaching of Rousseau, who desired for his Utopia a religion which should be part of the machinery of the omnipotent State and, in all respects, subject to its control. No Church at all seemed to him preferable to a Church which should break what he calls "the social unity." The time-honoured phrase, "*Respublica Christiana*," disgusted him. "*République Chrétienne!*" he writes; "*chacun de ces deux mots exclut l'autre.*" It is significant that Robespierre forcibly expounded

that view in a famous speech on the Civil Constitution delivered on the 29th of May, 1790,<sup>1</sup> and unquestionably it guided the great majority of the National Assembly in dealing with the Catholic Church in France. They began by stripping it bare of its revenues ; and in this act of spoliation who can fail to see the Nemesis justly attending upon the horrible misuse of its possessions ? So did they destroy its corporate character and the measure of independence which it had possessed under the *ancien régime*. Having thus rendered it defenceless, they proceeded to regulate its constitution. That task they astutely entrusted chiefly to the Jansenists among them, few in number, but strong in learning and in character, and burning to avenge the ignominies of seventy years. Sir James Mackintosh remarks, in his *Vindiciæ Gallicæ*, that “ the spirit of a dormant sect, thus revived at so critical a period—the unintelligible subtleties of the Bishop of Ypres, thus influencing the institutions of the eighteenth century—might present an ample field of reflection to the intelligent observer of human affairs.” An ample field, no doubt. Here it may suffice to remark that while the *philosophes* had no more sympathy with the “ Jansenist rabble ” than with the “ Jesuit rabble,” as d’Alembert expressed it, they sagaciously discerned that Jansenists would

<sup>1</sup> An account of it is given by M. de Pressensé (p. 117). He well observes :—“ On n’a pas assez remarqué l’intervention de Robespierre dès l’ouverture de cet important débat. Il y apporta la pensée de Rousseau dans toute son intolérance.”

effectively shape a law destructive of the Catholicity of the Church in cutting it off from the Holy See. That was essential to the conversion of the clergy into a department of the State. The real object of the *Constitution Civile*, Mirabeau discerned, was "to decatholicise France." The name "Civil Constitution" is, indeed, fallacious. That disastrous measure affected other and far more important interests than those of a merely civil nature. It suppressed fifty bishoprics. It changed the boundaries of dioceses and parishes. It abolished cathedral and collegiate chapters. It severed the clergy from the Holy See, thereby destroying the essential principle of Catholic unity.<sup>1</sup> A Protestant historian writes :

"In vain do the fervent apologists of the French Revolution contend that the Civil Constitution respected the dignity and independence of the religious Society by contenting itself merely with external reforms which did not touch dogma. To unsettle, to this degree, the organization of the Catholic Church, to decide the very delicate question of its relations with the Papacy, entirely to transform the episcopate by making of it a kind of constitutional sovereignty, with responsible ministers, to base the whole ecclesiastical edifice on popular election, was evidently to do a work which, coming from a political Assembly, was an inexcusable abuse of power. It matters little that this or that reform was good in itself, and sanctioned by the most ancient traditions of Christianity.

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<sup>1</sup> Lord Acton describes "the Papacy, that unique institution, the crown of the Catholic system," as "the bulwark, or rather corner-stone, of Catholicism—the most radical and conspicuous distinction between the Catholic Church and the sects."—*Essays on Liberty*, pp. 320-321.

## II] LOUIS XIV.'S INFAMOUS PRECEDENT 65

Nothing could redress the vice of its origin. The Church was, in the event, placed in absolute dependence on the Civil power. Her representatives were right in protesting against such a measure." <sup>1</sup>

As we know, they protested in vain. The only effect of their protest was to enrage the Jansenists and the Rousseauan sectaries in the National Assembly, and to let loose the fool fury and sanguinary savagery of the populace outside. Cazalès warned his fellow legislators that "the effect of the Civil Constitution of the clergy would be like that of the revocation of the Edict of Nantes—a crime by which justice was outraged and over which humanity still groans." The warning was unheeded, and Louis XIV.'s infamous precedent was unhesitatingly followed.<sup>2</sup> Surely there must have been some among the clergy who, when they remembered how the Church had welcomed that atrocious measure, made the reflection, "*Quam temere in nosmet legem sancimus iniquam.*" The fact, however, remains that the spirituality, confronted with the Civil Constitution, rose to the height of the situation. M. de Pressensé—to quote him once more—seems to me well warranted when he writes: "Nothing but the most sectarian prejudice can deny the grandeur of that scene of

<sup>1</sup> *L'Église Catholique et la Révolution française*, par E. de Pressensé, p. 114.

<sup>2</sup> M. Albert Sorel points out:—"On trouve dans les édits de Louis XIV. contre les protestants, tous les précédents des lois révolutionnaires contre les prêtres."—*L'Europe et la Révolution française*, vol. i. p. 231.

the refusal of the oath at the morning sitting on the 4th of January. . . . Religion defended its rights and preserved them by great sacrifices, offered in the midst of the gravest perils." Of the two hundred and forty-six of the inferior clergy who were members of the National Assembly, sixty took the oath. Of the forty-two bishops, two took it, Talleyrand and Gobel.<sup>1</sup> The rest of the episcopate refused it. They recognized—how could they fail to recognize?—that, as Pius VI. declared in his Brief *Quod Aliquantulum*,<sup>2</sup> the object of the Civil Constitution was the destruction of the Catholic religion in France; and in an extremely beautiful and touching letter they assured the Pontiff, "We shall submit to our fate, whatever it may be, with the courage which religion inspires." Rousseau, in the *Contrat Social*, expressly claims for the people the right of imposing, under the penalty of death, the cult which seems to be most useful for the public weal. This doctrine was acted upon by the National Assembly. In the next Chapter I shall have to give some details of the persecution which fell upon the non-juring clergy; the horrible massacres;<sup>3</sup> the

<sup>1</sup> Subsequently three other prelates, of much the same type as these two, took it: Loménie de Brienne, Archbishop of Sens; Jarente, Bishop of Orléans; and de Sarrines, Bishop of Verviers;

<sup>2</sup> It is dated the 10th of March, 1791.

<sup>3</sup> It is worth noting that to the priests slaughtered in the massacres of September, life was offered upon condition of taking the oath to the civil constitution; and that the offer was, in every case, rejected. M. de Pressensé well remarks:—"There is nothing finer in the history of martyrdom than the scenes of

## II] THE EXPULSION OF THE CLERGY 67

physical tortures, just short of death ; the mental anguish worse than death. In the event, forty thousand ecclesiastics were driven from France, no inconsiderable number of these confessors of the faith becoming the honoured guests of Protestant England. The power of nicknames is great, and the supporters of the constitutional clergy called them "patriots," and styled the non-jurors "aristocrats." This was ingenious ; and it cannot be denied that some of the bishops, in their pastorals and other official documents, expressed themselves in terms which exhibited their dislike of the new order of things. Nay, language used by the Pope himself lent colour to the allegation that he regretted the *ancien régime*, notwithstanding its abuses ; that he associated the cause of the old monarchy with the liberties of the Church. By the Civil Constitution the Revolution had shown itself, clearly, as rabidly anti-Catholic, and how could the Pope or his clergy be expected to love it ? But the *prêtres assermentés* did not, in the event, fare much better than the non-jurors. By 1794 the Civil Constitution had become a mere shadow. Apostasy had thinned the ranks of its votaries. It had been made well-nigh as difficult for them as for the orthodox ecclesiastics to discharge their functions. They had ceased to receive stipends, and were

the Carmes." It must not be forgotten that the savagery of the Revolutionary butchers was especially directed against religious women. Some touching details of their heroism will be found in M. Biré's work, *Le Clergé de France pendant la Révolution*

almost all in abject poverty.<sup>1</sup> To declare oneself a Christian had come to be regarded as incivism, and was punished accordingly. Ministers of religion who would not deny their faith, were cast into filthy dungeons, there to await a mock trial, of which the foregone conclusion was the guillotine. And this bitter persecution lasted, with a few lulls, until the end of the Directory. It is pleasant to read that many of the Constitutional clergy, when brought face to face with death, displayed better sentiments than those which had animated them during life. The Abbé Emery, in a letter addressed to Pius VI., writes<sup>2</sup> that during the seventeen months of his imprisonment in the Conciergerie, the schismatic priests confined there, before making their appearance at the revolutionary tribunal, without exception repudiated the oath which they had taken to the Civil Constitution, and urgently sought to be reconciled to the Church.

## VI

So much must suffice as to the earliest chapter in the history of the relations between the Catholic Church and the Revolution. There can be no question as to its significance. It is the record of

<sup>1</sup> Grégoire writes that in 1794 all the churches were closed except a few in outlying villages.—*Histoire des Sectes Religieuses*, vol. i. p. 179.

<sup>2</sup> This most interesting letter is given by Theiner, *Doc., Inéd.*, vol. i. p. 439.



an implacable war against Catholicism of which the Rousseauan demagogism was as intolerant as any medieval inquisitor had ever been of heresy. And this is but the carrying out of the express teaching of the *Contrat Social*, which insists that “Christianity preaches only servitude and dependence”; that “true Christians are made to be slaves”; that Catholicism, “like the religion of the Lamas or of the Japanese,” by “giving men two legislations, two chiefs, two countries,” is “so evidently bad, politically considered, that it would be mere waste of time to argue about it.” In these words we have the key which explains the Civil Constitution of the clergy and all that came of it. Lord Morley of Blackburn tells us that “at the heart of the Revolution was a new way of understanding life.”<sup>1</sup> And this is undoubtedly true. It was not a merely political movement: it exhibited itself, in the words of Alexis de Tocqueville, as a “sort of religion.” Nor was it merely a national movement; Lord Acton truly says: “*The Rights of Man* were meant for general application; they were no more specially

<sup>1</sup> *Rousseau*, vol. i. p. 4. Among the “springs” of the Revolution Lord Morley reckons “undivided love of our fellows, steadfast faith in human nature, steadfast search after justice, firm aspiration towards improvement and generous contentment in the hope that others may reap what reward may be.” One rubs one’s eyes as one reads these words, and thinks of what the history of France from 1789 to 1799 really was. Can Lord Morley be poking fun at his readers? But, no; Lord Morley is nothing if not serious.

French than is the multiplication table.”<sup>1</sup> It dealt with the individual, not as a member of a particular race, tribe or kindred, but as a man. Like Christianity, it professed to have glad tidings of great joy for all people. Anacharsis Clootz, in expounding it, assumed the title of “Orator of the Human Race”; and at all events, that buffoon thus truly indicated its pretension. Its leaders supposed themselves to be living “dans le siècle de lumières, dans l’âge de raison,” their mission to give light to a world which had hitherto sat in darkness and in the shadow of death. It claimed to replace Christianity, and its leaders emphatically asserted this claim by abolishing in 1793 the Christian era, and by substituting the *décadi* for the Sunday.

## VII

Lord Morley then seems to me well warranted when he speaks of the French Revolution as “a new Gospel”; “aliud Evangelium quod non est aliud”; a Gospel according to Jean Jacques Rousseau, quite incompatible with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. And this the chiefs of the Revolution ever apprehended. Thus the Directory wrote to Bonaparte in February, 1797: “You are too accustomed to politics not to have felt, as well as we, that the Roman religion will always, by its

<sup>1</sup> *Lectures on the French Revolution*, p. 211.

essence, be the irreconcilable enemy of the Republic.”<sup>1</sup> “By its essence.” The words are worth noting. What they called “the Republic” was a polity embodying the doctrine of Jean Jacques Rousseau: his postulates or fundamental axioms of man’s congenital goodness and rationality, freedom, and sovereignty; of the contractual nature of human society, and of the unlimited sovereignty of the State. It is hardly necessary to remark that these axioms are really monstrous sophisms; that man is no more essentially good than essentially bad; that so far from being wholly rational, speaking and thinking like a book, he is much more under the dominion of habit and passion than of logic—nay, that the number of people capable of general ideas and consecutive reasoning is extremely limited; that inequality, mental, physical, civil—not equality—is his heritage, and ever must be; that the social contract is a fraudulent fiction, and the unlimited sovereignty of the State deduced from it an outrage on man’s most sacred and most inalienable prerogative—the rights of conscience. All this is “as true as truth’s simplicity, and simpler than the infancy of truth”; but that is not my present point. My present point is that the teaching of Christianity is utterly opposed to, utterly irreconcilable with, these postulates. Christianity takes man as he is—a being under two laws, the law of his mind and the law in his members: not

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by M. de Pressensé, p. 334.

doing the good that he would, and doing the evil that he would not. And in answer to his exceeding bitter cry, "O me miserum! O wretched that I am, who shall deliver me?" it offers itself as the rescuer. It starts with the fact, which only the theory-blind can ignore, that there is in the heart of every man, more or less developed, an evil principle—*radicale Böse*, Kant called it—which is a primordial, permanent ingredient of human nature. You may give it what name you will, or leave it innominate, you may explain it how you will, or pronounce it inexplicable, that taint, that perversion. But there it is, "a wild beast within us," to use Plato's word. He added, "The wild beast must be tamed." Rousseau lets it loose—with what consequences the history of France from 1789 to 1799 may sufficiently show. And it is the best of us who are most sensitively conscious of the innate evil element in us, which thwarts and mars our life, just as it is the wisest of us who feel most acutely the inadequacy of the individual reason as the guide of human action. Nor is it too much to say that here we have the very *raison d'être* of Christianity which, as one of the profoundest students of man and society has observed, is "a complete system of repression of the depraved tendencies of man."<sup>1</sup> It is also, he goes on to note, "the greatest element of social order"; and it is this because it bases that social order not upon the fleeting caprice of the multitude, but

<sup>1</sup> Honoré de Balzac, *Œuvres*, vol. i. p. 7.

upon justice—*justitia fundamentum regni*. It knows nothing of a social contract between sovereign and equal units. It accounts of civil society, in whatever form, as of divine ordinance ; of right as issuing, not from the empirical *consensus* of individuals, but from that *θεῖος νόμος* which is the supreme reason ; of human jurisprudence <sup>1</sup> as the adaptation to our needs of “ the moral laws of nature and of nations ”—an ideal order of right ruling throughout all worlds. And this law of virtue which we are born under, it does not exhibit as “ an appendage to a set of theological mysteries,” <sup>2</sup> but as a natural and permanent revelation of Reason, whereof conscience is, in the words of Aquinas, the practical judgment or dictate, for it is the entering into the individual of the objective law of Right.

I must not enlarge on this topic, nor, indeed, is that necessary for my present purpose. I have said enough, I think, to show how irreconcilable

<sup>1</sup> So Aquinas: “ A human law bears the character of law, so far as it is in conformity with right reason ; and, in that point of view, it is manifestly derived from the Eternal Law. But inasmuch as any human law recedes from reason, it is called a wicked law ; and to that extent it bears not the character of law, but rather of an act of violence ” (*Summa Theologica*, I, 2, q. 93, a. 3, ad. 2). Or, as he elsewhere puts it, “ Laws enacted by men are either just or unjust. If they are just, they have a binding force in the court of conscience from the Eternal Law whence they are derived. . . . Unjust laws are not binding in the court of conscience, except perhaps for the avoiding of scandal or turmoil ” (*Ibid.*, q. 96, a. 1).

<sup>2</sup> As Lord Morley seems to think. See his *Voltaire*, p. 50.

is the doctrine of Rousseau with the doctrine of Catholicism. And this is quite sufficient to explain the rooted hostility to Catholicism which animated the men of the first French Revolution, and which equally animates their successors—their spiritual children, if I may so speak—at the present day. It is natural that these, as it was natural that those, should seek to decatholicise France. In place of Catholicism, the present rulers of that country have nothing to offer but Atheism. Some of the older Revolutionists thought Atheism insufficient. They felt that man does not live by bread alone ; that he needs a religion of some sort to support “ the burden and the mystery of all this unintelligible world.” And, at all events, it is to their credit that they did their best to provide substitutes for Christianity. Let us go on to consider what those substitutes were.

## VIII

But before we proceed to do that, I would ask my readers to look a little more closely at the religious history of France during the first ten years of the Revolution (1789-99). That period divides itself into three portions. First, there are the twenty-eight months of the National Assembly, subsequently called Constituent ; then come the well-nigh twelve months of the Legislative Assembly ; next the three years of the National Convention ;

and lastly, the four years of the Directory. The great work of the National Assembly in the domain of religion was, of course, the Civil Constitution of the Clergy—the setting up, in July, 1790, of a schismatic Church. That Church may be said to have had a career of four and a half years, its end as a State religion being wrought by the decrees of the Convention of the 18th of September, 1794, and of the 21st of February and the 30th of May, 1795, which professed to establish liberty of worship. It started with some prospect of success. Probably one-third<sup>1</sup> of the French clergy at first adhered to it. But it bore within it the seeds of dissolution and death. As soon as the Pope's condemnation of the Civil Constitution of the Clergy became known, many priests who had accepted it, with or without qualification, withdrew from it. Not a few who adhered to it lost their influence by marriage or some other scandal. A certain number apostatised from Christianity. Popular feeling was everywhere in favour of non-juring clergy,<sup>2</sup> and the troubles which arose throughout France might well have caused the Constituent Assembly serious searchings of the heart as to the policy of their ecclesiastical legislation.

<sup>1</sup> That is the estimate accepted by the Abbé Pisani after careful examination. See his *L'Église de Paris et la Révolution*, p. 188.

<sup>2</sup> “Les fidèles ne tardèrent pas à manifester leur préférence : pendant que le curé constitutionnel disait la messe paroissiale dans l'église vide, il y avait foule aux heures où officiaient les insermentés.”—Pisani, *L'Église de Paris et la Révolution*, p. 236.

But revolutions never turn back. And the Legislative Assembly, which met on the first of October, 1791, devoted no small portion of the twelve months less nine days during which it existed to devising measures of persecution against the nonjuring priests. We must not forget that the Girondins were the most conspicuous initiators, and the most zealous fautors, of those laws of tyranny and proscription. They were, indeed, animated by so intense a hatred of Christianity that Sainte Beuve's account of Condorcet, their chief philosopher and theorist, may well apply to the whole party; "*fanatique d'irréligion et atteint d'une sorte d'hydrophobie sur ce point.*" And Durand de Maillane, the Deputy of the Bouches du Rhin, expressed the opinion, "*le parti girondin était plus impie même que le parti de Robespierre.*" It was Roland who, on becoming Minister, gave the signal for this persecuting legislation. On the 23rd of April and the 9th of May, 1792, he wrote to the Assembly, begging them to take measures against the "refractory" priests, a request which amounted to a command, three-fourths of the Legislative Assembly being under the control of the Girondin party. On the 29th of November, 1791, indeed, the Assembly had passed a decree declaring that all ecclesiastics who should refuse to take the civic oath forfeited by such refusal their salaries and pensions. It further declared that the nonjuror priests were "suspect" of revolt against the law, and of evil intentions



against the country, and as such were specially recommended to the surveillance of the public authorities. But this was insufficient to satisfy their thirst for persecution. So, on the 27th of May, 1792, a further decree was adopted proscribing the nonjurors, as a body and without trial. Vergniaud and Gaudet were chief movers in procuring this measure, which may be regarded as the crowning achievement of the Girondins. It mirrors them truly with their contempt for liberty, their hatred of priests, their passion for delation. The whole of this law of theirs—a law involving the deportation of thousands of Frenchmen—rests upon the sole basis of denunciation. And they sought to enlarge this basis, as far as possible, by providing, in Article VIII., that the denunciation should be received even when the delators (*les citoyens délateurs*) did not know how to write. The utterances of Isnard, one of the principal members of their party, in the sitting of the 14th of November, 1791, well interpret their sentiments: “If there are complaints against a priest who has not taken the oath, he should be compelled to quit the kingdom; proofs are not necessary (*il ne faut pas de preuves*).”<sup>1</sup> By way of supplement to this measure, a decree, passed on the 26th of August, ordained that all nonjuring priests who,

<sup>1</sup> In the course of the debate on this decree a deputy, one Larivière, read from the tribune the Chapter of the *Contrat Social*, which declares the right of the State to put to death dissentients from its religion.

in a fortnight should not have left the kingdom, should be deported to Guiana. Louis XVI. vetoed these decrees, but they served as a pretext for arbitrary violence throughout the country. And the time was rapidly approaching when Louis XVI. and his veto should be taken out of the way.

On the 21st of September, 1792, the Legislative Assembly came to an end, and the National Convention took its place. At the first session of the Convention, Collot d'Herbois, a strolling comedian, brought forward a motion for the abolition of royalty; and the hall resounded with applause. The motion was carried and the Republic proclaimed. On the 3rd of December, Robespierre proposed that the king should at once be declared "a traitor to his country and a criminal against humanity, and should be immediately condemned to death for an example to mankind," alleging as a precedent for this summary proceeding that "Hercules did not resort to legal tribunals, but at once relieved the world of its monsters." The Assembly, however, declined to emulate the exploits of Hercules, preferring to decree injustice by a law. On the 19th of January, 1793, it voted the murder of the King, and was congratulated by Cambacérès on "having done a deed the memory of which would never pass away and which would be graven by the pen of immortality on the *fasti* of the world." Murdered the King was, accordingly, on the 21st of January, having recommended

by letter his family to the care of the Convention. That Assembly passed a resolution, "That the people of France, always magnanimous, would take upon themselves the care of his family." This magnanimous engagement was fulfilled by guillotining the wife and sister of the monarch, by slowly doing to death his infant son, and by keeping his daughter in close confinement.

The Convention having thus begun its tyranny by shedding the innocent blood of the King, continued it by slaughtering, without mercy, the no less innocent ministers of religion. The men who dominated it were the declared enemies of Christianity in all forms and phases. The Constitutional clergy was well-nigh as hateful to them as the Catholic, but was attacked in a different way. In November, 1793, they passed a decree declaring that the public authorities might receive from ministers of any cult the renunciation of their ministry. And on the 30th of that month they accorded to apostate bishops, *curés*, and vicars annual pensions varying from 1200 to 800 francs. A very considerable number of the Constitutional clergy accepted the thirty pieces of silver.

The orthodox clergy, who could not thus be bought, were killed all the day long, and were counted as sheep appointed to be slain. They were drowned in batches, or sent, *en masse*, to the scaffold. Or, worse fate still, were sentenced

to deportation.<sup>1</sup> The sufferings of the priests condemned to this torture are indescribable—huddled together, in the most filthy conditions, with galley slaves, insulted and outraged by their guardians, every religious act prohibited under pain of being cast into irons. Carlyle has depicted their state in words which, though every one is as an echo of Dante's *Inferno*, yet fall short of the truth. "Ragged, sordid, hungry: wasted to shadows: eating their unclean rations on deck circularly, in parties of a dozen: beating their scandalous clothes between two stones: choked in horrible miasmata, closed under hatches, seventy of them in a berth, through the night: so that the aged priest is found dead in the morning, in the attitude of prayer." The chief legislative measures<sup>2</sup> against them were the laws of

<sup>1</sup> M. Biré tells us of a batch of forty of them on board the *Vaillante*, bound for Guiana. Two days after they set sail, the *Vaillante* was captured by an English vessel, whose captain—afterwards celebrated as Lord Exmouth—noticing the costume of the priests, asked one of them, who they were. On receiving a reply he saluted them courteously, saying, "Gentlemen, this is the richest capture I have ever made in my life."—*Le Clergé de France pendant la Révolution*, p. 135.

<sup>2</sup> It may be worth while to quote M. Biré's excellent summary of this legislation (p. 172). "La Convention, continuant l'œuvre de l'Assemblée législative, comme l'Assemblée législative avait continué l'œuvre de l'Assemblée constituante, se contente de faire deux lois contre le clergé catholique, mais deux lois d'extermination. *Loi du 18 Mars 1793*. Les prêtres qui devaient être déportés et qui ne le sont pas, ou qui, ayant été déportés, sont revenus de la déportation, seront mis à mort dans les vingt-quatre heures. *Loi du 21 Avril, 1793*. 1°: Tous les ecclésiastiques réguliers, séculiers, frères convers et frères laïcs qui n'ont pa

extermination made respectively on the 18th of March and the 21st of April, 1793, to which indeed may be added the law of the 17th of December, 1793, the terrible *loi des suspects*. To enforce this penal legislation the Convention sent out into each department two deputies designated "représentants du peuple en mission," who were empowered to create revolutionary committees with virtually despotic powers. The savagery perpetrated by these emissaries of anti-religious fanaticism has never been surpassed. At Lyons, Collot d'Herbois, in a single day, condemned to death a hundred and twenty victims. Lebon, at Arras, shed their blood in torrents, and no inconsiderable number of them perished in the drownings of Nantes. The Revolution was not less cruel towards religious women. Those of Compiègne gave this noble answer to their persecutors, who charged them with fanaticism: "Fanatics slaughter and kill: we pray for them." "You will be transported." "To whatever place that may be, we shall pray." "Where do you wish to be transported to?" "Where there are the most unhappy to be consoled: and there are nowhere so many as in France." "If you remain here, it is to die."

prêté le serment de maintenir la liberté et l'égalité (serment imposé par l'Assemblée législative le 14 Août, 1792), seront déportés à la Guyane. 2°: Ceux même qui auront prêté ce serment seront également déportés s'ils sont dénoncés pour cause d'incivisme par six de leurs concitoyens." And these two atrocious measures of proscription were supplemented on the 17th September, 1793, by the *loi de suspects*.

“We will die.” These holy women sang the *Salve Regina* at the foot of the scaffold. The simple faithful often rivalled in courage the priests and nuns. An assembly for worship was held in a grotto. Those present were warned by the priest that their hymns were heard by the cannoneers of the Republic. “That does not matter, my father,” they replied.<sup>1</sup> It is notable that the Convention, in its last sitting (24th October, 1795), provided fresh pains and penalties for priests. It left the Departments of France covered with Watch Committees (*Comités de Surveillance*), Revolutionary Committees, Military Commissions. The religious houses, which had been turned into dungeons, were crammed with prisoners, of whom a certain number were led forth, day by day, and, after a mock trial, were conducted to the guillotine, which, as the phrase ran, was *en permanence*. France was deluged with blood—innocent blood, for against the vast majority of the condemned no shadow of an offence was so much as attempted to be proved. Piety, attachment to religion were regarded as capital crimes, as was also the mere fact of being a priest, unless the accused had married or apostatised.

## IX

There are writers, and writers of name, who represent the period of the Directory (1st

<sup>1</sup> De Pressensé, *L'Eglise Catholique et la Révolution*, p. 257.

November, 1795, to 9th November, 1799) as being one of comparative toleration for the Catholic clergy. Lamartine, indeed, goes so far as to say, "Sous le Directoire la proscription avait cessé." Nothing could be more opposed to the truth. The policy of the Directory was a policy of ruthless persecution<sup>1</sup> carried out with a cynical contempt of all legal guarantees, which recalls the proceedings of the Committee of Public Safety during the worst days of the Terror. In 1795 there was a widespread feeling in France in favour of religious peace. The Directory by no means shared it. Rewbel declared in one of his speeches, "Il faut poursuivre les prêtres refractaires comme des bêtes fauves qu'il faut exterminer."<sup>2</sup> He and his colleagues did their best to carry out this programme.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> On the 3rd of Ventôse, Year III. (21st February, 1795), was passed what has been called the law of the Separation of Church and State. Except that it deprived the constitutional clergy of their ill-gotten stipends, it was a mere form.

<sup>2</sup> "Je n'ai jamais eu qu'une reproche à faire à Robespierre, c'est d'avoir été trop doux," was, according to Carnot, Rewbel's judgment of "the Incorruptible."

<sup>3</sup> A very full account of their proceedings is given in M. Victoire Pierre's masterly book, *La Terreur sous le Directoire* (Paris, 1887), and in the excellent work which may be regarded as a supplement to it, 18 *Fructidor* (Paris, 1893), where—to quote his own words—he presents "l'histoire d'une juridiction peu connue, celle des commissions militaires." Most of the historians of the French Revolution say not a word about this terrible chapter in its annals. Taine devotes to it a single pregnant sentence: "De toutes parts, dans les départements, les commissions militaires fusillent en force." M. Pierre, with enormous labour, has collected authentic official documents which supply a complete and horrible justification of these words of Taine.

They passionately wished to sever France from her ancient religion. But they had not a free hand until after the *coup d'état* of the 18th of Fructidor (4th September, 1797), which delivered the country once more to the Jacobins and plunged the Church into a savage persecution. The very next day a decree was passed abrogating the law of the 7th of Fructidor (24th August), 1797, and reviving all the preceding legislation against the clergy—even the laws of 1790 and 1791, which required the oath to the Civil Constitution of the Clergy, now defunct; but besides resuscitating those enactments, it conferred on the Directory an absolute right to deport priests whom it should judge guilty of “troubling, in the interior, the public tranquillity.” And this legislation rested in full force until the end of the Directory, and was worked with unscrupulous vigour by anti-Christian zealots throughout France. The Directory, indeed, did not employ largely the guillotine to kill priests. They preferred that their victims should die slowly by deportation<sup>1</sup>—a mode of punishment called *la guillotine sèche*—or that they should be shot by military commissions.<sup>2</sup> A

<sup>1</sup> The favourite place of deportation was French Guiana, but owing to the vigilance of British cruisers, it was difficult for the French convict ships to make their way there, and large numbers of priests were shut up, in terrible conditions, concerning which some details will be given in the next Chapter, in the isle of Ré and the isle of Oléron.

<sup>2</sup> There is a touching story in M. Biré's volume of a venerable priest, Mathurin Cochon, who was arrested by the Revolutionary



private letter from Nantes, dated the 7th of January, 1798, which chanced to be intercepted by the police, and has been preserved in official archives, gives a graphic account of the state of the Catholic clergy there at this period.

“Everything is going from bad to worse here since the 18th of Fructidor. All the nonjuring priests are concealed, and those who are caught are shot or deported : things are pretty much as they were in the time of Robespierre. All the *émigrés*, priests or laity, who are arrested are shot within twenty-four hours ; and all people who are ‘suspect’ are shut up in prison. Those condemned to deportation are huddled together in the prisons of Rochfort and the Isle of Ré.”<sup>1</sup>

But the Directory employed against religion other weapons besides death and deportation. Following the example of the Convention, it encouraged the constitutional clergy by money gratifications to apostatise, and in many instances it provided them with employment in the service

troops, and who, worn by hunger, asked a little girl for a bit of a morsel of bread which she had in her hand. “Yes,” she replied, “take it.” “You see I can’t, my hands are tied.” Then the child put the bread into his mouth. He thanked her and told her God would bless her for what she had done. Just then a well-known constitutional cleric—one Lalléton—came up, and remarked, “Take the oath and I guarantee your life.” “No,” he replied, “I have not suffered so much, up to now, to damn myself at this moment.” “Then do your duty, soldiers,” the schismatic priest rejoined. They did. (P. 264.) This was on 8th September, 1798.

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Biré’s *Le Clergé de France pendant la Révolution*, p. 140.

of the State. Another anti-Christian measure of even more importance was the substitution of the *décadi* for the Sunday, and the imposition of a new Calendar, devised by Fabre d'Eglantine, shortly before his execution for forgery, in which domestic animals, fowls, vegetables, and fishes figure instead of the mysteries and Saints of Christianity.<sup>1</sup> M. Biré sees here "the most dangerous weapon wielded by the Revolution in the strife with the Church."<sup>2</sup> And a writer of a very opposite school, M. Aulard, judges, "To substitute for Catholic rites and feasts, other dates and feasts, to abolish Sunday, and to impose the lay *décadi*, to replace the names of Saints by those of objects which constitute the true riches of the nation, was to snatch from Catholicism its ornament and distinction (*parure et prestige*); it was violently to expel it from the national habits."<sup>3</sup> As a matter of fact, the Directory stuck at no violence to accomplish this "reform." Grégoire does not speak too strongly when he says that "whole

<sup>1</sup> The Turkey, the Pig, the Cat, the Goat, the Rabbit, have places in that curious document. The 19th July, which is the feast of St. Vincent of Paul, is consecrated to German wheat (*Epeautre*); 28th August, the feast of St. Augustine, to the Water Melon; 2nd December, the feast of St. Francis Xavier, to Horse-radish. It seems hard to believe that this performance of Fabre d'Eglantine should have found admirers; but it did. For Michelet it is "le Calendrier vrai où la nature elle-même nomme les phases de l'année," and Louis Blanc describes it as a "chef-d'œuvre de grâce, de poésie et de raison."

<sup>2</sup> Biré, *Le Clergé de France pendant la Révolution*, p. 369.

<sup>3</sup> *Le Cult de la Raison et le Cult de l'Être-Suprême*. Avant-Propos.

departments were tortured by *décadi* fury ” ;<sup>1</sup> he gives ample warrant for these words. It is notable that the Directory was busy with further projects of persecution when the *coup d'état* of the 18th of Brumaire put an end to its existence.

## X

Thus much as to the persecution of Christianity in France from 1789 to 1799—enough perhaps to illustrate the truth of M. Biré's observation : “ The Revolution was before all things anti-Christian : its chief work was to expel and kill priests, to shut and desecrate churches, to tear away the soul of France from the Catholic religion.” But there were among its earlier leaders some who appreciated the dictum, “ On ne tue que ce qu'on remplace.” Let us now proceed to see how they proposed to replace the Catholic Church : what were the substitutes for Christianity which they provided for France.

First among the inventors of new religions comes Pierre Gaspard Chaumette—Anaxagoras he

<sup>1</sup> “ Quelques départements tirailés, torturés par la fureur décadaire,” *Histoire des Sectes Religieuses*, vol. i. p. 229. The whole of the chapter—the tenth—headed, *Persecutions pour le décadé*, in which this statement occurs, is well worth reading. It was in August, 1800, that the *décadi* was abolished by a Consular decree, after an existence of seven years. Grégoire truly remarks (p. 339), “ La postérité ne pourra jamais se former qu'une idée très incomplète de ce qui les fêtes décadares ont coûté d'argent, de larmes, de tortures et de sang.”

called himself, I do not know why—whom Lord Morley praises as showing “the natural effect of abandoning belief in another life by his energetic interest in arrangements for improving the lot of men in this life.”<sup>1</sup> The most famous of the arrangements claiming that character which engaged the energetic interest of Chaumette was the worship of Reason—indeed, it would seem that he was not only energetically interested in this cult, but was its actual originator. In the Commune of Paris he found his first converts, and through the favour of that body he was allowed to set up his religion on the 10th of November, 1793, in the Cathedral of Notre Dame. A sort of elevation which they called a mountain (*une montagne*) was erected over the high altar of the Church, with a kind of throne whereon the Goddess of Reason was installed. Who the Goddess was we do not certainly know: the honour has been claimed for Mdlle. Aubrey, for Mdlle. Maillard, for Mdlle. Candeille, all of the Opera; but the probabilities are in favour of the concubine of the printer Momoro. Prudhomme testifies: “Momoro entretenait une femme assez fraîche qu’il traitait durement. Il en faisait alors sa servante. Enfin il en faisait une Déesse de Raison.” De Maistre speaks of the Goddess as “toute nue”; but this appears to be an error. Eye-witnesses describe her as clothed, though scantily, in white tunic, purple girdle, and an azure mantle. Incense

<sup>1</sup> *Miscellanies*, vol. i. p. 78.

was burnt before her, and hymns were sung, of which the two following verses are a specimen :

“ Descends ô Liberté, fille le la Nature ;  
 Le peuple a reconquis son pouvoir immortel :  
 Sur les pompeux débris de l'antique imposture  
       Ses mains relèvent ton autel.

“ Venez, vainqueurs des rois, l'Europe vous contemple ;  
 Venez, sur les faux dieux étendez vos succès ;  
 Toi, sainte Liberté, viens habiter ce temple,  
       Sois la déesse des Français.”

Which rites being accomplished, the Goddess, attended by her “ vestals ”—who had been picked up in the coulisses of the Opera—was borne aloft to the Convention, where Chaumette perorated, declaring her to be a *chef-d'œuvre* of Nature, asserting that she had inflamed all hearts, and demanding that the Cathedral of Notre Dame should thenceforth be consecrated to Reason and Liberty. One Laloy,<sup>1</sup> who presided, expressed the most lively satisfaction at these proceedings, as a triumph over superstition and fanaticism—the two words by which Christianity was then commonly designated—and the Convention decreed that the Cathedral should in future be the temple of Reason. Next, Laloy put the sacred red night-cap on the Goddess and gave her a kiss —“ the fraternal accolade ” it was supposed to be. Then the procession trooped out to finish the day

<sup>1</sup> It was this Laloy who presided over the Convention when Gobel made his declaration of apostacy, and who congratulated the wretched man on having “ risen to the height of philosophy.”

with an orgy—over which it is better to draw a veil. Chaumette was delighted with his work, and predicted, “This time Jesus Christ won’t rise again.” He also professed a sure and certain hope that in four months’ time they would be strong enough to guillotine all who believed in God. The event proved that he was in error. Indeed, at the end of four months he himself was guillotined. It is worth while to notice, in passing, how, thirteen years before this profanation of Notre Dame took place, it was prophesied in a sermon preached in that very church.

“Yes,” the preacher exclaimed, “religion is the real object of the attack of the *philosophes*. The axe and the hammer are in their hands; they merely await the favourable moment for overturning the altar. Yes: Thy temples, O Lord, shall be plundered and destroyed; Thy feasts abolished; Thy Name blasphemed; Thy worship proscribed. But what do I hear, great God? What do I see? The sacred canticles with which these roofs have resounded in honour of Thee, are replaced by lubricious and profane songs. And thou, infamous Deity of Paganism, shameless Venus, thou comest here to take the place of the living God, to sit on the throne of the holy of holies, and there to receive the incense of thy abandoned votaries.”<sup>1</sup>

A few days after the enthronement of the Goddess of Reason at Notre Dame, all the Catholic

<sup>1</sup> Grégoire, *Histoire des Sectes Religieuses*, vol. i. p. 32. The preacher was le Père Beauregard, whom Grégoire terms “mon ancien professeur.” The passage is given by Jauffret, with some slight variations, in his *Mémoires*, vol. i. p. 213. Jauffret speaks of the sermon in which it occurs as having been preached *three* years before the Revolution.

churches and chapels in Paris were closed. Some, however, were soon reopened for the new cult, and the example of Paris was largely followed throughout France under the guidance of the deputies *en mission*, seconded by the generals, judges, and administrators, and supported by "the loud applause and aves vehement" of the "people."<sup>1</sup> It is said that within twenty days over two thousand churches were converted into Temples of Reason. Shortly the new religion completed by a decree of the Convention bestowing on Marat—to quote the official language—"the sublime honour of apotheosis." "And so," as M. de Pressensé pungently remarks, "it had prostitutes for Goddesses, and a man of blood and mud for a martyr and Saint."<sup>2</sup> But, on the other hand, it had for its arch-enemy Robespierre, who quickly made an end of its chief apostles and evangelists, sending to the scaffold Chaumette, Clootz, and even Momoro, the husband, or vice-husband, of the Goddess of Reason, in company with Hébert, Gobel, and others of the same persuasion. Having thus made straight the paths for his own religion, he proceeded to recommend it to the Convention, on the 8th of May, 1794, in a discourse wherein he dwelt upon "the utter inadequacy of Atheism to

<sup>1</sup> M. Aulard describes this worship of "Reason" as "an expedient of national defence" ("un expédient de défense nationale")! *Le Culte de la Raison et le Culte de l'Être Suprême. Avant Propos.*

<sup>2</sup> *L'Église et la Révolution Française*, p. 280.

meet the innate convictions of the human conscience," and recommended the Assembly to recall men to the pure worship of the Supreme Being. The Convention manifested, in complying with this summons to the pure worship of the Être-Suprême, as much alacrity as they had shown six months before in adopting the impure worship of Momoro's concubine; indeed, it not only decreed his existence, but voted him a festival on the 20th of Prairial—the 8th of June. Accordingly, when the appointed day arrived, the feast of the new Deity was celebrated with becoming splendour in the gardens of the Tuileries, Robespierre, as President of the Convention, pontificating. In a basin, situated in the middle of the gardens, David the painter, who was in charge of the arrangements, had constructed with pasteboard a colossal group supposed to represent Atheism sustained by Ambition, Discord, and False Simplicity. Robespierre, after a discourse <sup>1</sup> inveighing against kings and tyrants, and extolling his Être-Suprême, descended into the basin and set fire to the images there. It had been devised that from their ashes should arise a statue "with front calm and serene," to symbolise Divine Wisdom, but unfortunately this work of art made its appearance

<sup>1</sup> His admirers likened him, on this occasion, to Orpheus. Thus, in Boissy d'Anglas' *Essai sur les fêtes nationales*, we read, "Robespierre parlant de l'Être-Suprême au peuple le plus éclairé du monde, me rapellait Orphée enseignant aux hommes les principes de la civilisation et de la morale."



in a villainously besmirched condition.<sup>1</sup> Nothing dismayed, however, by that accident, the Pontiff proceeded, at the head of the Convention, to the Champ de Mars, where on a sham mountain had been erected an "altar of the country" with a tree on the top—presumably a tree of Liberty. There, as an eye-witness puts it, "Robespierre expectorated further rhetoric," and the proceedings were enlivened by a hymn to the Supreme Being composed by Chenier, in which it is alleged that the murder of the King was inspired by that Deity.

"Quand du dernier Capet la criminelle rage  
Tombait d'un trône impur, écroulé sous nos coups,  
Ton invisible bras guidait notre courage,  
Tes foudres marchaient devant nous."

Of course, no intelligent student of history in judging of its phenomena will forget that large allowance must be made for national character and temperament. Still it is difficult to contemplate Robespierre's festival of the Être-Suprême without recalling Butler's question whether whole nations might go mad. Carlyle speaks of the French as "a people prone to monomania." And whether or no we agree with him as to that, there are probably few Englishmen who will dissent from his opinion that the record of this business of the Être-Suprême is "the shabbiest page of

<sup>1</sup> Which gave Sénart occasion, some weeks afterwards, for the witticism, "*La Sagesse de Robespierre est restée terne, et lui-même est mort en prouvant qu'il avait manqué de sagesse.*"

human annals": that "Mumbo-Jumbo of the African woods seems venerable beside Robespierre's new Deity, for this is a *conscious* Mumbo-Jumbo and knows that he is machinery." But stripped of Robespierre's verbiage and theatricalities, the religion which he wished to establish was Rousseau's Deism, and nothing else. M. Aulard truly says that certain parts of the *Émile*, and the last page of the *Contrat Social*, prepared the way for the Fête of the 20th of Prairial. The votaries of the Goddess of Reason, naturally enough, disliked the new cult, but, warned by the fate of Chaumette and Cloutz and Momoro, they did not venture to offer any resistance to it. "That cursed Robespierre," one of them complained, "has thrown us back ten years with his Être-Suprême whom no one was thinking of: we were getting on famously: he has spoilt all." It seems hardly open to doubt that a Goddess of Reason, "ripe and real," was a divinity more to the taste of most Frenchmen than Robespierre's shadowy abstraction, of whom, indeed, the vast majority could make nothing. Grégoire tells us of a man who, summoned to a communal assembly, thought that the question before the meeting was of electing an Être-Suprême.<sup>1</sup> And there seems to have been a prevalent opinion that, whether owing his place to election or not, the new Deity was a successful rival of "le bon Dieu." Of course, the deputies *en mission* hastened to

<sup>1</sup> Grégoire, *Histoire des Sectes Religieuses*, vol. i. p. 102.

introduce his worship throughout France, and the terrorised populace had to profess it. Naturally, glorious accounts of its triumphs was sent to the Convention. Thus a *juge de paix* of the Canton of Saugé reports to that body "a simple matter, but enough to show how this belief, free from senseless and superstitious practices, will propagate the reign of fraternity." The simple matter was this: that at the Fête of the Être-Suprême, one Trocheteau, an apostate and married constitutional *curé*, gave his hand to the *citoyenne* Levêque, a Protestant, and embraced her.<sup>1</sup>

Notwithstanding, however, enthusiastic official reports such as this, it is certain that the worship of the Être-Suprême did not catch on; and, of course, the guillotining of its author did not help it. Intelligent men perceived that a cult with more warmth, more colour, so to speak, was wanted. Hence the invention of Theophilanthropy, a religion, indeed, without mystery and without dogma, but with much histrionic display. Larevellière Lépaux, a member of the Directory, is sometimes spoken of as its founder. But this appears not to have been so. He expressly denies it in his *Mémoires*, and I do not know why, in this matter, he should not be believed. It seems to have been excogitated by one Haüy, brother of the famous chemist of that name, assisted by four others who were described as "pères de famille." This Haüy was the director of an asylum for the

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 112.

blind, where was a disused chapel which served for the first home of the new sect. But if Larevellière Lépaux was not the founder of Theophilanthropy, he was assuredly its most zealous, devoted, and influential adherent. Indeed, we may say that it was his hobby. He was a furious Jacobin, breathing out threatenings and slaughter against Christianity ; but he was wise enough to discern the desirability of providing something to replace it, and he supposed himself to have found that something in Theophilanthropy. Through his influence the Theophilanthropists obtained possession of some of the chief churches of Paris, Saint-Jaques - du - Haut - Pas, Saint - Nicolas - des - Champs, Saint-Germain-l'Auxerron, Saint-Sulpice, Saint-Gervais, Saint-Thomas-d'Aquin, Saint-Etienne-du-Mont, Saint-Médard, Saint-Roch, Saint Eustache. Indeed, in 1796 they invaded Notre Dame, and the choir and the organ of that church were assigned to them. Their difficulty, indeed, was not to get churches, but congregations. The chief authority on their tenets and rites is the *Manuel* of Chemin Dupontés, which, by the way, was distributed gratis throughout France by direction of the Minister of the Interior. Perhaps I should rather speak of their tenet than of their tenets, for the sole article of their creed seems to have been belief in a Deity who bears a suspicious likeness to Robespierre's Être-Suprême. They celebrated their rites on the *décadi*, their clergy, if the word may be permitted, being for the most

part apostate constitutional priests and *ci-devant* Protestant pastors. These gentlemen were clad in sky-blue tunics, with red belts and a long white robe open in front. They included in their communion all beliefs except the Catholic. On the Festival of Toleration they set up their banners for tokens, each being inscribed with the name of some religious sect. In their assemblies, it is stated, passages were read from Confucius, Vyasa, Zoroaster, Theognis, Cleanthes, Socrates, Aristotle, La Bruyère, Voltaire, Rousseau, William Penn, and Franklin, but the Christian Bible was tabooed. In imitation of the Catholic religion they had ceremonies for the various circumstances of life—infancy, marriage, and death—parodies of the Christian rites. Hymns were copiously employed in their churches. The sect lasted, in spite of ridicule, as long as the Directory lasted, and, indeed, a little longer; it was finally excluded from the “National Edifices” by a decree of the consuls on the 5th of October, 1801, and shortly after disappeared.

## XI

So much as to the substitutes for Christianity which the Revolution in its first fervour introduced into France. They were tried and found wanting. Perhaps their chief practical effect was to accelerate the Christian reaction which, in spite of military

commissions and deportations and manifold murders, set in under the Directory. No doubt the extent of that reaction has been exaggerated. For a statement made by Bishop Lecoc in August, 1797, and widely repeated, that forty thousand communes had returned to Catholic worship, no evidence has ever been produced, and there is a vast assemblage of facts which discredit it. Still, that there was a reaction—a considerable reaction—is undeniable.<sup>1</sup> At the beginning of 1798 Bonaparte, who, at all events, had eyes, whatever else he lacked, wrote to Clarke “On est redevenu Catholique Romain en France.” Probably the present rulers of that country will not attempt to set up a new religion of their own. The ill-success of the three which we have been considering, notwithstanding a vast amount of State support, affords them no encouragement for such an undertaking. They appear to be content to rest in sheer Atheism, to hold the view expounded in Proudhon’s *Popular Revolutionary Catechism*: “Qu’il n’y a pas de puissance et de justice au dessus et en dehors de l’homme : et que nier Dieu c’est affirmer l’homme unique et véritable souverain de ses destinées.” That is the creed with

<sup>1</sup> Some very striking details illustrative of the Catholic revival in 1798 will be found in the second volume of Jauffret’s *Mémoires*, pp. 472–512. The Abbé Sicard, in his interesting work, *Les Evêques de France pendant la Révolution*, gives it as the result of his careful statistics, that at the beginning of the Consulate there were 28,000 priests in France, 6000 of them being constitutional clergy of whom not more than one-half exercised their ministry.

which the children of France are being indoctrinated. But can society be carried on with such a creed? It is a question to which history supplies no answer, for the experiment has never been tried. The First Napoleon, we may note, thought not. "Il me faut," he observed on one occasion, "des élèves qui sauront être des hommes. On n'est pas homme sans Dieu. L'homme sans Dieu, je l'ai vu à l'œuvre en 1793. Cet homme-là, on ne le gouverne pas : on le fusille."

## CHAPTER III

### THE ANTI-CHRISTIAN CRUSADE

#### I

WE considered in the last Chapter the anti-Christian legislation of the Revolution. In this I propose to give some details of atrocities perpetrated in anticipation or in pursuance of that legislation. It is curious to reflect how soon the movement, of which the New France is the outcome, developed the character of an anti-Christian crusade. It may be fully admitted that there was nothing anti-Christian in its inception. The summoning of the States-General was a vindication of popular rights which had come down from the Ages of Faith. Their solemn opening was hallowed by the most august act of Catholic worship. The demand for reforms in Church and State made by the *cahiers*—whatever exception may be taken to some of them—were, on the whole, congruous with the first principles of religion and morality. But a year had barely passed away before the Revolutionary movement stood self-revealed in its true character. The 14th of July,



1789, was marked by the capture of the royal fortress of the Bastille and the assassination of its little garrison—a cowardly crime which not only went unpunished, but was exalted by the popular imagination into an act of heroism, and is still glorified as such by a national fête. It was the beginning of the revolt against ordered government which was to lay the French Monarchy in the dust, and to issue in “red ruin and the breaking up of laws.” And it was distinctly and directly anti-Christian. In France, as in the rest of Christendom, the precepts: “Fear God,” “Honour the King,” were revered as resting upon the same divine authority. Obedience to the powers that be was regarded as a religious duty—not indeed the passive obedience preached by the Anglican clergy, under the Stuarts, but the *rationabile obsequium* inculcated by the great Catholic moralists.<sup>1</sup> The taking of the Bastille was a denial of the duty of civil obedience, the proclamation of a so-called right of insurrection—a “sacred” right it is sometimes denominated by politicians to whom little else is sacred.

But still more directly and avowedly anti-Christian was the attack of the mob—the first fruits of the Revolution—upon St. Lazar on 12th of July. The Bastille had an ugly record and might well have seemed a monument of self-condemned tyranny. Very different was it as regards St. Lazar. Nothing but hatred of the Christian religion

<sup>1</sup> As to the which, see p. 9.

could have prompted the raid upon the house of St. Vincent of Paul : an institution which was one of the vastest agencies of beneficence in France, or, indeed, in the world : an institution existing chiefly for the people, and assuredly not tainted by the misuse of public authority or by the abuses of arbitrary power. A century and a half before the French Revolution broke out, St. Vincent of Paul had accepted this disused hospital for lepers as a home for his congregation. During that century and a half his work had marvellously prospered. In 1788 his congregation had seventy-seven houses in France, five in Poland, fifty-six in Italy, Spain, and Portugal. So much for Europe. In Asia they were dotted about from Constantinople to Peking. In Algiers and Tunis his priests were to be found by the side of the galley slaves held in bitter bondage in those countries.

In France the number of charitable institutions when the Revolution broke out was immense. There was hardly a parish which had not some foundation for the relief of its indigent, some Hôtel Dieu served by the brothers or sisters, or ladies of charity, of St. Vincent of Paul. Then again there were the Foundling Hospitals, the homes for young girls who had gone astray, for widows and virgins who wished, without formal vows, to devote themselves to the service of the poor, for the insane, the blind and the incurable.

The centre of all this good work was the vast enclosure known as St. Lazar, where there were

some four hundred residents—priests, novices, young students in philosophy or theology, forty-eight laics, and some pensioners. It was under the rule of a Superior-General who shared fully in the laborious and ascetic life of the rest, his sole privilege being to entertain two poor men, one on each side of him, at dinner. Side by side with the habitation of these religious, was the dwelling of the Sisters of Charity, who were under their direction—they were some hundred and fifty, with ninety postulants. On the night of 12th July the Revolution invaded this peaceful home of religion and charity. Two hundred ruffians armed with poniards, guns, lances, hatchets, broke open the principal door of the house and began to devastate the place, encouraging one another by the cry, “Comrades, liberty.” After some hours of aimless and wanton destruction these missionaries of liberty made their way to the refectory. Having devoured all the food on which they could lay their hands, they proceeded to despoil that noble hall, cutting to pieces the hundred and sixty portraits of benefactors with which it was hung, and destroying the windows, the woodwork and the furniture. Thence they betook themselves to the library, where fifty thousand volumes were hacked to pieces by them. The treasures of the museum then engaged their attention and anything capable of being stolen was purloined. The room in which St. Vincent de Paul lived and died was next invaded: the cherished memorials of

him were dispersed,<sup>1</sup> and his statue was broken in pieces. At ten o'clock in the morning the missionaries of liberty invented a pretext for their atrocities in the assertion that the congregation had stores of concealed grain—an allegation for which, as was abundantly proved, there was no shadow of foundation.

We may regard, then, as it seems to me, the attack upon St. Lazar as the opening of the Revolutionary crusade against Christianity. And I would beg of my readers to remember—what is forgotten or ignored by most historians—that it was just this furious hatred of the Catholic Church, this blind zeal, this mad rage for persecuting her, which was the distinctive mark, the special note of the Revolution from 1789 to 1799. Bishop Cousseau was not wrong when he called the authors of the Civil Constitution the elder brothers of the murderers of September. During those ten years there were diversities of operation but the same spirit. To eradicate the Catholic religion from France was the supreme end. It was for this object that the Legislative and Constituent Assemblies set up a schismatic Church, requiring adhesion to it under penalties. The Convention did not want any Church at all. After a series of anti-religious measures, they addressed to the Communes suggestions for the cessation of public worship, and, of course, received the answers they

<sup>1</sup> On 14th July many of the relics which had been thrown into the street and courtyard were recovered.

desired. Of the exploits of the Convention in promoting the cult of the Goddess of Reason and in receiving the abjuration of Gobel and his company, I spoke in the last Chapter. I also touched on their legislation for furthering the apostacy of the poor remnant of the Constitutional clergy. In the French Revolution the political question fell altogether into insignificance by the side of the religious. It became a crusade for the dechristianization of France and all the powers of the State were unscrupulously devoted to that end until the fall of the Directory. The end was not realized in spite of guillotines, military commissions, deportations, drownings and numberless other horrors extending through ten miserable years. The gates of hell did not prevail.

## II

The details of this life and death struggle are not given with adequate fullness in any of the formal histories of the French Revolution. A few lines, or it may be a page or two, have been devoted by some to certain of the more colossal atrocities such as the massacre at the Carmes, the savageries of Fouché and Collet d'Herbois, or the atrocious tortures inflicted on priests deported to the Isle of Oléron and French Guiana, but the full story is left untold, of hellish cruelty on the one hand, of divine heroism on the other. We turn in vain

to Thiers, Mignet, Louis Blanc, Lamartine, Michelet, for the history of the crusade against Christianity. Instead of facts, they present us with excuses, legends, and, I fear I must say, lies. M. Biré has truly observed that more is to be learnt on this subject from the few pages of Balzac's *Un Épisode sous la Terreur* than from the whole of their volumes. We find the real history of those times, written as with blood and tears, in documents such as those preserved for us in Bishop Baruel's excellent book, in the pages of Bishop Jauffret's *Mémoires*, and in the venerable Abbé Carron's most pathetic volumes. It has, however, been thought that a general and, as far as possible, complete martyrology of the Catholics who suffered during the French Revolution should be compiled. We are told "Pretiosa in conspectu Domini mors sanctorum ejus." And assuredly the histories of those heroes of the faith, resisting unto blood, should be precious to all whose sympathies are with truth and righteousness.

But the foundation of this so desirable work must be sought in local memoirs, diocesan monographs, and the like ; and with the sanction and encouragement of many of the Bishops of France a beginning has been made. Thus, the Abbé Delarc has given us an admirable volume, *L'Église de Paris pendant la Révolution française* (1789-1801). The Abbé Odon has written a pathetic and illuminating account of the martyrdom of the Carmelites of Compiègne. M. Lallié has published

a most praiseworthy work, *Le Diocèse de Nantes pendant la Révolution*, in the course of which he sketches the instructive career of M. Julien Minée, the constitutional Bishop of the Loire Inférieure. The Abbé Bourgain's *L'Église d'Angers pendant la Révolution* consists of fourteen conferences and has all the vigour, the actuality, which should characterize that kind of composition. The Abbé Bossard has given us a new chapter in the Acts of the Vendean Martyrs. M. l'Abbé Bauzon and M. l'Abbé Muguet have collected authentic details of the persecution in the Department of Sâone-et-Loire ; and M. Anatole Charmasse has supplied a pendant to this work in his biography of Gouttes, constitutional Bishop of that region, who is traditionally believed to have had the grace, before he was guillotined, to retract his adhesion to the Civil Constitution and to reconcile himself with the Church. To the history of the diocese of Saint Brieuc during the Revolution, two volumes have been furnished by an episcopal Commission. It is a subject of peculiar interest, because Brittany had the bad eminence of being foremost in receiving the shibboleths of the Revolution and in devising refinements of cruelty against the orthodox priests. The life and death of the Abbé Talhouët have been treated by M. Goeffroy in a fascinating study, to which he has given the title of *Un Curé d'autrefois*. We owe to the Abbé J. P. C. Blanchet a graphic account of the clergy of the Department de la Charente during the Revolution, and to the Abbé

Justin Gary,<sup>1</sup> what he calls a *Notice sur le clergé de Cahors pendant la Révolution*. The history of the Ursulines of Bordeaux during the Terror and under the Directory has been written by the Abbé H. Lelièvre in a volume of singular power.

### III

I have been led to enumerate the twelve books mentioned in the preceding paragraph, not because they are superior in interest and importance to many others of the kind, but because they have been briefly reviewed in M. Biré's *Le Clergé de France pendant la Révolution 1789-1799*, a work to which I wish to call attention both on account of its intrinsic merits, and of its modest dimensions. The extracts from the publications with which it deals are full of the most pathetic interest, and it may serve to send some readers to the sources from which it is drawn—readers who will realize the truth of the proverb, “*Melius est petere fontes quam sectari rivulos.*” I shall proceed to quote a few pages from it.

First take the following account of the murder of the Abbé Belouart, who suffered, like the early martyrs, for the *Name* of Jesus :

“On January 6th, 1796, he was apprehended and shut up in a chapel whence, when the night was well advanced, they

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<sup>1</sup> The Abbé Gary's work is a republication, with valuable additions, of the Abbé Floras' *Mémoire*.



took him into a neighbouring field, where they massacred him with their bayonets. All his body was so pierced with bayonet thrusts in the back, head, sides, and belly that his entrails fell out. When the wretches heard him utter the names of Jesus and Mary they cried, 'Ah le sacre b——, he pronounces the name of Jesus. Give it to him with your bayonet.' According to the report of his murderers, the more he uttered the name of Jesus the more thrusts of the bayonet did he receive. In conducting him to the place of his punishment they all had lighted candles as a token of their triumph."

Next, let me speak of another priest to whom fell the rare distinction of being guillotined in his sacerdotal vesture. On the 21st of February, 1794, as he was about to say Mass, and had put on his chasuble, he was seized by the "patriots," and his butchers insisted that he should die in his vestments. He was dragged round the town, amid the sobs and tears of the faithful, and when he had arrived before the scaffold he crossed himself and began the Psalm, *Introibo ad altare Dei*. It is worth while to quote six lines of a very beautiful sonnet which Louis Veuillot has consecrated to the memory of the Abbé Noël Pinot :

" L'échaufaud attendait. La canaille féroce  
Veut qu'avant d'y monter, l'homme du sacerdoce  
Prenne l'habit sacré. Cet ordre est obéi.

" Le prêtre alors, signant son front de patriarche,  
Tranquille, met le pied sur la première marche,  
Et dit : *Introibo ad altare Dei*."

Surely this is a scene which ought never to be forgotten.

I will now briefly relate the martyrdom of six Ursulines of Bordeaux—an episode of the persecution in that city. Anne Gassiot, in religion Sister Saint Ursula, had been professed seven years when the delegates of the municipality invited her to take advantage of the “beneficent” decree of the Legislative, enabling her to quit the religious life. But, like the other thirty-nine Ursulines of the Community of Bordeaux, she did not wish to avail herself of this privilege. On the 1st of October, 1792, however, she was turned out of her convent, with the other religious, and took refuge in the house of the Abbé Boyé, who was then administering the diocese. She undertook the dangerous and difficult task of carrying his correspondence. She also undertook the task, hardly less perilous, of messenger of the Association for the Adoration of the Sacred Heart. Two “patriots” denounced her.

She was arrested and imprisoned, and, together with five other religious, was brought before a military commission. This is an extract from the official record of her trial.

“The Commission after hearing the answers of the accused and the different documents regarding them,

“Convinced that the women Briolle, Maret, Dumeau, Gassiot, Lebret and Girot have assisted, in various private houses, at religious services conducted by refractory priests, that notwithstanding the efforts of the tribunal and the means of persuasion employed by it, they have declared in open court, that they have heard the mass of the said priests, and know where they are, but will not say.

“Convinced that in all respects they ought to be classed as counter revolutionists and accomplices of perfidious priests, the most cruel and dangerous enemies of the country.

“Orders that in accordance with the law of the 27th March and that of the 29th of Ventôse they shall suffer the pain of death, declares their goods confiscated to the benefit of the Republic, and directs that the present judgment shall be executed forthwith on the *Place Nationale* of this Commune.”

A few minutes after the sentence was pronounced Anne Gassiot and her companions appeared on the place of execution. Their faces were irradiated by a peace and gladness not of this world. It was that celestial light, unknown to Pagan antiquity and reserved for Christian centuries: “*ibant gaudentes a conspectu consilii quoniam digni habiti sunt pro nomine Jesu contumeliam pati.*” On ascending the Rue Bouffard the six victims intoned *Veni Creator Spiritus*. Arrived at the *Place Nationale* they lifted their eyes and saw the cleaver of the guillotine shining in the rays of the sun. It was five o’clock in the evening—“*in tempore sacrificii vespertini.*” Neither their heart nor their voice failed them. To the hymn *Veni Creator* succeeded the antiphon, so dear to St. Theresa and to Angela Merici. *Salve Regina* began one of the martyrs, and the rest took it up: *Mater miserecordiæ, vita dulcedo et spes nostra salve.* The words ceased as one head fell after another: and then some “patriots” clapped their hands and shouted *Vive la République*.

## IV

In the last Chapter I touched briefly upon the torture of deportation specially affected by the Directory; a torture often ending in madness and death, and inflicted upon hundreds of priests, innocent of any crime save that of refusing to deny Christ. I will now give a detailed account of the sufferings of one of them, as related by a distinguished Frenchman of letters, speaking out of the fullness of knowledge. Towards the end of May, 1794, a great number of ecclesiastics of the diocese of Angoulême were brought to Rochfort and huddled together, with several hundreds of clerics from other departments, on two rafts or pontoons where they endured unimaginable horrors. Among them was the Abbé de Féletz who did not succumb to his tortures. He eventually became a member of the French Academy, and M. Désiré Nisard, who, on his decease, succeeded to his *fauteuil*, spoke of this episode of his career in admirable words,<sup>1</sup> which I will translate, however inadequately.

“The Convention had wished to appropriate the punishment to the condition of the victims. Of the priests huddled together on board the *Two Associates* and the *Washington*, it made so many martyrs. During the day it penned them on half of the deck which was separated by a grating from the

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<sup>1</sup> M. Biré justly remarks, “Cette belle page académique est une belle page d’histoire.”

crew. This was their yard. There, with the mouths of cannon charged with grape shot, continually pointed at them, on foot, without tables, without seats, without books—even their manuals of devotion had been taken from them—overwhelmed by cold, hunger, inaction, spied upon, insulted, and, under pretext of plotting, searched by the cupidity of their gaolers, as though their clothes in rags could conceal anything but their nudity—all this suffering appeared to them as a deliverance compared with what awaited them at night. The night was eleven hours long : eleven hours which they were obliged to pass in a between decks five feet high where the air and the light penetrated by only two hatches. Planks adjusted all round, breast high, served for beds to a certain number of them. Others slept below, and on the bare floor. The rest piled themselves up, some on the middle of the between decks, in closely packed lines, spread out on the side, for want of room : others in hammocks each containing two men, and hanging close to the faces of those who lay below. The vision which the affrighted imagination presents of such an agglomeration of men in so small a space, men many of whom were infirm and nearly all ill, what picture could equal ? The régime of the hulks at Rochfort was that of a negro slaver, with this difference, that the owners were in a hurry to throw their cargo into the sea. As soon as each, crawling, had dragged himself to his place, often the officer on duty would appear at the entry of the dungeon, lantern in hand, pushing before him into the gulf some new prisoner, whom he would pleasantly counsel to lie across the others, promising him the first place that a dead man should vacate. The poor wretch had not long to wait. In those endless nights how often would piercing cries, and a noise of people who seemed to be scuffling in the darkness below, announce that delirium had converted into a raging lunatic one who had perhaps been the quietest and most resigned of those sufferers ! So, often, began an illness on board the hulks at Rochfort ; and it did not last long. Happy were they who escaped by a sudden death the tender mercies of the infirmarians of the Convention. Instances were not unfrequent. One night M. de Féletz felt a head

pressing on him more heavily than usual, and gently asked his neighbour to move a little ; but no notice was taken. He then supposed that the man was asleep and said nothing more, not wishing to rob the poor wretch of this short respite. Next morning when the first rays of light penetrated by the hatches, he understood that his shoulder had served all night as a funeral pillow for a corpse. The invalids among the deported were placed on the boats of the two rafts, where the cold, the water which soaked their wretched couches, the rolling, the want of help, soon brought them to their end. Every time one of them died, a flag was hoisted on the boat and the crew, thus informed that the Republic counted an enemy the less, shouted, hat in hand, *Vive la République*. Hardly a day passed but that some boat carried off one or more dead to the Isle of Aix which had become the cemetery of the *déportés*. Sometimes there were as many as fourteen of them in less than two days. Those who were strong dug with their hands the ditches in the sand of the shore, and the dead were deposited there in silence, without any external signs of religion, without a prayer.”<sup>1</sup>

## V

I will end my citations with an extract from the Abbé Sicard's book *Les Evêques pendant la Révolution* giving a graphic account of an ordination in 1800 by Mgr. d'Aviau, Archbishop of Vienne. From 1797 this holy and devoted prelate had been visiting his desolate diocese—they were three years of a truly apostolic life, of journeys by night, of perpetual hiding, of constant watching. On one occasion, we read, the Archbishop and his

<sup>1</sup> Quoted by M. Biré, pp. 307-310.

companion arrived in the late evening at a château near Briançon, and the domestic taking them from their garb for beggars, lodged them in a hayloft, but being led to suspect from the length of their prayers that they were priests, went to tell the châtelaine about them. She begged them to come to her, and after a curious interrogation discovered who they were, and threw herself at the feet of the Archbishop, thanking God for sending her such a guest.

It was at Monestière, in the mountains of the Ardèche, that the ordination took place, the time being the dead of night, and the place the barn of the presbytery, the walls of which had been hung with some rough cloths. There the young men who sought to dedicate themselves to the ministry, received sacred orders from the hands of the venerable and much-tried pastor, who addressed them as follows :

“ My dear children, if ever vocation was inspired from on high is it not yours ? Is it not God Himself who has called you ? Is it not He who has put into your heart this generous resolution ? Oh, surely flesh and blood have nothing to do here to-day. What should *they* seek in the sanctuary ? There are no more riches, no more benefices, no more honours. The temples have been devastated, the altars broken down, the priests imprisoned, banished, slaughtered, nay, what do I say ? The scaffold still stands ready, the prisons are crowded with ecclesiastics, the lands of exile have not given us back our banished ones. These locks, these chains, these blood-stained axes, have they no terror for you ? ” <sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> P. 449.

No ! these things had no terror for those young Christian athletes, to whom the measure of all things was the Cross of Christ. They had looked them in the face. And it is well that we, too, should look them in the face, and realize what the French Revolution was—what it is. Yes: *is*. “Marvel not, my brethren,” an Apostle exhorted, “if the world hate you.” The French Revolution is an expression of that hatred, the bitterest, the most venomous. The ethos of the men in power to-day in France is precisely that of their predecessors at whose deeds we have been glancing. They boast themselves the representatives of “the giants of 1793,” and if they have not as yet been able to emulate the exploits of their spiritual ancestors, may they not fairly plead lack of opportunity? May they not claim also that they have done what they could? To have chased the religious communities from France, while stealing their property, to have confiscated the miserable pittance doled out to the French Church in lieu of its ancient revenues, to have appropriated its houses, to have made attendance at the public offices of religion a virtual disqualification for the service of the State, and to have converted the primary schools of France into nurseries of Atheism—surely this is something considerable. And the end is not yet. The time may be at hand when it will be open to them to fill up more fully the measure of Robespierre and Chaumette, of Fouché and Collot d’Herbois.



## CHAPTER IV

### A TYPICAL JACOBIN

#### I

SOME years ago I ventured to remark to a distinguished French historian that Joseph Fouché might be regarded as “la Révolution faite homme.” My friend, a man of few and well-weighed words, after brief reflection replied, “Il me semble que vous avez raison.” Fouché is singularly conspicuous among the founders of the New France. His astonishing career throws a flood of light upon the times and is therefore well worth studying, whatever estimate we may form of the man. Most of his contemporaries held him in great disesteem, Liar, cheat, assassin, traitor, nay, *fanfaron de trahisons*, were epithets which they freely applied to him. Napoleon, summoning up, at St. Helena, remembrance of things past, called him *ce coquin*, and expressed poignant regret at not having hanged him. On the other hand, the Duke of Wellington does not seem to have thought him more unprincipled than most politicians, and had a kindly feeling for him. That was the case, too,

with Metternich ; and he was on terms of intimate friendship—purely platonic, be it noted—with Madame de Custine, with Madame de Rémusat, with Madame Récamier, and with many other charming and accomplished women. The literature about him is enormous ; but happily it has been thoroughly investigated—I may say winnowed—by M. Louis Madelin, whose two ample volumes<sup>1</sup> supply a long-felt want in French literature. This monumental work is the first attempt to present a complete life of Fouché. Its author gives us to understand that he was engaged upon it for six years. They must have been six years of unremitting toil, which the result thoroughly justifies. M. Madelin has used his abundant materials with discrimination and impartiality. Moreover, his book is not merely a biography. It may truly be described as being also an essay in psychology, unpretentious, indeed, but not, on that account, of the less value. In what I am about to write I shall freely use it.

## II

Joseph Fouché was born in 1759 at Pellerin, five leagues from Nantes. He came of a good middle-class family belonging to the French mercantile marine—a more adventurous calling then

<sup>1</sup> Paris : Plon-Nourrit, 1901.

than now, for, owing to the constant hostilities with the English, there was in it an element of war. At nine he was sent to the College of the Oratorians at Nantes to learn "grammar and the humanities"; but arithmetic, physics, the exact sciences, had a greater attraction for him. It was soon decided that he was unfit for a seafaring career on account of his delicate health; and he continued his studies with the Oratorians, who, since the expulsion of the Jesuits, had had the higher education of France in their hands. In 1781, having received the tonsure,<sup>1</sup> he removed to their Seminary in Paris, where, among other students, who were to be damned to everlasting flame for participation in the worst atrocities of the French Revolution, were Joseph Lebon, Ysabeau, and Billaud-Varennes. He himself came much under the influence of a pious priest, Père Merault of Biszy, of whose "angelic soul" he wrote forty years afterwards, declaring that it had penetrated his own. Clearly the effect of the alleged penetration was not lasting; but there can be no doubt that down to the year 1792 he was a devout Oratorian. He took his colour, then as always, from his surroundings. After teaching in various Oratorian institutions, he was sent in 1788 to the college at Arras, as professor of physics. Here he

<sup>1</sup> That is to say, he was admitted to minor orders; he never went further in the ecclesiastical career. M. Wallon, therefore, is in error—an error shared by many other writers—when he speaks of him as "prêtre défroqué, moine apostat." He was neither a priest nor a monk.

came under the influence of the new ideas which found expression in the French Revolution ; and here he made the acquaintance of Robespierre, then an advocate, with little business, to whom he lent money, and to whose sister Charlotte he paid much attention, without, however, becoming actually affianced to her. In 1790 he was transferred to the Oratorian college at Nantes. There the Revolutionary doctrines were fermenting in the heads of many students, the consequence being an epidemic of anarchy. Fouché shortly became principal or prefect of the college, and laboured successfully to introduce order and discipline.

The old institutions of the country—the French Oratory <sup>1</sup> among them—were now crumbling away, sapped by the Revolutionary tide ; and Fouché, always “a man of circumstances,” as his biographer calls him—“opportunistic” does not seem a precise equivalent—watched keenly the signs of the times. He became a member of the Club of “Friends of the Constitution,” a liberal royalist society, if I may so speak, and in a few months he was elected its president. In 1792 the Oratory came to an end, and with it Fouché’s community life of celibacy. On the 17th of September, 1792, he married Mlle Coignard, daughter of the president of the administration of Nantes, a lady endowed with many excellent virtues, but of singularly

<sup>1</sup> A different institution from the Oratory of St. Philip Neri, though derived from it.

unprepossessing appearance.<sup>1</sup> Barras, a good judge, speaks of her "horrible ugliness"; and Vincenzo Monti applies to her the adjective "*brutta*." Fouché himself was, to say the least, as ill-favoured as his spouse—Michelet attributes to him "*une figure atroce*"—a fact which, later on, Robespierre, oddly enough, urged against him in the course of a general indictment. But he and his wife appear to have been indifferent to external parts and graces, and were unquestionably a devoted couple. Moreover, he always retained the simple and frugal habits, the gravity and austerity, which had marked his career as an Oratorian. M. Madelin, in an interesting page, traces the influence, visible throughout his career, of heredity and early education. The descendant of a family of sailors, the qualities of energy, self-confidence, and coolness, so necessary to seafaring men, and treasured up through long generations of them, were ever displayed by him. He knew too, instinctively, that it is of no use to sail against the wind; that in order to arrive, one must tack and sail with it. Again, though he was never ordained priest, his ecclesiastical training had imparted to him something sacerdotal. Even in his later years his correspondence teems with biblical

<sup>1</sup> Baron Despatys describes her as "*une femme maigre, rousse, aux pomettes osseuses, une vraie laideron*" (p. 11); he speaks of "*son caractère difficile, son humeur acariâtre*" (p. 250), and refers *passim* to her vulgarity and avarice. But to these defects and blemishes Fouché seems to have been blind. His marital fidelity was matter of wonder in those days.

phrases. One of his most striking characteristics was an absence of rancour; the readiness with which he pardoned—or perhaps I should say, ignored—injuries, even grave ones, was remarkable; and this he himself ascribes, in one of his letters, “au souvenir de la morale Oratorienne, qui était celle de l’Évangile.” To which may be added, that he possessed quite a clerical gift “à fréquenter, à ménager et à diriger la femme”—a gift of which he made full proof with women of very different types and positions. For Charlotte Robespierre, for Joséphine Beauharnais, for Élise Bonaparte, for Madame de Custine, he is “le grand ami,” the companion, the guide and the familiar friend. Moreover, as professor, he had acquired the art of managing men; he had “le sens gouvernemental.” One more debt he owed to his studious youth. Mathematician, physicist, chemist, he had learnt to state problems accurately; and this is the first step towards their solution.

### III

Fouché’s political life began in 1792 with his election to the National Convention as a deputy from Nantes, in the character of a Moderate, or, we may say, a Conservative. In the Convention he took his seat on the Right, to the displeasure of Robespierre, his old friend of Arras, and was numbered among the Girondins. He was appointed

to several Committees and took an active part in their labours. But all the time he was slowly gravitating towards the Left. When the question of the King's execution came up, he inclined at first against that crime ; but, perceiving that the majority was of the contrary opinion, he made no difficulty about following the multitude to do evil, and voted that the monarch be put to death, defending his vote by a violent pamphlet. This was the occasion of his leaving the Girondist party, and becoming the associate of Hébert and Chaumette. "*Esprit résolu et énergique*," says M. Madelin, "*il entendait aller jusqu'au bout de l'aventure. La parole était aux violents : il les dépassa tous, au moins en paroles.*" Such was the change wrought by a few weeks of political life—probably the most corrupting atmosphere in which a man can exist—on the Moderate and Conservative candidate who had won the suffrages of the electors of Nantes.

It was on the 13th of March, 1793, that Fouché was sent "*en mission*" to the west of France ; and there he made full proof of his readiness to carry out a policy of "*thorough*," which he himself seems gradually to have excogitated—the complete programme of what he called "*an integral revolution.*"<sup>1</sup> We should do him an injustice if we

<sup>1</sup> His letters to the Convention and the Committee of Public Safety—especially his letters from Lyons—are revolting in their utter savagery. That they expressed the real convictions of the man—cold, hard-headed, sceptical, caustic and, in private life, benevolent—is impossible. We must remember that one of the

supposed that he himself had any personal predilection for this integral revolution. But his aim was to be—or to seem to be—in the advanced guard of the extreme party, his adhesion to which had been cemented by the blood of the King. Hébert and Marat were at the height of their authority when he left Paris ; and it was his cue to show himself as good a Revolutionist as they. This was undoubtedly the secret of what M. Madelin calls “ the policy of demagogic exaltation ” which he displayed at Nantes, and which won him honour from the terrorists of Paris. The programme of “ the integral revolution ” was a monstrous amalgam of Jacobinism, Atheism and Communism. He was ever, let us remember, “ a man of circumstances ” ; and, at the moment, the faction of Hébert, Chaumette, Collot and Billaud was dressed in a little brief authority. So Fouché was, for the nonce, of their persuasion ; he was indeed the most daring theorist of their party, giving lessons of Jacobinism to Hébert, of Atheism to Chaumette, of Communism to the Commune of Paris. On the 27th of June, 1793, he caused himself to be designated Commissary of the Convention in the West and Centre ; and, after having installed the Revolutionary tribunal at Nantes, he left that city, amidst the maledictions of its inhabitants, soon to be succeeded there by his friend the notes of the Revolutionary spirit was utter ferocity. Bishop Gauffret says, with entire accuracy, “ Dans ce temps d’horreur, développer le moindre sentiment d’humanité était un crime digne de mort.”—*Mémoires*, ii. 261.



murderous Carrier. At Nevers, the next scene of his activity, he had the assistance of another friend, Chaumette, the apostle of official Atheism, whom he enthusiastically assisted, making churches the scene of horrible profanations, while over the gates of the cemeteries he caused the inscription to be put, "Death is an eternal sleep." One of his achievements was the establishment of a "philanthropic Committee," authorized by him to levy on the rich a tax proportioned to the number of the indigent. He also issued a proclamation abolishing mendicity and affirming that every one has a right to be comfortable, and ought to be made so at the expense of the State. He assumed, as pro-consul, the power of marrying and unmarrying people, and constituted himself a court of appeal in criminal cases. He invited the public authorities to substitute for the God of the priests the God of the *sansculottes*, without, however, affording any information concerning that Deity. Not only did he claim the privilege of arbitrary taxation; he also plundered the churches and châteaux of all the gold and silver which he could find, sending it to the Convention. Sacks of chalices, monstrances, coronets, dishes, forks and spoons, were poured out before the assembled legislators, to the satisfaction of some, to the disgust of others, among whom, to his credit, Robespierre must be reckoned. "Fouché," said his admiring colleague Chaumette, "has wrought miracles."

The Convention showed their appreciation of these performances by decreeing on the 30th of October, 1793, that Fouché and Collot d'Herbois should be sent to Lyons. That unhappy city had revolted against the rule of the Jacobin *canaille* who in the name of liberty had established the most grinding tyranny, in the name of philanthropy had shed torrents of blood, in the name of justice had violated man's most elementary rights. It had been besieged and captured by the Revolutionary troops, and now was awaiting its doom from the "patriots." That doom was conveyed in a decree from the Convention couched in these terms :

"The city of Lyons shall be destroyed. The portion of it inhabited by the rich shall be demolished. The name of Lyons shall be effaced from the map of the cities of the Republic. The houses which are left shall bear the designation of *Ville Affranchie*. On the ruins of Lyons shall be erected a column bearing the inscription, 'Lyons made war on Liberty : Lyons is no more.'"

Such was the decree which Collot d'Herbois and Fouché went to carry out. Collot, a drunken debauchee, was a monster of cruelty ; his feet were swift to shed blood ; and Lyons became a human slaughter-house. It was this *cabotin* who played the principal part in the atrocities endured by that miserable city. Fouché seems to have been chiefly his accomplice in the acts of "cannibalism"—that was the expression subsequently used in the Convention—committed in 1793 and 1794. Not, indeed, that Fouché can in the least

escape responsibility for them. His signature is appended to the most sanguinary edicts. He, too, it was who organized the processions which profaned the churches, broke down religious emblems, burnt crucifixes and the Gospels, and originated the cult of the infamous Châlier, a Jacobin most righteously executed during the revolt of Lyons, a worthy martyr of the new irreligion. "Châlier, Châlier!" he is reported to have said in a solemn discourse, "we swear by thy sacred image to avenge thy punishment; the blood of the aristocrats shall serve in the place of incense." The oath was more faithfully kept than most of Fouché's. The guillotine being insufficient for the work of massacre, the victims were arranged in batches before trenches which were to serve as their graves, and were shot down into them. At the same time people were plundered even of their garments, "the rich egoist" being bidden to tremble, as he may well have done.

Fouché designed to crown his work by introducing the religion of Reason invented by Chaumette; and the cathedral of Lyons was arranged for the installation of a goddess. But news came from Paris that Chaumette, with his new cult, was rapidly falling into discredit; that Danton had denounced his tomfooleries; that Hébert had repudiated his pontificate; and that he was suspect to Robespierre. The late Mr. Gladstone attributed his escape from "inconvenience in the race of life"—what a phrase!—to his faculty for

discerning “ the ripeness of questions ” : <sup>1</sup> in other words, of seeing to what quarter the political wind was veering. Fouché possessed in ample measure this valuable gift *de flairer le vent*. He abandoned the religion of Reason and devoted his energies to the propagation of Communism and the work of murder. What was called “ la terreur active ” was organized at Lyons. The crowded prisons had to be purged (*nettoyés*). The *mitraille* was called to the aid of the too slow guillotine ; and in three or four weeks more than two thousand inhabitants were massacred. Fouché and Collot wrote to the Convention, “ La terreur, la salutaire terreur est ici à l’ordre du jour.” But a great cry went up from the terrorised city—a city everywhere saturated with blood, enveloped by an atmosphere of putrefaction and death. A deputation presented itself before the Convention Collot d’Herbois was summoned to Paris to justify himself and his colleague. He appeared, terrified the cowardly Assembly, and won from it a vote of confidence. But Fouché was fully sensitive to the signs of the times. In December, 1793, Robespierre’s determination to put down the Hébertist faction was clearly manifested ; and before the year 1794 was far advanced, the heads of Danton, Desmoulins, Momoro, Clootz, and Hébert himself had fallen. Other prominent demagogues soon shared their fate. From one point of view this year 1794 is the brightest

<sup>1</sup> *The Irish Question*, p. 22.

of that miserable Revolutionary decade. It is some satisfaction to see the vile *canaille* who devastated France engaged in murdering one another. It gives us a glimpse, at all events, of that Eternal Justice ruling the world, without belief in which life would not be worth living. "Nec est lex justior ulla, Quam necis artifices arte perire sua."

## IV

On the 17th of Germinal, Year II. (6th April, 1794), Fouché left Lyons, recalled by the Convention to give the necessary information regarding the affairs of that city. He departed with an unquiet mind, but full of resolution and courage. At Paris his performances had been persistently discussed. He returned thither not as an obscure or ordinary commissary, but as one of the prominent chiefs of the Revolution, whose heavy hand had been laid upon one-fourth of the territory of France. He was commonly spoken of as "le fameux Fouché de Nantes," and was extolled by many as a pure democrat, which suggests an enquiry as to what manner of man an impure democrat may be. But the Convention, as M. Madelin remarks, must have been a terrible and threatening spectacle for him. A hundred empty places testified to Robespierre's "stern surgery," to borrow a phrase from Carlyle. Chaumette was

to be included in the next batch of victims. Tallien, Barras, Cambon, Carnot, Billaud-Varennes, Collot d'Herbois, were expecting their turn. Men's hearts were failing them for fear. And Fouché had as grave reason for apprehension as any one. Personal enmity and political conflict, old antipathies and recent grievances, an absolute opposition of temperament, of principles, of politics—all divided the Incorruptible from his quondam friend, the ex-professor of Arras. He was utterly out of sympathy with the Communistic views professed and applied by Fouché, whose sacrilegious performances and adhesion to Chaumette's atheistic worship of Reason filled him with disgust. M. Madelin observes, justly, that, little as the fact is recognized, the 9th of Thermidor was the consequence of a religious strife, of the conflict of two sects: the cult initiated in the person of Momoro's concubine and the cult of the "Être Suprême." One great quality, which assuredly cannot be denied to Fouché, is courage. The ill reception accorded to him when he called on Robespierre, on his return to Paris, sufficiently indicated the Incorruptible's hostility. Fouché felt that his head was in jeopardy; but he was not dismayed, even for a moment. He possessed a supreme genius for intrigue, as his whole career clearly manifests.

To follow here, in detail, the incidents of the game he played at this period would take too long. They will be found in the copious pages of M. Madelin. At one moment we see him President

of the Jacobin Club ; then he is formally expelled from it. That was for him the signal to redouble his activity. He joined himself to Tallien and Billaud, and with them put about, to the consternation of his fellow legislators, lists of the next victims said to be designated by Robespierre for the scaffold. His *sang-froid* was extreme, and so was his confidence. Of course, he was always talking of his probity, his integrity, and the like. " Yet a few days," he writes to his sister, " and Truth and Justice will have a striking triumph." Truth and Justice ! At all events, Fouché had a striking triumph on the 9th of Thermidor, when Robespierre fell. He was proud of it. A year afterwards he wrote to the Convention : " When Robespierre lorded it over you as master, when you bent your heads like slaves before the success of his crimes, when you rendered the most degrading homage to his ferocious and murderous tyranny, I it was who, almost alone, combated him." And so, many years later, he observed, " Robespierre had declared that my head or his must fall on the scaffold. His it was that fell." It must be confessed that the skill, energy and coolness with which Fouché conducted his patient, slow and secret operations merited this triumph. And yet one cannot survey the events of the 9th of Thermidor without reflecting how large a part what we call " accident " plays in history. It seems not too much to say that, if Robespierre had not been physically and mentally exhausted on

that memorable day, if Henriot<sup>1</sup> had not been drunk, if the gendarme Méda had been less bold, it would not have been the head of Maximilien that would have fallen, no, but the heads of Tallien, Collot, Billaud, Barras, and of the “génie ténébreux, profond, extraordinaire”—as Balzac well calls him—Fouché, who counselled, united and guided them.

## V

The overthrow of Robespierre was Fouché's first master-stroke in the Revolutionary history. He might have expected that it would place him in a position of security and influence. One immediate result of it was, indeed, to restore him to the Jacobin Club, where he was received with acclamation as a victim of the perfidious machinations of the dead tyrant. But he was soon

<sup>1</sup> Fouché writes in his *Mémoires*, i. 25, “Ce fut Henriot qui compromit, le 9 Thermidor (27 Juillet), la cause de Robespierre, dont il eut un moment le triomphe dans sa main. Qu'attendre aussi d'un ancien laquais ivre et stupide ?” As regards these two volumes of *Mémoires*, I cannot agree with the Baron Despatys (*Un Ami de Fouché*, p. 42) that “they present nothing of great interest.” It seems to me that they are full of matter in the highest degree both interesting and important. Nor can I doubt their virtual authenticity. It was called in question, indeed, in an action brought by Fouché's heirs in 1824; and a French Court decided against it. Nevertheless, I venture to think that the internal evidence warrants us in regarding them as, at all events, substantially Fouché's; “aut Fouché aut diabolus.” And I am glad to see that M. Madelin (Preface, xxviii) is of the same opinion.



alienated from his late anti-Robespierrian colleagues, Tallien, Barras and the rest, who now trod in the way of reaction. It can hardly have been, as M. Madelin observes, his "fragile convictions, his accommodating principles, his cold character," that withheld him from following them. No; doubtless, it was rather because he thought that way led to the counter-revolution and the restoration of Louis XVIII.; a consummation which, as a regicide, he could not view with equanimity, though—such is the irony of fate—he was destined, in the long run, to bring it about. But he was quite right in regarding his vote for the murder of the King as the great political mistake of his life. It ever hung over his impious neck, like the sword of Damocles, and at last—as we shall see later—it fell, cutting off, not indeed his head, but his career. Fouché, however, was to pass through many evolutions before that consummation. At the moment of which we are speaking he remained a terrorist. He was still associated with the extreme Mountain, and declared in the Convention that "every thought of indulgence is a contra-revolutionary thought." He succeeded, however, in avoiding the fate which overtook the majority of his Jacobin associates. Within a year, most of them had been guillotined or were rotting in Guiana. He escaped their doom, but only—if I may so speak—by the skin of his teeth. The odium of his atrocities at Nantes he managed to transfer to Carrier, his successor

there. Lebon was similarly his scapegoat for his deeds of blood at Arras. The denunciations of Tallien, now become a man of clemency and good principles, he met with a haughty defiance. He managed even to throw off responsibility for the savageries at Lyons, casting it upon Collot d'Herbois, who was condemned to Cayenne. To the accusations against him which came from Nevers, from Moulins, from Clamecy, he replied with his usual self-laudation, declaring that his soul was pure, nay more, holy and glorious ; that there was not an act of his, during his missions, which was not marked by the good faith of an unstained conscience, altogether occupied with social perfection and happiness ; and that, if he had committed any error, it was due to the fatality of circumstances. Such turgid rhetoric was in vogue at the time ; and doubtless this bombast pleased the ears of some of the Revolutionary legislators.<sup>1</sup> But Fouché, as is evident from his private letters, was well aware of the jeopardy in which he stood. The upshot was that by a large majority of the Convention his arrest was decreed. And that meant the Conciergerie, as a stepping-stone to the scaffold.

All might now have seemed hopelessly lost ; but M. Madelin well observes that nothing was hopelessly lost where Fouché was concerned. By

<sup>1</sup> M. Madelin truly remarks, " Dans les assemblées les faits pèsent peu et beaucoup, au contraire, les phrases retentissantes," i. 199.

the influence of Barras or Tallien or of some other friend, he escaped arrest. He proceeded to address to the Convention a letter in which he assumed the tone rather of an accuser than of an accused ; and in a subsequent epistle he declared that the judgment of posterity upon him would be " he was a good son, a good friend, a good husband, a good father and a good citizen." This is not precisely the judgment of posterity. What that judgment is we will consider later. But Fouché's letters had the effect which he desired—he remained at liberty. He proceeded to demand leave of absence for a few weeks, which was accorded to him. Those weeks he spent in plotting with Barras the *coup d'état* which came off on the 13th of Vendémiaire, when Napoleon's " whiff of grapeshot " was so effectively employed. This we may regard as Fouché's second master-stroke in the Revolutionary history. It was he, chiefly, who had planned it. It was he who wrote the document in which Barras defended it.

## VI

This whiff of grapeshot marks the end of the Convention's career, and, we may say, the beginning of Bonaparte's. Fouché avers in his *Mémoires* that " it restored to him liberty and honour." We may perhaps demur to the word " honour," but it certainly delivered him from the peril in

which he stood. He did not, however, derive from it, immediately, any other benefit. On the morrow of Vendémiaire he was literally buried in oblivion ; all that remained to him was one valuable friendship—that of Barras. Through Barras' influence he received some trifling employment which just sufficed to keep him alive. It is not too much to say that he really subsisted on the alms of Barras, for whom he appears to have acted as a sort of secret police agent. In 1797 this potent protector procured for him a contract in connexion with “ the army of England ” ; and here was the beginning of the immense fortune which he subsequently amassed. An era of speculation had set in ; and the great bankers, Ouvrard and Hainguerlot, were the financial kings of the day. Fouché consorted with them, and continued, for the rest of his life, these useful relations. But he ever kept his eye on politics. The royalists had had a great success in the elections of May, 1797. The Assembly of Five Hundred were mostly reactionaries ; and Barthélemy had become one of the Directorate. There is ground for believing that Fouché again offered himself to the royalists, and that they rejected his advances with disdain. He then planned and induced Barras to carry out the *coup d'état* of Fructidor, which crushed the royalist party and delivered him from obscurity. This was his third master-stroke in the history of the Revolution, and was more profitable to him than the preceding two had been.

Its immediate result was that he was appointed ambassador to the Cisalpine Republic, established three months before. After a short and tumultuous time there, he was superseded and recalled by the Directory. But, as he tells us with much satisfaction in his *Memoirs*, instead of standing on the defensive he assumed the haughty tone of injured innocence which he knew so well how to employ on occasion, and demanded, not only an explanation of their savage proceedings in respect of him, but a pecuniary indemnity for a money loss which he had thereby sustained. The indemnity was accorded, but he was begged to keep the matter quiet (*"de ne point faire d'esclandre"*). This sufficiently indicated to what degree the authority of the Directory was discredited. He then applied himself, with his accustomed skill, to the intrigues resulting in the *coup d'état* of Prairial, Year VI. (18th June, 1799), which issued in the expulsion of the three Directors who were hostile to him, and gave his protectors, Barras and Sieyès, the mastery. He claims in his *Memoirs*, no doubt justly, that he, more than any one else, brought this about. It was his fourth master-stroke. The immediate result, so far as he was concerned, was that he was sent as ambassador to Holland. His mission there was quickly and skilfully fulfilled, and he soon had his reward. On the 2nd of Thermidor he was named by the Directory Minister of the General Police of the Republic.

## VII

And now we have Fouché as an *arrivé*. There can be little doubt that again he was quite ready to go over to the royalist party if they would have had him. But they would not. M. Madelin well observes that he was a revolutionist by accident. His sympathies were with law and order, with a strong and settled Government. Solid principles he had none ; a primordial interest supplied their place, and this bound him to the Revolution. Jacobinism, however, was played out ; so he ceased to profess it. He applied himself, in fact, to curb royalism on the one hand, the ultra-revolutionists on the other. In a day or two he astonished the Directory—and France generally—by issuing a proclamation in which he announced his intention to re-establish interior tranquillity. This was succeeded by a report to the Directory on Popular Societies which he desired to dissolve. The most active and powerful of them was the terrible club of the Rue du Bac. For twelve months it had made the Directors shake in their shoes. It had highly-placed protectors, among them Bernadotte, then Minister of War, to whose inquiries as to his intentions Fouché replied : “To-morrow I will deal with your club, and if I find you at its head, *your* head shall fall from your shoulders.” Bernadotte profited by the warning. Fouché did not find him at the club

when he went there alone on the morrow, and authoritatively dissolved the assembly, turning out the members and putting in his pocket the keys of the building, which he calmly delivered at the bureau of the Directory.

And now began a series of intrigues of which Fouché gives us in his *Memoirs* a full and, on the whole, a candid <sup>1</sup> account—intrigues leading up to the *coup d'état* of Brumaire. The Government was discredited; the Directors were divided; and the popular mind was agitated by a vague anticipation of coming change—"quelque chose de factice, une impulsion occulte," Fouché calls it.

"The course of human events" (he truly observes) "is doubtless subject to an impulse derived from certain causes of which the effects are inevitable. Unperceived by the mass of men, these causes strike, more or less, the mind of the statesman; he discovers them, it may be in certain tokens (*indices*), it may be in casual incidents, whence come inspirations which enlighten and guide him." <sup>2</sup>

Fouché unquestionably, at this period, displayed genius of a high order in reading the signs of the times. It was reported to him, he tells us, that two of the clerks of his office, in discussing public affairs, anticipated the speedy return of Bonaparte from Egypt.<sup>3</sup> He set himself to ascertain

<sup>1</sup> Of course, his aim is apologetic, and some of his statements must be discounted, as, for example, his allegation (i. 96) that his management of Barras was inspired "bien moins pour me maintenir que par amour pour mon pays."

<sup>2</sup> *Mémoires*, i. 103.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 104.

their reasons for this belief, and found that it had no other basis than what he calls "a flash of involuntary prevision." But this prevision possessed him also, and he set himself to follow it up. He put himself into communication with Bonaparte's brothers, who also entertained it, though the difficulty of communicating with Egypt, on account of the English cruisers, was a serious obstacle to the reception of authentic news. He addressed himself to Joséphine, whom he found easily accessible. She was, as usual, in pecuniary straits, the income of 40,000 francs allowed her by her husband being altogether insufficient for her profuse expenditure. A present of a thousand *louis* was gratefully accepted; and similar subsidies were renewed from time to time. "Through her I got much information," Fouché writes. What he learnt from all quarters induced the belief that Bonaparte would, so to speak, "fall from the clouds."

That is what Bonaparte did, arriving in France, shortly after the news of his victory at Aboukir, amid a torrent of popular enthusiasm, which much impressed and by no means pleased the Directory. Fouché soon called upon him. He was then conferring with Réal, one of his most trusted and active agents; and Fouché, of whom Bonaparte knew very little, was kept waiting for an hour in the ante-chamber. Réal, well aware of the political importance of the Minister of Police, was astonished by this treatment of him, and made



representations which led Napoleon to order his speedy introduction. It was the first interview between the two men, and they soon came to an understanding. The future Emperor discerned the value of his new auxiliary, who at once began to exercise over him that curious influence which endured till 1815. Fouché, as the Director Gohier said, "became one of the conspiracy" issuing in the *coup d'état* of Brumaire, which was to oust Gohier and his colleagues from the seat of power, and to introduce the Consulate. But in all the intrigues which took place at this time Fouché was on his guard. He was personally most anxious to secure the success of the *coup d'état*, his fifth master-stroke; but he was quite ready to exercise his authority as Minister of Police against the Bonapartists in case of their failure, and laid his plans accordingly. In later years the Emperor used jokingly to remind him of this without a trace of rancour. In spite of Bonaparte's hesitation at the last moment <sup>1</sup> the *coup d'état* succeeded. The Directory succumbed; and Fouché, in one of the declamatory proclamations which he knew well how to compose, may be said to have made the funeral oration of the Republic. In another, issued soon afterwards, he announced to the people of France the new Constitution, declaring, in words to which subsequent events lent bitter

<sup>1</sup> M. Madelin remarks, "Tous les apprentis dictateurs en notre siècle ont eu de ces faiblesses de la dernière minute; heureux ceux qu'une main secourable est venue rejeter dans l'illégalité." i. 268.

irony, "that it should be welcomed with transports by every one who carries in his heart the love of liberty and the desire of peace."

### VIII

It is impossible to follow here, in detail, Fouché's tortuous career during the Consulate and Empire. His relations with Napoleon were very extraordinary and are very illuminating. For nearly sixteen years <sup>1</sup> they were closely united ; and it is not too much to say that the ex-Oratorian was the greatest statesman who served the Emperor—the *only* statesman, Napoleon is reported to have declared, forgetful of, or undervaluing Talleyrand. Fouché, on the other hand, though well aware of Napoleon's consummate greatness as a general, had a very low opinion of his political powers, and deemed him entirely wanting in statecraft. Certain it is that the Emperor prospered when he followed Fouché's counsels. He disregarded them in the matter of the Spanish War, of the Austrian marriage, and of the Russian campaign, with the results which all the world knows. The two men's characters were very dissimilar, though they had in common a total absence of moral scruples, a profound contempt

<sup>1</sup> On 3rd September, 1802, Napoleon suppressed the Ministry of Police, and Fouché went out of office. On 10th July, 1804, he re-established it and recalled Fouché, whom he dismissed on 3rd June, 1810, for secret intrigues with the British Government.

for parliamentary government, and a deep hatred of the newspaper press. Napoleon was well aware that Fouché was entirely wanting in loyalty, and sought to attach him by favours, creating him Duke of Otranto and making him considerable gifts of money. Moreover, he relied on his complicity in the murder of the King as an insurmountable obstacle to his being welcomed by the Bourbons. The event showed that this calculation was erroneous, and that Napoleon judged the Bourbons too highly. It was not only Fouché's broad intelligence, keen perceptions and indefatigable activity which won for him the Emperor's admiration. It was also that he was the only man that had the courage, as the phrase is, to stand up to his Imperial master. Napoleon, who, perhaps, was less of a gentleman<sup>1</sup> than any man that has ever achieved greatness, took pleasure in brutally reminding him of his vote for the murder of Louis XVI. "Yes, Sire," Fouché imperturbably replied, "that was the first service which I had the happiness of rendering to your Majesty." On another occasion, "Duke of Otranto," the Sovereign said, "I ought to have you beheaded." "Sire, that is not my opinion," was the Minister's calm answer. At St. Helena the fallen Emperor expressed the opinion that if he had caused Fouché and Talleyrand to be

<sup>1</sup> I have in my mind a dictum of Cardinal Newman's: "It is almost a definition of a gentleman to say he is one who never inflicts pain."—*Idea of a University*, p. 208.

hanged he would still be on the throne. It would have been more correct to say that he would have been still on the throne if he had followed the counsels of those statesmen.

The end which Fouché had foreseen came. The Russian campaign broke Napoleon. All Europe arose against him. He was, in fact, played out. Of this Fouché was well aware. Dismissed in 1810 from his post of Police Minister—it was his second disgrace—he had been subsequently employed by the Emperor in Italy, and had been nominated Governor-General of the Illyrian Provinces, in which capacity he had made his mark during the short time that he held the office. But the Austrians soon occupied the Illyrian Provinces, whereupon his Sovereign nominated him Imperial Commissary-General in Italy. The appointment did not realize Napoleon's expectations. Fouché, of whose intrigues at this time M. Madelin gives us a full and vivid picture, became—to use his biographer's picturesque expression—"the liquidator of the Napoleonic bankruptcy" in that country. The issue of his policy was the deliverance, in 1814, of all Italy to Murat, who, after much vacillation, had decided to join the coalition against the Emperor. Fouché now hastened to Paris in order, if I may so speak, to be in at the death. But he was too late. He arrived there on 8th April; on 31st March the city had capitulated. On 1st April, the Senate, under the influence of Talleyrand, had appointed a

provisional Government with that statesman at its head ; and in it no place had been found for Fouché. Nor in spite of all his incessant intrigues, did he succeed in finding one. He retired to his château of Ferrières, devoting himself to his affairs and to the care of his children, now motherless, for the Duchess of Otranto had died in 1812. He consoled himself for his ill-success with the Bourbons by the prediction that the Restoration would not last six months.

## IX

When Napoleon returned from Elba on the 1st of March, 1815, Fouché saw his opportunity to regain office and power. The Bourbons, now fully perceiving his importance, sought to secure him by offering him a place among the King's Ministers. But it was too late. He turned a deaf ear to them. He was not the man to associate himself with a falling cause. Then they endeavoured to arrest him, but he managed to escape by jumping out of a window and climbing over a wall, with an agility surprising in a man of his age. Napoleon returned to the Tuileries, and, with many misgivings, made Fouché again Minister of Police—it was the fourth time he was appointed to that office. He held it during the Hundred Days. The Emperor utterly distrusted him, and with reason ; and his distrust found vent, from time to time, in bitter invectives.

“Duke of Otranto,” he is reported to have said, “you are betraying me. I have proof of it. I ought to have you shot ; and every one would applaud such an act of justice. You will ask perhaps, why I do not. It is because I despise you too much.” He ought to have said, “Because I have too great need of you.”

Then came Waterloo. And now Fouché, by an utterly unscrupulous exercise of his supreme gift of intrigue, made himself master of the situation in Paris. It was to him that the fallen Emperor entrusted the Act of Abdication, which he, more than any one else, had contributed to bring about. It was he who presented the Act to the Chamber, and caused the nomination of a Commission of Five. It was he who, by adroit manœuvring, procured his own election as President of the Commission. It was he who, magnifying the office which he had thus obtained, appeared as Chief of the State, deciding all grave questions by his sole authority. It was he who, although his four colleagues detested the Bourbons, negotiated the Capitulation—in the Chamber he called it a Convention—which effected their restoration. He managed to convince the Duke of Wellington that it was only under his protection that Louis XVIII. could peacefully enter Paris. His own reward was his nomination as Secretary of State and Minister-General of Police to the Most Christian King. Beugnot tells us that Louis XVIII., when signing the ordinance which

made the appointment, wiped away a tear, murmuring, "Unhappy brother, if you see me, you have pardoned me"—a statement which, as M. Madelin justly remarks, no one could gainsay. Fouché now took the oath of fidelity to the new régime—it was the eighth of the kind by which he had bound himself; and Chateaubriand, in stinging phrase, describes how, with Talleyrand leaning on his arm, he passed into the King's cabinet—"vice supported by crime"—and depicts the trusty regicide, on his knees, putting the hands which had contributed to the decapitation of Louis XVI., between the hands of the brother of the royal martyr, the apostate Bishop going bail for the oath. To many of the men of the Revolution the inclusion of Fouché in the Ministry must have been grateful and comforting, as a pledge of their own security. If this old Conventional, this deeply-pledged regicide, this assassin of ten thousand royalists, was admitted to the royal favour, who need despair? Certainly not Talleyrand, who, by the side of Fouché, felt himself a saint. For the rest, it must be added that all his plans and combinations regarding the second Restoration succeeded. Louis XVIII. re-entered Paris on the 8th of July, 1815, and took possession of the Tuileries. A crowd of notables assembled there to pay their respects to the Sovereign. Among them was Fouché—perhaps, notwithstanding his *sang-froid*, a little ill at ease. The door of the King's cabinet opened; the Count

d'Artois approached him, and taking his hand cordially pressed it with exuberant thanks, saying, "l'entrée du roi a été admirable ; et nous vous en avons toute l'obligation." Then, the rest of the assembly having been dismissed, the King expressed a desire to see the Duke of Otranto privately, and had a long conversation with him.

Fouché, naturally enough, left the Tuileries entirely satisfied with himself and with his sixth political master-stroke. But the work before him as Minister of the Most Christian King was extremely difficult. He assured his old associates that he had accepted the portfolio only out of devotion to the interests of the Revolution, which doubtless was true, in a sense ; for with those interests his own were bound up. He desired to pursue a policy of moderation ; to adopt, in Burke's phrase, "healing measures." Unquestionably that would have been the wisest course both for the country and for the Bourbons ; but with such a policy, with such measures, the triumphant loyalists had no sympathy. The tide of reaction was flowing strongly ; and Fouché, with all his ability, could not dictate to it "Thus far shalt thou go, and no farther." The regicide, the Conventional, the ex-Jacobin, the Minister of Napoleon, was obliged to proscribe, almost at hazard, no small number of his former colleagues, revolutionary and Bonapartist ; the Royal Ordinance by which this was effected bears his counter-signature. It is true that he did his best to enable some of them to



escape ; but his pity, if pity it can be called, was largely flavoured with contempt. “Où veux-tu que j’aïlle, traître ?” Carnot is said to have asked him, the reply being, “Où tu voudras, imbécile.” For the rest, it cannot be denied that Fouché, in his circulars to the prefects and in other official documents, spoke the language of an enlightened statesman as to the policy required by France.

This policy had, for a time, the support of the King. M. Madelin says, “Fouché’s firmness without violence, his *sang-froid*, the governmental tact which never left him, his perfect knowledge of public affairs, of the men about him, of the French character, astonished and reassured the *revenants* from Coblenz and Hartwell, ignorant of the things of their epoch and of their country, of the new institutions, of the new traditions.” It is certain that, in the months of July and August, 1815, both Louis XVIII. and the Comte d’Artois had confidence in him. It is certain that he had full confidence in himself. He despised “the ultra-loyalists”—this was the name he invented for them—as utterly destitute of political sense, as having learnt nothing and forgotten nothing ; and he was right. He was wrong in underestimating them, for they represented, stupidly enough, moral forces ; the might of such forces, indeed, he did not understand. But just at this period his mind was occupied with his second marriage. He was now fifty-six, and appears for the first time in his life to have experienced the

tender passion,<sup>1</sup> for his *laideron* of a first wife, whatever her merits, can hardly have inspired it. The second Duchess of Otranto was Mlle Gabrielle de Castellane, a daughter of one of the most ancient and honourable houses of Provence. She was young—twenty - six—beautiful and charmingly clever ; and she fell under the spell which Fouché, notwithstanding his unprepossessing exterior, unquestionably exercised over women.<sup>2</sup> She was for the rest of his life his faithful and devoted companion. The wedding was celebrated with much pomp, the King himself—it was held a great honour—signing the marriage contract.

## X

This took place on the 1st of August. Ten days afterwards Fouché was elected to the new Chamber for three constituencies. He was now at the apogee of his career. And what a career, if we look back on it ! A devout Oratorian, a violent apostle of Atheism, a bitter persecutor of those whose faith he had professed and shared, a profaner of churches

<sup>1</sup> “ Mlle de Castellane ” (writes the Baron Despatys), “ l’avait séduit par sa grâce, son charme et sa distinction ; elle était pauvre mais jolie, remplie d’esprit, d’une grande vertu, estimée et adulée de tous ceux qui l’approchaient ” (*Un Ami de Fouché*, p. 426). And he observes, quite justly, regarding some malicious reports spread concerning her in 1818 (as to which see Madelin, ii. 519), “ ce ne furent-là que des bruits sans fondement.”—*Ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>2</sup> M. Bardoux remarks (*Madame de Custine*, p. 255), “ Il était fort épris de sa beauté, et elle fort éprise de son esprit.”

and steeped in all kinds of sacrilege, a missionary of Communism, a murderer not only of his Sovereign but of thousands of guiltless people, a multi-millionaire by means of secret speculations and scarcely avowable profits, the creature of Barras and Sieyès, one of whom he betrayed on the eve and the other on the morrow of Brumaire, a Napoleonic Minister and Duke and a traitor to the Emperor ; and now Secretary of State to the Most Christian King, the hope, the great resource of capitalists, the friend of dignified ecclesiastics, the favoured guest at aristocratic houses, and the husband of a lady of great personal charms belonging to one of the noblest of them. Apostate, regicide, homicide, traitor, he might well have questioned the existence of justice in the world's affairs ; he might well have regarded himself as an exception to the rule that retribution, however halting her foot, does overtake crime. But at last the sword suspended for so long over his impious neck, and ever dreaded by him, was about to fall. The elections of August, 1815, which had returned him for three constituencies, had returned also a vast majority of ultra-loyalists who were bent upon his overthrow.<sup>1</sup> The Chamber was too

<sup>1</sup> Oddly enough, this result was directly due to a want of prevision curious in so cautious a man. French elections were largely determined then, as they are now, by the wire-pulling of the party in power. It is not open to doubt that Fouché, if he had used the means at his command "pour faire la Chambre," as the phrase is, might have secured the return of a very different assembly. But he did not use them. Why? "Cherchez-moi

violent in its hatred and its fanaticism to tolerate a regicide Minister ; and two of Fouché's colleagues, Talleyrand and Pasquier, who, though not regicides, were regarded by the ultras as little less abominable, were only too glad to make him a scapegoat. He defended himself with his accustomed energy and astuteness, but without success. The Duke of Wellington<sup>1</sup> interposed in vain on his behalf with Louis XVIII. The most influential members of the Chamber protested against the presence on the ministerial bench of "this wretch loaded with crime and shame." A more powerful adversary still was Louis XVI.'s daughter, the Duchess of Angoulême—"the only man of her family," Napoleon called her—who emphatically declared that she would not receive this murderer of her father, notwithstanding that he was a Minister of the King. Louis XVIII., in spite of

la femme." He was enamoured of a singularly attractive young lady and was occupied with the arrangements for his approaching marriage with her. But Talleyrand, the head of the Ministry ? He also left the elections uncontrolled, and for a similar reason. So Fouché transfers the blame to "l'incurie nonchalante du président du conseil, qui se berçait d'illusions sensuelles" (*Mémoires*, ii. 383), the object of these amorous imaginings being his niece by marriage, the Duchesse de Dino, whose "relations with him," to use a French phrase, date from that time.

<sup>1</sup> Fouché tells us in his *Mémoires* that the origin of the Duke's interest in him was "dans l'empressement que je mis, lors de mon second ministère, à faire cesser la captivité d'un membre de cette famille honorable détenu en France par suite des mesures rigoureuses qu'avait ordonnées Napoléon" (*Mémoires*, ii. 324). But there can be no doubt that the Duke, apart from this, entertained the highest estimate of Fouché's political sagacity.

vast obligations to Fouché, bowed before the storm. Talleyrand, the President of the Council, resolved on sacrificing him ; and the rest of the Ministry cheerfully consented. On the 15th of September, a Royal Ordinance was published appointing him ambassador at Dresden. It was an expatriation. The law of amnesty (oddly so called), passed shortly afterwards, changed it into exile. Fouché ceased to be ambassador. He was civilly dead. The catastrophe was as sudden as it was complete. One thinks of the words of the Psalmist : " I myself also have seen the ungodly in great power and flourishing like a green bay-tree : I went by, and lo, he was gone : I sought him, but his place could nowhere be found."

No : his place could nowhere be found. For the remaining five years of his life, Fouché was a wanderer in the Austrian Empire, occupied in futile schemes for returning to France and to public life there. The devotion of his young and charming wife, his daily intercourse with his children, whom he tenderly loved—he was ever a man of strong family affections—the various resources which his immense fortune placed at his command, were unable adequately to console him. He was tormented by what M. Madelin calls "*le pruruit de pouvoir*." In 1820 he died at Trieste, where for some time he had resided, having received, it is said, the last sacraments of the Catholic Church.

I have called Fouché a typical Jacobin, and I

think with reason. "Parvenir" is the word which really represents the supreme aspiration of those sectaries. Is it credible that any of them, with the possible exception of here and there a crack-brain enthusiast, such as Anacharsis Clootz, really believed in the claptrap shibboleths—Liberty, Equality, Fraternity, Reason, the Holy Law of Nature, and the like—upon which they so successfully traded? Danton, in a moment of candour, revealed their secret: "Nous étions dessous, nous sommes dessus, et voilà toute la Révolution." Parvenir—to arrive—was their master desire, and the cleverer of them whose vile heads were not shorn off in the struggle, *did* arrive and strut on the world's stage as Dukes, Princes, Archchancellors, under the Empire. Fouché is assuredly an excellent type of them in his utter indifference to anything but his own advancement. This passion of individualism, if I may so speak, completely dominates him, altogether atrophying his moral sense. Not naturally cruel, it renders him quite callous to all considerations of humanity; men are "impotent pieces in the game he plays." Not naturally avaricious, he heaps up riches by questionable means to serve it: for he knows that "omnia pulchris parent divitiis." In comparison with it, truth, honour, loyalty are to him as the small dust of the balance. "Unfettered by the sense of crime, to whom a conscience never wakes," we must say of this greatest statesman of the Revolutionary epoch. And it is the true

account of the rest of the *canaille* who have obtained a sort of apotheosis as “the giants of 1793.”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> I have in my mind that saying of Royer-Collard : “The men of 1793, who have been transformed into Titans, were simply *canaille*.”

## CHAPTER V

### THE FOUNDER OF A NEW CHURCH

#### I

TALLEYRAND is unquestionably one of the most conspicuous figures in the Revolutionary epoch, and affords, in some respects, valuable help for understanding the new France. His career as a statesman is fairly well known. His doings as a Member of the National Assembly, as Chauvelin's colleague in London, as Minister of the Directory, the Consulate and the Empire, and of both Restorations, as Ambassador under Louis XVIII. and Louis Philippe, have been related by many historians. But few have tried to put before us an accurate delineation of the man. There have, indeed, been gossiping books about him, for the most part of little value. And then there are his Memoirs, the publication of which was so long delayed, and the perusal of which is so disappointing. Fragmentary and apologetic, they leave psychological problems untouched, and contain little of self-revelation beyond a very significant expression of regret for their author's action as



the Founder of the Constitutional Church. But no one before M. de Lacombe has applied himself to the task of truly picturing Talleyrand's personality. In the two volumes<sup>1</sup> which we owe to this painstaking and accurate writer, we are presented with many new facts derived from documents previously unpublished, the most important of them collected by the late Bishop of Orleans, Mgr. Dupanloup. It is not easy to overrate the importance of M. de Lacombe's work, carried out, as it has been, in that spirit of complete impartiality upon which the late Lord Acton used so strongly to insist. "Les faits, tels que j'espère les avoir fixés," he writes, "ont ils servi ou desservi Talleyrand? Je n'en ai pas eu souci, ne poursuivant dans l'histoire que la vérité."<sup>2</sup>

## II

And now, keeping before us M. de Lacombe's volumes, and not neglecting other sources of information, let us endeavour to see what manner of man Talleyrand really was. He was born in 1754 and belonged to one of the noblest families in France. Shortly after his birth he was entrusted to the care of a nurse in a Paris faubourg. She seems to have discharged her trust with great

<sup>1</sup> They are *Talleyrand, Evêque d'Autun*, published in 1902, and *La Vie Privée de Talleyrand*, published in 1910.

<sup>2</sup> *Talleyrand, Evêque d'Autun*, avant-propos, p. 6.

negligence, as the boy, whether by a fall from a chest of drawers, which is one account, or by an attack of ferocious pigs, which is another, sustained an injury to his right foot which made him slightly lame. This accident determined his future career. It unfitted him for the profession of arms, and his family decided that he should enter the Church. When he was four years old, his great-grandmother, the Princesse de Chalais, sent for him to her *château* of Périgord, which he reached after a seventeen days' journey in the mail coach from Paris to Bordeaux. Some charming pages in his Memoirs are devoted to the years which he passed with this venerable lady. We read how every Sunday he accompanied her to the Parish Church, where his little stool was ready by the side of her *prie-dieu*, on which an old relative of the family arranged the prayer-books, solemnly carried in a red velvet bag trimmed with gold; and how, after Mass, the poor and suffering made their way to the *château*, where the châtelaine distributed to them medicine or clothing, the boy standing by her side, his powdered hair carefully curled and tied into a pig-tail, with a laced cravat and an embroidered coat, his little sword on and his tiny hat under his arm. He declares that the recollection of those early days was inexpressibly dear to him. They came to an end in 1762, when he was sent to the Collège d'Harcourt in Paris. After remaining there three years, he was removed to the Seminary of Saint Sulpice. "All the accounts,"

writes M. de Lacombe, "agree in attributing to him a melancholy akin to misanthropy during his period of preparation for holy orders." One of his fellow-students, M. de Béthisy, afterwards Bishop of Uzès, remembered his saying, "Ils veulent faire de moi un prêtre : eh bien ! vous verrez qu'ils en feront un sujet affreux : mais je suis boiteux, cadet ; il n'y a pas moyen de me soustraire à ma destinée." <sup>1</sup> He appears, however, at this early period, as later on, to have done all in his power to alleviate the destiny which he could not escape. His morals are said to have been "anything but clerical." He himself tells us, in his Memoirs, of his relations, at that time, with a young and pretty actress who lodged in the Rue Férou, a few yards from the Seminary. And one of his fellow-students, M. de Sausin, afterwards Bishop of Blois, writes, "Money was his passion." In fact, the love of woman and the lust of lucre, of which he thus early gave proof, dominated him through his life.

In 1773 Talleyrand received the tonsure, that is to say, was admitted into minor orders ; and became known as the Abbé de Périgord. He was a conspicuous figure in the brilliant and corrupt society of Paris, this "abbé pimpant" just turned twenty, with his illustrious name and with his social talents. His face, without being handsome, is described as singularly attractive, from the triple expression of sweetness (*douceur*), impudence,

<sup>1</sup> Talleyrand, *Evêque d'Autun*, p. 10.

and wit. M. de Lacombe remarks, “Avec les ordres sacrés, le sous-diacre Talleyrand n’avait pas acquit les vertus de son état : il les montrait de moins en moins.”<sup>1</sup> And M. Pichot puts it, “He completely over-passed the limits of tolerance, which were large enough in that age : no laymen even, except perhaps Richelieu and Lauzun, had so copiously enriched the *chronique scandaleuse* of Paris.”<sup>2</sup> In 1775 he obtained his first preferment, the sinecure Abbey of St. Denis, in the diocese of Rheims, which gave him a revenue of eighteen hundred livres.<sup>3</sup> In 1779,<sup>4</sup> as M. de Lacombe shows from the archives of Rheims—thereby clearing up an obscurity—he was ordained priest, and the day afterwards he was nominated Vicar-General to his uncle, the Archbishop of that see. But Talleyrand “n’était pas prêtre pour rester prêtre.” In 1780 the clergy of the province of Tours, to whom that year the election of two Agents-General fell, chose him as one of them. The place was of importance. The Agents of the clergy were the representatives of their order to the King and the Ministers ; it was their duty to

<sup>1</sup> *Talleyrand, Evêque d'Autun*, p. 25.

<sup>2</sup> *Souvenirs Intimes de M. de Talleyrand*, p. 17.

<sup>3</sup> M. de Lacombe shows conclusively (*Talleyrand, Evêque d'Autun*, p. 22), the incorrectness of the legend which represents him as having obtained this preferment in recompense for a *bon mot* at Madame du Barry's.

<sup>4</sup> Lady Blennerhassett is therefore in error when in her *Talleyrand, eine Studie* (p. 19) she says : “Talleyrand was already a priest when he assisted at the Coronation of Louis XVI. at Rheims in June, 1775.”

defend the interests of the Church of France. Talleyrand made the most of his opportunities during his five years' tenure of the office. "Il avait," says Mignet, "la reputation d'un homme spirituel, il acquit celle d'un homme capable." It is somewhat amusing to find him signing, in 1780, a clerical petition to the King against the introduction into France of the writings of Voltaire, of whom he was assuredly a disciple, and whose benediction—according to a story, lacking, indeed, in confirmation—he is said to have sought on bended knees when the moribund philosopher visited Paris in 1778.

Talleyrand's devotion to women was the result of temperament; but he knew how to turn it to account. In those days the readiest road to ecclesiastical preferment was through the boudoir; and Talleyrand endeavoured to follow it. He stood high in the favour of the Comtesse de Brienne, "la superbe Comtesse," Bachaumont calls her; and she had great influence with the King of Sweden, Gustavus III., who was a *persona gratissima* to the Pope, Pius VI. Madame de Brienne addressed to the King a letter, the text of which M. de Lacombe gives, soliciting a Cardinal's hat for Talleyrand, in whose Memoirs we read that the request would certainly have been accorded but for the hostile interposition of Marie Antoinette. It was just after the affair of the diamond necklace, and Madame de Brienne had warmly embraced the side of Cardinal de Rohan, who was her cousin.

Talleyrand's thoughts then turned towards a bishopric, but his love of women and gambling—"sa façon de vivre," we are told, "était de plus en plus un défi à la morale"—stood in his way with the honest and pious Louis XVI., and it was not until 1788 that he obtained the See of Autun. Its revenues were not large—only twenty-two thousand livres—but they were eked out by the Abbey of Celles in the diocese of Poitiers, which was worth nine thousand five hundred livres. On the 16th of January, 1789, he was consecrated, and on the next day he received the pallium, to which the Bishops of Autun had right through a concession of Gregory the Great in the year 600. On the 26th of January he addressed to his flock a Pastoral Letter which M. de Lacombe, who gives extracts from it, well calls *une petite merveille*. Borrowing the words of St. Paul, he calls God to witness that from the day of his nomination he has never ceased to think of them: "Testis est mihi Deus quod sine intermissione memoriam vestri facio: oui," he continues, "souffrez-moi cette expression, nos très chers frères: vous êtes devenus notre douce et unique occupation."<sup>1</sup> But having despatched this *coup-de-maitre*, he was in no haste to quit Paris, nor did he in the least change his way of life there. His eyes were ever more and more turned to the political questions with which the States-General, so soon to meet, would have to deal. He had a presentiment of vast impending

<sup>1</sup> Talleyrand, *Evêque d'Autun*, p. 83.

changes, and thought it best to stay in the capital—"at the very heart of the furnace," as M. de Lacombe expresses it, "where events were cast into shape." That he did not in the least anticipate the sinister future which was at hand, we may be quite sure. But whatever the future might be, he was resolved to take his place in it—or, rather, to find his advancement in it. Those few sheep in the wilderness—for as such Autun appeared to him—could wait for their pastor, whose first duty appeared to him, then, as always, to be to himself. It was to the approaching meeting of the States-General that his clergy owed his presence. It occurred to him that he might become their deputy. And so he set out from his episcopal city in a superb chariot, for which, by the way, he seems not to have paid.<sup>1</sup> He arrived there on the 12th

<sup>1</sup> There are several versions of the story. I find this in M. Louis Thomas' volume, *L'Esprit de M. de Talleyrand* :

"Lorsque il fut nommé évêque d'Autun M. de Talleyrand commanda un superbe carrosse épiscopal qui lui faisait grand honneur. Mais déjà criblé de dettes il ne le paya point. Après avoir longtemps attendu, le carrossier prit le parti de se tenir tous les jours à la porte de l'hôtel de Monseigneur, le chapeau à la main, et saluant très bas lorsque l'évêque montait en voiture. Après quelques jours M. de Talleyrand intrigué lui demanda :

" 'Et qui êtes vous, mon ami ?' "

" 'Je suis votre carrossier, Monseigneur.' "

" 'Ah, vous êtes mon carrossier. Et que voulez-vous mon carrossier ?' "

" 'Être payé, Monseigneur.' "

" 'Ah, vous êtes mon carrossier et vous voulez être payé. Vous serez payé, mon carrossier.' "

" 'Et quand, Monseigneur ?' "

" 'Hum !' murmura l'évêque, s'établissant confortablement dans son carrosse neuf . . . 'Vous êtes bien curieux.' "—p. 24.

of March, 1789, and took personal possession of his see on the 18th of that month, amid popular rejoicing, for, as M. de Lacombe remarks, religious festivals were still popular festivals: “malgré le travail sourd qui se faisait, les âmes restaient toutes pénétrées de l'idéal chrétien.” During the few weeks which he spent in his diocese, he was assiduous in discharging his pastoral duties; he visited and prayed in the various churches of his cathedral city, and he might often be seen reciting his breviary in the garden of his episcopal palace. Nay, as a Right Rev. Father in God, he bestowed spiritual counsels upon his clergy, insisting, among other things, that they should give themselves much to mental prayer. At the same time he did not neglect other and more material means of ingratiating himself with his flock. It was mid-Lent, and at that time the police regulations compelled compliance with the laws of the church in respect of abstinence and fasting. But fish was scarce at Autun, and Talleyrand was recognized as a public benefactor when he procured a supply by means of the mail cart between Paris and Lyons. Moreover, he kept open house at the Palace, much to the satisfaction of his reverend brethren, who found his cuisine “a thing to thank God upon.” His labours were not in vain. On the 2nd of April, 1789, he was elected deputy of the clergy by a large majority. A week afterwards he quitted his episcopal residence, never to return to it, and proceeded to Paris.



## III

It is not my intention to follow in detail Talleyrand's career in the Revolutionary legislature. No man who ever lived, we may be quite sure, was less in sympathy with the Rousseauian ideas which dominated it. A thorough Voltairian, cold, sceptical, and elegant, Talleyrand was a *grand seigneur* of the *ancien régime*, penetrated by the charm of that old society brilliant with the phosphorescence of decay. The declamatory banalities and the brutal appetites of the Revolution must have disgusted him. But he recognized in it an irresistible torrent, and he thought it well to swim with the stream, striking out his own course, as best he might. M. de Lacombe aptly remarks, "He did not oppose the Revolution, he accepted it."<sup>1</sup> "His cleverness consisted in adapting himself to circumstances; and because he always obeyed in good time, he was able to create the illusion that he directed and dominated them."<sup>2</sup> Thus, when it became evident to him, in the debates in the Assembly on the Declaration of Rights, that an attack on the Church of France, with its traditional system of administration, was sure to come at no distant date, he urged successfully the postponement of the religious question till the proper opportunity for legislating upon it should be ripe. This was in August, 1789. Two months later he

<sup>1</sup> *Talleyrand, Evêque d'Autun*, p. 133.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 124.

judged that the opportunity was ripe ; and, in a memorable speech on the 10th of that month, proposed a measure for confiscating the property of the spirituality, and thereby destroying their independence, and converting them into hirelings of the State. For the scheme to remodel the external constitution and administrative system of the Church, adopted under the name of the Civil Constitution of the Clergy, was the logical, the necessary consequence of the scheme of confiscation proposed by Talleyrand, as of course he well knew, and on the 28th of January, 1790, he took the oath to it—the “Constitutional oath.”<sup>1</sup>

But let us turn from the politician to the man. I do not know where to go for a truer picture of him at the time with which we are at the present moment concerned, than to the notices scattered up and down *Gouverneur Morris's Diary*.<sup>2</sup> This shrewd observer, as he stumped, with his wooden

<sup>1</sup> Madame de Rémusat in her *Mémoires* gives a lengthy account of the reason assigned to her by Talleyrand for his proceedings at this period. It concludes with the following brief *Apologia pro vita sua*. “Vouz comprenez que dans le position où j'étais, je dûs accueillir cette Révolution avec empressement. Elle attaquait des principes et des usages dont je avais été victime : elle me paraissait faite pour rompre mes chaînes : elle plaisait à mon esprit. J'embrassais vivement sa cause : et depuis les événements ont disposé de moi.”—Vol. iii. p. 328. That “les événements ont disposé de moi” is delicious.

<sup>2</sup> *The Diary and Letters of Gouverneur Morris, Minister of the United States to France*. Edited by Anne Cary Morris, London, 1899.

leg,<sup>1</sup> from boudoir to boudoir, brought an eye for all he saw, and has chronicled it in clear and simple outline. His first impressions of Talleyrand were unfavourable: "a sly, cunning, ambitious, and malicious man," he wrote. A little later on in his Diary he credits the Bishop—Talleyrand is usually so described by him—with "sarcastic and subtle wit, joined with immense tact." Further acquaintance seems to have led to a sort of friendship between them. They saw a great deal of one another, for Morris was a constant caller on Madame de Flahaut, the Bishop's *maîtresse en titre*, a lady whom he describes as endowed with "youth, beauty, and every loveliness."

"Hers," we read, "had been a strange life. Married at fifteen to the Comte de Flahaut, then quite fifty, who had denied himself no excess of dissipation, she found herself coldly neglected. The Abbé Périgord, who had performed the marriage ceremony for her, became her friend and companion and instructor—for to him she owed the opening and training of her intellect—and he also became the father of her only child, who was named Charles, after the Abbé."<sup>2</sup>

This Charles, it may be mentioned, was the Comte de Flahaut, famed as the lover of Queen

<sup>1</sup> The wooden leg stood him in good stead on one occasion. Pursued by the scoundrelism of Paris as an aristocrat, because he was driving in a carriage, he thrust out his wooden leg, exclaiming, "An aristocrat! Yes, truly, who lost his leg in the cause of American liberty," and escaped unhurt, nay, applauded. In fact, he had lost the leg by being thrown out of a gig.

<sup>2</sup> *Gouverneur Morris's Diary*, vol. i. p. 42. I should note that these are the words not of Morris himself, but of his editor. I do not know whence she derived her details.

Hortense of Holland, and the father by her of Napoleon III.'s half-brother, the Duc de Morny, who would, upon occasion, boast of his descent from Talleyrand. In a subsequent page of Morris's Diary we have an account of a New Year's Day visit paid by him to Madame de Flahaut. After narrating his conversation with the Bishop of Autun, who was waiting for him, he adds :

"Madame being ill, I find her with her feet in warm water, and when she is about to take them out, one of her women being employed in that operation, the Bishop employs himself in warming the bed with a warming pan, and I look on. It is curious to see a reverend Father of the Church engaged in that pious operation." <sup>1</sup>

But we must not suppose that Madame de Flahaut was Talleyrand's only *bonne amie* at this period. His affections were erratic ; and although Madame de Flahaut retained them for some years, she by no means monopolized them. He was much devoted to Madame de Staël also ; but, indeed, he appears, to borrow a phrase from one of Swift's least decorous poems, to have been "an universal lover." There was about him a curious magnetic power which was felt strongly even by such a man as the Duke of Wellington. And it was easy for him, down to the close of his life, to

<sup>1</sup> *Gouverneur Morris's Diary*, vol. i. p. 264. At p. 226 we read of a visit paid by Morris to Madame de Corny. "Madame being ill, goes into the bath, and when placed there sends for me. It is a strange place to receive a visit, but there is milk mixed with the water, making it opaque. She tells me it is usual to receive in the bath."

ingratiate himself with women. They quickly caught what Madame de Rémusat quaintly calls "the malady of falling in love with him." One of his early portraits depicts him with wavy hair, slightly powdered, and tied in a pigtail with a black ribbon: the eyes look forth from beneath the brows with a cheerful assurance: a slightly turned-up nose, and a prominent chin, give the face an air of audacity and calm energy, recalling Byron's line:

"And while I please to stare, you'll please to stay."

"Peu d'hommes ont été aussi passionnés pour les femmes," <sup>1</sup> M. Pichot tells us. We may add that few men have inspired deeper and more lasting passions in women. How touching is that story of his visiting, on her death-bed, Madame de Brienne, after long years of estrangement. "Il faut que la politique attende," he writes in his *Memoirs*. She had refused all intercourse with him when he threw himself into the Revolutionary movement, when he became the Minister of Napoleon. But in 1815 he was the Ambassador of his lawful Sovereign, and she consented to see him. The end was close at hand when he arrived. She murmured, "Ah, M. de Périgord, you alone can tell how much I loved you!" and put out her hand. He kissed it, overcome with emotion, and held it till it hung powerless and dead in his.

The tide of revolution rose rapidly in 1791, and

Paris, robbed of all its social charm, was becoming an abomination of desolation. The fiercest passions were unchained, and Talleyrand knew that his life was in jeopardy. He judged that the only safe course was to bow before them. It was deemed necessary to constitute formally the new schismatic Church by consecrating a bishop, and Talleyrand was requested to put this finishing touch to the religious legislation which he had initiated. He dared not refuse, but he consented with fear and trembling. On the 23rd of February, 1791, he made his will, leaving to Madame de Flahaut all that he possessed. She passed the night in tears. He in hiding. On the morrow he consecrated, according to the schismatic forms, two apostate priests, one to the see of Finistère (Quimper), the other to the see of the Aisne (Soissons), and thus vindicated his title as Founder of the Constitutional Church. It was an act which, if we may judge from his language on the verge of the grave, lay heavy on what remained to him of conscience. He resigned his bishopric and entirely severed himself from the sect to which he had thus given some semblance of ecclesiastical authority, leaving to Gobel the task of completing its organization. He habitually expressed contempt for it<sup>1</sup> and its prelacy, and for the rest of his life divested himself of his episcopal and sacerdotal attributes. Moreover, he was active in encouraging and

<sup>1</sup> According to Cardinal Maury he accounted the constitutional clergy, "un tas de brigands déshonorés."

assisting Bonaparte to re-establish the Catholic religion in France.<sup>1</sup>

#### IV

Early in the next year he was sent on a mission to London, really as Ambassador, though not nominally,<sup>2</sup> the idiotic self-denying ordinance with which the Constitutional Assembly had finished its existence, having prohibited its members from taking office for two years after its dissolution. He was received with frigid politeness by George III. The Queen—"good Queen Charlotte," as I remember my grandmother used to call her—turned her back on him, whereupon Talleyrand is stated to have remarked to M. de Biron, who was with him, "Elle a bien fait car Sa Majesté est fort laide." London society followed the Queen's example.<sup>3</sup> In July, 1792, he obtained a fortnight's

<sup>1</sup> Cardinal Consalvi says, "Il fut le seul à assister Bonaparte et à soutenir de tout son pouvoir les affaires de la religion."—Lacombe, *La Vie Privée*, p. 165.

<sup>2</sup> Carlyle writes, "Ambassador, in spite of the self-denying ordinance, young Marquis Chauvelin going as Ambassador's cloak."—*French Revolution*, vol. ii. p. 42.

<sup>3</sup> Morris writes, "His reception was bad for three reasons: First, that the Court look with horror and apprehension at the scenes acting in France, of which they consider him a prime mover. Secondly, that his reputation is offensive to persons who pique themselves on decency of manners and deportment; and, lastly, because he was so imprudent when the time arrived as to propagate the idea that he should corrupt the members of administration."—Vol. i. p. 519.

leave of absence and returned to Paris. He found that he had put himself into a den of wild beasts, and his earnest desire was to get away from them as quickly as might be. They had already tasted blood; and some of them, at all events, were thirsting for his. Throughout the whole of his long career he displayed most wonderfully the instinct of self-preservation. "*Ce singe,*" Duke Dalberg observed of him, "*ne risquerait pas de brûler le bout de sa patte lors même que les marrons seraient pour lui tout seul.*" But the question here was not one of getting chestnuts out of the fire. It was of escaping the murderous fury of a mob, drunk with massacre and pillage, which was converting Paris into a huge shambles. "*Skin for skin : all that a man hath will he give for his life.*" Talleyrand paid a heavy price for his. A circular to the Powers, extenuating and defending the crimes which had placed the Provisional Executive in authority, was urgently wanted. Talleyrand, of all men, was the one to draw it up. At the request of Danton, who was the real head of the Government, he consented to do so. A more disgraceful document was never composed by any human being. It is even worse than the apology devised by him twelve years afterwards for the murder of the Duc d'Enghien.<sup>1</sup> It exhibits the

<sup>1</sup> It is noteworthy, as revelatory of the man, that when asked why he did not resign rather than undertake this odious task, he replied, "*Si comme vous le dites, Bonaparte s'est rendu coupable d'un crime, ce n'est pas une raison que je me rende coupable d'une faute.*"



simple and sentimental Louis XVI. as a tyrant and a traitor, the ruffians who had butchered the Swiss Guard as heroes, the cowed and contemptible Convention as the saviour and minister of peace. In return for prostituting his intellect in the production of this tissue of shameless lies, Talleyrand got his passport on the 8th of September, and set out for London. He pretended afterwards, as we shall see, when the pretence would serve his purpose, that he had received from the Provisional Executive Council a diplomatic mission to England. But this was not so. He wrote to Lord Grenville, on the 18th September, that he had no kind of mission.<sup>1</sup> And that was the truth. His occupation was gone. To all intents and purposes he had become an *émigré*.<sup>2</sup> He took a house in Kensington Square, which the Comtesse de La Chatre described as “une femme séduisante,”<sup>3</sup> kept for him, and here he received various old friends whom the tide of events had brought to London. The popular horror in this country engendered by the Revolutionary atrocities was great. The murder of Louis XVI. on the 21st of January, 1793, raised it to fever heat. The theatres were closed. There was a general mourning. The King, when going out in his carriage, was received with cries of “War

<sup>1</sup> This letter is quoted by M. de Lacombe at p. 23 of *La Vie Privée de Talleyrand*, and in the next page we find an extract from a letter of Talleyrand to Lebrun containing a similar statement.

<sup>2</sup> His name appears in the *Liste Générale des Emigrés*, published by the Revolutionary Government on the 29th August, 1793.

<sup>3</sup> *La Vie Privée de Talleyrand*, p. 28.

with France!" The Aliens Bill was passed. And on the 24th of January, 1794, Talleyrand received an Order, drawn up under its provisions, to leave the kingdom within five days. He betook himself to the United States of America.

Talleyrand remained in America for rather more than two years. A most interesting account of his time there fills forty pages of M. de Lacombe's new volume. Our chief source of information regarding him, at this period, is afforded by his letters to Madame de Staël. He was extremely well received by the richer and more cultivated people of the United States, although he is said to have scandalized them by publicly parading a negress, whom he had taken to himself as mistress.<sup>1</sup> But the representative of France in that country, the Jacobin Joseph Fauchet, prevented him from obtaining an audience of Washington, the President. Talleyrand applied himself to the study of the political institutions of the United States, and also of the means which it presented of speedy enrichment, and accumulated a mass of information which subsequently supplied him with the material for two admirable papers read by him, under the Directory, to the National Institute. But his gaze was all the while directed to France, where he hoped again to find a sphere of activity. On the 10th of June, 1795, he drew up a petition to the

<sup>1</sup> See *La Vie Privée*, p. 104. M. de Lacombe observes, " Cette interprétation de la Déclaration des droits de l'homme ne fut point, paraît-il, du goût des concitoyens de Washington."

Convention, requesting permission to revisit his country, of which he declares himself "worthy by his principles and his sentiments," and pleading that he was not an *émigré*, as he had left France on a mission entrusted to him by the Provisional Government. A long debate upon this petition took place in the Convention, it being strongly urged in Talleyrand's favour that he was the Founder of the Constitutional Church.<sup>1</sup> The issue was that on the 8th of September the decree of accusation which stood against him was reversed, and his name was struck out of the List of *Emigrés*. It was largely to Madame de Staël's energetic action on his behalf that he owed this rehabilitation. He wrote to thank her in warm terms, assuring her, among other things, that the rest of his life should be passed near her wherever she might be. "Chère amie," he continues, "je vous aime de toute mon âme."<sup>2</sup> In his *Memoirs*, however, there is no mention of Madame de Staël in connection with this matter. Moreover, with what M. de Lacombe euphemistically calls "a very strange failure of memory," he writes, "Le decret de la Convention qui m'autorisait à rentrer en France . . . avait été rendu sans aucune sollicitation de ma part, à mon insu." In July, 1796, he reached Hambourg, where he found many friends, among them Gouverneur Morris and Madame de

<sup>1</sup> "Qu'il a établi l'Église Constitutionnelle."—*La Vie Privée*, p. 101.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 101.

Flahaut, who—her husband had been guillotined—was then engaged in a sentimental intrigue, which ended in marriage, with M. de Souza, the Portuguese Minister. On the 20th of September he reached Paris. There Madame de Staël continued to be his good angel. He was almost penniless. He wrote to her, “Ma chère enfant, je n’ai plus que 25 louis . . . si vous ne me trouvez pas un moyen de me créer une position convenable je me brûlerai la cervelle. Arrangez vous là-dessus. Si vous m’aimez, voyez ce que vous avez à faire.”<sup>1</sup> She gave him twenty-four thousand francs, and so used her influence on his behalf that he became Minister of Foreign Affairs under the Directory.

## V

It is at this period that a lady comes into his life who was strongly and strangely to influence it—Madame Grand.<sup>2</sup> A great deal of mystery has hung over various details of her unedifying career. Some of it has been recently dissipated; and we may learn from M. de Lacombe, perhaps, all about her that we are likely to know, and certainly as much as is worth knowing. She was born on the

<sup>1</sup> Lady Blennerhassett’s *Talleyrand*, p. 189.

<sup>2</sup> Lady Blennerhassett speaks (p. 135) of his being accompanied by Madame Grand when he re-entered Paris in September, 1796; another account represents him as having made her acquaintance at Versailles before the Revolution; a third that he first met her in America; but all three seem legendary.

21st of November, 1762, at Tranquebar, a small Danish possession in the East Indies, but was of French origin, her father, whose name was Worlée, and who was a Chevalier of St. Louis, being a functionary of the King of France at Pondicherry. In 1777 she was married at Chandernagor to a young civil servant of the East India Company, George Francis Grand, who took her with him to Calcutta. There Sir Philip Francis saw her and fell in love with her, whence a scandal and an action for *crim. con.* in the Supreme Court, which awarded damages of fifty thousand rupees to the injured husband. This was in 1779. She lived under the protection of Francis for the next year, and then set sail for Europe. Where she landed is uncertain, but in 1782 she was established in Paris, spending money freely. How did she get it? “Des hommes de la finance s’intéressaient à elle,” M. de Lacombe tells us, and he mentions some of them: their names, however, need not detain us. The outbreak of the Revolution found her still in Paris. On the famous 10th of August the porter of the house in which she was established—a Swiss—having been butchered by the populace before her eyes, she fled precipitately to London, and there she is said to have “had many adventures.” But she hankered after Paris where, all the social barriers having been cast down, women of her kind—a Tallien or a Beauharnais—had become queens of fashion, and in 1797 we find her there again. It was then, according to Colmache’s account, which is the

most probable, that Talleyrand met her.<sup>1</sup> Returning late one night to the Hôtel Gallifet, which was his official residence as Minister of Foreign Affairs, he found her there, with a letter from his friend Montrond. She had been waiting for some time and had fallen asleep in an armchair before the fire. She woke upon his entering the room, and dropping her *manteau à capuchon*, stood before him confused and blushing, in her ball dress of gauze and gold tissue. She is described as tall, and at that time slight and graceful in person, with singular ease and languor in her carriage: her tender blue eyes, fringed with long dark lashes, large and lustrous; her hair, abundant, soft, golden-brown; “the most wonderful hair in Europe,”<sup>2</sup> competent judges averred. Colmache represents Talleyrand as confessing that when he first saw this vision of beauty, *blasé* and *désillusionné* as he was, he felt himself completely deprived of his self-possession; which is likely enough, considering his temperament. There can be no doubt that he fell violently in love with her, and that, protecting her from the persecution of the police, who inclined to regard her as a spy or a conspirator, he installed her in the Hôtel Gallifet. This was in the free-and-easy times of the Directory, when the morals of the poultry-yard prevailed in Paris. There was then no question of Talleyrand’s espousing her. Still,

<sup>1</sup> There is no evidence of his having known her previously.

<sup>2</sup> Madame de Boigne, in her *Mémoires* (vol. i. p. 433), tells an amusing story—it is, as she owns, “un peu leste”—about this wonderful hair.

she thought it well to dissolve her former marriage—a matter of no difficulty with the Revolutionary tribunals. On the 7th of April, 1798, she obtained a divorce at the Mairie of the Second Arrondissement on the ground that her husband had given no sign of life for five years.

She now presided over Talleyrand's house, receiving men of State and men of letters, diplomatists and warriors. And this lasted till the Consulate. Then Bonaparte determined to cleanse, as much as possible, the Augean stable which Paris had become; to make society there more decent, if not more virtuous. At one time, when the negotiations for the Concordat had begun, he thought of restoring Talleyrand to the Church, of obtaining a Cardinal's hat for him, and of giving him the charge of religious affairs. But the ex-Bishop did not fall in with the plan; and so—as M. de Lacombe puts it—not having succeeded in making him a Cardinal, Bonaparte resolved to make him a husband. It appears that the wives of some ambassadors objected—not unreasonably—to be received by Madame Grand at the Hôtel Gallifet. That was disagreeable to Bonaparte, who peremptorily told the Foreign Minister to banish the lady from his house. This proceeding, M. de Lacombe hints, might have suited Talleyrand. But it did not suit Madame Grand, who hurried off to Joséphine—a great friend of hers. Joséphine arranged that she should have an interview with the First Consul, who, moved by

her beauty—it was still very great, though she was nearly forty—and softened by her tears, said, “Very well, let Talleyrand marry you and all can be arranged : but you must either bear his name or leave his house.” Talleyrand was given by his imperious master twenty-four hours to decide. He decided for the marriage.

But it was not easy to carry out this decision. In the first place, the lady was married already, and the divorce granted her by the Maire of the Second Arrondissement would not be acknowledged by the Catholic Church, which does not admit divorce—a point of some importance on the eve of the conclusion of the Concordat. That point, however, does not seem to have received much consideration. What was more present to the mind of Talleyrand was that he was a Bishop, and that notwithstanding the manifold scandals of his career, and the ecclesiastical censures which he had incurred, the obligation to celibacy still bound him. When negotiating the Concordat, he had urged, with much tenacity, that ecclesiastics, secularised in fact, should become so in the eyes of the Church, hoping, no doubt, that his own case would be covered by a general concession and absolution of this kind. But the Holy See utterly declined to accept the proposal. It fell back on the precedent set in the time of Queen Mary by Julius III., who, while extending to married secular clerics, subdeacons, deacons, and priests, the indulgence sought, absolutely refused it to the regular clergy



and to Bishops. Failing in his first tentative, Talleyrand sought a particular condescension (*condescendance*) of the Pope for his own case ; and on the 27th of May, a special envoy proceeded to Rome with a letter from the First Consul requesting a Brief of Secularisation for the Foreign Minister, and quoting in support of that request various instances in which, it was said, the Holy See had granted a like indulgence. This document caused much distress to the Sovereign Pontiff. All motives of worldly prudence counselled the concession thus sought. And it was a question not of faith or morals, but only of ecclesiastical discipline. But Pius VII. merely inquired what was his duty. The matter was referred for investigation to the Roman canonists and theologians. They refuted, one after another, the instances alleged by the French Government of permission given to Bishops to marry. They showed, conclusively, that in the eighteen centuries of the Catholic religion there was not a single example of ecclesiastical sanction for episcopal nuptials. Pius VII., of whom it has been truly said, "He had the soul of a Saint and the heart of a hero," did not hesitate. Whatever might be the consequences he would uphold the discipline of the Church. A Brief was prepared authorizing Talleyrand to retire into lay communion, to wear the secular habit, and to fill great offices of State. It contained no word regarding his marriage. At the same time the Pope addressed to Bonaparte an autograph letter, explaining that it was impossible

for him to do more. *Rome locuta est, causa finita est*, it might have been said. But the saying would have been premature. Bonaparte and Talleyrand had another weapon at hand, namely, fraud. By a lie similar to that which asserted the sanction by the Holy See of the Organic Articles, the decision of Rome in this case was falsified. A notice in the *Moniteur* announced that the Papal Brief restored Talleyrand to the secular and lay life. Rome protested in vain against this cheat. No French journal reproduced the protest. “La censure consulaire était vigilante et ne laissait rien passer.” On the 10th of September, 1802, Talleyrand and Madame Grand were wedded at the Mairie of the Tenth Arrondissement, Joséphine and Bonaparte signing the marriage contract. A religious marriage at Épinay is said to have followed, but of this no evidence is now forthcoming.

Madame de Talleyrand, soon to become Princess of Beneventum,<sup>1</sup> had no qualification for her new position except her beauty. She was stupid, but not so stupid, perhaps, as a number of malicious anecdotes allege. Napoleon, who was really the author of her marriage, always treated her coldly and often rudely. It is said that when she appeared at the Tuileries for the first time as a bride, he

<sup>1</sup> In 1806 Napoleon conferred upon Talleyrand the principality of Beneventum, a papal fief, which he had to resign when the Temporal Power was restored at the Congress of Vienna. In lieu of it he received the Neapolitan Duchy of Dino, but he never took his new title. He transferred it to his nephew, Edmond, whose wife is best known as Duchesse de Dino.

received her with the incredible remark, "J'espère que la bonne conduite de la citoyenne Talleyrand fera oublier les légèretés de Madame Grand." Equally incredible is it that she had the wit to reply, "Je ne saurai mieux faire que de suivre à cet égard l'exemple de la citoyenne Bonaparte." At St. Helena Napoleon spoke of her as "très belle femme, mais sotte, et de la plus parfaite ignorance." And the story goes that Talleyrand explained to the Emperor his marriage on this wise: "Sire, je l'ai épousée parceque je n'ai pu en trouver de plus bête." And even in his honeymoon, comparing her with Madame de Staël, he is said to have observed: "Il faut avoir aimé une femme de génie pour savourer le bonheur d'aimer une bête." When the Restoration took place, Madame de Talleyrand's position became extremely difficult. At the Court of Louis XVIII. few looked with favourable eyes upon the ex-Bishop, whose marriage was an inexhaustible theme for sarcasm. Moreover, Madame Grand had grown very stout, very clumsy (*lourde*), and of very uncertain temper. When Napoleon retired to Elba, she betook herself to London. Talleyrand earnestly desired that she would stay there, and asked the French Ambassador, the Marquis d'Osmund, to arrange the affair. At Vienna, where Talleyrand attended the Congress on behalf of France, the Comtesse Edmond de Périgord—subsequently Duchesse de Dino—an extremely beautiful and brilliant woman, married to a nephew of his—kept his house, and made it a

great social centre. This, Madame de Talleyrand explained to Madame d'Osmund, was why she had not herself gone to Vienna. "Je savais l'attitude de Madame Edmond chez M. de Talleyrand à Vienne : je n'ai pas voulu en être témoin."<sup>1</sup> And so she submitted, not, indeed, to stay in London, but to go to Pont-de-Sains, in the Department du Nord, where she possessed a small estate which had been settled on her at her marriage, hoping to repair to Brussels for the winter. But Pont-de-Sains was not far from Paris, and Talleyrand dreaded lest his wife should bear down upon him. Moreover Madame Edmond, while quite willing to keep his house in France, as she had done in Austria, would not consent to its being invaded by Madame de Talleyrand. M. de Lacombe quotes a curious epistle in which she states her views to her uncle with a certain amount of imperiousness.

"I have thought much," she writes, "about Madame de Talleyrand's letter. It makes me dread that some fine day she will suddenly enter your chamber. She will say that she will stop only a little time, but that she wants an explanation with you : and all in the hope of getting some more money. . . . Since money is the true motive of all her actions, it is best always to start from that point of view in dealing with her ; so I venture to give you a bit of advice, which, if you follow it, will spare you a painful and disagreeable correspondence. Here it is. Send at once M. Perrey with a kind of letter of credit ; and let him tell Madame de Talleyrand that she shall not touch a penny of the allowance which you

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<sup>1</sup> *Mémoires de Madame de Boigne*, vol. ii. p. 226. It was from Madame d'Osmund, who was Madame de Boigne's mother, that she derived "ces paroles remarquables," as she calls them.

make her until she is in England, and that if she leaves that country, she will have nothing. Let M. Perrey go to Calais or Ostend, and not return till he has seen her off. My counsel is good, I assure you : and you will be ill-advised not to follow it." <sup>1</sup>

It was substantially followed. Madame de Talleyrand was authorized, indeed, provisionally, to live at Pont-de-Sains, but was given clearly to understand that if she set foot in Paris her income would be stopped.

## VI

And now Madame de Talleyrand vanishes from Talleyrand's life, her place being taken by Madame Edmond, née Dorothée de Courland. She was a daughter of an illustrious lady, the Duchess of Courland, and her marriage, negotiated by Talleyrand, with his nephew, Edmond de Périgord, had turned out unhappily. Her mother was on terms of close intimacy with Talleyrand during the last years of the Empire ; she was, Lady Blennerhasset observes, "the recipient of his most secret thoughts," as his letters to her sufficiently show. It was his habit thus to confide in the object, for the time being, of his adoration ; and he once observed that women had never betrayed him. Singularly interesting are the brief notes <sup>2</sup>—there are a hundred and twenty-three of them—which

<sup>1</sup> *La Vie Privée*, p. 211.

<sup>2</sup> They are published in the volume called *Talleyrand Intime*.

he addressed to her during the Hundred Days, and which, in spite of his injunction to burn them, she preserved : do women ever burn such letters ? These little missives—*petits billets de matin*, their editor calls them—were sent to keep her acquainted with the progress of affairs during that anxious time, and are couched in terms of extreme tenderness. “ Mon ange, je vous aime de toute mon âme,” he assures her in one ; in another he exclaims, “ Mon ange, comme je vous aime ! Vous . . . vous . . . vous ! ” They also exhibit his special interest in the Duchess’s daughter, Dorothee, who soon was to supplant her mother with him. What are we to make of this ? the editor asks. And he courteously replies, “ Ce que le lecteur voudra. Avec un homme tel que Talleyrand il faut tant de défier d’être dupe.” Madame de Boigne—*grande dame tournée à la commère*, M. de Lacombe aptly terms her—was at no loss what to make of it, and declares roundly that Talleyrand fell over head and ears in love with Madame Edmond as if he had been a young man of eighteen ; that her inclination for an Austrian gentleman, the Comte de Clam, with whom she repaired to Vienna, caused him to lose his head completely ; and that, moreover, he was persecuted by the despair of the Duchess of Courland, who was mortally jealous of her daughter.<sup>1</sup> This affair is also mentioned by a higher authority, Duke Pasquier, in his Memoirs. He represents Talleyrand, though past sixty, as

<sup>1</sup> *Mémoires*, vol. ii. pp. 225 and 227.

absorbed in this passion, and as having been physically and mentally prostrated when he believed that the object of it had left him for some one else.<sup>1</sup> Talleyrand was at that time Prime Minister to Louis XVIII., and it was while he was in the condition thus described by his colleague, that he indited the famous despatch which led to his resignation. He had supposed that monarch could not do without him. He was in error. His judgment, usually so sound, was off its balance. Louis XVIII., though personally not entertaining for him the intense aversion<sup>2</sup> which he inspired in most of the Legitimists, had no liking for him, and thought his services sufficiently repaid by the post of Grand Chamberlain and a salary of 100,000 francs. For the next fifteen years he was out of office. Had he swayed the counsels of Charles X., the Revolution of July would assuredly not have occurred—unless, indeed, he had wished to bring it about in order to put money in his purse, or for some other private and personal reason.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Mémoires du Chancelier Pasquier*, vol. iii. p. 376. The Comte d'Artois, who hated Talleyrand, nevertheless on one occasion remarked of him, perhaps with the benevolence engendered by a fellow-feeling, "I know it is said he has still some of the inclinations of youth. I congratulate him. *Gaudeant bene nati.*" In fact, Talleyrand preserved his physical vigour to an unusually late age.

<sup>2</sup> De Maistre expressed accurately their sentiments when he remarked, "Better Fouché than Talleyrand."

<sup>3</sup> On Talleyrand's venality see some interesting pages headed "Talleyrand's *Käuflichkeit*," in the ninth chapter of Lady Blennerhassett's book. Châteaubriand's *mot*, "*Quand il ne conspire pas il trafique*," is substantially borne out by his career.

During those fifteen years the Duchesse de Dino, who retained to an advanced age the singular charm <sup>1</sup> which had fascinated him, was his constant companion. They were bound to one another, M. de Lacombe observes, by "the most vivid, the deepest affection." <sup>2</sup> She surrounded him with little attentions and cares, and aided him with her counsels. It was to her business-like prudence that he owed the preservation of a considerable portion of his ill-gotten fortune when a bankruptcy threatened to swallow it up. On Louis Philippe becoming King, he was offered and accepted the post of Ambassador in England, and the Duchess presided over his house in London. But his relations on the one hand with the French Foreign Office, and on the other with Lord Palmerston, were not satisfactory to him, and in November, 1835, he resigned his embassy. In his letter of resignation, published in the *Moniteur Universelle* in January, 1836, he gives his reasons for his retirement: his great age, the infirmities which were its natural consequence, the repose which it prescribed, and the thoughts which it suggested. In another document he says that he does not wish "to be reminded by the *solve senescentem* of Horace that he had delayed this step too long." But Lady

<sup>1</sup> Comte A. de la Garde-Chambounas, who was at Vienna during the Congress, speaks, in his *Souvenirs*, of the Comtesse Edmond de Périgord's beauty with much enthusiasm. He adds, "Elle a sur sa figure et dans toute sa personne ce charme irresistible sans quelle la beauté, la plus parfaite, est sans pouvoir."

<sup>2</sup> *La Vie Privée*, p. 279.



Blennerhassett writes :

“ The real reason which led him to close his public career of fifty years lay deeper. He was of opinion that with the Reform Bill England had entered on a path which would lead to an entire transformation of her essential institutions, and convert the greatest aristocratic government of the modern world into a democratic community. The parliamentary revolution, which he compared to the revolution of 1789, might be inevitable. At all events, the new order of things did not inspire him with the same confidence as the institutions which had created the British Empire.” <sup>1</sup>

Talleyrand had eyes. Political vision was his supreme gift.

## VII

The task which now lay before Talleyrand was to prepare for his exit from the world's stage. It occupied his mind much in these long nights of little sleep, when, as he expressed it, “ on pense à terriblement de choses.” The task was a supremely difficult one, although, as he recognized, Madame de Talleyrand's death—she predeceased him by three years—simplified his position.<sup>2</sup> Royer-Collard observed of him, “ He was always a man of pacification ; he will not refuse to make his peace with God before he dies.” How he set about it, how earnestly he was assisted by the Duchesse de

<sup>1</sup> P. 526.

<sup>2</sup> That was his expression when he heard of the event. “ Ceci simplifie beaucoup ma position.” As M. de Lacombe remarks, “ Il ne lui restait de son amour qu'une rancune.”

Dino, a fervent Catholic,<sup>1</sup> whatever the irregularities of her life, may be read at large in M. de Lacombe's last volume, where the account left by Mgr. Dupanloup, hitherto known only by fragments, is given in full. One thing which stands out clearly is that in this grave matter he acted rather as an astute diplomatist than as a returning prodigal. He put off his reconciliation with the Church to the latest possible moment; and he made his submission in the widest and vaguest terms. His tone is largely apologetic in both the documents signed by him. He blames the excesses of the age to which he has belonged. He condemns "frankly" the serious errors which in that long tract of years have troubled and afflicted the Church Catholic, Apostolic, and Roman—errors in which he has participated. He protests his entire submission to the doctrine and discipline of the Church and to the decisions and judgments of the Holy See. He deplors the acts of his life which have saddened the Church. Renan observes that whether or no there was joy in the presence of the angels of God over this retraction of all his revolutionary past, there was joy in the Catholic world of the Faubourg St. Germain and the Faubourg St. Honoré.<sup>2</sup>

And now what are we to think of the career of this Founder of the Constitutional Church?

<sup>1</sup> She was brought up in Protestantism of the haziest kind—see her *Mémoires*—and was led, early in life, to become a Catholic, chiefly by perusing Bossuet.

<sup>2</sup> *Souvenirs d'Enfance et de Jeunesse*, p. 162.

Instead of answering the question, let us see how the "great inquisitor of human nature" contemporary with him answered it. In *Père Goriot* Talleyrand is spoken of as

"the Prince whom every one throws a stone at, and who despises humanity enough to spit in its face (*pour lui cracher au visage*) as many oaths as it asks for ; who prevented the partition of France at the Congress of Vienna ; who deserves crowns, and whom every one pelts with mud."

We must remember, however, into whose mouth Balzac puts these words. They express the view which Vautrin took : the judgment which the Prince of Convicts was led by his life philosophy to form of the ex-Bishop of Autun. And what was that life philosophy ? This :—

"Do you know how a man makes his way here ? By dazzling genius or by adroit corruption. You must tear among the mass of men like a cannon ball, or steal among them like a pestilence. Mere honesty is no good at all. If you want to get rich, you must play for big stakes. If you don't, there is nothing for it but low playing, which don't suit yours truly. There you have life as it is. Not nice, is it ? No more is cookery. That stinks in your nostrils too, doesn't it ? But you mustn't mind soiling your hands if you want your grub. Only take jolly good care to wash them well afterwards. And there you have the whole morality of this life of ours. Do you suppose I blame the world for being what it is ? By no manner of means. It has always been like that. And the moralists won't ever make it different. I don't speak to you of those poor helots who, all the world over, work away without getting anything for their toil. I call them the Confraternity of Almighty God's ragamuffins. Sure enough there you have virtue in the full bloom of its

idiocy—yes, and destitution with it. I can see from here the face those good fellows will make if God should play them the bad joke of stopping away at the Last Judgment.”

That appears to me to express accurately, in the jargon of the hulks, the principles on which Talleyrand acted during his long career. His patriotism, of which so much is said, was really his skilful playing of the political game : a game which he found far more exciting than his other favourite pastime of whist, and in which vast gains were to be won, and were won by himself. “ J’ai servi depuis Louis XVI. tous les gouvernements par attachement à mon pays,” he wrote to Louis Philippe. *Par attachement à moi-même*, would have been the truth.

Here, then, as it appears to me, we have the key to Talleyrand’s life. And what are we to think of his death, reconciled to the Catholic Church and fortified by her Sacraments ? It was a great event in 1838, and widely differing judgments were passed upon it. Chateaubriand, in his *Mémoires d’Outre-Tombe*, writes : “ La comédie par laquelle le prélat a couronné ses vingt-quatre deux ans est une chose pitoyable.”<sup>1</sup> M. de Blancmaison observed, “ Après avoir roulé tout le monde il a voulu finir par rouler le bon Dieu.” Lord Dalling’s explanation is : “ Talleyrand’s family were specially anxious that he should die in peace with the

<sup>1</sup> He speaks of “ sa nièce jouant autour de lui un rôle préparé de loin, entre un prêtre abusé et une petite fille trompée,” which is assuredly unjust to the Duchesse de Dino, of whose good faith and religious zeal there can be no question.

Church, and when convinced that he could not recover, he assented to all that was asked of him in this respect, as a favour that could do him no harm and was agreeable to those about him.”<sup>1</sup> That worldly-wise old lady, Madame de Boigne, speaks of his anxiety about his burial, and opines that notwithstanding all the vicissitudes of his social existence, he wished to die as a gentleman and a Christian, if not as a priest.<sup>2</sup> The Abbé Dupanloup, afterwards illustrious as Bishop of Orléans, who reconciled him to the Church and gave him the last rites of religion, observes : “ Dieu sait le secret des cœurs, mais je lui demande de donner à ceux qui ont cru pouvoir douter de la sincérité de M. de Talleyrand, je demande pour eux, à l’heure de la mort, les sentiments que j’ai vu dans M. de Talleyrand mourant.” Yes : “ Dieu sait le secret des cœurs.” It is not for us to invade the pene-tralia of conscience, or to give sentence upon things which “ the Invisible King, only omniscient, hath suppressed in night.”

<sup>1</sup> *Historical Characters*, vol. i. p. 432.

<sup>2</sup> *Mémoires*, vol. iv. p. 205.

## CHAPTER VI

### A PALADIN OF THE RESTORATION

#### I

CHATEAUBRIAND is unquestionably one of the most striking and fascinating figures of the early nineteenth century. One thing which marks him off from most public men of his time—from, for example, the two of whom I have had to speak in the last two Chapters—is that he had deep convictions, and unswervingly adhered to them at whatever cost of personal suffering and sacrifice. His mission it was to recall to his generation traditions and ideals of the Old France which the Revolution had banished for the New: to recall them and to make them available for the exigencies of national life. I do not know where the spirit which animated him is better described than in certain lines of a great poet of our own:

“ Love thou thy land, with love far-brought  
From out the storied Past, and used  
Within the Present, but transfused  
Thro’ future time by power of thought.”

That his labours were not crowned with the

success which they merited, is not to be accounted among his many faults upon which I shall be obliged to touch in this Chapter.

## II

For one striking characteristic of the age in which we live is its passionate desire to rake up the private lives of famous or notorious persons after their decease. The late Mr. J. A. Froude who, upon a memorable occasion, cast aside the most sacred obligations of friendship and the most elementary considerations of decency to minister to that desire, also applied himself to apologize for it. "The public," he asserted, "will not be satisfied without sifting the history of its men of letters to the last grain of fact which can be ascertained about them. This is not curiosity, but a legitimate demand."<sup>1</sup> "Legitimate"? How? "'Tis but right the many-headed beast should know," we are told. Whence the right? On what ground can it be maintained that any man possesses, that any body of men possesses, a prerogative to exhume the most intimate personal affairs of the dead and to put them on trial before "the public"—what a tribunal! Right? There is, there can be, no such right. I protest against the prostitution of that august word to veil the prurient cravings of a decadent age. I am well

<sup>1</sup> *Carlyle's Early Life*, vol. i. pref.

aware that the protest is as the voice of one crying in the wilderness: powerless against the general conviction that all possible details of the doings, and especially the misdoings, of public men—and, I may say, of public women too—ought to be revealed to the world. And so a considerable department of literature has become a sort of private inquiry office.

It is a maxim of the law—a maxim to be applied most cautiously indeed—*Quod fieri non debet, factum valet*. The results achieved by these literary resurrectionists are before us. We could not abolish them if we would. And however repugnant to our feelings their proceedings may be, the matter purveyed by them has to be reckoned with. No one could now write, to any purpose, concerning the subject of this present Chapter, Chateaubriand, without consulting the new information about him thus supplied. His prescient intellect indeed divined the interest which posterity would take in his personality, and for many years he devoted himself to setting down in his *Mémoires d'Outre-Tombe* what he supposed would satisfy it. But the *Mémoires* by no means suffice to slake the prevailing thirst for information about their author. For that, recourse must be had to other somewhat putrid fountains, and the books which lie on my table, as I write, testify how every hole and corner has been ransacked to find out his secrets. I have no wish to be unjust to these works. I cannot but agree with M. de Lacharrière that, although



sometimes they merely pander to the public appetite for scandal, they often contain data of value. M. de Lacharrière, indeed, goes further and remarks apologetically, that when we have to do with such a nature as Chateaubriand's—"une nature toute de sensibilité—a knowledge of his love affairs is an indispensable commentary on his writings."<sup>1</sup> Personally I demur to the adjective "indispensable." I think we might have done without this commentary. But, as it exists, we cannot ignore it or put it aside.

And now, in the first place, let us consider a little the net result of these abundant revelations about Chateaubriand which we owe to the untiring perseverance of the new inquisitors. Certainly, so far as the British public is concerned, that net result is unfavourable. The popular conception of him in this country—a very erroneous conception—is that he was a maker of evidences of Christianity: a prophet of righteousness to the dechristianised France of the opening nineteenth century. And I think I shall not be wrong in saying that the impression left upon the minds of most British readers who know anything of the recent literature about him, either at first- or at second-hand, is that this Christian apologist, this preacher of righteousness, as they account him, was, from first to last, a man of loose life, faithless to his own wife, and engaged in a succession of

<sup>1</sup> *Les cahiers de Madame de Chateaubriand : Publiés intégralement et avec notes*, par J. Ledrest de Lacharrière, intro., p. ix.

intrigues with the wives of other men. Whence the conclusion is pretty generally drawn that he did not believe in the creed which he professed and whose claims he advocated—that, in short, he was a hypocrite. It is not an unnatural conclusion for the average British reader : but I am persuaded that it is a false one. It is not unnatural because the average British reader looks at the matter from the Protestant point of view prevailing in this country. And in this connexion, I cannot do better than cite certain words of Cardinal Newman's :

“ Protestants do not think the inconsistency possible of really believing without obeying ; and when they see disobedience they cannot imagine there the existence of real faith. Catholics, on the other hand, hold that faith and obedience, faith and works, are simply separable, and are ordinarily separated in fact. . . . Faith in the Catholic creed is a certainty of things not seen but revealed. . . . It is a spiritual sight. . . . This certainty, or spiritual sight, is according to Catholic teaching, perfectly distinct, in its own nature, from the desire, intention, and power of acting agreeably to it. . . . Vice does not involve a neglect of the external duties of religion. The Crusaders had faith sufficient to bind them to a perilous pilgrimage and warfare : they kept the Friday's abstinence and planted the tents of their mistresses within the shadow of the pavilion of the glorious St. Louis.” <sup>1</sup>

An unquestioning belief, then, in Christianity —“ the faith of a charcoal burner,” as the French say—seems to me quite compatible with the infringement, even the habitual infringement, of some of its positive precepts. But the Protestant,

<sup>1</sup> *Anglican Difficulties*, pp. 236-246.

or rather non-Catholic, Englishman does not see this. At all events—to come to one particular instance—he is quite sure that what he calls “real faith” cannot co-exist with disregard of the prescriptions of Christianity concerning the relations of the sexes. He terms a man guilty of that disregard a *vicious* man—vice meaning for him specially, if not exclusively, sexual intercourse out of marriage. Hence, at the time of the great explosion of the Nonconformist conscience, occasioned by a scandalous episode in the life of Mr. Parnell, an eminent Italian ecclesiastic was led to observe to a friend of mine, “You English seem to think that there is only one virtue.” So Mr. Mallock’s pungent remark: “The quality of chastity [is] popularly called morality, as though it comprised all the other virtues, or even the chief of them.” Mr. Mallock goes on to observe, no doubt correctly—it is not a subject in which I am specially versed—that “the physical basis of this quality is the cerebellum.”<sup>1</sup> I suppose, then, we must conclude that Chateaubriand’s cerebellum was, in some way or other, unsatisfactory. However that may be, it is certain that his life was unsatisfactory in the matter of his sexual relations. This must be allowed. My present point is that here is no reason for questioning his religious sincerity. Even Sainte-Beuve, whose malice would have neglected no point which might have been plausibly made against him, did not question it.

<sup>1</sup> *Religion as a Credible Doctrine*, p. 139.

But there is more to be said on this subject. The principles of the moral law which Christianity consecrates and inculcates are immutable: they are "not of an age but for all time." Most of those principles, however, are not of specifically Christian origin. It is certain that Jesus Christ left no code of ethics. He left the record of a life wherein the moral ideal is realized: a supreme example: an all-sufficient pattern. But it is impossible to form from the Gospels, even if we add to them the Epistles, the elements of a scientific morality. So Suarez observes: "Christ did not deliver positive moral precepts, but rather developed (*explicavit*) those of the natural order."<sup>1</sup> And in another part of his great work he quotes the dictum of Aquinas that the New Law is contained in the moral precepts of the Natural Law and in the articles of the faith and the Sacraments of Grace.<sup>2</sup> This Natural Law does not depend upon the command of a Supreme Legislator, but is a permanent revelation of the reason, indicating what is good or bad for a man as a rational creature: what *should* be as distinct from what *is*. And when in the expanding Christian society the need arose for a scientific synthesis, recourse was had to the philosophers of Greece, to Aristotle and Plato, to the Stoics and the Epicureans. But there was one important title of morals concerning which the teaching of those "wise old spirits," as Jeremy

<sup>1</sup> *De Legibus*, lib. ii. c. 15, v. 9.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* lib. x. c. 2, v. 20.

Taylor well calls them, was inadequate, the title regarding the relations of the sexes. Looking the other day at a recent work of French fiction,<sup>1</sup> which seems to have "caught on," as the phrase is—in a very short time it has gone through a dozen editions—I came upon the following confession of faith made by the hero of the story: "Je n'ai jamais pu attacher à l'œuvre de chair la moindre importance, et je ne suis pas, de cet égard, infecté de Christianisme." "Infecté de Christianisme!" The author spoke wisely, more wisely, probably, than he was aware of. Christianity introduced into the world a new doctrine as to the relations of the sexes, a doctrine resting on its revelation of the virtue of purity. The great moralists of the antique world had barely suspected the existence of such a virtue. We should hardly exaggerate in speaking of it as unknown in ancient Rome or Hellas. A wife was expected, indeed, to be faithful to her husband. But that duty was derived from the fact that she was his property: that her office was to bear his children. No similar duty was regarded as incumbent upon a man. The Greek orator in a well-known passage says, "We have courtesans for pleasure, female house slaves (*παλλακὰς*) for daily physical service, and wives for the procreation of legitimate children, and for faithfully watching over our domestic concerns." And a man's intercourse with all these classes of women was regarded as equally

<sup>1</sup> *Daniel*, par Abel Hemmant, p. 34.

lawful. The view which Christianity introduced rests, of course, upon its doctrine of the Incarnation: "sanctification and honour" is its new law<sup>1</sup> of the relations of the sexes in virtue of their new creation in Christ. But it is not necessary to pursue that topic here. What I am concerned to observe is that, in the age and country into which Chateaubriand was born, this Christian view was largely inoperative. It had fallen into abeyance in the days of the Ancien Régime. Under the First Republic it was definitely rejected. The society in which Chateaubriand lived and moved and had his being had not recovered it. And, to quote certain admirable words of Taine, "We must look at men and things in the environment (*milieu*) which explains them." For good and for evil, Chateaubriand was of his age, and I may remark, in passing, that it was not as a prophet of righteousness, a preacher of penance, that he appealed to his age. What his message to it was, I shall consider later on. Here I am merely concerned to observe that I do not seek to extenuate, although I quite understand, his conformity to its ways. No doubt he *ought* to have followed a nobler rule. But he did not. Is that any wonder? I suppose the critics who are so ready to throw stones at him would unquestionably have

<sup>1</sup> "Its new law." This is clearly enough indicated in the Apostle's words: "Let every man possess his vessel in sanctification and honour, not in the lust of concupiscence, *even as the Gentiles who know not God*" (1 Thess. iv. 5).

conformed to that severer standard had they been in his place. Doubtless they know themselves to be without sin. For myself I confess I have not that reassuring conviction of my utter whiteness which would warrant my joining them. And I do not feel inclined to usurp the office proper to "the pure eyes and perfect witness of all-judging Jove."

So much may suffice to explain why, though personally lamenting Chateaubriand's lapses from chastity, I find therein no argument to support the charge of hypocrisy sometimes based upon them. Indeed, may we not say that they were, in some sort, a manifestation—illicit, unfortunately—of certain of the more striking of his psychical endowments? An ancient sage has pointed out that "*Deum amare*" and "*mulieribus vinci*" are closely related in the highest natures. I suppose David, the "man after God's own heart," as he was considered, may serve as an illustration of the truth of this dictum. Anyhow, true it would seem to be. Chateaubriand came of a very noble race, the Breton; a profoundly poetical race; devout Catholics; ardent lovers. He was first and before all things a poet:<sup>1</sup> a poet of a very high order; and is it possible to deny some force to M. Séché's words?

<sup>1</sup> It may be pointed out that the real antithesis is not between verse and prose, but between poetry and prose. Many of the truest poets have never written a line of verse: many versifiers have been writing prose, and nothing else, all their lives.

“ N'en voulons donc pas à Chateaubriand d'avoir si bien amalgamé l'amour et la religion qu'on ne saurait pas plus les séparer dans sa vie que dans son œuvre. Il était voué au premier avant d'embrasser la seconde, ou plutôt il avait sucé l'un et l'autre avec le lait maternel, et la morale relâchée de ceux qui ont fait le catholicisme à leur image était incapable de lui imposer, à trente-deux ans, le sacrifice nécessaire. En Bretagne tous les cœurs biens nés sont amoureux dès l'enfance. L'amour, au pays de *Marie* et de *Pêcheur d'Islande*, est aussi indispensable à la vie de l'âme que le pain à la vie du corps. Tout petits, on nous berce avec des chansons dont l'amour est le thème unique ; c'est sur les bancs du catéchisme que s'ébauchent les premières idylles, et, la mer et le ciel aidant—la mer grise sous le ciel brumeux—vers la seizième année les passions naissantes nous plongent dans des rêveries sans fin. De là notre fonds de mélancolie naturelle, car il n'y a pas d'amour sans trouble et sans chagrin. Et voilà pourquoi aussi, dans l'espèce de prison où son père l'avait pour ainsi dire emmuré à Combourg, Chateaubriand s'éprit d'abord de sa sœur Lucile. Il n'y a qu'une chose qu'il n'ait pas connue en amour, c'est la fidélité—vertu si bretonne pourtant, que sa ville natale s'en est fait une devise : *Semper fidelis*, lit-on sur l'écusson de Saint-Malo. Mais de cela encore il ne faut pas lui faire un grief trop sévère : il tenait de sa caste sa belle inconstance. C'était un vieux reste de chevalerie, la noblesse française ayant toujours mis son amour-propre à marcher sur les traces du roi vert-galant. Et d'ailleurs, s'il fut inconstant en matière d'amour, on peut d'autant mieux l'excuser, de ce chef, qu'il poussa la fidélité jusqu'à l'héroïsme en matière d'honneur.”<sup>1</sup>

Yes : it is quite true that he carried fidelity to the extent of heroism where honour was concerned. He well merits the title of Paladin of the Restoration.

<sup>1</sup> *Hortense Allart de Méritens*, préface, p. 11.



## III

And now let us go on to consider a little further what those "esprits passionnés pour l'étude de Chateaubriand," who have laboured so abundantly, have practically achieved for him. Their books, as we have seen, have brought into stronger relief some of his weaknesses of character and conduct specially odious to the British public, and have done him ill-service in this country. In France it has been otherwise. These matters have there received comparatively small attention, and the general effect of the recent literature about Chateaubriand has been to rehabilitate him, so to speak. The sort of adoration lavished upon him during the latter years of his life was succeeded after his death by a violent reaction, due in greater measure to Sainte-Beuve<sup>1</sup> than to any one else, which has lasted, more or less, to this present day. But there are indications that a more favourable and, I will say, a juster judgment has now gained ground among his countrymen. The unswerving loyalty of the man to his convictions, his refusal to sacrifice

<sup>1</sup> I do not know who has better judged Sainte-Beuve's work on Chateaubriand than M. Giraud. After indicating the sort of book which the great critic, endowed with so many fine qualities, might have been expected to produce, he continues: "Il a mieux aimé satisfaire ses rancunes, et au lieu de l'étude sérieuse et décisive qui seule eût été digne de Sainte-Beuve et de son passé, nous avons eu un livre très intéressant certes, et fort amusant, très habile aussi, mais aussi malveillant qu'habile, livre très, superficiel en somme et d'une criante injustice."—*Chateaubriand: Études Littéraires*, Avant-propos, p. x.

one jot or tittle of them to his personal interests, his elevated conception of public duty, the amplitude and prescience of his political vision, his indifference to money, the firmness of his friendships, his frankness of speech, "his hand unstained, his uncorrupted heart," are now more correctly valued. And I suppose most competent men of letters would accept the judgment formulated by Lord Acton. "He wrote French as it had never been written : and the magnificent roll of his sentences caught the ear of his countrymen with convincing force." <sup>1</sup>

It is not my intention to put before my readers a biographical sketch of Chateaubriand. I shall, however, follow the chronological order in what I am about to write. He came of a very distinguished Breton family. One of his ancestors had fought by the side of St. Louis at the battle of Mansoura (1250), and, like the king, was wounded and taken prisoner. The monarch, touched by his devotion, gave him permission to bear the royal *fleur-de-lys* in his escutcheon and to use the motto "Notre sang a teint la bannière de France." Chateaubriand was born in 1768, and spent his childhood in the gloomy ancestral château of Combourg. As a younger son, he does not seem to have received much attention from either of his parents ; and the same must be said of his highly gifted sister Lucile, between whom and himself there was a passionate affection. He

<sup>1</sup> *Lectures on the French Revolution*, p. 115.

distinguished himself first at his school at Dol, and then at the College of Rennes, by his application, his extraordinary memory, his rapid progress in mathematics, and his decided taste for languages. It was originally intended to send him into the navy. That intention was, however, abandoned. At one time he imagined himself to have a vocation for the ecclesiastical state, and was sent to the College at Dinan to complete his studies in the humane letters ; but he soon recognized that he was not fitted for a sacerdotal existence. At last, as he seemed unable to choose a career for himself, his father chose one for him, addressing him in the following terms :

“Chevalier, you must give up your nonsense. Your brother has procured for you a sub-lieutenant’s commission in the Navarre regiment. You will start for Rennes, and from there you will go to Cambrai. Here are a hundred louis. I am old and ill, and have not long to live. Conduct yourself like a man of honour : and never disgrace your name.”

Chateaubriand tells us that he was so affected by this address that he threw himself on the paternal hand and covered it with kisses.

And so Chateaubriand left the prison-house of his childhood and went to Paris and thence to Cambrai, where he joined his regiment. He appears to have soon acquired such knowledge of his profession as was necessary, and to have won the esteem of his Colonel. In September, 1786, his father died, and he went back to Combourg for a brief visit. During the years 1787-1789 he

was in Paris from time to time. He felt inclined to sympathize with the Revolutionary movement, he tells us, but the first head he saw paraded on a pike made him recoil from it. In 1790 the Navarre regiment, then stationed at Reims, mutinied, and he resigned his commission. His brother officers went to join the army of Condé. He decided to go to America with the grandiose project of discovering the North-West Passage.

He embarked at St. Malo on the 8th of April, 1791. And the real date of his arrival at Baltimore appears to have been the 10th of July of the same year. He re-embarked at Philadelphia on the 10th of the following December. I give these dates, which seem to be fully established, on the authority of Mr. Gribble.<sup>1</sup> They reduce the term of Chateaubriand's American visit from the traditional eighteen months to five. The importance of this reduction is, as Mr. Gribble shows, that it proves the impossibility of Chateaubriand having made in America all the travels which he relates. There is unquestionably an element of fiction in his narration. Equally unquestionable is it—the proof will be found in Mr. Gribble's pages—that in writing it he freely borrowed, without acknowledgment, from earlier travellers who had really visited regions which he had not. All which is certainly far from creditable to him. An Elizabethan poet writes :

<sup>1</sup> *Chateaubriand and his Court of Women*, chap. iv.

“ We, through madness,  
Form strange conceits in our discoursing brains,  
And prate of things as we pretend they were.”

Madness can hardly be pleaded as an excuse for Chateaubriand, notwithstanding Pope's dictum that great wits are near allied to it. Veracious he unquestionably was in provinces where the standard current in his day, and in his class, required veracity from a man of honour. Literature he appears to have considered not to be one of those provinces; and I may observe, by the way, that he made a like exception in the case of love. Further, we must remember that there is a very considerable number of people who must be accounted congenitally incapable of enduring the trammels of reality. To pull the long bow, as the phrase is, seems part of their nature. A master-bowman was the late Mr. J. A. Froude, of whom Freeman observed, with hardly an exaggeration, that his account of any historical matter might safely be accepted as indicating one of the ways in which it did *not* happen. But I should add that this temperament is by no means incompatible with very high moral and religious excellence. Among the best, I would say most saintly, men it has been my privilege to know, was the late Cardinal Manning. At one time I was much surprised, like the rest of the world, by statements, as of fact, which occasionally proceeded from his lips; such as his assertion that the transactions of the Vatican Council were

characterized by "majestic unanimity," or this : "In 1800 years there has never been wanting a man prepared in secret by God to rise up to the full elevation of the primacy of Peter ; and the election of the Holy Ghost reveals him in due season to the Church when the appointed hour is come."<sup>1</sup> Declarations like these—and they were not unfrequent with him—made one stare and gasp. And it was only when towards the close of his life I had the privilege of knowing him somewhat intimately, that I realized the truth of the apology for them which his friends were in the habit of making—that they were not due to any wish to mislead, but were an outburst of the poetical element in the Cardinal's nature.<sup>2</sup> He felt how delightful it would be if the Vatican Council had been "a vision of peace" ; if supernatural influences had been always forthcoming to prepare and to designate the Roman Pontiff ; and he could not refrain from announcing these

<sup>1</sup> This is a quotation from the *Tablet* report of an Address made by him to his clergy on his return from Rome after the election of Leo XIII. I remember that at the Requiem for Cardinal Newman at the London Oratory, he spoke in the course of his sermon—which, by the way, contrary to his usual custom, he read—of the "affectionate friendship of more than sixty years" between them. Knowing, as I did, what the relations of the two men really were, and that instead of a lifelong friendship there had been lifelong opposition, fierce and bitter, these words astonished me beyond measure, as they did most of Newman's friends. One of them observed : "Well, if Manning will say that, he will say anything."

<sup>2</sup> Or, according to another explanation, of "theological idealism."

aspirations as truths. Perhaps a similar explanation may apply to Chateaubriand's fictions. They are beautiful: much more beautiful than the plain unvarnished tale would have been. He was before and beyond all things a poet: and "soaring in the high reason of his fancies" he may have lost sight of humdrum facts. But he is *splendide mendax* when he gives us *Dichtung* for *Wahrheit*.

On Chateaubriand's return from America, his relations appear to have thought it his duty to join Condé's army. But he had no money. So they sought him a wife with a *dot*, in order to provide him therewith. "They married me," he says, "because they wanted to give me the means of going to get killed for a cause to which I was indifferent." The bride, Mademoiselle Céleste Buisson de Lavigne, was a great friend of his adored sister Lucile, and was quite ready to accept Lucile's brother, although she knew nothing about him. She was an excellent woman, possessed of few personal charms, and, as Chateaubriand found out later on, not gifted with a specially good temper—"d'une humeur difficile," says the editor of her *Cahiers*. He espoused her without enthusiasm, being quite indifferent to her, and feeling no vocation for the married state. A few days afterwards he left her to join Condé's army, with which he served for a few months. Then he was invalided, and after a difficult and perilous journey found his way to England. This was in 1793. He lived in great poverty for some time in

London, whither, twenty-nine years afterwards, he was to return as the magnificent Ambassador of the Most Christian King. He went down to Suffolk to teach French,<sup>1</sup> and there a scholarly clergyman "loved him, oft invited him," and talked classics and travels with him over copious postprandial port. The clergyman's daughter, Miss Charlotte Ives, also loved him, and the good parson and his wife were willing to accept him as a son-in-law, when he remembered that he had a wife already, and confessed it to Mrs. Ives, and fled. No doubt his obliviousness of the fact that he was married is curious. But, as a charitable critic has observed, "*il l'était si peu.*"

So he went back to London, and in 1797 published his *Essai sur les Révolutions*, which made him almost a personage among the *émigrés* there, and brought him a little badly wanted money. The book has traces of what may be called Chateaubriand's "regal French"; "*œuvre de doute, de colère, et de révolte, plus sceptique encore qu'impie,*" is the account given of it by a great critic. No doubt it was a correct transcript of Chateaubriand's mind at that period. Shortly, M. de Fontanes

<sup>1</sup> Chateaubriand's account in the *Mémoires* is, that he went to Suffolk "to decipher manuscripts in the Camden Collection." Mr. Gribble (pp. 48-52) shows conclusively that this was not so, but that he went to teach French in schools and in private houses. It will be remembered that when Chateaubriand wrote the portion of the *Mémoires* dealing with this matter he was in London as French Ambassador. It is intelligible, if somewhat petty, that he should have shrunk from reference to his career as usher and private tutor.



arrived in London with news of his mother's death. Then came a letter from his sister Julie telling him how much that excellent woman had been shocked by the sentiments expressed in the *Essai*, and exhorting him to come to a better mind. He did. "I wept and I believed," is his account of the matter. The result of this change was seen in the *Génie du Christianisme*. The work had indeed been begun earlier and laid aside. He now applied himself to it with new vigour. In May, 1800, he returned to France, bringing the manuscript with him. He felt, to use his own words, that the publication of the book would decide his fate. But he did not know what changes the book required in order to succeed. Much light was radiated on this subject by Joubert, to whom Fontanes had introduced him. And Joubert presented him to Madame de Beaumont.

#### IV

Pauline-Marie-Michelle-Frédérique-Ulrique de Beaumont, who belonged to one of the most illustrious families of Auvergne, was born on the 15th of August, 1768. She was the younger daughter of the Comte de Montmorin, the well known and unfortunate Minister of Louis XVI. Brought up, as all French girls of good family then were, in a convent, she was told, when she was eighteen, that a husband was waiting for her

in the person of Count Christophe de Beaumont, whom she had never seen. The marriage turned out to be most unhappy, which is not wonderful if, as the Baron de Frétilly alleges, the bridegroom was *le plus mauvais sujet de Paris*.<sup>1</sup> After a few days the young wife left her husband, and returned to her father, who threatened him with a *lettre de cachet* in case he should molest her. In the year 1800 she divorced him. This proceeding, while effectually protecting her against him, did not, of course, annul her espousals in the eyes of the Catholic Church. That, however, was in those days, of small importance to her, as she seems to have fallen into a kind of agnosticism.<sup>2</sup> The years of Revolution were terrible for Pauline de Beaumont. First her father was slaughtered, with revolting cruelty, by the Parisian mob. Next her mother, her brother Callixte, and her sister Madame de Luzerne, were arrested in the Château de Passy—they had sought refuge there—and were carted to Paris, where Madame de Montmorin and Callixte were guillotined, and Madame de Luzerne died of

<sup>1</sup> *Souvenirs*, p. 249.

<sup>2</sup> Her biographer writes: "Madame de Beaumont had been as religiously brought up as one could be in the high society of the eighteenth century. A second education had then come to her through her reading, and through the young and distinguished friends who surrounded her. The confiscations of the Revolution, the triumph of the implacable enemies of her family, the numberless misfortunes with which she was overwhelmed, brought her a third education. She doubted for a time, according to her own expression, of divine justice and of Providence."—*La Comtesse de Beaumont*, par A. Bardoux, p. 250.

fever. Pauline de Beaumont insisted on accompanying them, but was soon expelled from the cart, as she seemed to be on the point of death, and was left by the roadside, in the snow. A poor peasant, Dominique Paquereau, took compassion on her, and sheltered her in his hut for several months. Two old servants of her father's, husband and wife, called Saint-Germain, found her there, and devoted themselves to her for the rest of her life. Then Joubert, who lived in the neighbourhood, and had heard of her misfortunes, sought her out, and in his wife's name and his own—he had been married the year before—offered her an asylum. Later on, she availed herself of the invitation, and from 1794 to the end of the century, she was often an inmate of his house at Villeneuve, where “your green room” was always ready for her. The subtle penetration of this refined and sensitive soul soon showed him that he had entertained an angel unawares. In truth, notwithstanding his uninviting exterior and eccentric habits of life, he and she were of the same high intellectual and spiritual lineage. He has been well called “le plus fin, le plus délicat, le plus original des penseurs.” These adjectives might apply also to Pauline de Beaumont, who had besides the charm of a highly bred woman, vexed with all “the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune.” It is not too much to say that from 1794 to 1803 she was the confidante of his deepest thoughts, the object of his unceasing solicitude ;

and she knew well how to value the grave and tender friendship of a man “who could love nothing which he did not respect, and whose respect was an honour.”<sup>1</sup>

In 1799 Madame de Beaumont, who had gone to Paris for the business of her divorce, took an apartment in the Rue Neuve de Luxembourg, where her friends gathered round her, on most evenings, in her modest and dimly lighted salon. One day Joubert took Chateaubriand there, and presented him to her. She was delighted, and more than delighted. “The Enchanter” was the name which Joubert had bestowed upon Chateaubriand. Pauline de Beaumont altogether succumbed to his enchantments. To see him, to listen to him, was for her to worship him. She confessed it in her inimitable way, after hearing him read some pages of his *René*: “Le style de M. de Chateaubriand me fait éprouver une espèce d’amour ; il joue du clavecin sur toutes mes fibres.” She herself dwelt much among her own thoughts, but Chateaubriand tells us “Quand une voix amie appelait au dehors cette intelligence solitaire, elle venait et vous disait quelques paroles du ciel.” A new thing had come into her existence: “la divine douceur de l’amour spontané, naturel, irrésistible” ; and now

<sup>1</sup> M. Bardoux writes: “Madame de Beaumont doit beaucoup à Joubert ; il lui doit beaucoup aussi : et cet empire qu’il exerçait sur les autres, une femme qu’un souffle pouvait renverser, un être tout de grâce, de faiblesse, et de langueur, l’exerça, à son tour, sur le penseur ingénieux et fort.”—*La Comtesse de Beaumont*, p. 210.

at last she was to find life worth living—the little that remained to her of life. Chateaubriand was then in the full bloom of early manhood, wielding that singular personal charm which he never altogether lost, even in extreme old age, with his Olympian head, his eyes full of mysterious meaning like the sea of whose colour they were, and his irresistible smile—a smile, it was said, which belonged only to him, and to Napoleon. She, still young, with tender, grave almond eyes, and a sylph-like figure, though not strictly beautiful, fascinated Chateaubriand as instantaneously as he fascinated her. As M. Beaunier puts it: “Il aimait Pauline de Beaumont, certes imparfaitement ; il l’aimait de son mieux.”<sup>1</sup> She threw herself, with all the ardour of her impulsive temperament, into his literary work ; her great delight was to minister to it. He resolved to publish *Atala* separately from and in advance of the *Génie*—it originally formed part of that work. Madame de Beaumont was full of anxiety about its success. Joubert, who, as M. Bardoux finely says, loved her so well that he loved Chateaubriand also, calmed her fears. “The book,” he told her, “is like no other : it has a charm, a talisman which it owes to the fingers of the workman.” Joubert’s judgment was soon amply vindicated, and Chateaubriand suddenly found himself famous not only in France, but throughout Europe, English, Italian, German,

<sup>1</sup> This reminds me of a profound remark of Bourget—“ Pour les hommes la vanité fait le fond de presque tous les amours.”

and Spanish translations of *Atala* quickly appearing. And now the great thing was to finish and publish the *Génie*. But for that, as Pauline de Beaumont saw, quiet was necessary. Inspiration would not come to Chateaubriand in a Parisian crowd. She herself provided the refuge required. She took for seven months a house at Savigny. Thither she and Chateaubriand betook themselves. Pauline de Beaumont's delight was unbounded. "I shall hear the sound of his voice every morning," she wrote to her friend Madame de Ventimille: "I shall see him at work." "Her enthusiasm," her biographer writes, "was as boundless as her tenderness. And Chateaubriand had never been more gay, more boyish. They were like two truants running away."<sup>1</sup>

In that still retreat the *Génie* was finished, and much that is best in it is unquestionably due to Pauline de Beaumont's<sup>2</sup> keen perception, delicate sympathy, and subtle intellect. "I wish," she wrote to Joubert, "he had critics bolder and more enlightened than me; for I am under a spell, and am much less severe than he is: it is detestable." Her biographer observes that it was not detestable at all, since it was just the spell cast by him upon his tender companion which made him write his most eloquent pages;

<sup>1</sup> Bardoux, *La Comtesse de Beaumont*, p. 317.

<sup>2</sup> M. Beaunier writes—and I agree with him—"J'attribue à Pauline de Beaumont la délicate et la mélancolique poésie, qui est le plus subtil parfum du *Génie de Christianisme*."—*Trois Amies de Chateaubriand*, p. 76.

that hers was that voice divine of which every poet has need. The time went on all too quickly for them both. Chateaubriand was in a fever of composition. "He is working like a nigger," she wrote to Joubert. She sat at his table copying his extracts, arranging his notes, making her diffident suggestions. It is notable as a sign of the times that no one seems to have been shocked by this irregular *ménage*. Joubert, who with his wife and child came to see them occasionally, rejoicing in the happiness of a woman so deeply interesting to him, blessed it and approved it, if not with a text, at all events with an aphorism. Chateaubriand's sister Lucile, now Madame de Caux, Madame de Chateaubriand's greatest friend, came too; and became the greatest friend of Madame de Beaumont also. "So passed the days."

When the seven months at Savigny had expired, Madame de Beaumont returned to her apartment in the Rue Neuve de Luxembourg, where her friends gathered around her once more. The *Génie du Christianisme* appeared on the 14th of April, 1802, in five octavo volumes. The moment was opportune. Bonaparte had concluded his Concordat with the Holy See. The Churches, long closed and desecrated, were opened, and purged from their defilements, and Mass was again said in them. Sensible people, throughout France, were sick alike of atheism and of the fantastic tricks played by various sectaries who had tried to provide substitutes for the Catholic

rites. The first edition of the *Génie* was exhausted in less than a week. The second was dedicated to the First Consul. Chateaubriand was absent a great deal from Paris in those days ; in Avignon, where he had to take proceedings in respect of a pirated edition of the *Génie*, in Brittany to see Madame de Chateaubriand—he had not seen her for ten years—and elsewhere.<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile Pauline de Beaumont was ill and unhappy. “La société m’ennuie,” she wrote, “il n’y a plus qu’une société pour moi ; la pauvre Hirondelle<sup>2</sup> est dans une sorte d’engourdissement.” She was, in fact, slowly dying of pulmonary trouble.

The success of the *Génie* was doubtless largely due to its intense vitality. It was the true transcript of the author’s mind, or, in Madame Récamier’s words, “a revelation of himself.”<sup>3</sup> It certainly took the world by storm, and secured for Chateaubriand at once a foremost, I might say *the* foremost, place among contemporary men of letters in France<sup>4</sup>—a place which he never lost

<sup>1</sup> “Elsewhere.” At Madame de Custine’s Château de Fer-vaques, among other places. This very attractive woman had thrown herself at Chateaubriand’s head, and he, like a lady in one of Oscar Wilde’s plays, could resist everything except temptation.

<sup>2</sup> “The Swallow” was a pet name given her by her friends.

<sup>3</sup> “Le lendemain elle [Madame Récamier] s’embarqua pour La Haye, et mit trois jours à faire une traversée de seize heures. Elle m’a racontée que pendant ces jours, mêlés de tempêtes, elle lit de suite *Le Génie du Christianisme* ; je lui fus révélé, selon sa bienveillante expression.”—*Mémoires d’Outre-Tombe*, vol. iv. p. 397.

<sup>4</sup> M. Giraud has well expressed this : “Si jamais écrivain a du premier coup séduit et ravi et conquis le public, c’est lui :



as long as he lived. Moreover, it accomplished his object, which was to show that the Christian religion was the source of many most precious elements of modern civilization. The book is not, what it is often called, an apology for Christianity. It is rather, as the sub-title of the first edition indicates, an exposition of certain beauties<sup>1</sup> of that faith, very generally ignored or overlooked when Chateaubriand wrote. It is a vindication of the religious sentiment in man as being, like the sentiment of love or art, an ultimate irreducible fact of our nature. It is really a poem. Joubert's mellow wisdom anticipated its mission in words which are worth quoting. "We shall see what a poet will arise to purify France from the mess of the Directorate, even as Epimenides, with his sacred rites and poems, purified Athens from the plague." This is precisely what the *Génie* did. It addressed to a frivolous, sentimental, worldly generation just the considerations most likely to weigh with them. "What an awakening!"

et cette royauté, sans précédent, devait durer près d'un demi-siècle. Il n'est pas un Maître, il est le Maître."—*Chateaubriand*, Avant-propos, p. 6.

<sup>1</sup> *Le Génie du Christianisme, ou Beautés de la religion Chrétienne*. The title which Chateaubriand thought originally of giving to his book was "Des Beautés poétiques et morales de la religion Chrétienne, et de sa supériorité sur tous les autres cultes de la terre." On the first page of every volume of the original edition was the following epigraph taken from Montesquieu's *Esprit des lois* :—"Chose admirable ! La religion chrétienne, qui ne semble avoir d'objet que la félicité de l'autre vie, fait encore notre bonheur dans celle-ci."

writes Madame Hamelin in one of her letters ; “ what a clatter of tongues, what palpitations of the heart ! ‘ What ! is *that* Christianity ? ’ we all exclaimed. ‘ Why, Christianity is perfectly delightful ! ’ ” A revolution was worked in the dominant sentiment of French society, and, to use Talleyrand’s *mot*, impiety became the greatest of indiscretions. But the success of the book in the salons was the least of its triumphs. It brought back into French life and literature what may be called a Christian note ; it repaired, and set flowing anew, fountains of emotion which had been supposed to be ruined for ever. Am I asked, Well, does any one read it now ? I suppose, notwithstanding the fine things in it, few do, except professed men of letters. The generation for which it was written has long passed away. *We* look at things with other eyes. The book did its work—a beneficent work—for the age to which it was addressed. To our age it has no message. For us it is a document of history.

The *Génie* had its effect upon Bonaparte. It led him to offer to its author the post of Secretary of Legation at Rome. Chateaubriand, after some hesitation, accepted the appointment, and set out to take it up in May, 1803. In September, Madame de Beaumont followed him thither. The doctors had sent her to Mont-Dore, where she became worse ; she could not rest there ; so she determined to go to Rome that, at all events, she might see Chateaubriand once more. It was a terrible

journey, in those days, for a woman in her delicate, her moribund state. Her excitement kept her up ; but her great fear, as she expressed it, was that the drop of oil which still remained in her lamp of life should burn out too soon. At Florence, Chateaubriand met her ; she had just strength enough left to smile, she writes. At Rome he installed her in a little house at the foot of the Pincian Hill, standing in an orange garden. For a day or two, she felt better. The Pope, and the Cardinals resident in Rome, sent to inquire after her, and the Roman nobility followed their example—a curious instance of the tolerant spirit then prevailing, for her relations with Chateaubriand were perfectly well known. The doctors told him that nothing but a miracle could save her. And soon the end came. Chateaubriand, weeping, broke the news to her. She took his hand and said “ Vous êtes un enfant. Est-ce que vous ne vous y attendiez pas ? ” She told him to send for the Abbé Bonnevie,<sup>1</sup> the Chaplain of the French Embassy, to whom she made her confession, and who was greatly edified by her patience and good dispositions.<sup>2</sup> When Chateaubriand returned she

<sup>1</sup> M. Biré tells us : “ Une étroite intimité s'établit entre l'auteur du *Génie du Christianisme* et le très spirituel abbé, qui ne tarda pas à conquérir l'estime et l'affection de Madame de Chateaubriand. Jusqu'à leur mort il resta l'un de leurs plus fidèles amis.”—*Mémoires d'Outre-Tombe*, vol. ii. p. 335 note.

<sup>2</sup> M. Séché observes : “ N'est-ce pas aux pieds d'une jeune païenne que fut écrit le *Génie du Christianisme*, et n'est-ce pas aussi par la vertu de ce livre que cette jeune femme mourût chrétienne ? ”—*Hortense Allart de Méritens*, Préface, p. 11.

said "Eh! bien, êtes-vous content de moi?" Later on in the day they brought her the last sacraments with the solemnity and pomp—and crowd—which accompanied them at Rome, in those days. She saw, without the least tremor, "le formidable appareil de la mort," and, then, when she found herself alone with Chateaubriand, they had their last talk—of the past, with its tender memories, of their plans for the future, never to be realized. She begged him to promise her to take up his married life with Madame de Chateaubriand, and he gave his promise. They buried her in the Church of San Luigi dei Francesi, Chateaubriand being the chief mourner. In a most touching letter,<sup>1</sup> giving an account of her last moments, he begged of M. de Luzerne—the husband of her dead sister—two favours: that he might be allowed to raise a monument to her, and that he might take into his own service the two Saint-Germains who had served her so faithfully, and her father before her. Both requests were readily granted. The *bas relief*<sup>2</sup> in San Luigi bears these among other words: "F. A. de Chateaubriand a élevé ce monument à sa mémoire."

<sup>1</sup> Joubert wrote of it: "Rien au monde est plus propre à faire couler les larmes que ce récit. Cependant, il est consolant; on adore le bon garçon en le lisant, et quant à elle, on sent pour peu qu'on l'ait connue qu'elle eût donné dix ans de vie pour mourir si paisiblement et pour être ainsi regrettée."

<sup>2</sup> In erecting it Chateaubriand spent all the money he had—and more. He mentions in one of his letters that it has cost him about nine thousand francs, and that he had sold everything to pay a part of this sum.

The graceful bit of statuary has already suffered from the hand of time. But another monument, which time cannot touch, has been dedicated to her by Chateaubriand in some exquisitely tender and pathetic pages of the *Mémoires d'Outre-Tombe*.

## V

Chateaubriand's devoted attendance upon Madame de Beaumont—it was on the 4th of November, 1803, that she died—had won for him in Rome general sympathy, to which he was by no means indifferent. But he was anxious to quit scenes so full of death for him. He writes in his *Mémoires* :

“No one knows what desolation of heart is till he has been left to wander alone in places hitherto frequented by another who has made the delight of his life. You search for her everywhere, and you find her not ; she speaks to you, smiles on you, is by your side ; all that she has worn or touched brings back her image, there is only a transparent curtain between you, but so heavy that you cannot lift it. . . . I strayed abandoned among the ruins of Rome. The first time I went out everything seemed changed to me. I did not recognize the trees, the monuments, or the sky. I wandered about the Campagna, and by waterfalls and aqueducts. . . . I came back to the Eternal City, which had added to so many past existences, one more spent life. And by constantly frequenting the solitudes of the Tiber they imprinted themselves so vividly on my memory that I reproduced them correctly enough in my letter to M. de Fontanes.”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This celebrated letter on the Campagna Romana is dated the 10th of January, 1804. Sainte-Beuve reckons it the high-water mark of French prose : “ En prose il n'y a rien au delà.”

It was this staunch friend who had procured his nomination as French Minister to the little republic of the Valais. And on the 21st of January, 1804, he left Rome for Paris, where he made preparations for taking up his new post. Madame de Chateaubriand was to accompany him. Her fortune had disappeared, and the arrangement that she should join her husband was opportune for her as for him. But they never went to the Valais. Chateaubriand shall himself explain the reason why :

“ On the 21st of March I rose early on account of a souvenir sad and dear to me. In the garden of the house built by M. de Montmorin at the corner of the Rue Plumet—sold during the Revolution—Madame de Beaumont, then little more than a child, had planted a cypress, which she would sometimes point out to me when we passed it in our walks. It was to this cypress, of which I alone knew the origin and the history, that I went to say Adieu. It still exists, but in a languishing state, and scarcely reaches the height of the window under which a vanished hand had loved to tend it. I can distinguish this poor tree from three or four others of its kind ; it seems to know me and to be glad when I draw near it : a melancholy breeze inclines its yellow head a little towards me, and it murmurs something to the window of the forsaken chamber : mysterious communications between us which will cease when one or the other shall have fallen. My pious tribute paid, I went down the boulevard and the esplanade of the Invalides, crossed the bridge Louis XIV. and the garden of the Tuileries, and went out by the grille which now opens on the Rue de Rivoli. There, between eleven and twelve o'clock, I heard a man and a woman crying official news which caused the passers-by to stop, suddenly petrified by the words : “ *Judgment of the Special Military Commission assembled at Vincennes which condemns to the penalty of death*

*Louis Antoine Henri de Bourbon, born the 2nd of August, 1772, at Chantilly.*" The cry fell on my ears like thunder: it changed my life, just as it changed Napoleon's. I went back to my hotel. I said to Madame de Chateaubriand, "The Duc d'Engbien has been shot." I sat down at a table and began to write my resignation. Madame de Chateaubriand did not oppose me, and looked on with great courage while I wrote. She was well aware of my danger. The trials of General Moreau and of Georges Cadoudal were proceeding: the lion had tasted blood: it was not the moment for provoking him. M. Clausel de Coussergues then came in: he too had heard the news. He found me pen in hand. Out of consideration for Madame de Chateaubriand he made me strike out of my letter certain angry phrases: and it went to the Foreign Office."

The substance of the letter, couched in the usual official language, was that Madame de Chateaubriand's health compelled her husband to resign the appointment to which he had been designated, and that he begged the Foreign Minister to submit "ces motifs douloureux" to the First Consul.<sup>1</sup> It appears to me that Chateaubriand, at this moment of his career, presents a spectacle which may well make us pause. The effect of the murder of the Duc d'Engbien was to strike terror into "the good

<sup>1</sup> Mr. Gribble (p. 128) speaks of this letter as "disappointing" because "it does not, as might have been expected, hurl indignant defiance at a Government guilty of a judicial crime," but "merely states, untruly, that Madame de Chateaubriand is ill." I wonder whether if Mr. Gribble had been in Chateaubriand's place he would have hurled "indignant defiance" at Napoleon. I am sure I should not have done so. It is a proceeding which would have been good and congruous for St. John Baptist, but Chateaubriand was merely an official resigning an appointment; and assuredly the pretext—one of the flimsiest—for his resignation deceived no one, Napoleon least of all.

society " of Paris. To quote the words of Madame de Chateaubriand, in her *Cahiers* : " As soon as the hero was changed into an assassin, the royalists precipitated themselves into his ante-chamber." Alone, with one exception, among Frenchmen,<sup>1</sup> Chateaubriand declined to be associated with the author of so great a crime. The " *vultus instantis tyranni* " had no terror for him. It had much for his friends. Madame Bacciochi, Napoleon's sister, who took great interest in him, burst into loud laments. " M. de Fontanes," Chateaubriand writes, " became almost mad with fear at first, and gave me up for shot." But things passed quietly. Talleyrand, whether from design or from indifference, kept the letter for two days before submitting it to the First Consul, who merely observed " Very well " (*C'est bon*). I consider that in this transaction we have, so to speak, the keynote of Chateaubriand's public career. Long years afterwards he wrote :

" Grâce à Dieu je n'ai jamais eu besoin qu'on me donnât des conseils d'honneur : ma vie a été une suite de sacrifices qui ne m'ont jamais été commandés par personne : en fait de devoir j'ai l'esprit primesautier." <sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Louis the Eighteenth returned to the King of Spain the Order of the Golden Fleece with which Bonaparte also had been invested, declaring that there could be nothing in common between him and so great a criminal.

<sup>2</sup> *Mémoires d'Outre-Tombe*, vol. v. p. 172.



## VI

For ten years, public life was to be closed to Chateaubriand. He had to fall back, as he says, on his literary career. In the year 1806-7 he made his Eastern journey which was to supply him with materials for his *Itinéraire de Paris à Jérusalem*, and with local colour for *Les Martyrs*. His expedition ended, as all the world knows, in Spain, and in his meeting there Madame de Mouchy, concerning whom those who desire information will find it in M. Baunier's *Trois Amies de Chateaubriand*, or in Mr. Gribble's volume. On his return to France he became the proprietor of the *Mercure*, and published in it an article on, or rather apropos of, a volume of travels in Spain, in the course of which he took occasion to make some reflections on Nero and Tacitus. Napoleon construed them as an allegory reflecting on himself. The *Mercure* was confiscated, and Chateaubriand's friends thought him fortunate in escaping prison. It was in 1807 that he bought a rustic country house—it is described as “maison de jardinier”—in the neighbourhood of Sceaux, expending upon it a considerable portion of the money brought him by his books. He occupied himself much with planting and gardening, and found, as he tells us, great delight in that occupation. Here he wrote *Les Martyrs*, accounted the most finished of his works; the *Itinéraire*, which unquestionably contains some

of his finest passages ; and *Le Dernier des Abencérages*. And here he began his *Mémoires*, carrying out a resolution which he had made in Rome in 1803, and communicated to his friend Joubert, as we shall see presently.

In what I have still to write about Chateaubriand I shall use chiefly these *Mémoires*. I regard them as by far the most important work which he has left behind him. And he thought so too. They are not, properly speaking, confessions. Chateaubriand's account of them is "j'écris principalement pour rendre compte de moi-même à moi-même."<sup>1</sup> But of course they were intended for future generations, too, and in his letter to Joubert, just now referred to, he tells him :

"I will not trouble posterity with the details of my frailty. I will relate of myself only what is in accordance with the dignity of man and—I dare to say so—with the elevation of my heart. One should put before the world only what is beautiful (*beau*). To reveal of one's existence only what may lead our fellow-men to noble and generous sentiments is not to lie unto God."

Elsewhere he says, "I have let my whole life pass into these *Mémoires*," and I agree with M. Giraud that for anyone who has eyes there exists no more sincere autobiography. Further, as that accomplished critic remarks :

"All his work leads up (*aboutit*) to this book, and without this book his work would remain incomplete and in part unexplained. He felt that deeply : hence his quite paternal

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<sup>1</sup> MS. of 1826. Quoted by Giraud, *Chateaubriand* p. 30.

tenderness for the poor orphan destined to remain on earth after him : hence the care which he took in writing it, the incessant retouches which he gave it, the unquiet curiosity with which he tried to foresee and to shape its fortunes. . . . It was more than a mere book for him : it was a part of himself, the dearest, the most intimate. A part ? It *was* himself : it was his *ego* which he had cast into these pages : the mysteries of his heart—his ‘inexplicable heart’—he had here, if not unveiled, at all events indicated to those who have eyes : the incomparable gifts of his genius are here profusely scattered. . . . It was not then in vain that for more than thirty years Chateaubriand had patiently, lovingly, retouched and fixed the image of himself which he would leave to his contemporaries, and to posterity. The image is flattered, doubtless, but less than has been alleged. And it would be easy, with a little ingenuity, to extract from the *Mémoires* a veritable indictment of their author.<sup>1</sup> The truth is that they are a sufficiently faithful portrait,—and that when we judge them, we may judge Chateaubriand and his works.”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> So M. de Lacharrière observes : “Chateaubriand s’est calomnié lui-même en exagérant certains gestes : il a montré à nu certains côtés de son caractère choquants pour les idées actuelles, mais qui pour les contemporains se voilaient d’une apparence plus sympathique.”—*Les Cahiers de Madame de Chateaubriand*, intro. p. x.

<sup>2</sup> *Chateaubriand*, p. 34. By a cruel irony of fate these *Mémoires* were given to the world in a way utterly remote from Chateaubriand’s design, and most calculated to defeat his purpose. His pecuniary necessities, in his old age, obliged him to sell them to what I suppose we may call a small company, who agreed to pay him an annuity of 20,000 francs during his life, and one of 12,000 francs to Madame de Chateaubriand in case she should survive him, and to publish them after his death. In breach of this engagement they began to publish them some months before his death, and—horror of horrors !—as a feuilleton in the *Presse* newspaper. This prostitution to the *canaille* of what was so deeply cherished by, and so sacred to, him was the last great grief of his life, and doubtless hastened his end.

And that is for me the special value of these *Mémoires*. They are the abstract and brief chronicle of his life and times by a great genius, who was one of the few honest men then found in French public affairs. But their interest is almost inexhaustible. Carried on by the magic of Chateaubriand's style, one reads and re-reads pages until one knows them pretty well by heart. They place before us, as in sunlight, the story which the author has to tell, and the moral signification of the story. Chateaubriand had that prophetic vision which is the prerogative of poets. He sees through the veil of phenomena to the causes determining them, and moralizes like a chorus in a Greek tragedy. And while he deals with these high themes, he scatters by the way literary judgments of the greatest value. My space does not allow me to dwell on them, but I will give, by way of specimen, three that happen to meet my eye in the second volume of the *Mémoires*, which chanced to be open before me. Where shall we find a more pregnant dictum than this: "L'Angleterre est toute Shakespeare"? Profoundly true again is his estimate of the Byronic school: "Lord Byron a ouvert une déplorable école : je présume qu'il a été aussi désolé des Child Harolds auxquels il a donné naissance que je le suis des Renés qui rêvent autour de moi." And how admirable is his criticism of Sir Walter Scott ! While fully recognizing the high gifts of the author of the Waverley Novels, he writes : " Il me semble avoir créé un génie faux : il a perverti le roman et

l'histoire : le romancier s'est mis à faire des romans historiques, et l'historien des histoires romanesques."

The wise Duke of Weimar prophesied of the domination of Napoleon, when he seemed the foremost man of all the world : " It is unjust : it cannot last." It lasted till 1814. Two years before, Chateaubriand had said, " Napoleon's fate will be that of Crassus : the Russians will retire before him like the Parthians, and this will be the rock on which his power will split." On the 31st of March, 1814, the Allies entered Paris. A few days afterwards Chateaubriand published his pamphlet *De Bonaparte et des Bourbons*, a scathing indictment of the Empire and all its works, and an earnest plea for the old royal house. " I flung it," he said, " into the balance : and all the world knows what an effect it had." Louis the Eighteenth confessed it had been of as much service to him as an additional army corps. But to say that was to say too little. Then set in the scramble for offices under the restored monarchy, from which Chateaubriand proudly kept aloof. His friends did what they could for him, and he was nominated to the Swedish Embassy with the modest emolument of 33,000 francs. He felt that he was too poor to take it. Next came the escape from Elba. Not the least interesting portion of the *Mémoires* are the pages describing the condition of things in Paris when Napoleon was approaching the city. On the 23rd of March Louis the Eighteenth presented himself to the Chamber of Deputies, and

among other brave words inquired, amid much applause, whether at sixty he could better terminate his career than by dying in defence of his country? He gave them to understand that he meant to remain at his post. This royal declaration filled Chateaubriand with hope, and in a speech delivered by him on the morrow he said :

“ Let the King keep his word and stay in his capital. . . . Let us resist for only three days and the victory is ours. The King defending himself in his château will evoke universal enthusiasm. And if it is destined that he should die, let him die in a manner worthy of his rank. Let Napoleon’s last exploit be to cut an old man’s throat. Louis the Eighteenth in sacrificing his life will gain the only battle he has ever waged : and he will gain it to the profit of the liberty of the human race.”

These heroic sentiments pleased the ear. To the King they appealed, Chateaubriand says, as having “ a certain Louis Quatorze ring ” about them. But they were not translated into action. Louis the Eighteenth fled to Ghent four days after his memorable speech about dying at his post.

“ If he had only kept his word,” Chateaubriand remarks, “ legitimacy might have lasted for another century. Nature herself seemed to have deprived the old monarch of the means of retiring by enchaining him with salutary infirmities. But the destinies of the human race would have been fettered (*entravées*) if the author of the Charter had adhered to his resolution. Bonaparte came to the succour of the future. This Christ of the evil power took by the hand the new paralytic and said, Arise, take up thy bed : *Surge : tolle lectum tuum.*”

The Hundred Days ran their course. In the miniature Court of Louis the Eighteenth at Ghent,

Chateaubriand filled the post of Minister of the Interior *ad interim*, while remaining also titular Ambassador of the Most Christian King to Sweden. Intrigues abounded, and well-nigh every intriguer was "in utraque sorte paratus"; just as ready to serve a Bonaparte as a Bourbon. The Duke of Wellington came over from time to time for reviews, and would be greeted with a patronizing nod if Louis the Eighteenth, taking a drive, should chance to meet him. The *idée fixe* of the monarch was the grandeur, the antiquity, the dignity, the majesty of his race. And as Chateaubriand observes, "this unshakable faith of Louis the Eighteenth in his kingship was a power—the power which gave him the sceptre. He was legitimism incarnate, and with him it disappeared."

On the 18th of June, 1815, Chateaubriand went out of Ghent by the Brussels gate to take a walk on the main road, carrying Cæsar's *Commentaries* in his hand. He was deep in his book when, some two miles from the city, a muffled rumbling reached his ears. It was the distant roar of the cannon at Waterloo. Soon a courier passed and announced to him Bonaparte's entry into Brussels and the defeat of the Allies. He went back to Ghent, where there was a general *sauve qui peut*. Shortly, more authentic tidings arrived. Bonaparte had not entered Brussels; he had lost the battle of Waterloo and had fled to Paris. Four hundred thousand troops of the Allies were marching thither after him. Louis the Eighteenth received a friendly

hint from Vienna that he would do well to follow them as soon as possible, or he might find his place filled up. The filling up of places was indeed the question of the hour. Chateaubriand had nothing of the courtier about him; he was absolutely wanting in the suppleness of character, the elasticity of conscience, needed by those who would thrive in Courts. He did not choose to ask for an appointment. He waited to be asked to accept one. Moreover, he shrank from the contaminating contact of some who were judged indispensable to the restored monarchy. He made no secret of his aversion from the vile Fouché, from the venal Talleyrand. He came back to France with no offer or promise of office, but he was nominated to the peerage, and was made a Councillor of State, a position which brought him a modest salary.

## VII

And now we come to the years of Chateaubriand's life in which he took an active part in politics. Some critics appear to find it difficult to understand his standpoint. To me it seems quite easy. He was a legitimist whose personal sympathies with most called by that name were very limited. He was also a liberal in the best sense of the word, seeking to bind together the old historic traditions of France with the claims—new in that country—of individual freedom. That was the



dominant thought to which he was ever loyal, and M. de Lacharrière appears to me well warranted in speaking of the unity of his political conduct. It is true that, to the incalculable loss of France, his dream of an alliance between legitimism and liberty was not realized. That was not his fault. It was due to the falsehood of extremes which he found on either side. On the one hand was the dissolvent individualism of the revolutionary doctrine.<sup>1</sup> On the other, the solid dullness of a conservatism utterly unable to read the signs of the times; the dullness which had learnt nothing and forgotten nothing since 1789, and of which Charles the Tenth may be taken as the supreme type. Chateaubriand's lot was cast in a world not moving to his mind. "Pourquoi," he exclaims in a striking passage of his *Mémoires* :

"Pourquoi suis-je venu à une époque où j'étais si mal placé? Pourquoi ai-je été royaliste, contre mon instinct, dans un temps où une misérable race de cour ne pouvait ni m'entendre, ni me comprendre? Pourquoi ai-je été jeté dans cette troupe de médiocrité, qui me prenait pour un écerelé quand je parlais courage, pour un révolutionnaire quand je parlais liberté." <sup>2</sup>

Such then were Chateaubriand's political principles, from which he never swerved. They animated his speeches in the Chamber of Peers.

<sup>1</sup> "Douce patriarcale innocente honorable amitié de famille, votre siècle est passé; on ne tient plus au sol par une multitude de fleurs, de rejetons, et de racines: on naît et l'on meurt, un à un."—*Mémoires*, vol. ii. p. 186.

<sup>2</sup> Vol. iii. p. 432.

They were fully unfolded by him in his pamphlet, *De la Monarchie selon la Charte*, which he published in 1816. This brochure, an admirable exposition of the doctrines of constitutional government, gave offence to Louis the Eighteenth and was seized by the police—illegally as the event proved—while its author was struck off the list of Councillors of State, and lost the stipend attached to that dignity. That reduced him to something like penury. He was obliged to sell his library and his country house, La Vallée-aux-Loups. He determined to turn to journalism. In conjunction with some of his friends he founded the *Conservateur*, which, thanks chiefly to his brilliant articles, soon became a great political power. He claims—not without reason—“la révolution opérée par ce journal fut inouïe : en France il changea la majorité dans la Chambre : à l'étranger il transforma l'esprit des Cabinets.” In 1820 the Decazes Cabinet fell, and the Duc de Richelieu became Prime Minister for the second time. He offered Chateaubriand the Embassy at Berlin.

Chateaubriand accepted the offer, with some reluctance indeed, but he could not afford to decline it. One reason for his reluctance was that it removed him from the society of Madame Récamier, which since 1817 had entered largely into his life. His relations with this extremely beautiful and accomplished woman<sup>1</sup> have been generally

<sup>1</sup> Benjamin Constant's account of her is: “Sa beauté l'a d'abord fait admirer : son âme s'est ensuite fait connaître : et

supposed to be Platonic,<sup>1</sup> but M. Beaunier's inquisitorial tribunal<sup>2</sup> has decided otherwise. Whether the decision is right or wrong, I do not undertake to pronounce. I must refer the curious in such matters to M. Beaunier's own pages. What is certain is that in Madame Récamier Chateaubriand found that *adjutorium simile sibi* which unhappily he had not found in Madame de Chateaubriand. In a striking passage<sup>3</sup> which ends the first volume of the *Mémoires*, he does full justice to his wife's high qualities, her fine intelligence, her original and cultivated mind and her admiration for him,<sup>4</sup> although, he adds, she had not read one of his works. "She is better than I am," he observes, but "d'un commerce moins facile"—which no doubt was true. For the rest, Madame de Chateaubriand was greatly absorbed in the affairs of the Infirmerie Marie Thérèse, an asylum for invalid priests, which she

son âme a encore paru supérieure à sa beauté. L'habitude de la société a fourni à son esprit le moyen de se déployer, et son esprit n'est resté au-dessous ni de sa beauté ni de son âme."

<sup>1</sup> As his relations with the Duchess de Duras unquestionably were.

<sup>2</sup> See *Trois Amies de Chateaubriand*, pp. 157-165.

<sup>3</sup> The passage concludes with these words: "Je dois donc une tendre et éternelle reconnaissance à ma femme, dont l'attachement a été aussi touchant que profond et sincère. Elle a rendu ma vie plus grave, plus noble, plus honorable, en inspirant toujours le respect, sinon toujours la force des devoirs"—which is very neatly put.

<sup>4</sup> The Duchess de Duras' judgment of her is amusing: "C'est une personne qui a de l'esprit et surtout de l'originalité: elle adore son mari et cela me paraît sa meilleure qualité."—*La Duchesse de Duras et Chateaubriand*, p. 44.

and her husband had founded, and where she associated with religious and charitable persons given, like herself, to good works. It was not an atmosphere in which Chateaubriand could exist for long. He found one more congenial to him in Madame Récamier's salon, where all that was most illustrious in literature and politics gladly resorted, and where he was the central figure. For thirty years she was the light of his life. And when his life was drawing towards its close, he wrote thus of her in his *Mémoires* :

"As I approach my end it seems to me that everything which has been dear to me, has been dear in Madame Récamier, and that she has been the hidden source of all my affections. My recollections of every period of my existence—those of my dreams as well as those of my realities—have become moulded, commingled, blended, to make an amalgam, of which she has become the visible form." <sup>1</sup>

Chateaubriand held the Embassy at Berlin for only a few months.<sup>2</sup> Then, in consequence of political changes in France, which need not be

<sup>1</sup> *Mémoires*, vol. iv. p. 488.

<sup>2</sup> The independence which characterises his despatches to the French Foreign Office during this period is remarkable. Thus in one dated the 10th of February, 1821, he writes : " Je désire, Monsieur le baron, que l'on m'évite des tracasseries. Quand mes services ne seront pas plus agréables, on ne peut me faire un plus grand plaisir que de me le dire tout rondement. Je n'ai ni sollicité ni désiré la mission dont on m'a chargé . . . Je suis au-dessus ou au-dessous d'une ambassade et même d'un ministère d'État. Vous ne manquerez pas d'hommes plus habiles que moi pour conduire les affaires diplomatiques . . . J'entendrai à demi mot : et vous me trouverez disposé à rentrer dans mon obscurité."

dwelt on here, he was nominated to the much-coveted post of Ambassador to the Court of St. James. He accepted the nomination with pleasure. "It brought back to me," he says, "Charlotte, my youth, my emigration, with a multitude of joys and sorrows. Human frailty, too, delighted in the thought of my reappearing, celebrated and powerful, in scenes where I had been small and of no reputation." Some of the most charming pages in the *Mémoires*<sup>1</sup> are those which are devoted to this episode in his career. In September, 1822, he left London to go as one of the French plenipotentiaries to the Congress of Verona. M. Villemain enumerates as present there the Emperor of Austria and Prince Metternich, the Emperor of Russia with several of his generals and ambassadors, the

<sup>1</sup> Take the following extract as a specimen of them : " Arrivé à Londres comme ambassadeur français un de mes plus grands plaisirs est de laisser ma voiture au coin d'un square, et d'aller au pied parcourir les ruelles que j'avais jadis fréquentées, les faubourgs populaires à bon marché où se réfugie le malheur sous la protection d'une même souffrance, les abris ignorés que je hantais avec mes associés de détresse, ne sachant si j'aurais du pain le lendemain, moi dont trois ou quatre services couvrent aujourd'hui la table . . . Quand je rentre en 1822, au lieu d'être reçu par mon ami tremblant de froid qui m'ouvre la porte de notre grenier, en me tutoyant, qui se couche sur son grabat auprès du mien, en se recouvrant de son mince habit, et ayant pour lampe le clair de lune, je passe à les lueurs des flambeaux entre deux files de laquais, qui vont aboutir à cinq ou six respectueux secrétaires. J'arrive tout criblé sur ma route des mots, *Monseigneur, Milord, Votre Excellence, Monsieur l'Ambassadeur*, à un salon tapissé d'or et de soie. Je vous en prie, Messieurs, laissez-moi. Résussitez, compagnons de mon exil. Allons, mes vieux camarades du lit, de camp, et de la couche de paille."

King of Prussia with his two brothers and his principal Ministers, the King of Naples with his mistress and his confessor, the King of Sardinia with his Minister of Foreign Affairs, and the delegates of England—chief among them the Duke of Wellington.<sup>1</sup> Chateaubriand has left us a full account of the Congress in two volumes of entrancing interest. The question which above all others occupied it was that of mediation or intervention in the Spanish revolution. Chateaubriand, who had larger and more far-seeing views in politics than most of his colleagues, was strongly in favour of a French intervention which, as he judged, would do much to check the advancing spirit of unrest throughout Europe and to enhance the prestige of France. We learn from the *Mémoires* that in 1822 he was full of anxiety for the future of his country. He speaks of “cette Restauration à laquelle j’ai pris tant de part, aujourd’hui glorieuse, mais que je ne puis pas néanmoins entrevoir qu’à travers je ne sais quel nuage funèbre.” He became Foreign Minister, and in that capacity carried out victoriously the Spanish war. Lord Acton considers “the overthrow of the Cadiz constitution in 1823” “the supreme triumph of the restored monarchy in France.”<sup>2</sup>

Chateaubriand’s tenure of the French Foreign Office lasted for fifteen months. The military success of the Spanish campaign was complete.

<sup>1</sup> *La Tribune Moderne : Chateaubriand*, p. 231,

<sup>2</sup> *Essays on Liberty*, p. 89.

And no doubt, as he had anticipated, one of its effects was to add to French prestige. But its result in Spain was to deliver that country to the unrestrained despotism of Ferdinand the Seventh, a prince as vindictive in power as vile in captivity. The guarantees for good government which Louis the Eighteenth sought from him were not forthcoming, or were rendered illusory. On one occasion Chateaubriand threatened to withdraw the French Ambassador from Madrid if the King did not pursue a wiser policy. But Ferdinand, surrounded by a furious and greedy *camarilla*, made no real reforms. Meanwhile Chateaubriand's position in the French Cabinet became more and more insecure. His relations with the Prime Minister, M. de Villèle, were unsympathetic. His masterful ways were distasteful to Louis the Eighteenth, who had never liked him. Nothing, however, suggested, as nothing could excuse, the manner in which he was dismissed. On Sunday, the 6th of June, 1824, he went to the Tuileries to hear Mass at the Chapel Royal and to present his respects to the Sovereign. He was told that some one was waiting to see him in the Salle des Maréchaux. He found there his private secretary, who brought him a communication from the President of the Council transmitting a royal ordinance by which he was relieved of his office.

“Quel coup pour les Bourbons, et de leurs propres mains,” a highly cultivated Englishman, Mr. Frissell, exclaimed to Villemain when he heard

the news. The insult was gross, and was of a kind which Chateaubriand would deeply resent. Years before—it was in 1816—Fontanes had said of him : “Chateaubriand est un terrible homme : ils se repentiront d’avoir provoqué un homme de génie.” His late colleagues did repent. Chateaubriand put his pen at the service of the *Journal des Débats*, while the Villèle Ministry fell from one fault into another, and at last, in 1828, arrived at a degree of unpopularity which terminated its existence. Chateaubriand had cause to be satisfied.

“After my fall,” he writes, “I became the acknowledged leader of French opinion. . . . Young France was on my side to a man, and has never since deserted me. . . . Crowds surrounded me whenever I showed myself in the streets. Why did I acquire this popularity ? Because I had read the true mind of France. I had begun the combat with a single journal at my service. I became the master of the entire press.”

In the new ministry which was formed, M. de Martignac desired—naturally enough—to include Chateaubriand. But Chateaubriand declined to accept any place in it except that of Foreign Minister—he would return, he said, by no door save the one at which he had been thrust out—and Charles the Tenth would not consent to that appointment. He was however appeased by the nomination of his great friend, M. de la Ferronays, to the Foreign Office, and of another valued friend, M. Hyde de Neuville, to the Admiralty, while he himself accepted the Embassy at Rome. Madame de Chateaubriand—who had not been with him



when he went as Ambassador to Berlin or London—determined to accompany him on this occasion, moved no doubt by her devout instincts. If the reminiscences of M. de Hausonville, then a young attaché, are to be trusted, her presence did not greatly add to her husband's peace and comfort. His most important work during the few months that he was accredited to the Holy See was the defence of French interests—or what were supposed to be such—during the conclave which followed the death of Leo the Twelfth. But the pages of the *Mémoires* which relate to this period are full of charm, containing, as they do, some admirable letters to Madame Récamier, and several diplomatic papers still well worth reading. Meanwhile the political situation in France was becoming ever more menacing. The Liberal majority in the Chamber of Deputies was in constant conflict with M. de Martignac's Ministry, which endeavoured in vain to form a party out of the centres, or more moderate members, on both sides. In fact, the ministry was at the mercy of two great parties, both of which equally detested it, and over neither of which had it any control. Prescient of coming changes, Chateaubriand determined to return to France. Having obtained leave of absence, he left Rome on the 6th of May, 1829, accompanied by Madame de Chateaubriand, who, as we read, took back with her for her *Infirmierie de Marie-Thérèse*, a plentiful supply of relics, medals, and indulgences, as well as the famous Micetto, Pope

Leo the Twelfth's favourite cat, "red streaked with black," which had been given to her on the death of that Pontiff.

On arriving at Paris, Chateaubriand proceeded to pay his respects to the King, whom he found in a state of grave discontent with his Ministers. They were too liberal for him. For the country they were not liberal enough. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs was vacant. There was some expectation that it would be given to Chateaubriand. But the King said, "I won't say that he shall not be my Minister at some time; but not at present." Charles the Tenth had other views, which Chateaubriand did not even divine.

"The accession of M. de Polignac to power," he says, "never entered my head"; "M. de Polignac! son esprit borné, fixe et ardent, son nom fatal et impopulaire, son entêtement, ses opinions religieuses exaltées jusqu'au fanatisme, me paraissaient des causes d'une éternelle exclusion."

But it was on M. de Polignac that the royal choice fell. Chateaubriand had gone to Caunterets to drink the waters; and there news of the formation of the Polignac Ministry reached him. He knew well what this mad act of Charles the Tenth meant. "Le coup me fit un mal affreux," he writes, "j'eus un moment de désespoir, car mon parti fut pris à l'instant; je sentis que je me devais retirer." He immediately returned to Paris and wrote to M. de Polignac requesting an audience of the King, with a view of explaining to his Sovereign the reason which constrained him to

resign his embassy. The King was unwilling to receive him unless he would retain his embassy, which he firmly declined to do, telling M. de Polignac frankly why.

“ Je répondis que son ministère était impopulaire ; que la France entière était persuadée qu’il attaquerait les libertés publiques, et que moi, défenseur de ces libertés, il m’était impossible de m’embarquer avec ceux qui passaient pour en être les ennemis.”

It is not necessary here to tell the story of the dethronement of Charles the Tenth. But it may be well to recall certain words addressed to him by Chateaubriand in 1821—he was then Comte d’Artois—nine years before the catastrophe came.

“ The new France is now entirely royalist. It may become entirely revolutionary. If the institutions of the country are conformed to, I would stake my head on a future of several centuries. If they are violated or abused, I would not answer even for a future of a few months.”

Chateaubriand’s position in the crisis brought about by the Polignac *Ordonnances* was stated very plainly in a letter of his to Madame Récamier. “ It is painful but clear. I will betray neither the King nor the Charter, neither legitimate power nor liberty.” His famous speech in the Chamber of Peers on the 7th of August, 1830, is but an explication of these words. Charles the Tenth had fled, after abdicating in favour of his grandson, and appointing the Duc d’Orléans Lieutenant-General of the Kingdom and guardian of the royal infant. But Louis Philippe was by no means satisfied with

that arrangement. He had long aspired to the crown, and he thought—rightly, as the event proved—that his hour was come. Every effort was made to win over Chateaubriand to the Orléanist party. He was offered the Foreign Office, the Roman Embassy, or what he liked. His answer was, “Would you have me give the lie to my whole life?” That was the keynote of his speech on the 7th of August—“a day ever memorable to me,” he says, “for then I had the happiness to finish my political career as I had begun it.” Assuredly it is the greatest of his speeches, and perhaps he never wrote anything better than the paragraph which, as he tells us, moved him to tears when he delivered it :

“Inutile Cassandre, j’ai assez fatigué le trône et la patrie de mes avertissements dédaignés : il ne me reste que de m’asseoir sur les débris d’un naufrage que j’ai tant de fois prédit. Je reconnais au malheur toutes les sortes de puissance excepté celle de me délier de mes serments de fidélité. Je dois aussi rendre ma vie uniforme : après tout ce que j’ai fait, dit et écrit pour les Bourbons, je serai le dernier des misérables si je les reniais au moment où, pour la troisième et dernière fois, ils s’acheminent vers l’exil.”

Chateaubriand refused then to take the oath to Louis Philippe as King of the French. He resigned his peerage, and, of course, the emoluments attached to it, and also his place of Councillor of State. He sold the trappings of his ceremonial dress—gold lace, shoulder straps, epaulettes—to a Jew for seven hundred francs. “I was left stripped as naked,” he says, “as a little Saint John.” He

might have added, "et mea Virtute me involvo probamque Pauperiem sine dote quæro." So far as I know, in this heroic sacrifice to principle he stands alone among French statesmen of that time. "Heaven's Swiss, who fight for any god or man," is the correct account of well-nigh all of them.

### VIII

In what I have written about Chateaubriand I have referred to his relations with his fair friends only so far as was necessary for the elucidation of his public career. If anyone desires full details of his amours, are they not written in Mr. Gribble's *Chateaubriand and his Court of Women*, and in M. Beaunier's *Trois Amies de Chateaubriand*? Of the "trois amies" I have been led to speak of two—Madame de Beaumont, the muse of his early manhood, and Madame Récamier, the guardian angel of his maturity and old age. But there is a third lady who came into his life in 1829, and who counted for much in the last two years of his public activity. She is mentioned only once<sup>1</sup> in the

<sup>1</sup> M. Beaunier well explains the reason why: "Chateaubriand dans ses *Mémoires* parle beaucoup de ses amies: mais il a l'honorable soin de présenter ses amours comme des amitiés: le reste, il le donne à entendre. Avec Hortense ce n'était pas possible. Cette aimable femme avait eu de si célèbres et nombreuses aventures qu'en se disant son simple ami, Chateaubriand risquait le ridicule. Il supprima cette anecdote d'une existence qui était assez riche, au surplus, sans cela."—*Trois Amies de Chateaubriand*, p. 230.

*Mémoires*, and then casually. But there are abundant sources of information about her, and they have been fully utilized by M. Séché, in his ably written volume which forms one of the series called *Muses Romantiques*.

Hortense Allart was born at Milan in the year 1801, her father being then "membre d'une commission extraordinaire de liquidation" for that city. At the age of twenty she became an orphan. Her intellectual endowments were considerable, and she had received what was accounted a good education. For some two years she was a governess in the family of General Bertrand, where apparently she made the acquaintance of the Comte de Sampayo, a Portuguese gentleman, of whom M. Séché tells us "Il était alors âgé de vingt-quatre ans, avait une jolie figure et l'âme religieuse." With these advantages he won the affections of Hortense, who became his mistress, and in 1826 bore him a son, Marcus. Then their intimacy came to an end, Sampayo, notwithstanding his "âme religieuse," having abandoned her when she was about to become a mother. She had betaken herself to Florence, where, after a time, she appears to have had tender relations with Capponi, one of the heroes of the Risorgimento, who had been interested in a book entitled *La Conjuraton d'Amboise*, which she had published when she was twenty-one. Another early work of hers was a volume of *Letters to George Sand*, with whose moral and religious principles she much

sympathized, and who, later on, pronounced her to be "one of the glories of her sex." Hortense, says her biographer, "n'écouta jamais que la voix de la nature"—"nature" meaning for her what her inclination prompted. She professed herself a Protestant, and had a kind of religiosity, real, however hazy; she was loyal, generous and true to her lovers, who, in the event, usually became her friends. "C'était une âme simple et naturelle du XVIIIe. siècle, à qui le sens moral pouvait faire défaut, mais dont la sincérité n'était pas douteuse," says M. Séché. For the rest, she was a very pretty woman, "étincelante de vie, d'intérêt et de gaieté: un morceau de roi."

In 1829 Hortense Allart was in Rome on a visit to her sister, who was married to a M. Gabraic, a man of business, residing in the quarter delle Quattro Fontane. She passed her time, M. Séché tells us, in exploring the ruins of pagan antiquity, with no more thought of Chateaubriand than if he had never existed, when she received from Madame Hamelin a letter of introduction to him. To prepare herself for the interview with the great man she read *Atala*, and was much charmed with it. Chateaubriand was much charmed with her. It was in the month of April, 1829, and he was just then suffering acutely from ennui—which, indeed, was often the case with him. The visit of this young and fascinating woman at once dispelled it. "Pour la vingtième fois de sa vie," writes M. Séché, "il avait reçu le coup de foudre: à cela rien

d'étonnant, du reste, car Hortense était vraiment séduisante." As for him, though turned sixty, his Olympian head and irresistible smile and charming manner had retained all the fascination of his earlier days, and he might have said, in the verse of Victor Hugo, "le cœur n'a pas de rides." M. Beaunier writes, "It was as though the young women whom he loved, successively, with an assiduous ardour, ever renewed, communicated to him, by a phenomenon of gracious contagion, a persistent youth."<sup>1</sup> However that may have been, Hortense Allart too fell under his spell, and when, in the course of a few weeks, he proceeded to Paris, on leave of absence, she followed him thither, and, to be near him, took an apartment in the Rue d'Enfer.

Chateaubriand's passion for his young mistress was of the intense kind which sometimes assails men at the *âge critique*, and in the troublous days which arrived he found in her society a welcome refuge from the strife of tongues. But her great work for him—"elle n'a rien fait de plus glorieux en ce monde," M. Séché judges—was to bring him into relations of close friendship with Béranger, whom she had known intimately from her childhood. Louis Philippe was as much detested by the advanced liberals of France as by the legitimists. They by no means saw in him "the best of republics." They regarded him, not without reason, as a discounter and juggler who had

<sup>1</sup> P. 184.



jockeyed them. Chateaubriand had delighted them by his refusal to serve under Polignac ; he delighted them still more by his contemptuous defiance of the new Sovereign. Béranger was quite one of the most influential men in the liberal ranks, and Chateaubriand, who greatly admired his songs and rated very highly his genius, gladly fell in with Hortense Allart's suggestion that he should make the acquaintance of the poet, upon whom he called, after some preliminary negotiations skilfully conducted by her. Béranger succumbed at once to the spell of the enchanter and wrote to Hortense to ask how soon she thought he might return the call—"tant je suis sous le charme, mais je crains d'être indiscret." "From the date of this visit," writes M. Séché, "the sentiment of respect and esteem which the two men cherished for one another changed into a friendship which lasted as long as they.<sup>1</sup>" On the 16th of May, 1831, Chateaubriand left France for Switzerland, most certainly not without a view of returning. Béranger had dissuaded him from going. It appeared to him that Béranger's was the one voice which should call him back. No one had so much authority, so much popularity as the poet "whose couplets, charged with saltpetre, had blown up the throne

<sup>1</sup> I confess that I am insensible to the charm of Béranger's songs, and that I have no sympathy with his religious or political opinions. But I have the greatest respect and admiration for his honesty and straightforwardness. His letters to Hortense Allart are charming.

of Charles the Tenth." After some hesitation Béranger wrote the song, "Chateaubriand, pourquoi fuis ta patrie?" The summons to return was promptly obeyed. "How can I be insensible," Chateaubriand wrote, in his grand manner, "to the flattery of that muse who has disdained to flatter kings?"

We read in Chateaubriand's *Mémoires* that this period was the happiest of his life, and M. Séché observes, "Je le crois bien, puisqu'il savoura les douceurs de l'amour et de la popularité."<sup>1</sup> Unquestionably his delight in the *popularis aura* was intense—so intense as to surprise Béranger, who, in a letter to Hortense Allart, observes, "Bon Dieu, qu'il a besoin de gloire et de bruit!" But the *popularis aura* does not continue to blow for long with the same strength, or in one quarter. And, as a matter of fact, Chateaubriand's public career<sup>2</sup> was virtually closed in 1830. Moreover his *liaison* with Hortense Allart came to an end. He was himself, in some sort, the author of that calamity. "Un jour," M. Séché relates, "pour se distraire d'Hortense, il lui conseilla d'aller faire un petit voyage en Angleterre : elle le prit au mot : mais quand elle revint, le charme était rompu ; elle avait trouvé une nouvelle chaussure à son pied," which, being interpreted, means that in England she met Henry Bulwer Lytton, afterwards Lord Dalling,

<sup>1</sup> P. 124.

<sup>2</sup> "Public career." Of course, I do not forget his chivalrous activities on behalf of the Duchesse de Berri in the immediately succeeding years.

to whom she transferred her mutable affections—as she frankly told Chateaubriand on her return. She had her notions of probity, and was faithful in her temporary unions. It was a great blow to him thus to lose “sa dernière Muse, son dernier enchantement, son dernier rayon de soleil.” But he got over it, and he and Hortense were always friends. Her admiration of, her interest in him, lasted till his death in 1848.<sup>1</sup>

## IX

Unfortunately, it lasted longer. Hortense Allart had a way of recording in books her gallant adventures, under the slightest veil of fiction, which more expressed than hid them. Thus her novel *Jérôme*, published in 1830, is really an account of her experiences with Sampayo, who, as we have seen, was a Portuguese gentleman—married, we may note—and who is converted by her, for the purposes of her story, into a celibate Roman prelate. Her other novels are similarly autobiographical: a friend of hers remarked, “You are the first woman who has made such frank confessions to the public.” None of them had much success,

<sup>1</sup> She gives us a glimpse of him, a year before his death, in a passage which M. Séché quotes (p. 139): “Il m’a charmée et touchée. Il ne peut marcher: il est mélancolique. Il a ses anciennes grâces: cette distinction, cette élévation qui en font un homme si attrayant. L’âge, au lieu de changer la beauté de son visage, l’a rendue plus remarquable.”

except *Les Enchantements de Prudence*, published in 1873—which had a *succès de scandale*. It is by way of being an account of her relations with Chateaubriand, and there seems no reason for doubting that it is substantially accurate. Veracity was one of her virtues. Indeed, no sort of reticence much checked her fluent pen. For example, she describes, with great liberty, her little dinners with Chateaubriand, in a *cabinet particulier* of a small restaurant, l'Arc en Ciel, near the Jardin des Plantes. She tells us how she would sing him favourite songs of Béranger—*Mon Âme, la Bonne Vieille, le Dieu de bonnes gens*, and how “il les écoutait ravi, et cette belle poésie et la voix de sa maîtresse l'attendrissaient: ces chansons le sortaient de lui-même, éveillaient son génie, le jetaient dans un état exalté, triste et doux.” But I must refer those who desire further details of this flow of soul to the pages of M. Séché—or indeed of M. Beaunier or Mr. Gribble. The effect of these revelations was different on different readers. George Sand characterized the book as “un livre étonnant,” and pronounced the authoress to be “une très grande femme, une âme fervente qui n'est pas exclusivement chrétienne” (which was doubtless true); and while making “certain reserves,” would throw no stone at her, but would rather present her with a crown of roses and oak leaves. The general impression among men of letters appears to have been one of cynical amusement. M. Antoine Passy wrote to Hortense:

“ Cette grande figure littéraire, religieuse et politique, baisant vos pieds est un tableau ravissant.” But the legitimists were of a different opinion. They found the picture by no means ravishing. Two of their chief writers expressed the general scandal, and burst into loud lamentations and indiscriminate invective, when silence perhaps would have been more dignified and more politic. M. Armand de Pontmartin was aghast to find

“ Chateaubriand, cette grandiose figure de défenseur d’une religion, de créateur d’une poésie, de précurseur d’une révolution littéraire, d’ordonnateur des pompes funèbres d’une monarchie vaincue,” exhibited, at the mature age of sixty, “ en un vicomte bohème, royaliste et Catholique pour rire, enfoncé jusqu’au menton dans cette coterie dominée par Béranger . . . infidèle tout ensemble à sa femme—ceci ne comptait pas—à Madame Récamier, à son nom, à son passé, à sa gloire.”

Similarly, M. Barbey d’Aurevilly qualified as “ ignoble and horrible ” the spectacle of the author of *Le Génie du Christianisme* “ sur le bord de sa vie, en bonne fortune de cabaret, avec une maîtresse, y chantant *le Dieu de bonnes gens* de Béranger,” and expressed his sincere pity for the husband, the sons, the daughters—if they have any—of the women who write such books.<sup>1</sup> Marcus Allart—

<sup>1</sup> Hortense Allart, her biographer relates, was much astonished to hear of the scandal caused by the *Enchantements*, the more especially as she had ended the book with certain prayers—“ de très belles prières,” her friends esteemed them—which, M. Séché

now arrived at man's estate—was so disobliged by this unsought commiseration, that he sent M. Barbey d'Aurevilly a challenge to single combat, which was not accepted; whereupon he betook himself to the office of the *Constitutionnel* and failing to find his adversary there, assaulted and battered some unoffending contributor, who was unfortunate enough to come in his way; for which he was condemned, in due course, to a month's imprisonment and a fine of two hundred francs.

Chateaubriand had been dead a quarter of a century when all this happened. And I suppose it did not matter to him. Does it really matter to us that, like Samson of old, "effeminately vanquished," he was thus exhibited to make sport for the Philistines? Is not their mirth more ignoble than his humiliation? No doubt his unquestionable strength and greatness were marred and foiled by as unquestionable weakness and littleness. But surely to him, if to anyone, may be applied Pope's doctrine of the Ruling Passion. I quoted in a former page his declaration, "Je n'ai jamais eu besoin qu'on me donnât des conseils d'honneur . . . en fait de devoir j'ai l'esprit prime-sautier." The testimony which he thus bears of himself is true. If we would judge him aright, we must remember that his ruling passion was loyalty to honour, to duty. Let us take leave of him in the familiar

tells us (p. 73), she thought would sanctify, or at all events purify, her confidences.

and beautiful lines which he knew well and deeply treasured : <sup>1</sup>

“ No farther seek his merits to disclose,  
Or draw his frailties from their dread abode,  
(There they alike in trembling hope repose)  
The bosom of his Father and his God.”

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<sup>1</sup> In vol. xxii. of Chateaubriand's *Œuvres Complètes* will be found an imitation of Gray's *Elegy in a Country Churchyard*, which Sainte-Beuve praises : “ Vers tout-à-fait beaux et poétiques,” he says. I have no doubt this praise is well deserved, but the verses are widely remote from the thought and manner of the original. That is not the fault of Chateaubriand. The ethos of Gray's masterpiece is so utterly English that an adequate, or, indeed, a tolerable version of it in French is quite impossible.

## CHAPTER VII

### L'ÂME MODERNE

#### I

A REMARK of M. Henry Bordeaux has suggested to me the title which I have given to this Chapter. I leave it in the French because no English rendering <sup>1</sup> of it quite satisfies me. M. Bordeaux's words are, "M. Paul Bourget a l'âme moderne : toutes les tendances de notre époque se reflètent en lui." <sup>2</sup> I shall try to catch that reflection and to present it to my readers.

#### II

I suppose no one doubts that M. Bourget is the greatest novelist of contemporary France—the greatest novelist that his country has produced since Balzac. His popularity is enormous, and it is merited by his high gifts. For they are

<sup>1</sup> "The Modern Spirit," "The Mind of the Age," "The Soul of the Epoch," are translations; but, somehow, they are not equivalents.

<sup>2</sup> *Les Âmes Modernes*, p. 246.



indeed high gifts which he has brought to the composition of romantic fiction. Every page of his is marked by sagacity and subtlety, by depth of feeling and by delicacy of touch, by intellectual distinction and by wide culture. His work, to borrow a word from Emerson, is "vital and spermatic." It is literature presenting to us, with singular seductiveness of form, reality which has passed through the fire of thought. The critics are accustomed to compare him with Stendhal or with Balzac. There are grounds for both comparisons. Inferior, perhaps, to Stendhal in originality, he is assuredly superior to that great master of psychological fiction not only in what is called "*le roman de caractères*"—again I am at a loss for an English equivalent—but also in poetic faculty, in philosophic culture, in literary power. With Balzac he has much in common. Both possess the singular faculty of description by minute delineation of details, which, so to speak, makes us see with our own eyes what they picture ; which brings before us not *individua vaga*, not types and shadows, but actual entities. They have in common that curious gift of fascination—a kind of literary magnetism—which commands the reader's attention in spite of himself ; "he cannot choose but hear." They are both endowed with that wonderful psychological power which enables them to lay bare the innermost secrets of the human soul. But here there is a difference between them which ought to be noted. Balzac's

psychology is that of the seer, the *voyant*. Bourget's is that of the moral anatomist. Balzac is "the great inquisitor of human nature." Bourget is the accomplished analyst of human passions. Balzac, as George Sand said, "knew and dared everything." Bourget confines himself to what may be called experimental or applied psychology.

### III

So much in general as to M. Bourget. And now let us briefly survey his career. His father, sprung from a province of central France, was engaged in 1852 in teaching mathematics at Amiens, and it was there, in September of that year, that Paul Bourget was born. His early youth was passed in the lycée at Clermont whither his father had been transferred; and in his work *Le Disciple* there is a page in which his earliest recollections of his life are put into the mouth of Robert Greslou. But for his father's mathematical pursuits he had small inclination. It so chanced that a French translation of Shakespeare, in two large volumes, which found place in the scanty paternal library, was used to prop up the child when seated at the family table. Curiosity led him to look into them. He fell at once under the spell of the great magician. It was the awakening of his intellectual life. At his lycée, we are told, he made "serious and solid studies"

in the Greek and Latin classics. In 1867 he came to Paris and entered the college of St. Barbe, where his father had been nominated Directeur des Études. There he won a prize for a Latin dissertation, and there he continued, with appreciation and judgment, his reading of the poets and historians of Hellas and Rome. Now, modern writers began to engage his attention: Balzac and Stendhal, Musset and Beaudelaire, Flaubert and the Goncourts: and now too he began those philosophic studies which later on were to bear such good fruit in the *Essais de Psychologie*. In 1872 he travelled for a time in Greece and Italy—it was the first of those many expeditions to which he considers himself to have been so deeply indebted: “tout ce que je sais, tout ce que je vauz, tout ce que je suis, je le dois aux voyages,” is his judgment. Then for a time he had to fight the battle of life in hard conditions. The first thing was to assure his daily bread. He did that by giving private lessons. The rest of his time he devoted to literature. His earliest published works are poems, some of them—and notably the volume called *Les Aveux*—of considerable merit. In 1872 his admirable essay on Spinoza appeared. He was beginning to be known—and to be appreciated by the wise few—but he found it very difficult to find the entry which he desired into the domain of remunerative literature: “j’ai eu beaucoup de peine à forcer la porte des journaux,” he writes. In 1880, however, he joined the staff of

a newspaper, now long defunct, called *Le Parlement*, and was assigned the duty of directing the literary portion of it. In 1881 and 1882 he published in the *Nouvelle Revue* the studies which he collected afterwards under the title of *Essais de Psychologie Contemporaine*: and at last his reputation was made.

#### IV

It was in 1885 that he gave to the world his novel *Cruelle Énigme*. It may truly be said to have taken the world by storm. I remember how I read it through, the first time, at a sitting. And now, after so many years, if I take it up, I am little less under the spell. The theme is of the simplest. A young man carefully and religiously, but not effeminately, brought up, by two charmingly refined ladies, his mother and his grandmother, falls a victim to the fascination of a young married woman, who under a graceful and ingenuous exterior conceals a sensuous nature and an adulterous past. She delights in his freshness and ignorance of the world. To him she is Ilia and Egeria. Even her monstrous infidelity to him fails, in the event, to free him from her toils. He sinks to her level. In *Mensonges* the theme is somewhat similar. The book is more powerful: the characters are more strongly drawn: the psychology is more subtle: the situations are more

accentuated. But Susanne Morannes is cast in the same mould as Thérèse de Sauve, and René Vincy is of the same type as Hubert Liauran. I need not dwell here on the long succession of masterpieces which have followed these two. Adequately to deal with M. Bourget's contributions to French literature would require a volume. But what I want to point out here is that all his novels, if I may so speak, hold together. They are all variations upon one and the same theme. It has been observed—and truly—that his two volumes of *Essais Psychologiques* are a sort of grammar of which they are illustrations. I said just now that he confines himself to what we may call experimental or applied psychology. Still he is not a mere psychologist. His method is analytical. But he does not analyse merely for the sake of analysing, impelled by scientific curiosity, or, as Plato has it, "wise wonder." The psychologist, pure and simple, desires to penetrate to the very depths of the soul in order to know the most secret springs of men's actions, and is satisfied if he finds them. But such knowledge does not content M. Bourget. He proceeds to judge. Sensitiveness to moral good and evil is written on every one of his pages, and is written ever more strongly as the years go on. He becomes ever more keenly alive to the ethical import of the social phenomena which he describes. The title of his early book *Cruelle Énigme* is most significant. That is all he has to say by way

of comment upon this sad story of the ravages, the irreparable destruction, wrought by passion. "Cruelle Énigme : cruelle, cruelle énigme !" But why are these things so ? Is there any explanation of the riddle ? No : he has none to give. The question remains without an answer, "comme le trahison de la femme, la faiblesse de l'homme, comme le duel de la chair et de l'esprit, et comme la vie même dans ce ténébreux univers de la chute—cruelle, cruelle énigme !" In the concluding page of his *Crime d'Amour*, he gets beyond this. The wretched hero of that most powerful but most horrible and revolting story, finds, "a reason for living and acting" in "le respect, la pitié, la religion de la souffrance humaine." And so, step by step, he reaches the distinctly Christian conclusion which we find embodied in *Cosmopolis*, in *L'Echéance*, in *Le Fantôme*, in *Le Disciple*. It is a conclusion which a still greater master of French romantic fiction had anticipated. He does but follow Balzac in holding Christianity to be "a complete system of repression of the depraved tendencies of man and the greatest element of social order,"<sup>1</sup> in regarding "all the religious observances, so minute and so little understood which Catholicism ordains, as so many dykes necessary to hold back the tempests of evil within."<sup>2</sup>

M. Bourget has now definitely thrown in his lot with the religious tradition of Old France which

<sup>1</sup> *Œuvres de Balzac*, vol. i. p. 7.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. vi. p. 542.

the Revolution sought and still seeks to destroy. In his books he examines man and society as they exist. The task to which he has set himself is, in the words of Lemaître, "to reflect and embody the soul of a certain literary epoch." To this task, as M. Edmond Rod puts it, "he has devoted one of the most complete, the best equipped and the most comprehensive intellects of the time." And the conclusions at which he arrives are that human existence, an existence really *human* and not bestial, is possible only when man lives under a law strong enough to destroy the anarchy of his senses; and that the only law, in the Western world, at all events, which possesses that strength, is Christianity. This is the issue of his fruitful doubt—the doubt of which Abelard speaks: "By doubting we are led to inquire: by inquiry we perceive the truth."

## V

And now, before I go further, there is one point upon which I ought to say something. There are critics worthy of all respect—and I, for my part, yield it to them ungrudgingly—who would doubtless say, "All that you have written about the high gifts of M. Paul Bourget is unquestionably true. But are they not marred, stained, perverted by sensuality? Does he not dwell too much, and too immodestly, upon merely carnal desires and

animal passions—upon things of which St. Paul judges, “It is a shame even to speak of them?” Well, the objection cannot be properly met, as some seek to meet it, by a repudiation of English prudery, or by the reply—true enough in itself—made by others, that a French novelist does not, as a rule, write *virginibus puerisque*, but for men. No doubt it may be rightly urged that the business of an author of romantic fiction is to describe things as they are, not as they are not. But the novelist too is under the moral law which embraces every segment of civilized life: nay, it may be truly said that he has a cure of souls. He is, and cannot help being, a teacher. There can hardly be any more important question than that of the ethos of a popular work of fiction. And it is in the author’s treatment rather than in his choice of his subject that his ethos comes out. The test is what is the impression left upon a healthy mind,—a mind infected neither by prudery nor by prurience, which are merely different forms of the same moral disease. Now if we judge certain of M. Paul Bourget’s novels by that test, what must be our verdict on them? Take, for example, his *Crime d’Amour*. The last thirty pages are admirable. I hardly know where to turn for a more passionate and persuasive exhibition of the moral agonies which, by the nature of things, are bound up inseparably with the crime whereof he has been writing—the crime of high treason against the most sacrosanct of human affections. Those pages



go far to redeem and explain all that has gone before. But still—I put it to any man of the world who has carefully read the book—does not the sensuous impression of certain voluptuous scenes, of certain “audacities of description” (to use the author’s own phrase) in the earlier chapters, gradually dim, if it does not quite efface, this stern and lofty teaching? <sup>1</sup> “Tout cela, c’est de grandes saletés,” says the Abbé Taconet towards the end of *Mensonges*. It is too true of too much of M. Bourget’s work. He has described himself, half apologetically, as “Un Moraliste de Décadence.” I suppose it is difficult for him to escape from the contamination of the intellectual atmosphere which he breathes, from the yoke of the tradition of lubricity so firmly established in French fiction. Assuredly he has not always escaped. As we look through some of his books, we may almost say that illicit love is his *ποῦ στῶ* whence his whole world is moved. Man is apparently conceived of in them as an essentially adulterous animal. “First catch your hare,” enjoins the ancient oracle of British cookery. “First find your neighbour’s wife,” prescribes the French novelist, and then proceed to corrupt her, *secundum artem*, with all due gravity. For one thing notable about most French fiction is the utter absence of

<sup>1</sup> I find in M. Henry Bordeaux’s book, before cited, a similar judgment. He remarks of *Un Crime d’Amour* and *Cruelle Énigme*, “sans doute on peut dire de ces deux livres qu’ils s’attardent aux dangers de la chair au risque d’en y communiquer la fièvre.”—P. 279.

humour in it. "Thou knowest, dear Toby," quoth Mr. Shandy, "that there is no passion so serious as lust." Well, I say that this lubricity is the capital sin of French novelists, and it is a sin against the laws of art as against the laws of ethics. For beauty and morality spring from the same eternal fount; they are expressions of the same immutable truth: they are different sides or aspects of the same thing: of reason, order, harmony, right. And so Kant, in a pregnant passage of his *Critique of Judgment*. "Only the productions of liberty—that is, of a volition which founds its actions upon reason—ought properly to be called art." This dictum goes to the root of the matter. The true starting-point of the controversy is Free Will. If we may choose what we will habitually dwell upon in our thoughts—and no man who has not sophisticated his intellect away can doubt that this is largely in our own power—the question arises, whether we have any right to be indifferent to the sort of facts with which we surround ourselves, which we habitually contemplate, and which leave their impression, through the channel of the senses, upon the hidden man of the heart. Are all facts ethically equal and indifferent? Is it enough that a thing should be true, to justify us in considering it in all its bearings, and in exposing ourselves to all its seductions? What calls itself free thought—God only knows why, for instead of thought, I find in it claptrap phrases, instead of freedom

slavery to the basest passions—boldly answers, Yes. Modern and ancient Determinism tells us that the question is idle, for that we cannot help ourselves. Well, I assert, on the contrary, that we can help ourselves, and that we ought to do so. I say that there are truths which it is well not to know, and which it is our duty not to dwell upon, if we do know them—truths which tend to debase and destroy a being like man, who is not constituted wholly of spirit, but of spirit and sense. I say that the great moral principles of reserve, shame, reverence, have their perpetual application in art, as in every sphere of civilized life. A savage is naked and not ashamed, because all facts are to him equally devoid of moral significance. Much of French fiction is naked, and not ashamed, for a far worse reason : all facts that possibly can, acquire in it an immoral significance. The late Lord Acton, I remember, somewhere speaks of George Sand's "ignominious novels." He is quite right. She wrote too many—*Lélia*, *Valentine*, *Jacques* occur to my mind as examples—which amply merit the epithet. And I cannot deny that it is applicable to some pages in M. Bourget's works.

I have all this time been speaking about M. Paul Bourget : and now I will let him speak for himself. I will put before my readers a brief sketch of two of his books which are of especial interest for my present purpose as exhibiting the view which he is led to take of certain tendencies

of thought, of certain social phenomena in the New France where his lot is cast. Those of my readers who are not acquainted with the two works before me, will, I feel sure, thank me for an introduction to them. Those who have read them will not be displeased to renew acquaintance with them.

## VI

One of the novels of M. Bourget which I have selected for my present purpose is *Le Fantôme*. I shall first give a succinct account of it. Then I shall endeavour, as briefly, to estimate its didactic significance.

The story opens on a bright May morning in 1894. M. Philippe D'Andiguier, the well-known collector of *quattrocento* works of art, is pacing the large room in his *appartement*, which serves as a gallery for his treasures, a prey to an agitation at which "his colleagues in *quattrocento* mania" would have been much astonished if they had known the cause of it. He is a man of sixty-four, whose life, sad and stainless, has for many years past been chiefly spent in accumulating the master-pieces now surrounding him, to a description of which M. Bourget devotes six admirable pages, making us know them almost as well as their possessor can have known them. He excuses himself gracefully for his prolixity. He has to tell

the story of so lamentable a moral aberration, to study and exhibit a psychical anomaly of such criminal pathology, that he may well linger by the elderly collector amid the delicate and beautiful things assembled in that *appartement* in the Faubourg St. Germain, before proceeding to his task. "So does the surgeon, on the threshold of a hospital, pause to look at the fresh flowers exposed for sale in the open air, in order to realize, for a moment, that there are other things in this world than bodies eaten away by ulcers, than purulent sores, and human agonies."

And now let me unfold the cause of M. D'Andiguiet's emotion. There has been a romance in his life, a pure and peaceful romance, round which it has for years centred. His youth, his early manhood, has been devoted to the care of his mother, who had lost her reason on the death of his father. He could not bear her removal to a *maison de santé*. He had consecrated his leisure to her—he held an appointment in the *Cour des Comptes*—never marrying, and finding his one pleasure in collecting *quattrocento* works of arts. When he is past forty, she dies, and his occupation seems gone. He travels for a time in Italy, and on his way home stops at a little village on the lake of Como, intending merely to spend the night there.

"Good God, how strange a thing is destiny! What a surprise it would have been to that traveller, who bore everywhere the imprint of care—in his withered eyelids and cheeks, in the red patches on his complexion, in the greyness of his

tufts of hair, in his stooping shoulders—if any one had told him that a child of twenty would make her way into his heart that very evening, never to quit it ; and that this would be brought about by the most commonplace incidents of hotel life : the mere contiguity of two rooms, an open window, and a little curiosity.”

Philippe D'Andiguier is in his chamber about to make a brief toilet for the seven-o'clock dinner of the hotel, when he steps into the balcony before his room, to look at the magnificent view. His attention is arrested by a sound of sobbing in the next room. He listens, not unnaturally. Yes ; it is violent sobbing broken by hardly articulate cries, “ Ah, mon Dieu, mon Dieu,”—and it is a woman's voice. Without reflecting upon what he is doing, he steps across the slight barrier which divides his balcony from that of the adjoining chamber, and sees through its open window a young girl in an agony of distress ; fair, with blue eyes, with small and delicate features, charming teeth and dainty hands and feet. She is extremely pretty ; that is evident at once to this lover of art. As evident is the despair in which she is plunged. She notices him, and giving a little cry, shuts her window, the purple of shame on her face. He for his part is ashamed of his unpardonable curiosity, and doubts whether he will go down to dinner. But he does, and—grave official of forty as he is—bestows unusual care on his toilet. In the hall of the hotel he finds the young lady with her father, M. André de Montéran, who turns out to be an old colleague of his, and heartily

welcoming him, introduces him to Mme. de Montéran and to Mademoiselle Antoinette—and also to M. Albert Duvernay, a young man whom the girl is about to marry.

This is the beginning of D'Andiguier's acquaintance with Antoinette de Montéran. Her face now wears a mask—the mask of a conventional smile—as she returns his salute. But he notes a heightened colour on her fair cheeks, and a look of entreaty in her blue eyes. He gazes with wonder at the calm of her delicate and charming face, so lately convulsed with sorrow: pure and virginal it is: a sort of distant sweetness or sweet aloofness written on it: gracious and at the same time inaccessible. The mystery veiled by her modest and tranquil appearance—to his keen and instructed eyes the tranquillity seems a little forced—adds to the interest with which her personal charm invests the young girl for him. Soon she recovers from the embarrassment which her recognition of him naturally causes her. Soon he divines her secret—it is not a difficult one. She is to marry a man whose coarse and vulgar appearance revolts her, as well it may, for it is the outward visible sign of a coarse and vulgar nature. The Montérans are on the verge of ruin, and are giving their daughter to this wealthy clod: and she—poor child—accepts the marriage, for she knows what her parents' situation is, and looks forward to paying their debts and rendering their life easier. As he watches the

two *fiancés*, so unlike, so ill-suited, D'Andiguiér understands too well the young girl's sobs and despairing cry. He soon wins her confidence; her pure and noble nature responds to his purity and nobleness. The day before he leaves, he ventures to speak to her about her approaching marriage, pleading in excuse for his temerity, his age, his long acquaintance with her father, his respectful and deep sympathy with her and—well, a certain circumstance on which he need not dwell, and entreats her not to take an irreparable step before she reflects, before she *well* reflects. She answers quickly that she has well reflected—yes, *well* reflected: that she knows what she is resolved to do—yes, resolved—because she ought to do it: and as to that “circumstance” to which he has alluded—“Ah,” he interrupts, “I have offended you.” “Perhaps I ought to be offended,” she replies with a smile of melancholy sweetness; “but, although I have known you such a little time, I have so much esteem for you, so much trust in you, that I am inclined to thank you.” And then, with girlish dignity and grace, she leaves him, telling him to come and see her after she is married. “And we shall be friends, if you know how to forget what should be forgotten, and to remember the rest.”

They are friends for the remainder of her brief life—fourteen years, during which his chivalrous, unselfish, adoring devotion ever attends her.



“At forty,” observes the author, “if a man has led a pure life, as this man had, pure in deed, and in thought, a life ennobled, like this man’s, by daily sacrifice to some high idea, whether it be family duty, or religious faith, cult of science or of art, his feelings preserve a freshness and a nobility which render him capable of emotions, rare indeed, and scoffed at by vulgar scepticism: feelings which may be likened to literary masterpieces, exceptional but undeniable.”

Antoinette’s marriage turns out unhappily—as might have been expected. Her husband has nothing in common with her: and, his physical caprice once gratified, she ceases to interest him. A daughter Eveline is born to her, a daughter who singularly resembles her in appearance and character; and in a short time her husband dies. She makes up her mind not to marry again. She devotes herself to her daughter, goes little into society, and sees much of D’Andiguier, whose devotion to the mother is extended to the child. Then, the blow suddenly falls upon him, putting a tragic end to the happiness which he had fondly hoped might last indefinitely. One day when Antoinette is driving in the Champs-Élysées, the horses of her carriage take fright. The vehicle is broken to pieces. Antoinette is thrown out and killed on the spot. D’Andiguier learns the appalling news by telegram while he is making a tour in Italy.

He learns too that Antoinette has made him her executor and Éveline’s guardian. When her will is found, there is found with it a letter addressed to him, in which she thanks him, in touching

words, for his long and tried friendship, and begs him to give a last proof of it by destroying, unread, the papers which he will find in a certain coffer. He obeys her with his usual scrupulous fidelity—but he is unable to refrain from wondering at the request. Then he remembers how, at the date which the will bears, Antoinette's beauty seemed to have suddenly developed: how happiness seemed radiated from her eyes, her smile, her least gestures. Could it be that then she loved and was loved? But no: he recalls also the men he used to meet in her house: none of them could possibly have instilled such a sentiment in her. Besides, would she not have told him? She used to tell him everything! He thinks of Éveline—to exorcise these unworthy imaginations. Éveline remains to him: his adored dead friend lives still for him in her child.

And now Éveline is married: married to Étienne Malclerc, a man of thirty-four, whom she had met at Hyères, and had accepted after an acquaintance of four months. He is four-and-thirty, but looks younger: of good family, fair fortune and unblemished reputation. He has travelled a great deal, and has published a volume of *Impressions de Voyage*, in which D'Andiguier finds tokens of real culture. He has called on D'Andiguier who does not quite know what to make of him. He is slight, of a Florentine type of features, bearing the imprint of a sort of refined arrogance and delicate brutality, the face rather

long, the nose straight and short, the chin prominent and square, the hair brown with a reddish tinge, the eyes, too, brown, and sometimes looking like two dark spots on his clear complexion. No : D'Andiguier does not know whether the feeling the younger man gives him is the prelude to a deep sympathy or a decided antipathy.

And so Étienne Malclerc and Éveline were married, and went on a long tour in Italy ; and at the time when this story opens they had returned to Paris, and D'Andiguier was expecting a visit from Éveline, and, as we saw, was pacing the great room of his *appartement*, which served as the gallery for his art treasures, in much agitation. There was good cause for it. He had already seen the girl since her return, and had been distressed to find her thin and pale, and sad-looking : a sort of sad look which he remembers on her mother's face, at a like period of expectant maternity. Has her mother's experience, then, been repeated in her young life ? Was it the same story of a man's passion without love, and satiety after possession ? The note, asking him to see her at once, was not calculated to reassure him. It spoke of a terrible misfortune that had befallen her. What can it be ? D'Andiguier's restlessness increases, until the clock strikes five, the hour he had appointed for Éveline's visit : and she enters.

Ah ! what a vision for the tender-hearted old man. He had not seen the girl for some days ;

she looked ill enough then. But now—with her wan and hollow cheeks, the dark circles round her eyes, her lips, once so rosy, discoloured and parched by fever, the stigmata of suffering imprinted on her pretty face so fresh and mobile, and the pity of it all enhanced by her condition ! He recalls a similar visit which her mother paid him, on the eve of her birth—her mother suffering like her in soul and body, and in a fit of sudden despairing revolt against destiny. At last the girl tells him her story. Her husband—well, from the first Something has come between them ; Something—she knows not what—has separated them even in their closest intimacy ; her husband is the victim of some fixed idea, which preys upon him, and which he can no longer endure. Only last night on awaking at three, she noticed a light in his room—it is next hers—and on going in found him seated at a table covered with papers, and a loaded pistol before him ; and there was a large envelope destined apparently to receive the papers, and it bore D'Andiguier's name newly written, the ink was scarcely dry. She prevented the intended suicide, and he gave her his word of honour not to destroy himself ; he was tender to her, nay he lavished on her words of passionate love : but he did not tell her his secret : he did not explain what that Phantom is that haunts him. What can it be ? No ; there have been no scenes. There has been that indefinable Something ! It is a situation, an atmosphere. Before

they were engaged, she remembers, he sometimes had sudden fits of silence and sadness, and they ceased after the betrothal—ah, that happy time ! They returned after the marriage. He has seemed to love her passionately—and yet, and yet, she felt somehow that it was not love for *her*. She had thought that the prospect of paternity might tranquillize him. But no ; he has been more troubled, more unquiet, more uncertain, since she told him of it. Her old friend—her mother's old and true friend—does not know what it has cost her to reveal to him all this ; what a blow it has been to her pride, to that *fierté du foyer* so dear to the married woman. But tell him she must, or go mad : her very soul is so bruised, so wounded. What can he do, does he ask ? Well, would he go to her husband, and try to get the explanation of that terrible secret ? He will do anything for her, he replies : anything to be of use to her. “ Ah, you save me, you save me ! take my carriage, which is below. How I shall pray till you come back.”

“ La naïve ardeur de sa dévotion ”—I must quote this beautiful and touching passage in the original—“ la naïve ardeur de sa dévotion la fit, quand le vieillard fut sur le pas de la porte, courir encore une fois vers lui, pour esquisser le signe de la croix sur son front et sur sa poitrine. Elle revint, une fois seule, s'agenouiler en effet devant le fauteuil où elle s'était assise, durant sa longue et cruelle confession. Certes les madones des vieux maîtres, qui ornaient le musée de Philippe d'Andiguier, avaient vu bien des ferventes oraisons monter vers elles, quand elles souriaient et songeaient dans

la paix des chapelles italiennes, leur patrie d'origine. Jamais plus pur et plus douloureux cœur ne s'était répandu à leurs pieds, que celui de cet enfant de vingt-deux ans, à la veille d'être mère, et qui dans cette période d'un début de mariage, où tout est espoir, lumière, confiance, commencement, se débattait contre un mystère dont, hélas ! elle n'en soupçonnait pas toute l'amertume ! S'il flotte dans l'atmosphère invisible dont sont entourées les belles œuvres d'art quelques atomes épars des émotions qu'elles ont suscitées, un peu des âmes qu'elles ont consolées et charmées, certes une influence d'apaisement dut descendre sur cette tête blonde, convulsivement pressée contre ces mains jointes. . . . Où va la prière ? Quand des profondeurs de notre être intime jaillit un appel comme celui-là vers la cause inconnue qui a créé cet être, qui soutient son existence, qui recevra sa mort, nous ne pouvons pas comprendre que cet appel ne soit pas entendu, que la cause de toute pensée n'ait pas de pensée, la cause de tout amour pas d'amour. Mais quelles sont les voies de cette communication entre le monde de l'épreuve, où nous avons été jetés sans le demander, et le monde de la réparation où nous aspirons par toutes nos fibres saignantes, dans ces minutes de nos agonies intérieurs ? Cela, nous ignorerons à jamais, comme aussi la raison de cette loi d'expiation—du sacrifice de l'innocent pour le coupable—qui pesait sur la femme d'Étienne Malclerc sans qu'elle le sût, sans quelle eût par elle-même rien mérité que du bonheur."

In due time D'Andiguiers returns. His face does not tell the girl anything. It is, she notes with dismay, expressionless, like a mask beneath which nothing can be read but the consciousness of great responsibility in an extremely serious crisis. He says that he has seen her husband, and that Malclerc had repeated to him the explanation already given to her of nervous derangement, and has begged that the events of the last night might

not be spoken of between them. She is not really satisfied. But would her old and true friend, her mother's old and true friend, deceive her? She goes; and as he hears the door of the house close behind her, he utters a cry: "Ah, la malheureuse!"

Malclerc, who had been expecting D'Andiguier, had given him the papers which Éveline had seen on the previous night, fragments of the unhappy man's diary, revealing his terrible secret. D'Andiguier had glanced at them as he drove back in Éveline's carriage, and had seen enough! He had seen a name often repeated there which was the key of the enigma: the name of Éveline's mother, Antoinette: the idolized name which death had invested for him with a more sacred devotion. And now he nerves himself to read through the fragments of the journal which unfold the dolorous mystery. Malclerc had met Antoinette some eighteen months before her death. He had fallen deeply in love with her, had wooed her with all the ardour and intensity of his passionate nature, and had won her. Not for his wife, indeed. His senior by some years as she was, she would not do him the wrong of marrying him; she would be an old and faded woman while he was still in the prime of life. Nor would she give Éveline a stepfather. But she loves him. She finds in her maturity the supreme joy denied to her youth, and she does not repulse it. Religious scruples do not trouble her. Nay, she makes a religion of her passion.

"God is love," she tells her lover; "and never will I believe that He will punish us for loving. He punishes only for hating. When we feel in our heart what I feel for you, we are with Him; He is with us. When I read in *The Imitation of Christ* those pages about love, I find there what I experience for you."

Antoinette is one of those romantic women who, as M. Bourget somewhere tells us, transform physical voluptuousness by sentiment: a woman who gives to it the same cult as to her moral emotions: a woman who—to quote his own words if my memory rightly retains them—"aborde avec une piété amoureuse, presque avec une idolâtrie mystique, le monde de caresses folles et des embrassements." She becomes his mistress, but insists on keeping him wholly apart from her home existence. He never enters her house. They never meet in society. There is an utter separation between their life of love and her life as widow and mother. Their *liaison* is absolutely secret. Its entire clandestinity, doubtless, helps to make of it that masterpiece of emotion that it was for them: "le doux roman caché de nos tendresses," Malclerc calls it. For thirteen months it lasts: and then comes the accident which ends her and it.

The loss of Antoinette is as the bitterness of death to Malclerc. It is the death of half himself, and the best half; the death of his youth and of the one great passion which had been the soul of his youth. And yet she is not wholly dead to him. Her image is ever before his mind. In vain



does he seek solace in other women. Her sweet Phantom ever glides between him and them—"se glisse entre mes maîtresses et mon étreinte"—recalling to him that *they* are not her; that he will never love *them* as she made him love her. He tries to distract himself with travel, with literature. In vain. His recollections of her—of all that their hidden intercourse was to him—are a kind of obsession. No: death has not quenched his love for her. She has passed into nothingness. But in her nothingness she is still the one, the only woman for him.

And so seven years go by. And then, by what we call accident, he finds himself, one December, at Hyères. Éveline is wintering there with an aunt who has taken charge of her since her mother's death. He sees her, for the first time. It seems to him that he sees his lost mistress again: a younger Antoinette, and a gayer, with rounder cheeks, with the freshness of youth, and with a childish brightness over her face which he had never seen on the *other's*; but, still, Antoinette! The same features, the same hair, the same figure and carriage and little winning gestures, the same profile and expression, except, indeed, that the look of the *other*, when it rested on him, seemed like a caress and the very flame of love, while hers does not express even recognition, for she does not even know him! The resemblance, striking even to hallucination, overmasters him. It is as though his dead mistress had come back to life; as though

his dead youth had left the tomb in which it sleeps beside her ; as though, through the witchery of a likeness, the irreparable past had become the present. I have not space to trace how Malclerc falls, more and more, under this spell : nor would it be fair to M. Bourget to attenuate the masterly pages in which it is described. He is introduced to the young girl, and speedily interests her as much as, in years gone by, he had interested her mother. She soon grows to love him : and he knows it, in spite of her virginal shyness and religious reserve. And he—yes, he loves her, but with a passion only half intelligible to himself ; with a complex emotion where remembrance of the past is strangely blended with desire of the future. Still, he loves her ; that child—who should be nothing but a dream to him—has made his heart, which he thought dead, beat again : has once more sent the delicious poison through his veins. But how can he marry her—after he has been her mother's lover ? Has been ? Yes, and is still. Is it the dead woman that he desires in the living ? Horrible ! He is tortured by the interior conflict. At last, he reasons his scruples away. Would it not be sheer madness to renounce the happiness of his youth, thus miraculously resuscitated for him just when he is passing into middle life ? All those seven weary years he has been hungering after his dead love, consumed with the vain, vain longing that she would come back to him. And she *has* come back : come back in the fragrance of her youth

and the freshness of her virginal beauty. She loves him—that sweet, tender child! And shall he sacrifice the supreme joy within his reach to the most vulgar, the most unreasonable prejudice? When he entered upon manhood, he determined to make his own feelings his religion; to enjoy his *own* joys, to suffer his *own* sufferings, to will his *own* will, to live his *own* life, in entire disregard of conventions and tradition. He loved, he still loves the mother, passionately, profoundly. He loves the daughter. He loves them both—the one dead, the other living. That is the truth, his heart's truth. All the rest is make-believe. Ah, but may he love the daughter as he has loved the mother? *May* he? Why not, if he feels the same love? He *does*. The only thing that withholds him from giving free course to his passion for Éveline is—the fear of what people would think if his secret were known. A cowardly scruple indeed! And if Antoinette, in the land where all things are forgotten, could have knowledge of his position, would she not say, in her magnanimous tenderness, “Take her, love her; it is *me* that you love in her; in giving you her, I give you *myself* again; she is young, you will have the longer time to love *me* in her.”

They are married; and from the first moment of their married life his punishment begins. The scales fall from his eyes, even when they are in the train starting on their honeymoon. He sees that the fancied identity between his old love and

the new was an illusion. He ought to have known that it was. He had had warnings. One came from the Abbé Fronteau, Éveline's confessor, to whom he went for the customary *billet de confession*, before the religious marriage. The venerable priest knew, of course, that he was a *libre penseur*, and spoke to him with all courtesy and reserve indeed, but still deemed it right to utter a word of warning.

"Your future wife has no past to hide from you. Of your past I know nothing ; but I feel sure that the moment you decided upon this marriage you freed yourself from all other sexual ties, in thought, as in deed ; that you approach the altar not only without regrets—it is indeed impossible that you should entertain them—but without remembrances. If it were not so, you would profane a great sacrament—you would commit a real sacrilege, sure to be visited with terrible punishment. *Deus non irridetur* : God is not mocked with impunity."

The words sink to the very primal depths of his conscience, and for a moment trouble him strangely. Had the Abbé, who assuredly knew nothing of his past, thus spoken by supernatural prompting ? No ; there is no supernatural. And yet—if the priest was right ? He cannot help a shadow of superstitious terror at this appeal to his moral sense. Superstitious ? Yes ; for what is the moral sense but an exploded superstition ?

"Si pourtant le prêtre avait raison !" And he is ever more and more led to believe that the priest *was* right. *Deus non irridetur*. It is the

Phantom of his dead love which is made the avenging angel of Eternal Justice ; and the very purity and innocence of her daughter are as whips to scourge him. Yes, even in the train which bears him away from Paris on the day of his wedding, his punishment begins. He looks into his bride's candid eyes as she nestles gently against him, and reads there the unquestioning, the entire confidence of a young girl who gives herself wholly to the man she loves.

“ Il y eut dans ce silencieux et tendre mouvement, quelque chose de si virginal, une telle innocence émanait d'elle, que le baiser par lequel je lui fermai ses chers yeux bleus, était celui d'un frère. . . . Au lieu de presser ces lèvres, qu'aucun baiser d'amour n'avait jamais touchées, à peine si mes lèvres les effleurèrent. Rien que d'avoir associé, une seconde, à cette enfant, qui ne saurait de la vie que ce que je lui en apprendrais, l'image des voluptés goûtées autrefois auprès de sa mère, venait de me donner l'horreur de moi-même. C'avait été comme si je me préparais à lui infliger une souillure. . . . J'éprouvai dans toute sa force, dans toute son horreur, la sensation de l'inceste.”

The horror deepens in him day by day. How should it be otherwise ? By his intercourse with the mother he has contracted affinity in the first degree with the daughter. It is no idle figment of the canonists. It is a truth of human nature which they have merely clothed in ecclesiastical language. The claim of the Catholic Church to be the embodied conscience of mankind is more easily vindicated than are some of the claims sometimes made for her. First, unconquerable trouble, then,

boundless pity for the girl he has so wronged, and, at last, gnawing remorse fills the heart of Malclerc. Yes, *remorse*. He writes in his journal : “ L'idée que j'ai toujours haïe comme la plus mutilante pour l'expérience sentimentale, celle de la responsabilité, s'élève en moi, s'empare de moi. Je me sens responsable vis-à-vis d'elle. *J'ai des remords.*” He learns that the moral law is no superstition, as he had supposed, but a fact, and the first fact of man's being, the law which he is born under : that punishment is not, as Milton finely puts it, “ a mere toy of terror, awing weak senses,” but “ law's awful minister,” its divinely appointed sanction, “ the other half of crime.” *Deus non irridetur*. And if death does not end all, if Antoinette still exists in another state, and has knowledge of his marriage, would she, as he madly dreamed, approve it ? Nay, in the undiscovered country whither she was so tragically hurried, without confession, without repentance, may not that knowledge be her hell—the hell in which Éveline believes, who is not a visionary, in which that priest believes, who is so wise ?

Those of my readers who would know more of this dolorous story, I must refer to M. Bourget's own pages. It is a story worthy of the pens of the old tragedians of Hellas, whose themes curiously resemble it, which M. Bourget unfolds in this powerful book ; the most powerful, as I think, of all his psychological studies. What is its significance, its ethical significance ? I need hardly say

that M. Bourget is too true an artist to employ a work of romantic fiction for the establishment of a thesis. So to employ it would be fatally to pervert it from its true function, according to that admirable dictum of Flaubert's: "A work of art designed to *prove* anything, nullifies itself." But the phenomena of human life, whether we view them as existing in the world around us, or as woven into the picture presented by the novelist's imaginuous fancy, have a significance, an ethical significance, and cannot help having it.

"Great works of imagination," writes Balzac, "subsist by their passionate side. But passion is excess, is evil. The writer has nobly accomplished his task when, not setting aside this essential element of his work, he accompanies it with a great moral lesson."

What then is the lesson deducible from these profound and pathetic pages of M. Bourget? I take it that Malclerc is a type of a class of men which in the present condition of French education and French society, is far from uncommon, and is every day becoming commoner. He belongs to a generation in which the beliefs and traditions that for so many centuries held society together in Old France, have largely disappeared. That order of thought and practice is crumbling away, as the ethical and religious sanctions which had maintained it disappear, one after another.

"Excessere omnes, adytis arisque relictis,  
Di quibus imperium hoc steterat."

Materialism has taken the place of morality,

egotism of theism. The individual is his own law giver and his own law : self-deification, autolatry—*quisque sibi Deus*—is the real creed of millions. And the curious thing is that this is vindicated in the name of reason. The ancients conceived of reason as a curb to hold in check what Plato called “the wild beast within us.” For the average *libre penseur* it is a weapon wherewith to combat what he calls “superstition,” by which he means all those supersensuous beliefs and convictions which act as a restraint on imagination, passion, action. Malclerc is the natural result of the ethical or rather unethetical teaching of the French *lycée*. Listen to his creed as he expounds it.

“I have always believed that man, cast upon this earth, in a world which he will never understand, by a cause of which he knows nothing, and for an end of which he is utterly ignorant, has only one reason for existing during the few years that are accorded him between two nothingnesses : to multiply, to vivify, to heighten in himself, all strong and deep sensations ; and as love contains them all in their greatest strength, to love and be loved.”

I do not know that Malclerc, holding this creed, could reasonably be expected to shrink from acting as he does. If we shut out the eternal horizons, if we hold that this present life is its own end and object, and that we are concerned with nothing above or beyond it, we are as likely as not to proceed to the corollary that all means of enjoying life are equally good, and that all our appetites, being natural, have a right to all the satisfaction



we can give them. Let me not be misunderstood. No one recognizes more unreservedly than I the autonomy of the moral law, or has more unflinchingly contended for it. I hold the moral law to be a transcendent, universal order, good in itself, as being supremely reasonable; the rule of what *should* be, as distinct from what is: its own evidence, its own justification. I hold that it is independent of all the creeds, and would subsist to all eternity, as it has subsisted from all eternity, though Christianity and every other form of faith were swept into oblivion. I know that such is the moral law. But I know, too, that to be practically operative with the great mass of mankind, it needs religious sanctions. Take them away and what sufficient reason will the vast majority find for opposing their inclinations, subduing their passions, thwarting their tastes? What *frenum cupiditatis*, without which society must fall into civilized barbarism and hardly disguised animalism?

## VII

Commending these questions to the consideration of my readers, I will proceed to say a few words about another novel of M. Bourget's, *Le Disciple*, which is especially interesting from the point of view taken in this Chapter. He strikes the keynote of it in his dedication "*À Un Jeune Homme*," a

weighty and earnest document. Thus does it begin :—

“ C’est à toi que je veux dédier ce livre, jeune homme de mon pays, à toi que je connais si bien quoique je ne sache de toi ni ta ville natale, ni ton nom, ni tes parents, ni ta fortune, ni tes ambitions—rien sinon que tu as plus de dix-huit ans et moins de vingt-cinq, et que tu vas, cherchant dans nos volumes, à nous tes aînés, des réponses aux questions qui te tourmentent. Et des réponses ainsi rencontrées dans ces volumes, dépend un peu de ta vie morale, un peu de ton âme ; et ta vie morale, c’est la vie morale de la France même—ton âme, c’est son âme. Dans vingt ans d’ici, toi et tes frères vous aurez en main la fortune de cette vieille patrie, notre mère commune. Vous serez cette patrie elle-même. Qu’auras-tu recueilli, qu’aurez-vous recueilli dans nos ouvrages ? Pensant à cela, il n’est pas d’honnête homme de lettres, si chétif soit-il, qui ne doive trembler de responsabilité. . . Tu trouveras dans *Le Disciple* l’étude d’une de ces responsabilités-là.”

And now let us turn to the story.

A charming young girl, Charlotte de Jussat, is found one morning dead in her bed in her father’s château. Her face is livid. Her teeth are clenched. Her eyes are extraordinarily dilated. Her frame is curved. These signs of poisoning by strychnine are confirmed by the *post-mortem* examination. Suspicion at once falls upon Robert Greslou, who had been employed in the family as a tutor, and who had left the château, suddenly, on the night of the girl’s death. A phial bearing no label, but containing a few drops of *nux vomica*, is found under her windows. A bottle, half full of the same poison, is discovered in Greslou’s room ; and

the village apothecary states that the young man had obtained it from him some six weeks before. A footman testifies that on the fatal night he had seen Greslou leaving her room. Others of the domestics allege that the relations between their young lady and the tutor, formerly somewhat intimate and confidential, had of late become manifestly strained. The ministers of criminal justice are led, by these and other facts of a like kind, to conjecture that Greslou had fallen in love with Charlotte de Jussat, and that, finding his advances repelled, he had infused the poison into some medicine which the girl was to take at night, his object being to prevent her from marrying another man to whom she was betrothed. Greslou is arrested and committed for trial at the forthcoming assizes. In prison he refuses to answer any interrogatories, and spends his time chiefly in writing, and in reading the philosophical writings of M. André Sixte, of whose doctrines he is an enthusiastic disciple.

M. André Sixte, a recluse of fifty, lives, and has for years lived, in a quiet street of Paris near the Jardin des Plantes. He is what Rabelais would have called "an abstractor of quintessences," the whole formula of his life summed up in the one word *penser*. In the first of his works, *La Psychologie de Dieu*, which won him a European reputation, he directly attacks the most tremendous of metaphysical problems. His argument is that "l'hypothèse-Dieu" is necessarily produced by

the working of certain psychological laws, connected with certain cerebral modifications of a purely physical order. And this thesis he establishes, confirms, and develops with an atheistic bitterness which recalls the invectives of Lucretius. His other two books are *L'Anatomie de la Volonté* and *Une Théorie des Passions*, which latter work has had a greater *succès de scandale* than even *La Psychologie de Dieu*. The substance of their teaching is this : The human intellect is impotent to know causes and substances : it can do no more than co-ordinate phenomena. What is called the soul is only a group of these phenomena, and must be investigated according to the methods of physical science. The genesis of the forms of thought is explicable by the law of evolution. Our most refined sensations, our subtlest and most delicate moral emotions, as well as our most shameful turpitudes, are the ultimate outcome, the supreme metamorphosis, of the simplest instincts ; and these are a mere transformation of the properties of the primitive cell. The moral universe is only the consciousness, pleasurable or painful, of the physical universe. In this connection the learned author is led to discuss the passion of love, on which subject he abounds to the extent of two hundred pages, “ d’une hardiesse presque plaisante sous la plume d’un homme très chaste, sinon vierge.” As might be expected, the most complete Determinism pervades the book. Liberty of volition, according to M. Sixte, is the greatest of illusions.

Every act is but an addition. To say that it is free, is to say that there is more in a total than in the elements which compose it—an absurdity as great in psychology as in arithmetic. To the philosopher there is neither crime nor virtue. For our volitions are facts of a certain order, absolutely governed by certain laws, and nothing more.

Such is the philosophy to the elaboration of which M. Sixte devotes his life ; a life led with mechanical regularity and in absolute detachment from the ordinary interests and pursuits of men. Imagine the consternation and dismay of the *savant* when one afternoon a citation arrives, summoning him to appear, on the morrow, before the *juge d'instruction* for examination “regarding certain facts and circumstances which will, in due time, be made known to him.” He has hardly recovered from the stupor into which he is plunged by this document when a card is brought, bearing the name of Madame veuve Greslou, and begging that he will receive her on the next afternoon, “to talk with her regarding the crime of which her innocent son is falsely accused.” M. Sixte, who never looks into a newspaper, had not the least notion of what crime Robert Greslou is accused. All he knows of Robert Greslou is that a young man of that name had called upon him, about a year before, to express deep gratitude for his writings, and that he had been greatly struck by the erudition and power of reasoning displayed by his visitor, who had since addressed to him a few

letters dealing entirely with philosophical questions. But what this can have to do with the crime of which Greslou is accused, passes M. Sixte's comprehension.

The next day M. Sixte presents himself at the Palais de Justice. When he is announced as in attendance the *juge d'instruction*, M. Valette, a magistrate of the new school, is conversing with a friend, a man about town, who is at once much interested.

"Hein ! mon vieux Valette, en as-tu de la chance à causer avec cet homme-là ? Tu connais son chapitre sur l'amour dans je ne sais plus quel bouquin. . . . Et voilà un lascar qui connaît les femmes. Mais sur quoi, diable, as-tu à l'interroger ? "

"Sur cette affaire Greslou," dit le juge ; "il a beaucoup reçu le jeune homme, et la défense l'a cité comme témoin à décharge. On a lancé une commission rogatoire, rien que pour cela."

"Quel dommage que je ne puisse pas le voir," dit le autre.

"Ça te ferait plaisir ? Rien de plus facile. Je vais le faire introduire. Tu t'en iras comme il entrera. . . . En tout cas c'est convenu, pour ce soir à huit heures, chez Durand, Gladys y sera ? "

"Convenu. . . . Tu sais son dernier mot, à Gladys, comme nous reprochions devant elle à Christine de tromper Jacques : ' Mais il faut bien qu'elle ait deux amants, puisqu'elle dépense par an le double de ce que chacun d'eux lui donne.' "

"Ma foi," dit Valette, "je crois que celle-là en remontrerait sur la philosophie de l'amour à tous les Sixtes du monde et du demi-monde."

The two friends laugh, and the *viveur* takes his leave as M. Sixte is introduced. M. Valette at

once assumes his judicial manner. Man of pleasure as he is outside the court—"goûté dans le demi-monde, ami des hommes de cercle et de sport, émule des journalistes en plaisanteries"—he is an extremely able magistrate within it. The aspect of the timid, eccentric old man who stands before him, evidently most ill at ease, takes him aback for a moment. He had expected the author of the pungent passage in the *Théorie des Passions*, which he had read with much gusto in certain reviews, to be a very different sort of person. However, he proceeds with his examination, and after a brief statement of the case existing against Robert Greslou, proceeds to question the *savant* as to his relations with the young man. M. Sixte replies that these relations were very slight, and were of a purely philosophical kind. The magistrate asks him to explain, if he can, certain expressions contained in a sort of Programme of Life found among the papers of the accused—for example, this: "To multiply as much as possible psychological experiences." In reply M. Sixte unfolds a portion of his *Theory of the Passions*. In physics, experimental knowledge means the power of reproducing at will such and such a phenomenon, on reproducing its conditions. Is a like procedure possible with regard to moral phenomena? He believes that it is. But the field for experimentation is too limited.

"Suppose (he goes on, by way of illustration) the exact conditions of the genesis of any particular passion were

accurately known. Well, if I wished to produce, at will, such a passion, in any particular subject, I should at once encounter insuperable difficulties from the existing legal and moral codes. Perhaps the time will come when these experiments will be possible. It is on children that we could best operate: but how difficult it is to make people understand what gain would accrue to science if we could impart systematically to children certain defects or certain vices."

M. Valette is taken aback by the calmness with which the philosopher expresses this opinion. He explains that he speaks as a psychologist. The magistrate replies that such materialistic doctrines have doubtless had much to do with the destruction of all moral sense in the accused. M. Sixte rejoins—not very conclusively perhaps—that he cannot be called a materialist, as he does not pretend to know what matter is. He adds, in a tone of deep conviction:

"It is absurd to hold a philosophical doctrine responsible for the interpretations put upon it by a badly balanced brain; you might as well blame the chemist who invented dynamite for the crimes perpetrated by means of that substance."

In the afternoon Robert Greslou's mother comes to see the *savant*. She speaks of her boy's innocent childhood and pious youth, and of the change wrought in him by the study of M. Sixte's books. "You have taken away his faith," the poor woman sobs. "Can it be that you have made him an assassin? No, it cannot be that. But he is your pupil. You are his master. He has a claim upon your help." It was the second time in that day



that this altogether new view of his responsibilities as a teacher rose before M. Sixte. Then Madame Greslou gives him a packet of papers, written by her son in prison, which she has promised to convey to the philosopher. On opening it M. Sixte finds a document with the title "*Mémoire sur moi-même*," followed by these words: "I beg my dear master, M. Adrien Sixte, to consider himself pledged to keep to himself these pages; or else to burn them, unread." M. Sixte, after some hesitation, applies himself to the perusal of the manuscript.

The writer begins by an apology for placing this account of himself before his Master. His excuse is that between him and the philosopher there exists a tie which the world would not understand, but which is as close as it is adamantine.

"I have lived with your thoughts; and that so passionately, so completely, during this most decisive epoch of my existence! And now in the distress of my intellectual agony, I turn to you as the one being from whom I can expect, hope, implore, any help."

Not help to save him from the scaffold—no—but some word of sympathy, of confirmation, of consolation. He has not killed Mlle de Jussat, but he has been very nearly concerned in the young lady's tragic end. And now remorse weighs upon him. Yes, remorse, although the doctrines which he has learnt from M. Sixte—doctrines grown into convictions now forming the very essence of his

intellectual being—assure him that remorse is the most foolish of human illusions. Charlotte de Jussat had interested him by her grace and sweetness.

“ Comme elle était jolie dans sa robe de drap clair, et fine, et presque idéale avec sa taille mince, son corsage frêle, son visage un peu long qu'éclairaient ses yeux d'un gris pensif ! Elle ressemblait à une Madone de Memling, fervente, gracile et douloureuse.”

She was a creature of almost morbid sensibility, which manifested itself sometimes by a slightly tremulous movement of the hands and the lips—those lovely lips where dwelt a goodness almost divine. He thought it would be an experiment rich in psychological interest to win her affections and to practise upon them. Did an inner voice ask him, Had he a right to treat the young girl as a mere subject of experiment ? He replied, Yes, assuredly. Is it not irrefragable truth that might is the only limit of right ? Has not M. Sixte written, irrefutably, concerning “ the duel of the sexes in love ” ? Is it not the law of the world that all existence is a conquest of the weak by the strong ? the inevitable law, ruling in the moral as in the physical order ? Are there not souls of prey as there are beasts of prey ? Yes, there are, and his is one of them. And so he resolved to attempt her seduction.

“ Mais, oui, c'est bien ce que j'ai voulu—et je ne pouvais pas ne pas le vouloir—de séduire cet enfant, sans l'aimer, par pure curiosité de psychologue. La seule idée de diriger, à

mon gré, les rouages subtils d'un cerveau de femme, toute cette horlogerie intellectuelle et sentimentale si compliquée et si tenue, me faisait me comparer à Claude Bernard, à Pasteur, à leurs élèves. Ces savants vivisentent des animaux. N'allais-je pas, moi, vivisecter longuement une âme ? ”

I must leave those of my readers who will, to follow this history of the prolonged vivisection of a soul, told with rare power of morbid analysis in M. Bourget's admirably written pages. I hasten on to the *dénouement*. Robert Greslou succeeds too well in winning the affections of the young girl, who meanwhile is betrothed by her parents to a man of her own station, an eligible *parti*. She falls ill, and goes away for a time. When she returns to the château, Greslou finds that he is really enamoured of her : “ all lies and subtleties melted in the flame of passion, like lead in a brazier.” He is a prey to what he has learned to consider “ the malady of love,” and the instinct of destruction, so nearly allied, as M. Sixte has shown, to the sexual instinct, awakens in him.

“ Je me rappelle,” he writes, “ des sensations tourbillonnantes, quelque chose de brûlant, de frénétique, d'intolérable, une terrassante névralgie de tout mon être intime, une lancination continue, et—grandissant, grandissant, grandissant toujours, le rêve d'en finir, un projet de suicide : cette idée de la mort sortie des profondeurs intimes de ma personne, cet obscur appétit du tombeau dont je me sentis possédé, comme d'une soif et d'une faim physiques.”

He procures from the village chemist a bottle of strychnine. He writes a last note to Charlotte de Jussat, to tell her that at midnight he will drink

the poison. A little before the hour strikes she enters his room. She entreats him to live. No, they will die together. He swears it. And she abandons herself to his passion. But when the moment for their suicide comes, his volition fails him. He will not give her the poison. She begs for it in vain, and leaves the room exclaiming, "Mais m'avoir attirée dans ce piège ainsi! . . . Lâche! lâche! lâche!" A day or two afterwards Charlotte de Jussat finds means to read in his journal the account of how he has practised upon her, and to possess herself of some of the strychnine. She writes to her brother André, who is with his regiment, an account of what has occurred. Then she takes the poison and dies. Greslou is arrested, as we have already seen, on suspicion of her murder. At his trial André de Jussat appears, and tells the true tale of his sister's death. Greslou is acquitted and places himself at Count André's disposal for such satisfaction as may be sought from him. "No," replies the Count; "on ne se bat pas avec les hommes comme vous, on les exécute"; and drawing a revolver he shoots the wretched man dead.

And now let us turn to the philosopher poring over his disciple's manuscript. As he advances in it something of his inmost self seems to him soiled, corrupted, gangrened; so much of himself did he find in the young man: but a self united—by what mystery?—to the sentiments which he most detested in the world, to actions utterly

remote from the pure and passionless tenour of his blameless life. And here let me quote an eloquent page of M. Bourget, to which no translation would do justice :—

“ Que de fois, pendant cette fin de février et dans les premiers jours de mars, il commença pour Robert Greslou des lettres qu’il se sentait incapable d’achever ! Qu’avait-il à dire en effet à ce misérable enfant ? Qu’il faut accepter l’inévitable dans le monde intérieur comme dans le monde extérieur, accepter son âme comme on accepte son corps ? Oui, c’était là le résumé de toute sa philosophie. Mais cet inévitable, c’était ici la plus hideuse corruption dans le passé et dans le présent. Conseiller à cet homme de s’accepter lui-même, avec toutes les scélératesses d’une nature pareille, c’était se faire le complice de cette scélératesse. Le blâmer ? Au nom de quel principe l’eût-il fait, après avoir professé que la vertu et le vice sont des additions, le bien et le mal, des étiquettes sociales sans valeur, enfin que tout est nécessaire dans chaque détail de notre être, comme dans l’ensemble de l’univers ? Quel conseil lui donner davantage pour l’avenir ? Par quelles paroles empêcher que ce cerveau de vingt-deux ans fût ravagé d’orgueil et de sensualité, de curiosités malsaines et de dépravants paradoxes ? Démontrerait-on à une vipère, si elle comprenait un raisonnement, qu’elle ne doit pas sécréter son venin ? ‘ Pourquoi suis-je une vipère ? . . . ’ répondrait-elle. Cherchant à préciser sa pensée par d’autres images empruntées à ses propres souvenirs, Adrien Sixte comparait le mécanisme mental, démonté devant lui par Robert Greslou, aux montres dont il regardait, tout petit, aller et venir les rouages sur l’établi paternel. Un ressort marche, un mouvement suit, puis un autre, un autre encore. Les aiguilles bougent. Qui enlèverait, qui toucherait seulement une pièce, arrêterait toute la montre. Changer quoi que ce fût dans une âme, ce serait arrêter la vie. Ah ! Si le mécanisme pouvait de lui-même modifier ses rouages et leur marche ! Si l’horloger reprenait la montre pour en refaire les pièces ! Il y a des

créatures qui reviennent du mal au bien, qui tombent et se relèvent, qui déchoient et se reconstituent dans leur moralité. Oui, mais il y faut l'illusion du repentir qui suppose l'illusion de la liberté et celle d'un juge, d'un père céleste. Pouvait-il, lui, Adrien Sixte, écrire au jeune homme : ' Repentez-vous,' quand, sous sa plume de négateur systématique, ce mot signifiait : ' Cessez de croire à ce que je vous ai démontré comme vrai ? ' et pourtant c'est affreux de voir une âme mourir sans rien essayer pour elle. Arrivé à ce point de sa méditation, le penseur se sentait acculé à l'insoluble problème, à cet inexplicable de la vie de l'âme, aussi désespérant pour un psychologue que l'inexplicable de la vie du corps pour un physiologiste. L'auteur du livre sur Dieu, et qui avait écrit cette phrase : ' Il n'y a pas de mystère, il n'y a que des ignorances . . . ' se refusait à cette contemplation de l'au-delà qui, montrant un abîme derrière toute réalité, amène la Science à s'incliner devant l'énigme et à dire un ' Je ne sais pas, je ne saurai jamais,' qui permet à la Religion d'intervenir. Il sentait son incapacité à rien faire pour cette âme en détresse, et qu'elle avait besoin d'un secours qui fût, pour tout dire, surnaturel. Mais de prononcer seulement une pareille formule lui semblait, d'après ses idées, aussi fou que de mentionner la quadrature du cercle ou d'attribuer trois angles droits à un triangle."

So much must suffice to convey some account of this singularly arresting work. That its pages are wholly free from stains, I by no means assert. And I regret the more that I am unable to make the assertion, because the crudities of description which here and there occur, serve neither to point the moral nor to adorn the tale. I would add that, in my judgment, they proceed not from excess of imagination, but from defect of it. It is the very office of the imaginative faculty to *suggest*. French

novelists—it is a fault common to well nigh all of them—seem to suppose that no one will understand the thing to be impressed, unless he is taken by the throat, so to speak, and made to look at it by force. But the general scope and aim of this book of M. Bourget's appear to me worthy of no less praise than its workmanship. Brunetière has happily said that, "it is not only an admirable bit of literature, but a good action." The author speaks of it, we saw in the dedicatory preface, as a study of one of the responsibilities of men of letters. There can be no doubt that philosophic nihilism is the ultimate issue of the intellectual movement initiated by Rousseau which soon rid itself of the turbid inconsequent theism wherewith he had disguised it. This is the doctrine held, consciously or unconsciously, by the leaders of the anti-christian campaign calling itself *la laïcité*, now triumphant in France. M. Bourget has aimed at exhibiting how this doctrine works in practice. It may be said that even if M. Bourget's exhibition is correct, it supplies no argument against the truth of the doctrine: that consequences are the scarecrows of fools. To which I reply that only a fool will lose sight of consequences, and that a doctrine like a tree, may be judged by its fruits. A *reductio ad absurdum* is a good logical process. Why? Because man consists in reason. And so does the world external to the human mind. There are mysteries everywhere, and locked doors. But that is not contradiction or unreason. The more closely

the material universe is examined, the more clearly is it seen to be everywhere intelligible. It is cosmos, not chaos. Reason everywhere, in the microcosm of the leaf, and in the macrocosm of the fixed stars, and in the mind of man—such is the most certain of all certitudes. And a philosophy which makes unreason the last word is self-condemned.



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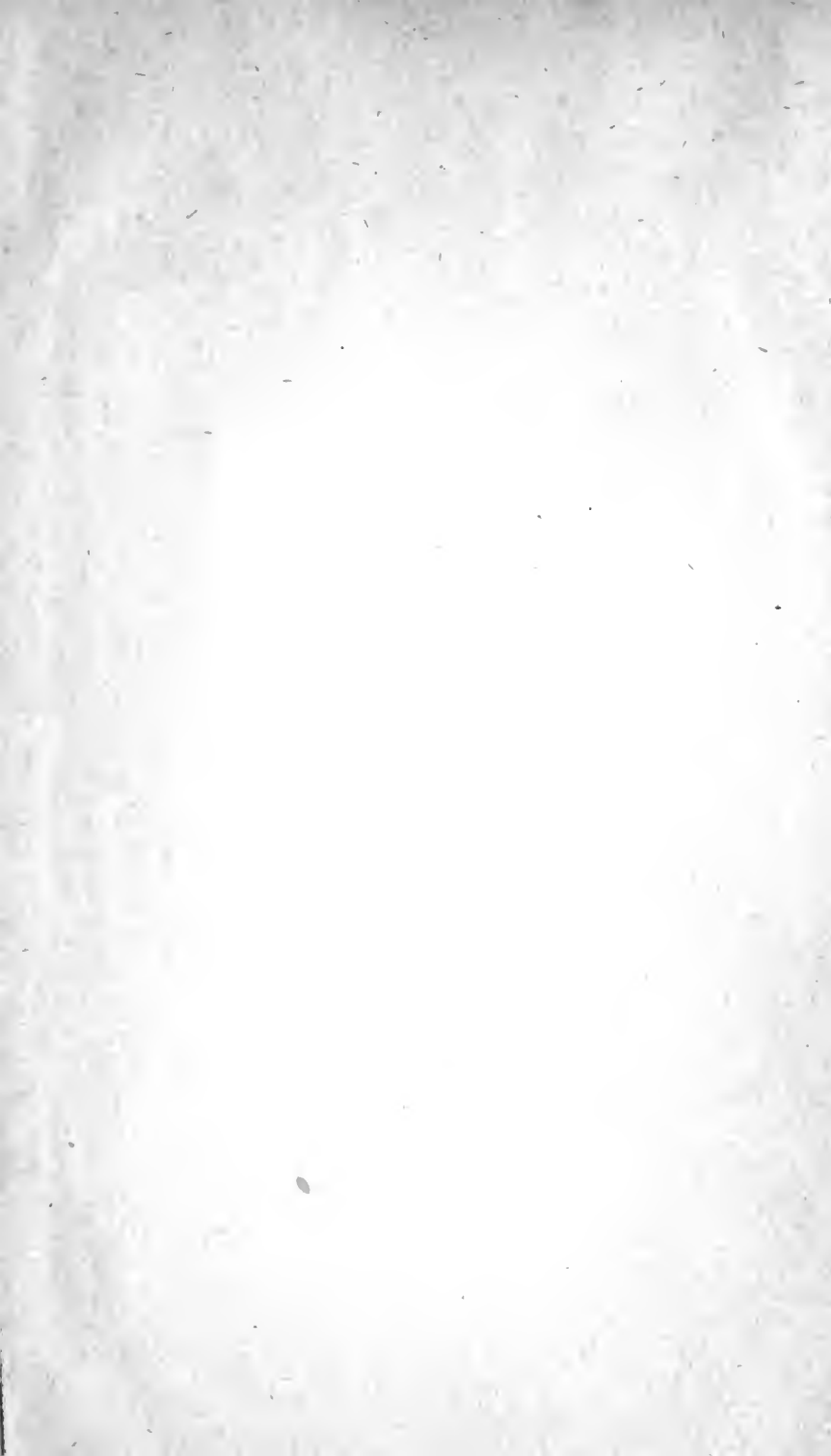
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