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*THE SUFFERINGS OF THE CHURCH  
IN BRITTANY DURING THE  
GREAT REVOLUTION.*

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THE SUFFERINGS OF  
THE CHURCH IN BRITTANY  
DURING THE GREAT REVOLUTION.

BY  
EDWARD HEALY THOMPSON.



LONDON: BURNS AND OATES.

—  
1878.



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## P R E F A C E.

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THE history of the Revolution in France which by the length of its duration and the magnitude of its results obtained for itself the title of Great—subsequent convulsions being but its product and outcome—has been written repeatedly and in abundant detail. Its salient features are well known, comprising in particular the hideous atrocities which have made the Reign of Terror infamous for all time—the daily holocausts of victims to the guillotine at Paris, the horrors perpetrated by Carrier at Nantes, by Le Bon at Amiens, by Couthon at Lyons—and including also the memorable Vendean War, to which Mme. de La Rochejacquelein's narrative has given so personal an interest. No reader of that history can be ignorant of the fact that the Church was cruelly persecuted, and that for a certain period, at least, the public worship of God was abolished throughout the land. For if the massacre of the Carmes testified to the intensity of the hatred with which a bloodthirsty faction was inflamed against men whose only crime was their sacred profession, the continued influx of emigrant clergy into this country gave evident proof that the proscription of the priesthood was due to no mere temporary ebullition of revolutionary fury. And yet it may be doubted

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whether there is any general or adequate recognition of the length of time during which the persecution lasted, and that, too, in its most sanguinary form; the subject being often so vaguely and partially treated as to convey the impression that after the fall of Robespierre the guillotine became comparatively inactive in the provinces, as in the capital, and that, although religion was not legally restored until after the accession of the First Consul, the lives of clergy and religious were no longer in jeopardy, and that the open profession and practice of their faith no longer exposed Catholics to grievous molestation. This, however, was very far from being the case. For ten long years faithful Catholics, and priests in particular, had to endure untold privations and sufferings—untold we may truly say, since, if they were recorded at all, it was in a very fragmentary and imperfect manner, and the generation which witnessed them has now passed away.

In the case, however, of a single province of France a very full and circumstantial account has been given by one who, besides being a native of the country, was a contemporary, and, to a certain extent, an eye-witness of what he narrated. The Abbé Tresvaux,<sup>1</sup> who is our chief authority for the incidents related in these pages, was a most careful and painstaking writer, sparing no trouble to ascertain the correctness of all the facts he stated, and which he had the best opportunities of veri-

<sup>1</sup> The title of his work, which occupies two octavo volumes, is *Histoire de la Persécution Révolutionnaire en Bretagne à la fin du dix-huitième siècle.* Paris : Le Clerc, 1845.

fying. He never puts himself forward, and says nothing of his own personal history, but we gather that he was quite a youth at the period of which he treats, and from one passage in his narrative we incidentally learn that his family practised the Christian virtue, which in those days involved no little peril, of hospitality to the servants of God ; in other words, the harbouring of priests, to which (as heretofore in England) was assigned the penalty of death. We are not aware that any one has undertaken for other provinces of France the work which Tresvaux has accomplished for Brittany. Writing in 1845, he says in his Preface, after enumerating the various sources from which his materials were derived, ‘I may be allowed, in conclusion, to express a wish, which I have often entertained, that a work similar to mine should be undertaken for other parts of France. But no time should be lost. Witnesses are disappearing, facts are being forgotten, and yet what a light they throw upon the past, and what lessons they furnish for the present, lessons which with them will be irretrievably lost.’<sup>2</sup>

The other writer to whom we are indebted, and that principally when speaking of the causes which led to the Revolution and of its early stages, is the Abbé Jager, Professor of Ecclesiastical History at the Sorbonne, who delivered a course of lectures, on the subject of that

<sup>2</sup> Mention may also here be made of the Life of Mgr. Bruté, himself a Breton, published by Messrs. Burns and Oates in their *Foreign Missionary Series*. His reminiscences of the revolutionary period are deeply interesting, abounding as they do in particulars of which he had direct personal knowledge or which were related to him by eye-witnesses.

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momentous event, which originally appeared in a series of papers in the *Université Catholique* (September, 1848, to June, 1851), and were subsequently published in a separate form. These lectures, unfortunately, were left unfinished, the author not having proceeded much beyond the return of the King from Varennes. The papers, however, were continued by the Abbé Cordier, whose contribution is characterized by accuracy of detail and a devotional spirit, but lacks, in our opinion, the originality, philosophical insight, and general grasp of the subject which distinguish the work of the Sorbonne professor.

2. In estimating the causes of the Revolution and its successes, much stress has been laid by various writers on the scandalous lives of the clergy previous to its outbreak, and their obstinate adherence to absolute monarchy and the abuses of the old *régime*. But this latter accusation, as will be shown in the ensuing narrative, is wholly groundless. The clergy, as a body, so far from opposing, were forward in advocating needful and wholesome reforms and promoting the establishment of a more liberal constitution ; and as to the former allegation, it is equally far from the truth in the exaggerated form in which it is commonly made. It cannot, indeed, be denied that worldliness and laxity of morals were but too prevalent among those ecclesiastics who through secular interest or noble birth had attained to high places in the Church, and were thus in a position to exercise a deteriorating influence, not only on the clerical body, but on society at large. Such men as

Loménie de Brienne, Archbishop of Toulouse, and in the early part of Louis XVI.'s reign prime minister of France, a favourer of the Encyclopedists, and a personal friend of D'Alembert ; the Prince de Rohan, Bishop of Strasbourg and Cardinal, notorious for his licentious life and in particular for the shameful affair of the diamond necklace, so injurious to the reputation of the calumniated Queen ; and the famous Abbé de Talleyrand-Périgord, afterwards Bishop of Autun, who, if not a positive infidel, was practically little better, were sufficient in themselves to dishonour and degrade the ecclesiastical order in popular estimation. But these men, we may be sure, did not stand alone ; and the very fact that a person like Loménie de Brienne, who was reputed to be an actual unbeliever, should have been able to get himself nominated by the clergy as reformer of abuses in the religious orders—a work urgently needed, but one which ought never to have been committed to such hands—and that the Abbé de Talleyrand-Périgord should have been selected to fill the post of Promoter of the Clergy of France, speaks volumes (to use a familiar phrase) as to the corruption which existed in high and influential quarters.

To these unworthy representatives of the clerical body must be added the numerous Abbés, frequenters of the Parisian *salons*, whose idle, frivolous habits were a discredit to their order; and, as the Church was wealthy and lay patronage very powerful, there were also many priests who had adopted the ecclesiastical profession simply as a means of subsistence and with a view to temporal

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advancement. The lives and manners of such men must have been calculated only to bring contempt on the sacerdotal character and on religion itself; and indeed, it was chiefly from among persons of the latter class that the Revolution gathered recruits for the schism which it sought to force upon the nation.

But in the face of all these acknowledged scandals, which, moreover, had been aggravated and, indeed, mainly caused by the arbitrary conduct of the civil power in impeding the action of the Holy See, promoting unworthy men to high offices in the Church, and denying to the Episcopate its rightful liberty of holding synods and exercising discipline, one patent fact there is which the writers in question are prone to overlook or lightly estimate, but which ought to be regarded as affording conclusive evidence in favour of the clergy of France at that day. If, unhappily, there were many apostates and prevaricators among their ranks when the Revolution set society loose from every shackle of restraint, moral and religious, it is undeniably that they constituted, comparatively, a very small minority. The Bishops, with four<sup>3</sup> notorious exceptions, remained faithful to their sacred trust, and the parochial clergy, as a body, presented a noble example of constancy and fervour. Hundreds freely gave their lives in sacrifice for the faith, or abandoned country and all that they possessed for conscience' sake, while those who remained in the land

<sup>3</sup> Five, if the Bishop of Lydda *in partibus*, coadjutor to the Bishop of Bâle, be reckoned (see page 37). The number of sees in France at that time was a hundred and thirty-four.

continued to minister to their flocks, under circumstances of the greatest peril and privation, with a courage and a fortitude which has never been surpassed. Thus, the multitude of martyrs and confessors which the Church of France produced during the terrible ordeal through which it passed is of itself sufficient to disprove the sweeping charge which has been brought against its clergy, and which has been too frequently accepted merely on the assertion of their accusers. True, a man may suffer martyrdom for the Christian faith without having previously led a saintly or even a very pious life, but only those on whom religion had a deep and vital hold, and who were animated by an ardent zeal for souls, would have endured, day after day, such extreme hardships and misery as the outlawed priests were content to undergo for the one sole purpose of ministering to the spiritual necessities of their people. The facts recorded in these pages will serve to show what manner of men the objects of the persecution were. Brittany, it is true, was a very religious province, and enjoyed the advantage of not possessing many rich benefices, which were temptations to the cupidity of worldly-minded families, but there is every reason to believe that the lives of the clergy were equally exemplary in many other parts of France, and it may safely be asserted that everywhere worthy priests formed the large majority. In the touching recitals which the Abbé Tresvaux gives, and some of which have been reproduced in this volume, will be found beautiful examples of the way in which these Breton priests, so barbarously ill-treated, comported

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themselves before their judges and at the scaffold. Their modest dignity, their pious resignation, their firmness in confessing the faith, their sweet and tender charity towards their persecutors, the tranquil joy with which they met their doom, make the patience and courage they exhibited quite different in kind from any mere natural heroism, however exalted. They proved themselves true soldiers of Jesus Christ, and their death was a veritable martyrdom. Moreover, it is impossible to read the brief references which the Abbé makes to the antecedents of these men without being struck with the fact that, in the quiet, ordinary times which preceded the Revolution, they had been most assiduous in the discharge of their sacred duties, and often eminently conspicuous for their holy lives and charitable labours; to which, indeed, the love and veneration manifested towards them by their parishioners when the hour of trial came rendered an additional and a most convincing testimony. For, if the priests risked their lives for the spiritual welfare of their people, the people encountered a like peril in sheltering and succouring their priests.

We should be travelling far beyond our province if we attempted to depict, even in briefest outline, the moral and religious condition of France previous to the year 1789, but we believe that it will be found on an impartial examination of facts that, although scepticism and immorality had pervaded, more or less, the upper and middle strata of society—including especially the professional classes—and had even begun to infect the

general population of the towns, accompanied by a restless spirit of dissatisfaction which the pressure of real grievances had served to foster, an intense disgust with the abuses which still existed, and a passionate longing for any change which might introduce a new order of things, nevertheless the rural gentry,<sup>4</sup> and the country people generally, who composed the main bulk of the French nation, had remained, comparatively, uncontaminated, and that the lower classes, as a body, were still profoundly Catholic. Anyhow, this, at least, is certain, that the condition of the people was, both morally and religiously, far superior to what it subsequently became. Torrents and rushing floods do not fertilize the lands over which they sweep. The Revolution left more corruption than it found. Needless to say, it left also a large mass of infidelity and, what is as hard, perhaps harder, to deal with, a rank crop of indifferentism. A generation grew up that knew not God and did not care to know Him; and well would it be for France at the present day if the Apostolic men who, year after year, have been engaged in the work of evangelization had found ready to their hand a population so piously disposed, so docile to instruction, and so submissive to authority, as that which existed throughout its provinces previous to the terrible convulsion which may be said to have torn society up from its very roots.

<sup>4</sup> Mgr. Bruté has given in his autobiographical notes a very pleasing picture of the routine of daily life observed in his own family and of the example set by his admirable mother. She was a matron of the genuine Catholic type, and such appear to have abounded in the France of those days.

3. No one who is acquainted with the tactics which the men of the last century pursued towards the Church, and which issued, as they were intended to issue, in its open persecution, but must have observed how similar they are in all essential respects to the measures adopted by its enemies at the present day—with one notable exception, the shedding of blood ; an exception which is certainly not due to diminished hatred of Catholicism, but to the change which has come over public opinion in the matter of judicial murder : however, we have not yet seen the end. The aim of modern Revolution, or of Liberalism—for the terms are, in effect, convertible—is still the same : that of substituting the tyranny of force for the reign of truth and justice. It is the counterpart in practice of the Protestant doctrine of the freedom of private judgment. This spurious freedom, which is so loudly claimed for mankind is, in fact, their enslavement ; since it is the emancipation of the will, which in man may be said to represent blind force, from the control and dominion of truth : man being declared free henceforth to accept, not what is true, but what he wills to consider as true and acceptable. Even so it is the aim of the Revolution to render a godless State, which it affects to regard as the organ and embodiment of the popular will, absolute sovereign in all things, religious no less than political and social, and to impose its laws upon mankind as the ultimate rule of right and wrong, to the utter corruption of their moral sense. Protestantism, as denoting a doctrinal system, is daily dying out, but its essential heresy remains in vigorous activity,

and is bearing fruit in that deification of the State and its hateful despotism over consciences which the Revolution is everywhere labouring to accomplish.<sup>5</sup>

The fabrication of a State-Church or, rather, of State-Churches, which shall supersede the one true Church of Christ, is still the pet project of Liberal politicians, who hope to be able to use these schismatic creations of theirs for the degradation of the priesthood and the secularization of society in all its ramifications; and if the measures employed as yet are not as immediately sharp and decisive as were those which the revolutionists of the last century were not slow to adopt, they are as surely calculated to effect the object proposed: not to add, that behind these astute politicians, whose aim, it may be, is only to dethrone and destroy the Church, stand the agents of the Masonic conspiracy, who will be satisfied with nothing less than the destruction of Christianity and the substitution of the religion, or, as it may be more rightly called, the worship, of Humanity. For the present, the work of disintegration is to be conducted by milder methods. Thus, candidates for the sacred ministry are to be emancipated from the trammels of ecclesiastical discipline and trained in the school of free thought; that is to say, they are to be indoctrinated with rationalistic and infidel principles

<sup>5</sup> It is a significant fact that the organs of English Protestant opinion, with scarcely an exception, either systematically ignore the iniquitous persecution which has been going on for several years in Germany and Switzerland, and has now avowedly begun in Italy, or, if they record any isolated facts, do so without a word of reprobation; while some by openly advocating State-absolutism in causes ecclesiastical, including dogma and worship, declare, at least by implication, their sympathy with the persecutors and approval of their acts.

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before they can be eligible to serve at the altar of God. Theology is no longer to be reckoned among the sciences, and as for vocation, the very idea is absolutely disallowed:<sup>6</sup> the sacerdotal spirit is to be totally eliminated, and the secular spirit, in other words, the spirit of this world, is to be introduced in its stead. The laity, again, are to elect their own pastors, and that without regard to the authority either of bishop or of Pope. The *Ecclesia Discens*, is in fact, to occupy the place of the *Ecclesia Docens*: for, in choosing their own teachers, the people will necessarily also determine what doctrines shall be taught in their respective localities. Religion being thus put to the popular vote, its degradation will be complete. A clergy educated by laics, and elected by laics, none of whom need to be Christian, even in profession, will certainly not teach Catholic doctrine, or any doctrine whatever as infallibly true, and thus the wished-for consummation will have been attained. There will be neither Church to teach nor creed to be taught as of necessity to be believed; neither faith nor the obedience of faith: Christianity, as a Divine revelation, will have ceased to exist.

This system of lay-election, irrespective of Episcopal

<sup>6</sup> Accordingly in Germany, as also in Italy, ecclesiastical students, parish priests, and even bishops are forced to serve in the army; and indeed in Italy, at the present time, members of religious orders, priests and others, are compelled to assist in repairing the highways, in other words, to break stones on the road; because, having been reduced by their rulers to a state of abject destitution, they are unable to pay the sum which would have exempted them from this manual labour.

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or Papal authority, is the boon which is being offered to the populations of to-day, as it was to the Catholic people of France in the Civil Constitution of the Clergy; and now, as then, it has been rejected by the faithful with scorn. The same woeful farce is again enacted : the schismatics are elected by a discreditable minority, including Protestants, Jews, and men of no religion ; they are installed by the civil power ; and the ‘ refractory ’ priests are ejected from their *cures*. So, too, if we compare the character and conduct of the apostates who figured in the Constitutional Church of France with those of the self-styled ‘ Old-Catholics ’ of Germany and Switzerland, we cannot fail to recognize the strong family likeness between the two : the same mean and ungenerous spirit, as shown in their combining with the civil power to oppress and persecute the rightful pastors and their flocks, the same secularity and self-assertion, the same moral degradation, the same unblushing violation of religious and sacredotal vows ; and again, as before, we see a faithful people holding steadfastly aloof from the usurpers and refusing to take part in their sacrilegious ministrations.

Many other points of resemblance might be mentioned, but, as they will appear in the course of the narrative, it is superfluous to enumerate them here, and, indeed, they are too palpable to escape observation. The parallel is exact throughout, with such only difference as comports with the state of the times and the temper of men’s minds ; so that it may be truly said that the events which we see passing before our eyes are but a repeti-

tion of what befell the Church of France at the outset of the Revolution. The same principles are at stake now, as then ; the same conflict is once more renewed ; on the one part is cruel, unprovoked wrong, on the other, patient suffering : religious are driven from their schools, their hospitals, their homes ; the religious life is itself proscribed ; bishops and priests are despoiled of their goods, thrown into prison, interned, expatriated, outlawed, returning only to be hunted from hiding-place to hiding-place ; seminaries are closed, churches and altars profaned, delivered over to heretical intruders ; the people are cruelly harassed and distressed, fined, imprisoned, robbed of their pastors, of the holy sacraments, of all freedom of worship, of everything they hold dearest on earth—denied even the liberty of sheltering their ejected clergy or supplying them with the common necessities of life ;<sup>7</sup> the young are deprived of Catholic

<sup>7</sup> For having said Mass three times and baptized a child, the Rev. Herr Cieslinski, of the province of Posen, was sentenced on October 31, 1877, to pay a fine of 1,200 marks (£60) or suffer 120 days' imprisonment. Being unable to pay the fine, he was sent to gaol. Not content with having the priest thus punished, the Government also prosecuted several gentlemen because they gave him something to eat when he was hungry and a shelter for the night when he was homeless. The district court that tried the case condemned Herr Gomerski, a landowner, and Herr von Swiniarski, a manufacturer, to pay each 400 marks or suffer forty days' imprisonment—the former for having given Herr Cieslinski a dinner *gratis* and lent him a carriage—and the Herr Rabbow, also a local landowner, to pay 600 marks or suffer 60 days' imprisonment because he let the hunted priest have a room in his house for the night. The inn-keeper Dobierznski, who is also the village mayor, was fined 100 marks, with the option of 10 days' imprisonment, and another inn-keeper, Okupiniak, 150 marks, with the option of 15 days' imprisonment. All these were further adjudged to pay the costs of the prosecution.

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and Christian instruction ; the poor and sick bereaved of nurses, teachers, benefactors : and all this because they will not defile their souls with the guilt of schism, will not sever themselves from Catholic unity—the people from their priests, the priests from their bishops, the bishops from the Vicar of their common Lord—will not accept the jurisdiction of the secular power in matters ecclesiastical and spiritual ; in short, will not give to Cæsar the things of God. And if the conflict is the same, so also, we are confident, will its issue be : save that we hope and trust that it will end in a far more perfect triumph of the Church than awaited it at the beginning of this nineteenth century. It may be that, in the inscrutable counsels of God, the sufferings of His people are still to be prolonged, but even so the glory of the present hour is all their own, and what the world counts disaster and defeat is to the eye of faith, which is ever fixed upon the Cross, but the presage and the assurance of future victory.

*Cheltenham,*

*Feast of St. Francis Xavier, 1877.*



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## CHAPTER I.

### *Causes of the Revolution.*

THE object of this work, as its title indicates, is to present a picture, more or less detailed, of the sufferings endured by a faithful people in one single province of France during the terrible persecution which fell upon the Church of that country in the last decade of the eighteenth century. Nowhere in the annals of those dismal times are more copious or more striking examples of Christian heroism to be met with than are afforded by the martyrs and confessors of Brittany ; but the limits within which our story is necessarily confined must compel us to omit many a name and many an incident which have quite as much claim to be commemorated as those which find mention in this volume. We cannot even attempt to give a full and consecutive account of the progress of the persecution in Brittany, still less to follow the different phases of the Revolution either in the capital or in the several provinces of France. Into the history of that great struggle we shall not enter further than it is found to be immediately connected with our subject ; a brief account of its origin and its first beginnings will suffice to show the nature of the conflict, the momentous interests which were at stake, and the sacredness of the cause for which the faithful Catholics suffered and contended, often even unto death.

Volumes have been written on this prolific and apparently inexhaustible theme, the Revolution of the last century, and no wonder that it continues to be a living

subject of interest, since, while some believe that the year '89, which saw its birth, ushered in an era of great social and political blessings—procured, it is true, at a costly expense of blood—and, above all, of liberal enlightenment, others see but too much cause to deplore the evil principles which it inaugurated, and the bitter results which still continue to flow from this poisoned source. Whatever may have been the social and political evils of the old order of things—and we are very far from denying their gravity—they can never in themselves be regarded as the efficient causes of the French Revolution. They cannot be considered as anything more than the occasion of that terrible convulsion in conjunction with various other circumstances, amongst which the financial embarrassments of the Crown, bequeathed to it by the prodigalities and corruptions of the previous reign, must largely count. The causes of such a hideous catastrophe lie deeper. The unjust inequalities and many social abuses which prevailed under the old *régime*, and, in particular, those resulting from the privileges of the aristocratic class, were not, in fact, the true causes of the horrors of the Revolution, which are often represented as a sort of natural outburst of a nation's fury and indignation against its oppressors. In saying this, we have not forgotten the attacks on the châteaux of the seigneurs and the revolting cruelties committed by the peasantry in different parts of France when the news of the taking of the Bastile and of the triumph of the populace in the capital reached their ears. It is not denied that there were treasured resentments in the lower strata of society, consequent on a long course of tyranny and injustice, yet may it safely be affirmed that they would never have found vent in that wild and sanguinary form but for the impunity with which the rabble in Paris had been allowed to insult the law and

bathe their hands in blood. This Jacquerie, as it may be called, of the early days of the Revolution cannot, then, be viewed in the light of the spontaneous rising of an oppressed people ; in fact, it need never have occurred, and never would have occurred, had the outbreak in Paris been quelled, as it easily might have been if the King had possessed that decision and firmness which the crisis demanded, and if he had not entertained the mistaken notion that in adopting coercive measures, as he was in duty bound to do for the maintenance of public security and order, he was incurring the responsibility of shedding blood in his own mere personal cause. Neither would it ever have occurred, notwithstanding the excesses committed in the capital, but for the active agency at work in all quarters to mislead the rural population and fan their discontent. Anyhow, the abuses which were the legacy of the feudal system were all speedily swept away, perhaps only too speedily—a complete *tabula rasa* being at the same time made of almost all existing institutions—for such wholesale and precipitate changes tend to excite, bewilder, and intoxicate a people, and destroy in them all respect for law and order. The Revolution took place none the less for the entire removal of its alleged provocatives, and that, too, under the reign of a monarch who, whatever his deficiencies, certainly lacked not the will to yield to every just demand of his subjects. The real cause of that terrible explosion must therefore be sought elsewhere, since it cannot be referred to the pressure of abuses or the tyranny of government ; and we are persuaded that a close examination will lead to the conclusion that it sprang, not from the state of things, but from the state of men's minds ; that state being itself the result of the false principles, religious, social, and political, promulgated by the infidel philosophy of the times.

At the head of this propaganda of pernicious doctrine stand two men of colossal proportions—colossal, we mean, for evil—Voltaire and Rousseau. Voltaire was the impersonation of hatred against Christianity. Animated with a malice which might truly be called fiendish, he attacked it with all the keenness of his wit, and entertained the insane hope that he could destroy it. But he was no enemy of the social order, nor of the throne, nor of the aristocracy. He himself belonged to the privileged classes ; he was intensely selfish and vain ; he loved material well-being ; he loved that grand society which flattered him. Voltaire, it has been truly observed, would have beheld the Revolution for which he prepared the way by his irreligious and blasphemous writings with utter dismay, and, had he lived under the Convention, would assuredly have received the honours of the Place de la Guillotine instead of those of the Panthéon. Such was Voltaire ; his object was to demolish Christianity, but, contrary to his intention, he helped to effect the destruction of the social order. He had this, however, in common with all his philosophical fellow-conspirators of the eighteenth century—he could but destroy ; he had nothing to put in the place of what he would have ruined.

Rousseau directly laboured to demolish what Voltaire would have spared. He was a man altogether of another stamp ; he had sprung from an inferior class, and, with a restless spirit and an excitable imagination, he imputed the troubles and disappointments of his early career, which were entirely the result of his own unprincipled conduct, to the evils of the social order. Society was to blame for all miseries and misfortunes, his own included ; and so he attacked society. Of all the erroneous principles which Rousseau put forth the most fruitful for mischief was the sovereignty of the people, which he

placed upon a false basis, and from which he extracted consequences most disastrous. The principle of the sovereignty of the people, rightly understood, was no new doctrine. It had been strongly maintained during the middle ages. It had been taught by doctors in the schools, and had been proclaimed from pulpits in the very presence of royalty. All power and authority is from God ; but on the community, if it finds itself without lawful rulers, devolves the right of choosing not only its governors, but its very form of government. In this sense sovereignty resides in the people, and in this sense it may be said to have originally resided there. No individual possesses in himself an indefeasible right to sovereign power. The doctrine of the so-called ‘divine right’ of kings was no product of Catholicism. It is authority and power itself which is of divine origin and has a divine sanction, God having created man to live in society. But it was not in this, its legitimate sense, that Rousseau taught the doctrine of sovereignty residing in the community ; he set up the people as a sort of idol in the place of God ; power, according to him, was not simply conferred mediately through the people, but belonged immediately and inalienably to them, so that rulers were but their delegates and servants, whom they could remove at pleasure and replace by others. Nay, more ; the people made not only society, rulers, and laws, but even justice itself. Everything was subject to them ; the person and property of individuals were alike at their disposal ; the very notion of right and wrong emanated from the same source, or, rather, depended upon the same arbitrary will, for it could change them at pleasure. Rousseau, in short, attributed to the people the same monstrous and exorbitant powers which Hobbes had ascribed to kings. At first sight the two theories seem diametrically opposed, but their principles are

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clearly analogous. With both, existing civil law was the criterion of right and wrong; the only difference being, that with the English philosopher law was the expression of the absolute will of one individual, the monarch, while with the Genevese it was that of the sovereign people collectively. Both agreed in banishing God from society and from the world.

Society, in short, was with Rousseau, as it had been with his predecessor, a matter of pure convention, a mere social pact into which men have entered for their own convenience. Every one who has heard of Jean Jacques Rousseau has probably also heard of his wild notions concerning man in his primitive—that is (according to him), savage, solitary, independent state. These eccentric fantasies might have remained comparatively innocuous, for nature will ever triumph over sophistry, and men were never likely to wish to disperse into the woods in order to reassert their individual rights and enjoy their pristine freedom; but Rousseau's theory of power, owing to its practical bearing, was far more dangerous. As power came from the people, not from God, so the people in their quality of sovereign could do what they pleased. He shrank from none of the fearful consequences involved in this position; he accepted them all. The Revolution was to work them out. Rousseau, like Voltaire, was an enemy to all revealed religion, though his language was not so grossly impious, and he would have wished to preserve a kind of natural religion, albeit the principles he advocated were inconsistent with any religion at all; but his direct object of attack was the social system, as the Christian religion was that of Voltaire. Both, however, combined to ruin social order, the one by attacking God directly, the other by assailing what He has ordained. The writings of these two champions of infidelity excited the emulation of a host of

scribblers, and France was deluged with irreligious books and pamphlets addressed to all classes. Eagerly read in the châteaux and hôtels of the seigneurs and the humbler homes of the bourgeois, they were even hawked about to cottage doors; everywhere they served to weaken or break the religious bond, and to fill the heads of thousands with Utopian theories founded on false and godless principles. It was thus the Revolution was created; circumstances did but furnish the occasion for its outbreak. But though Rousseau's attacks were levelled at social order more directly than at religion, his doctrines were no less fundamentally impious than those of Voltaire, while the form in which they were presented rendered them far more insidious and permanently mischievous. The name of the great enemy of Christianity is still, it is true, in high honour with the French infidels of our day, and a fresh apotheosis has been decreed to him within our recent memory, while Rousseau's glory has somewhat faded from the popular mind; yet his reign, or, rather, that of the false principles which he elaborated with so much subtlety and skill, is not yet over. He was, even at the time, much more influential than Voltaire in the immediate promotion of the Revolution, and how strongly men's minds were infatuated with his doctrines is evidenced by the famous Principles of '89, embodying the 'Rights of Man,' of which the 'Contrat Social' is the Gospel.

Again, although Rousseau did not, like Voltaire, declare an open and ferocious war against Christianity, nay, sometimes uttered words of eloquence in its praise, he laid down principles which form the alleged ground of the persecution which Liberalism has always directed against the Church. For, according to Rousseau, the sovereign people is master of the consciences as well as of the property and lives of individuals. In the very

same chapter of his ‘*Contrat Social*’ in which he inveighs against the Catholic Church he has this remark : ‘There is a profession of faith which is purely civil, the fixing the articles of which appertains to the sovereign people ; not precisely as dogmas of religion, but as sentiments of *sociality*, without which it is impossible to be a good citizen or a faithful subject.<sup>1</sup> Although not possessing the power to oblige any one to believe them, it may banish from the State whoever does not believe them ; it may banish him, not as impious but as unsociable, as incapable of sincerely loving the laws or justice, or of sacrificing his life if need be to his duty. Moreover, if any person, after having publicly acknowledged these dogmas, should behave as one who does not believe them, *let him be punished with death* : he has committed the greatest of crimes, he has lied in the face of the law.’ The similarity of this sentiment to the views of our modern Liberals will be seen at a glance. It is on the ground of its unsociability, its opposition to modern progress, that the Church is now undergoing persecution at their hands, whenever and in so far as they have attained to power. Liberalism, in fact, which was the legitimate offspring of Rousseau’s doctrines, and the reign of which was solemnly inaugurated in the great French Revolution of ’89, is not a political system the aim of which is the attainment of institutions more or less popular ; it is a moral system applied to the political and social order of society. Its object is nothing less than the exclusion of all religious influence from social relations, and the entire emancipation of the political order from the trammels of a Divine revelation. The State must own no law which does not emanate from itself ; this is what, in the jargon of Liberals, is called a

<sup>1</sup> Hence the subsequent invention, during the Revolution, of the crime of *incivism*.

'free State,' a state which has cast off all religious belief and all recognition of any authority superior to itself. It may thus easily be perceived that Liberalism and the Church of God are essentially opposed to each other, and that any accord between them is impossible. If in our day, when we have had the experience of more than three quarters of a century, there are even Catholics to be found who think that a compromise between them may be effected, we have less reason to wonder that many good men were blinded as to the false and dangerous character of the doctrines and opinions which were afloat in every class of society during the years preceding the first Revolution, ere they had as yet had time to develop into act; nay, that they even lent their influence to help on a movement in which their generous but undiscerning minds imagined they saw the dawn of an era of liberty and fraternal concord.

Another potent agent which concurred in the production of the French Revolution and its persecution of the Church was Jansenism, which, in its hatred of Catholic truth, made common cause with the infidel philosophy of the day. The class from which the magistracy was taken was peculiarly imbued with the spirit of this insidious heresy, which ever strove to maintain its position within the Church in order the more effectually to injure it. Hence the Parliaments, and especially that of Paris, were continually favouring the projects of the enemies of religion by their invasion of ecclesiastical rights, and by defeating the efforts of the clergy to stem the tide of infidelity.<sup>2</sup> France, it may be truly said,

<sup>2</sup> A striking proof of the extent to which Jansenism prevailed in the Parliament of the capital occurred in 1737, when, Pope Clement XII. having canonized St. Vincent de Paul, that body suppressed the Bull because in it was noted the zeal of that Saint against the Jansenistic heresy.

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owed her revolutionary horrors and religious persecution more to her magistrates and lawyers, as a class, than to any other body in the kingdom.

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## CHAPTER II.

### *State of Brittany at the commencement of the Revolution.*

BRITTANY was at the time of which we are speaking, and still is, notwithstanding the terrible ordeal through which it has passed and the corrosive action of ‘modern progress,’ a pre-eminently Catholic land. Ever since the day when his country was converted from Druidism, the Breton had adhered with unflinching constancy to the faith and retained it in all its freshness. Heresy had no power to pervert or seduce him, for no profane novelty had ever any attractions for his serious and deeply religious mind ; and as he had always shown himself proof against the allurements of error, so in the day of fiery trial the terrors of persecution were equally powerless to compel him to deny his God. A well-known author,<sup>1</sup> who has dedicated his pen to the

<sup>1</sup> Emile Souvestre. It is a pity that an author, so justly admired, who not only was gifted with much literary talent and descriptive power, but had also a genuine sympathy and reverence for the good, the pure, and the beautiful, should be deficient in several essential qualities, the absence of which renders his writings, taken as a whole, unsatisfactory to Catholic readers. There is in him a certain naturalness, and what may be called sensuousness, which is continually betraying itself. He looks at religion mainly from an aesthetic, picturesque, and sentimental point of view, and, when he attempts to go below the surface, he seems to get entirely out of his element. Passages occur in which, however unintentionally on his part, he expresses himself in a manner highly offensive to Catholic feeling ; but, allowing for these serious drawbacks, his pictures of Brittany are very valuable, and the more so as time is rapidly sweeping away all distinctive features there, as in every other quarter of Europe.

description of his beloved Brittany, says that the contest there was between the guillotine and faith, and that in the desperate struggle the guillotine blunted its edge and was worsted. That struggle never, as in La Vendée, resulted in civil war. Speaking generally, it may be said that Basse Bretagne<sup>2</sup> continued unmoved ; but, as the same writer forcibly expresses it, ‘she remained on her knees with clasped hands in spite of all that was done to prevent her.’ There was, indeed, something marvellous in this spectacle of a passive resistance which neither yielded to fear nor blazed into anger. Nothing could move her from her devout attitude, or shake her religious faith. ‘The *bonnet rouge* might be forced upon her head, but not upon her mind.’ ‘I will knock down your belfries,’ said Bon-Saint-André to a village mayor. ‘You will still have to leave us the stars,’ replied the noble peasant ; ‘and they can be seen farther off than our belfry.’

Not only had the Bretons been always remarkable for this strong attachment to the faith of their fathers, but nowhere had religion exercised a more salutary influence. The clergy were a zealous, unassuming, well-instructed body, entirely devoted to their round of sacred duties and possessing the respect and confidence of their flocks. Missions and retreats, in which all classes took part, were very frequent ; Christian education flourished ; crimes were rare, and the morals of the population remarkable for their purity. The geographical situation of this province isolated it in a certain degree from the

<sup>2</sup> The province of Brittany has been divided ever since the Revolution into five departments, but it is in Lower Brittany alone, which comprises the departments of Finisterre, Morbihan, and the Côtes-du-Nord, that the pure Celtic race, with its language, names, features, costumes, and traditional superstitions, is to be chiefly found. This is the genuine Brittany, the Bretagne Bretonnante of Froissart, who calls the eastern part la Bretagne Douce, because the French language was spoken there.

rest of France, and its peculiar language added a further bar of separation. It was in consequence a region little known and seldom visited, and was thus preserved in a great measure from that influx of corruption so commonly introduced by strangers into countries which they habitually frequent. Religion was interwoven with every event, with every occupation of life. It met the eye at every turn. To the Breton everything was, so to say, sanctified, even to the very ruins of Paganism which strewed the land; for when, as the writer just alluded to graphically expresses it, the old Druidess was baptized by St. Pol, she kept her dolmens and her menhirs<sup>3</sup> along with her thousand chapels of Mary and shrines of saints, the cross which surmounted their summits proclaiming the triumph of the faith of Christ over the ancient superstition. The amazing number even of the way-side crosses may be inferred from the fact, that when at the Restoration it was contemplated to replace those which had been demolished in 1793, it was found that it would cost no less a sum than 1,500,000 francs to carry out the design. Two-thirds of these crosses were in the Pays de Léon alone. Some idea may hence be formed of the deep hold which the faith must have had on the Breton population in the eighteenth century.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> St. Pol, or St. Paul, first Bishop of Léon, was a native of Cornwall, who, early in the sixth century, converted to the Christian faith the Pagan inhabitants of Armorica. The menhirs are large vertical stones, like those of Stonehenge. The dolmens are horizontal stones placed upon vertical ones: both evidently connected with the old Druidical worship. In the Ile-aux-Moines, the ancient dolmen is still traditionally called the altar of sacrifice.

<sup>4</sup> A writer in the *Revue de l'Enseignement Chrétien* tells us that there are two small islands on the coast of Brittany, called Hœdic and Houat, which seem entirely to have escaped the influences of the last century, and remain perfect relics of mediæval Christianity, nay, of Christianity still more primitive. He calls the Catholic community inhabiting these islets 'the model Republic.' These people have never changed their manners for fifteen centuries. They have no police or

A very serious blow, however, was inflicted upon religion by the suppression of the Jesuits in the year 1773. Education had been largely in their hands, and it now passed into such as were less able and less firm. At no time could such a loss have been more calamitous. The new ideas, under the specious name of philosophy, had begun to penetrate into the province and had seduced not a few members of the higher classes. Communication having become easier, the intercourse between Paris, the focus of the evil, was now more frequent, and nothing could surpass the activity of the propaganda of impiety and the variety of the arts employed to pervert and win to the cause all who by their social position were in any degree raised above the people. The spirit of faith began to be enfeebled amongst the youth in the schools and colleges. In the meantime bad books were being circulated and read, doing infinite mischief. Men of moral and intellectual shallowness, with the usual accompaniments of pride and self-sufficiency, greedily embraced the new doctrines, which had all the more attraction for them as they set them free from restraint and flattered their passions. These men were now to be met with everywhere, even in the smallest towns, and everywhere they showed themselves as bitter

courts of justice ; their simple laws are administered by the curé in the name of God. They have no lawyers, constables, journalists, usurers, publicans, prisons, or illegitimate children. All their land is cultivated for the use of the community, but the fishery, which is carried on by a fearless and skilful race of mariners, provides the staple of their sustenance ; the old people and orphans are supported by the community. There is no hotel or inn on either island, visitors being entertained by private hospitality without charge. Objectionable strangers are requested to depart as soon as possible. Crime and immorality are unknown on the islands, and always have been so for fifteen centuries, all the people being practical Catholics of the olden stamp, and thoroughly French in their attachment to that nation, though 'separated from it,' says the writer, 'by an abyss in their manners and customs' (*Tablet*, February 24, 1877).

criticizers of the clergy, of whom, before long, they were to become the relentless persecutors. Nevertheless, the rural population had almost wholly escaped the infection of infidelity.

About the same time political causes combined to trouble this peaceful land, but the agitation was confined to those who shared in the administration of the country; the people remained silent spectators, not presuming to intermeddle, so deep at that period was the respect for authority. Brittany, having been united to the Crown through marriage, not through conquest, had retained by express stipulation many privileges to which it was much attached. The nobility, in particular, were extremely zealous in defence of these rights, while the Court, on the contrary, was disposed to entrench upon them, and was always much opposed to the Provincial States, which stood in its way when it desired to effect any local change. It would gladly indeed have done away with this obstacle to the sovereign central power, but as this was not feasible, it was always striving to weaken the authority of the national legislative body. Minds became more and more excited and alarmed, and the changes with Louis XV. shortly before his death made in the Parliaments contributed to increase and extend the agitation. Certain projects of innovation, the result of which would have been to deprive Brittany of the greater part of its privileges and destroy its ancient constitution, resulted in dividing the inhabitants into two parties—the Government party and the country party, and thus prepared the way for some deplorable scenes which disgraced the town of Rennes in the beginning of 1789, and formed a fitting prelude to the horrors of the Revolution. For some time past, political writers, strangers to the province, had been disseminating pamphlets full of violent invectives against the clergy and

nobility. The States of Brittany were sitting for the last time in Rennes at the close of 1788, when some of these agitators established themselves in the city for the purpose of kindling discord between the higher classes and the third order. The Parliament, unfortunately, was unable to take any active measures to put them down, for that body did not enjoy the countenance of Necker, the then Prime Minister, who wished to get rid of all the local provincial courts, and favoured those who were inimical to them. Profiting by this support, they held tumultuous assemblies, in which the two higher orders were virulently assailed, and enticing promises were held out to the people, including the prospect of entire exemption from taxation. Students in the schools of law were admitted to these meetings and distinguished themselves by their violent demeanour, which broke out in open act when they were joined by some young men from Nantes. Sixty of these hot-headed youths attacked a peaceable body of working-men who were on their way to present to the magistrates a protestation of their submission to the Parliament, and a fray ensued. Accusing the nobility of having excited the working-men to take this step, the rioters proceeded the next day to assail any gentlemen whom they met in the streets, wounded many, and killed two. Yet the conduct of these seditious youths found many approvers and defenders in the ranks of the third estate, who were beginning to regard themselves as an oppressed and injured class.

An important body in the city of Rennes, the *avocats* or lawyers, had, in the first instance, sided with the Parliament and nobility in their struggle with the Crown, but, imbued with the new ideas and perceiving that Government favoured the innovations provoked by the philosophers, it speedily turned round against an authority which it had hitherto respected, and more than

one of its members were found to undertake the vindication of the young men who had been guilty of the late sanguinary riot. Things had now arrived at such a point that the clergy and nobility resolved upon sending a deputation to the King to claim the protection which was their due against the lawless outrages to which they were exposed, a protection which he was himself little capable of affording. The Tiers, or third order, also sent a deputation of its own to represent its grievances and give its version of the late disturbances. The deputation of the two higher orders consisted of members of the Breton States, which had been suspended on the 3rd of January by the influence of Necker, and were all, both clerical and lay, persons of distinction and merit. In the memoir which they addressed to the sovereign they ventured to tell him that, notwithstanding his love of peace, it no longer existed in his dominions; that everywhere the third estate was being excited against the clergy and nobility with the most fatal results. After narrating the late scenes in Rennes, they proceeded to express fears which were only too well justified, and to complain that the fomenters of the troubles boasted of Government support. Nor does it appear that this boast on the part of the factious was altogether destitute of foundation. Necker, seconded by the Intendant of the province in what he called his projects of reform, was striving to destroy the national Parliaments, and to this end favoured the illegal associations formed in Brittany with designs hostile to its ancient magistracy. He gave them so much encouragement that while the deputation of the higher orders found him well-nigh inaccessible, he would readily receive and give audience to the seditious malcontents. Whatever there might be that needed reform in the old fabric, and how great soever might be that need, such

a course on the part of Government, it is plain, was suicidal, being most injurious to the interests of order and authority. The Breton delegates proceeded to lay these considerations before the monarch, and to point out that by no act or measure had the Government marked its disapprobation of the conduct of the municipalities in encouraging the attacks made upon the clergy and nobility. They concluded with beseeching him to protect a Constitution which he had sworn to maintain, and which could not be altered except by common consent, still less in opposition to the wishes of two orders in the State.

It may be observed that the order of the clergy here alluded to included only the bishops, abbots, and chapters of cathedrals; the parochial clergy and other ecclesiastics forming no part of it. The enemies of religion profited by this exclusion to endeavour to raise a spirit of insubordination towards their prelates in the inferior ranks of the clergy. They affected to commiserate them, and had invented the invidious term of high and low clergy, in order to impress the latter with a sense of degradation. They declaimed against the dignitaries of the Church and the possessors of rich benefices, gorged, they said, with wealth, while the curés, who did the actual work and were the true fathers of the people, languished in poverty. Pamphlets were also addressed to them, filled with specious arguments artfully directed to disposing them in favour of the projected innovations. Such have ever been the tactics of the enemies of the Church in making their first assaults; men were presently to discover that the tender pity manifested for the curés was but a feint adopted for the purpose of creating disunion, and to see these pretended friends of the second order of clergy turn against them so soon as they no longer needed their concurrence,

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and persecute both pastors and prelates with the same implacable fury. In the meantime not a few were deceived and seduced by their sophistry. The parochial clergy of Brittany were, for the most part, simple, unsuspecting, confiding men, and though well instructed in all that was needful for the exercise of their vocation, very ignorant of the world, and therefore the easier to beguile. Add to this, that a very large proportion of their body, belonging by birth to the humbler classes, were naturally drawn to sympathize with the Tiers. By and by, however, with the exception of a lamentable but very small minority, who went astray altogether after their perfidious guides, they were to recognize their mistake, and to perceive that the real aim of these ardent reformers was not the removal of ecclesiastical abuses, but the utter subversion of the Catholic religion throughout the land.

The urgent representations of the Breton deputation were productive of no result, the attention of Government being engrossed with one object—the approaching meeting of the States-General. On January 24, 1789, Louis XVI. issued his letters of convocation, and simultaneously published the rules which were to govern the elections; for as there had been an interval of one hundred and seventy-five years since the last assembly of the States-General, certain changes in the old forms were judged needful, and in particular such as would introduce a larger popular element. Accordingly, the Tiers was to be represented by half the total number of deputies, the other half to be equally divided between the clergy and nobility. The inferior clergy, who, it may be noted, had never hitherto sent deputies to the States-General, were also upon the present occasion to have a share in the representation. The city of Saint-Brieuc having been designed as the place of meeting

for the election of deputies of the two superior orders, thither they repaired, but it was only to protest against the illegal manner in which they had been summoned. Elections for the States-General, according to the ancient constitution of Brittany, had always been made in their own Provincial States convoked for the purpose, and they refused to proceed according to any other form. But in a joint address to the King they expressed themselves as perfectly willing and desirous, in a constitutional assembly of the States-General, to consent to a more extended representation of the Tiers, as well as to a more equal assessment of the taxes. No satisfaction having been obtained, each of the higher orders put forth a separate declaration in the form of a protest against the injury done to the States of Brittany, at the same time formally disavowing whatever the Tiers, thus illegally chosen, might do in the Assembly contrary to the interests of the province. In thus acting, they were undoubtedly only asserting their just rights, but their determination may well be viewed as matter of regret, since it deprived the Assembly of the presence of many men both of worth and wisdom who would have been able to lend their powerful support to the party of order, for such might easily have been found in the ranks of the nobility, while among the bishops Brittany possessed men not only of sterling merit, but of consummate prudence and ability. Favoured by Government, the inferior clergy had been convoked a fortnight earlier, and their elections took place in the episcopal cities of each diocese, not in all cases with perfect tranquillity, particularly at Rennes and Nantes, where the prejudices lately fostered against the episcopal order manifested themselves openly, and declamations were heard against pretended abuses of authority, while at Nantes several most estimable and able curés were

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set aside solely because they had exhibited a strong attachment to their bishop. It may hence be concluded that, although the Breton clergy were represented in the States-General for the most part by men of merit and consideration, there was nevertheless an admixture of such as not only shared to a very regrettable degree the eagerness for innovation so common at the period, but were tainted with the still more deplorable spirit of insubordination; while, as a class, they were too little acquainted with political matters to enter with safety into so perilous an arena, and one for which their previous training and habits of mind had in no way prepared them. Accordingly, in the first instance they were almost universally led away by clever, artful men, and thus helped to accelerate the movement which was hurrying the nation into the abyss of Revolution. Some of their number were for a time even staggered in faith and betrayed into deplorable compromises which they were afterwards generously to disavow; while others, few, it is true, by comparison, were to make shipwreck altogether. But among them were also found individuals who, placed in the most trying circumstances, manifested a firmness worthy of their high vocation.

The *cahiers*, or papers of instruction, furnished to their deputies by the clergy of Brittany attest at once the soundness of their views and the spirit of genuine liberality which animated their body. This remark, indeed, is capable of more extended application. A modern historian, M. Alfred Nettement, speaking of the instructions furnished by the French clergy to their deputies in 1789, says, ‘In the States-General the clergy found themselves face to face with the mischievous theories of economists, the prejudices and Jansenistic resentments of the *bourgeoisie*, the implacable enmity of the philosophers—in fine, with the levity and weakness

of a vacillating Court. A formidable coalition was at once organized against them, and even before they had taken their seats, they were already not only judged, but sentenced to death ; and yet it may be truly affirmed that the *cahiers* which they brought with them to the Assembly formed collectively a work of high political science, a code of legislation, a treatise of true social economy.' Whatever, then, some may be ready to suppose, the clergy of France were in no way 'behind their age,' as it is the fashion to assert. If anywhere, assuredly in antiquated, isolated Brittany *retrogradism* (to adopt the liberalistic phraseology of our day) might have been expected to prevail. Yet, so far from this being the case, not a few of their number, as we have seen, were only too much infected with the fever of progress, while the great and sounder majority were as strong in their expressed desires for all wholesome, full, and liberal reforms as was the bourgeois class itself.

But if some undesirable elements existed in the ranks of the clergy, amongst the Tiers principles of a most menacing and destructive character were predominant. Never before had the elections been constituted on so wide and popular a basis, and the decision which placed the third order numerically on an equality with the two others, secured it a preponderance in the event of common deliberation.<sup>5</sup> Hitherto the third estate had borne all the public burdens without being allowed any part in the conduct of public affairs, whilst the two other orders had been entirely exempt from taxation, for which, as respected the nobles, military service, conducted, as it was in feudal times, at their own personal cost, was

<sup>5</sup> The deputies for the two higher orders numbered together 593 ; those of the third estate, 621. This excess was owing to the refusal of the higher orders in Brittany to send deputies. In other parts of France many, unfortunately, had also abstained from voting.

regarded as the substitute.<sup>6</sup> A conflict between the bourgeois and the nobles was therefore imminent, as the latter, though willing to concede some reforms, were bent on retaining, at least, a portion of their privileges. Nevertheless, even in the aristocratic class many were to be found who enthusiastically sided with the popular demands, whilst the clergy, throughout France, as has been already observed, were favourable to them and, indeed, to all reforms consistent with justice and the inalienable rights of the Church. All differences, therefore, might eventually have been overcome, and the most liberal reforms harmoniously effected, had not France laboured under far more serious evils than those of social and political inequalities. We have seen how wicked men had been actively employed in undermining the faith of the people, in effacing from their consciences the idea of a Present God, the Ruler of all, eradicating from their hearts a sense of the duty of obedience and submission, inspiring them with a contempt for authority and a hatred of the rich, as well as of all superiorities, in short, thoroughly demoralizing the public mind. When principles are corrupted, and passions, thus set free from all salutary restraint, are ready to burst into a flame before the slightest opposition, then it is that thrones are jeopardized and society menaced with utter subversion; and to this appalling state of things the higher class, which were to be its first victims, had in a great measure prepared the way in France, not only by the spectacle which they had too generally offered of luxury, licence, and immorality, but through

<sup>6</sup> Although the clergy were not taxed, yet they often taxed themselves; and it is matter of history how largely they contributed, when an emergency occurred, to the necessities of the State; not to speak of the liberal use they made of their ample revenues for the public benefit: as, for instance, in constructing bridges, building hospitals, erecting and endowing schools, &c.

the blind adoption and encouragement, on the part of so many among them, of the philosophical errors of the day.

The elections of the third order were, speaking generally, of a tumultuous character. The choice of deputies was not happy. Naturally, in the anticipation of the coming struggle, those men were elected who had been the most prominent in their declamations against popular grievances, and who, it was therefore expected, would prove the most energetic champions of reform. These individuals were almost all more or less infected with the new ideas; a large number were mere Utopians, regarding all existing institutions as bad, desirous to sweep them all away and to construct on their ruins an ideal government and a social state in accordance with the dreams of Rousseau. Men of this class had already formed themselves into clubs all over the country, the evil action and influence of which might already be foreseen, for they rested for their support upon the masses, whom, by the help of those arts which demagogues know so well how to practise, they would be able to use as their army of intimidation, as was soon to be terribly exemplified. The *cahiers* of the Tiers in Brittany, and it is with them we are chiefly concerned, did not exhibit the wisdom which characterized those of the clergy. Along with much which was unquestionably just and good, they contained suggestions altogether wild and unreasonable, especially as respected the Church, which the *avocats* had set themselves up to reform according to a constitution of their own devising, by which it was to be placed in harmony with the proposed liberal institutions, political and social.

## CHAPTER III.

### *Spoliation of the Church. Civil Constitution of the Clergy.*

THE States-General met on the 5th of May, 1789. Those who are familiar with the leading events of the Great French Revolution, need scarcely be reminded of the discussion which immediately ensued upon a matter which had unfortunately been left undecided, viz., whether the three orders were, as heretofore, to constitute three chambers, or whether they were to be united in one. The first question at issue was whether they should meet together for the verification of their powers, but all were aware that, this point once conceded, deliberation and voting in common were sure to follow. Louis, as usual with him, adopted that hesitating course which invariably encourages the insolence of the factious, and robs concession, in which it is certain to result, of all the grace and good effect which attach to it so long as it is accompanied by some freedom of choice, and thus possesses in a measure the merit of an initiative act. The clergy were employed in a fruitless measure of conciliation ; meanwhile the Tiers was labouring with more success to entice the inferior members of that body to join it. On the 13th of June, three curés of Poitou led the way in going over without awaiting the decision of the higher clergy. On the morrow six other ecclesiastics, amongst whom figured the afterwards famous schismatic bishop, Grégoire, Curé of Embergénil, in the diocese of Nancy, and two Breton curés followed their example ; and on the 17th seven other curés joined the Tiers.

These ecclesiastics committed the grave error of acting independently of their Superiors; but worse was to ensue.

It was on the 17th that took place the well-known scene in the Tennis Court, where the Tiers, which had already assumed to itself the title of National Assembly, bound itself by an oath never to separate till the constitution of the kingdom was settled on a firm basis. On that day the Revolution had begun. On the 19th, the clergy, after deliberating on the mode of verifying their powers, decided by a clear majority against joining the Tiers. The minority were betrayed into the inexcusable fault of holding a meeting of their own as soon as the opposite party had left their seats, and passing a resolution to the directly contrary effect. By the 24th of the month, one hundred and ninety-one ecclesiastics had gone over to the Tiers, and amongst them were all the Breton deputies except four.

The motives which led to the defection of so large a proportion of the clergy were of a mixed character. Some went in the hopes that their presence might help to check or modify violent counsels; others, from that sympathy with the third order to which we have alluded. They were received with a burst of rapturous applause, the last which was to greet them from the benches of that Assembly. A minority of the nobility, gained over by Necker, who favoured the Tiers and was then at the height of his popularity, were induced to follow the example of the clerical seceders. Had the Minister possessed, along with his better moral qualifications, the firmness and ability of Mirabeau,<sup>1</sup> the depraved leader of

<sup>1</sup> After the meeting of the Tennis Court, Mirabeau, laughing with his friends about his boldness on this occasion, said, 'With a handful of soldiers the new legislators might all have been sent to the right-about.' All that the Government did was to despatch a few workmen to remove some benches and tapestry hangings, in the hopes that the noise of their hammers might disturb the deliberations of the meeting !

the Tiers, he might have saved the King and the monarchy at that critical juncture. But Necker, although an able financier, lacked the qualities of a good and prudent Minister of State. He was also fond of popular applause. His conduct at this crisis cannot be excused, and, without impugning his honesty of purpose, he may well be considered as having virtually betrayed the interests of both the King and the kingdom, and led Louis, who felt himself powerless in his hands, to consent to acts which were a virtual abdication of his royal authority, and a direct sanction to lawlessness and insurrection. The weak monarch, thus unsupported by any sound statesman, counteracted by his own Minister, and ever recoiling from the employment of force, after causing a declaration to be published on the 23rd of June, which, among various concessions, still retained the separation of the three orders, allowed the moment for decisive action to pass by, and only four days later, on the 27th, signified his wishes, which in effect amounted to a command, that the remainder of the two orders of clergy and nobility, which had hitherto held aloof, should unite themselves to the Assembly. This act of Louis ought either to have been done in the first instance, or never to have been done at all.

We have no intention of following the rapid steps by which the Revolution now advanced, or of relating the terrible scenes which were enacted both in the capital and in the provinces between the 27th of June and the 2nd of November following, on which latter day the spoliation of the Church, which had been proposed by the notorious Talleyrand, Bishop of Autun, in order to supply the deficit in the public treasury, was decreed, and its property declared to be at the disposition of the nation: a decree in perfect harmony with the principles promulgated by Rousseau. Determined to secure the

carrying of their measure, the enemies of religion had summoned the dregs of the faubourgs to their aid. Armed with clubs and other weapons, this rabble filled the adjoining streets, insulting the ecclesiastics as they passed to the Assembly, or menacing with death all who should refuse to vote for the measure. On that day the Church of France was stripped of all her property, which was soon to become the prey of greedy speculators, Jews, Protestants, and bad Catholics, who had all for some time past been reckoning upon making their profit out of its sale. On the 13th of February, 1790, the religious orders were declared to be abolished, and the greater part of the convents were suppressed. The deterioration and degeneracy of the monastic institutions was the pretext put forward for this act. It is not to be denied that considerable relaxation prevailed in many religious communities in France, but it may be truly affirmed that this was chiefly owing to lay and governmental interference. Their reform was one of the objects recommended in the *cahiers* of the clergy ; and if that body had met separately, it would have formed a suitable matter for discussion and arrangement, subject to the approval of the Holy See. The National Assembly, in any case, was incompetent to deal with ecclesiastical matters. The separation of the good grain from the chaff was now to be witnessed. Bad monks availed themselves of this decree of the civil power to cast aside vows from which no secular authority had the right to release them. They left their convents, and were soon to be numbered amongst the active promoters of the schism. Few religious in Brittany thus disgraced themselves, and the vast majority throughout France proved faithful to their obligations. Congregating in those houses which were temporarily spared, they continued to practise their rule as well as they were able until

they were forcibly ejected. The nuns, in particular, gave an almost universal example of fidelity to their vows and attachment to their holy state. An extremely small proportion of these women, who had been represented as the victims of bigotry and superstition, and reluctant prisoners in the cloister, profited by the permission given them to return to the world. The rest remained to give a splendid contradiction to their impious traducers, and not a few of them were ere long to win the palm of martyrdom.<sup>2</sup>

Pursuing its work of destruction, the Assembly was now about to aim its most deadly blow at the Church by voting the ‘Civil Constitution of the Clergy,’ which carries its condemnation in its very name. ‘We must de-Catholicize France,’ had been Mirabeau’s exclamation in one of his philosophic rhapsodies. The clergy had been deprived of their temporal influence by being stripped of their property and placed on a level with the salaried officials of the State ; it was now necessary to destroy their spiritual influence, by reducing the Church to a mere department of the civil service. There were unfortunately many even of the moderate party in the Constituent Assembly, as it was now called, who were willing to combine with the declared enemies of religion in this work, having been led astray by that theory of Rousseau’s which absorbed all powers in one, viz., that of the State ; while the Jansenists again, who formed a very numerous party in the Chamber, saw in this plan the realization of their own views, which made spiritual power as well as temporal reside in the people ; Popes, Bishops, and

<sup>2</sup> It may be well to observe that though it had been decreed that all, men and women alike, were free to renounce their vocation and leave their convents, the houses of those religious women who occupied themselves with active works of mercy were not in the first instance suppressed.

Pastors, being simply delegates of the community, and rulers only in a ministerial sense.<sup>3</sup> An ecclesiastical commission had been appointed ever since the 20th of August to elaborate the scheme. It was composed chiefly of laymen, almost all of whom were sworn enemies of the Church ; only five ecclesiastics were associated with them, who found themselves powerless to effect any good ; and when fifteen more members noted for their revolutionary principles were added in the February following, the small minority of worthy deputies resolved to retire, and, if their names were retained as forming part of the commission, it was because their right to withdraw was contested. The constitution which was framed under such auspices, and submitted to the Assembly, assimilated the ecclesiastical to the new civil divisions. Suppressing the one hundred and thirty-four existing bishoprics, it created eighty-three new ones in their place, corresponding to each of the civil departments. For the Assembly, which conceived that it had the mission to change and recast everything, had expunged all the ancient distinctions and limits of provinces, and divided the kingdom into a sort of chess-board of departments, to which it gave the names of adjoining rivers or mountains. These departments again were sub-

<sup>3</sup> Jansenism was in its origin a heresy on the subject of grace, but after its condemnation by the Church it became a system opposed to the authority of the *Ecclesia Docens* and of the Supreme Pontiff. There is much affinity between Jansenism and Protestantism. The distinction may thus be broadly stated : Private judgment rebellious against the Church in the interpretation of Scripture, is the essential error of Protestantism. Private judgment, similarly rebellious in the interpretation of ecclesiastical documents, is the essential error of Jansenism. The two are in principle identical ; but Jansenism was able to disguise its assumption of private judgment, and consequent contempt of the authority of the living Church, by an affected reverence for the Church of the past, which meant, in fact, its own interpretation of primitive antiquity—in this resembling the High Anglicans of our own day.

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divided into a certain number of districts, each having its own administration, composed for the most part of hot-headed and intemperate individuals who believed themselves to be invested with an almost unlimited authority. Virulent persecutors for the most part of the faithful clergy, they were actuated by petty local animosities, and ready to inflict all manner of vexations on any who offered the least opposition to revolutionary measures. As Brittany, by the new arrangement, was to contain only five departments, four of its nine dioceses, those of Dol, Léon, Saint-Malo, and Treguier, were to be suppressed. The new constitution forbade the recognition of the authority of any bishop or metropolitan not resident in France. This prohibition was intended to abolish the jurisdiction of certain bishops, such as those of Bâle, Ypres, Tournay, &c., a portion of whose dioceses, more or less considerable, lay within the realm. The kingdom was to be divided into ten metropolitan sees. That of Rennes was to receive the title of Metropolitan See of the North West, and to include in its jurisdiction all the Breton bishoprics, as well as those of Angers and Mans and the proposed new see of Laval.

The choice of the bishops was confided to the electors of the department indiscriminately, thus including both Protestants and Jews. The bishop-elect was to demand canonical installation from the metropolitan, and simply to acquaint the Pope, as visible Head of the Church, with the fact of his election, in token of inter-communion. The departmental electors were also to choose the curés, and these in turn their own vicaires, from amongst the priests of the diocese. The cathedral chapters, abbatical and collegiate, were to be suppressed, as well as the priories and other benefices. These leading articles suffice to show the character of the proposed constitution. As may be seen, it violated the rights of the Holy

See, and destroyed the whole constitution and discipline of the Church; moreover, it was vicious in its origin, on account of the incompetence of the civil legislature to deal with ecclesiastical matters. When it came before the Assembly, the most influential deputies of the clergy, and even several lay deputies, exerted all their powers in opposing it and in demonstrating its injustice, and amongst them a Breton by birth, Mgr. de Boisgelin, Archbishop of Aix, particularly distinguished himself. He represented that the Church was a spiritual society, which the civil power was bound to protect, but upon whose rights it could not entrench without injustice, while such acts were in all cases stamped with nullity. He nevertheless expressed his desire, and that of his brethren, to meet the views of the Assembly for reform as far as might be possible. They had already proposed, and they again proposed, to consult the Gallican Church in a National Council. There, taking account of the wants of the age, and giving due weight to all considerations, it would be their object to reconcile the interests of religion, of which they were the depositaries, with those of the State, of which the Assembly he addressed were the arbiters and judges. The solid arguments he employed, and the tone of moderation with which he spoke, were all, however, lost upon men who wished neither to hear truth nor to do justice, but merely to have their own will.

On the 12th of July the Assembly decreed in its entirety this ‘work of darkness, this compendium of all kinds of heresies,’ as the Civil Constitution was characterized by the illustrious Pius VI. As the project had been for some time in preparation, Louis, whose conscience was alarmed, had been able secretly to consult the Pope, who, on the 10th of July, replied in a letter at once paternal and decisive. While expressing his confi-

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dence in the King's personal attachment to the Catholic faith, the Holy Father warned him that, if he should be led to sanction the decrees relating to the clergy, he would involve the whole nation in error, plunge the kingdom into schism, and perhaps kindle the flames of a religious war. He reminded him that in his Council sat two archbishops, one distinguishable for the zeal with which he had combated infidelity, the other remarkable for a profound acquaintance with ecclesiastical science and discipline, and recommended him to consult them, as well as all those prelates and doctors in his kingdom who were noted for piety and learning ; telling him, in conclusion, that although he was at liberty to renounce rights appertaining to the royal prerogative, he was not free to alienate or renounce anything which was due to God and to the Church, of which he was the eldest son. The two archbishops alluded to were Pompignan, Archbishop of Vienne, and Champion de Cicé, Archbishop of Bordeaux. To these two prelates the Pope also wrote confidentially, and it has been asserted that Pompignan kept back from Louis the Brief committed to him until after the 24th of August, on which day the King appended his fatal signature to the decree of the Assembly ; but this is evidently an error. The Brief, it is true, was kept secret, but it is probable that this was done by the King's own desire. A cloud, however, it must be acknowledged, rests on Pompignan's conduct, who died almost immediately. Some have attempted to clear his memory by saying that he was too ill to attend the Council or give any advice ; but he was certainly able to write to the Pope promising to do all in his power to deter the King from sanctioning the decree, so that this excuse can hardly avail. Others maintain that he joined the Archbishop of Bordeaux in betraying his sacred duty, and died of the remorse which he felt

for the act. Champion de Cicé lived to deplore bitterly his prevarication, and to make an humble avowal of his fault. Still it must remain matter of profound astonishment that two eminent prelates, or even that one—supposing, what can scarcely be proved, that Pompignan was innocent—should have been found to recommend to Louis an act by which he formally sanctioned schism, and this in the face of a Pontifical prohibition. The only explanation that can be given of so much ignorance, or so much pusillanimity, is that the tie which binds the Episcopate to the Holy See was sadly relaxed : one of the natural results of the so-called Gallican liberties, which Fénélon aptly styled liberties in relation to the Pope, servitudes in relation to the King. Gallicanism had fostered this spirit of servile deference towards the civil power, which had hitherto been embodied in the sacred person of the monarch, indoctrinating even pious and learned men with an inordinate estimate of his prerogatives in regard to ecclesiastical matters. The Constituent Assembly having now concentrated in itself the whole authority of the State, seemed thus to step into possession of the supposed rights of the sovereign. It required a rude shock to explode these false notions, and such a shock France was about to receive ; but, for a moment, the old ingrained ideas may have helped to create a kind of illusion in the minds of these prelates. This is all that can be said to explain, for nothing can excuse, their conduct. How little the relation between the Supreme Pastor and his universal flock was practically realized by many of the clergy, is proved from what we are told by a modern historian of the Church,<sup>4</sup> that he himself knew of a town, numbering fifteen thousand inhabitants, at the period of the schism in 1790, in which the faithful had never heard their

<sup>4</sup> Rohrbacher, *Histoire de l'Eglise*, l. xc.

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pastors utter one word respecting the Holy Father, either to remind them of his authority as Vicar of Jesus Christ, or to inculcate the filial submission due to him from all Christians; so that, in the hour of peril, they found themselves in a state of complete bewilderment from the want of those guiding principles which would have enabled them to understand the true nature and bearings of the question at issue.

Nevertheless, attachment to the See of Peter, although dormant, as it may be said, in the hearts of many of the clergy, was by no means entirely lost even in these exceptional, but unfortunately too numerous, cases; while the profound emotion excited in the clerical body generally, as well as amongst the faithful laity, when the provisions of the decree about to be presented to receive the royal sanction became publicly known, abundantly demonstrated what were the real sentiments and convictions of the great bulk of the nation. It was hoped, however, that Louis would refuse to make himself a party to so impious a law, and meanwhile prayers, novenas, fasts, and works of expiation, were everywhere being offered to avert the impending danger. Priests who had hitherto led lives little worthy of their profession were now seen to awaken, as it were, from a dream, and to recognize their place and office as consecrated intercessors for their people. Nay, some were converted, not merely from a worldly life, but from what is far harder to renounce, the proud intellectual errors which they had cherished; and men saw with astonishment the Curé of Saint-Etienne-du-Mont, who had borne a conspicuous part in the late revolutionary events, pass forty whole days at the foot of the altar, clothed in sack-cloth, to turn away God's anger from the Church of France.

While strongly condemning Louis's dereliction of

duty at this crisis, we must always think and speak with compassionate tenderness of the man himself. His virtues, his piety, his misfortunes, demand this at our hands. We must also remember that he had received evil advice from one, if not from both, of the prelates to whom he had been referred for counsel. Yet this last consideration, while pleading powerfully in extenuation, cannot avail to excuse him, for his own conscience forbade compliance, and, besides, he had received the Pope's letter, which left no room for doubt or hesitation. Louis yielded from weakness and fear; not, however, personal fear; he proved on many occasions that he possessed the hereditary courage of his race, and in his protracted trials and cruel death he showed that he could suffer and die with true Christian fortitude. But he was possessed, as we have said, with a morbid fear of causing the effusion of blood. The Assembly threatened; the threat meant insurrection—the gathering of a savage rabble, whom it could summon to its aid, but whose fury it was powerless to restrain; and so the unhappy monarch yielded to the imperious pressure brought to bear upon him. Forced, as he persuaded himself, by dire necessity—although no necessity can ever force the will to compliance with evil—he affixed his name to the iniquitous law which was to plunge France into so much misery and crime. His conscience, however, was ill at ease, and he wrote immediately to the Pope, begging him to confirm, at least provisionally, some of the articles of the Constitution. Pius VI., at once the mildest and the firmest of men, loved Louis XVI., and, compassionating his position, acted with the greatest condescension compatible with his duties as Supreme Pontiff. He held two consistories, in which the Civil Constitution of the Clergy was carefully examined, although it bore on its very face the unmistakeable stamp of heresy and schism. Before

proceeding to an immediate condemnation, the Pope also judged it well to elicit an expression of the sentiments of the collective Episcopate of France; and he wrote accordingly to that effect.

We must not suppose that the bishops and clergy had hitherto remained inactive spectators of the proceedings of the Assembly. In Brittany, in particular, two admirable bishops, those of Quimper and Léon, had already privately addressed the common Father of Christendom with the view of obtaining direction and support in their difficulties; and their own diocesan clergy, the overwhelming majority of whom were firmly attached to their bishops, had, on their part, sought instruction and advice from their ecclesiastical superiors. Meanwhile, the Breton clergy were by no means satisfied with the conduct of their representatives, particularly with the absence of so many of their names from a declaration which, on the 19th of April, had been addressed by the clergy sitting in the Assembly to their constituents, wherein they stated their ineffectual opposition to the late sacrilegious measures, which had been voted without their participation and in defiance of their protest. The fact was that some of these Breton deputies had been already gained over to the Revolution; others, following the mere dictates of human prudence, had feared to compromise themselves, or, as they represented it, to compromise the interests of religion by irritating its enemies; for several of their number had written to their constituents to excuse themselves and to explain their motives. It may appear extraordinary that so large a proportion of the representatives of the clergy of Brittany should manifest a spirit so different from that of the great majority of the body which had chosen them, but it must be remembered that just as the Tiers had elected the most ardent of its class, so the clergy,

whose sympathies ran in the same direction, had, under the influence of a like enthusiasm, made in too many cases an unfortunate selection.

As soon as the manifesto of the 19th of April became known, the religious and ecclesiastical bodies hastened to send in their declarations of adhesion. Some addressed their protests to the Assembly itself, and foremost in this course were large numbers of the Breton clergy; a proceeding which was immediately denounced by the revolutionary municipalities as an attempt to excite the province to revolt. But, indeed, the Civil Constitution of the Clergy had scarcely been published with the royal sanction before a general cry of indignation arose from one end of France to the other. The vast majority of the clergy, especially in Brittany, rejected it with horror, and a number of ecclesiastics distinguished by their learning and piety were urgent in warning the faithful, both by word and by their published writings, of the danger to which religion was exposed, hoping thereby to preserve from error all save those who had no mind to learn the truth. Upon the receipt of the Holy Father's letters, the bishops of France had lost no time in issuing a united declaration. On the 30th of October, 1790, appeared the ‘Exposition of the Principles of the Civil Constitution of the Clergy.’ It was drawn up and prepared by Mgr. Boisgelin, Archbishop of Aix, to whose zealous defence of the Church's interests we have already alluded. It was signed by all the French bishops except four: those of Sens, Autun, Orleans, and Viviers; five, indeed, if Gobel, Bishop of Lydda *in partibus*, Coadjutor of the Bishop of Bâle, is to be reckoned. But he scarcely belonged to the Gallican Church, as only a portion of the diocese lay within the French border. The document contained a clear and masterly statement of the respective limits of the spiritual and temporal

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powers ; it vindicated the jurisdiction of the Church, and established by irrefragable proofs its exclusive right to erect dioceses, establish metropolitan sees, institute bishops, give them their mission, and enact disciplinary rules. After demonstrating that the State had never possessed these powers, the Exposition proceeded to show the difference between the proposed elections and those of ancient times, to which it was pretended to assimilate them ; such elections having always been made with the concurrence of the clergy and provincial councils. It complained of the suppression of the monasteries and religious orders, as being a violation of the liberty of conscience, and concluded with demanding that recourse should be had to the Pope, and that the convocation of a National Council should be authorized, wherein any changes found to be desirable might be made in due accordance with canonical law. As the document was intended to enlighten, not the Pope, but the Assembly, the tone throughout was as moderate as was consistent with a firm enunciation of true principles. Pius VI. did not proceed at once to pronounce any public condemnation, but waited awhile, probably in order to observe what effect the Exposition would produce. That effect, no doubt, was great. A large number of the faithful, including certain ecclesiastics who had been deluded by the specious arguments of the Jansenists in favour of what was called the restoration of primitive discipline, returned to a better mind, and became determined opponents of the measure. Even in the Assembly itself there were not wanting men in whose hearts, despite their dissolute lives, the faith still lingered, and who had begun to repent of having lent a helping hand to the work of destruction ; and, indeed, it might be truly said that the majority were far from desirous of utterly destroying religion. The Jansenists, with whom

were associated many representatives of the old Parliamentary Gallicanism, and who formed a large party in the Assembly, were certainly not animated by any such motive—their sole object being to carry out in practice their own pet Church theory, for effecting which the Civil Constitution of the Clergy furnished them with the coveted opportunity—while even among the disciples of Voltaire and Rousseau numbers were to be found who, although they had lost their faith, were still desirous of preserving religion in some form, if only as a salutary check on social disorder and a necessary condescension to popular feeling. But pride alone, irrespective of any other motive, would have prevented any sort of compromise on the part of the Assembly, and, besides, it was urged on to pursue its anti-christian course by the extreme Left, which, now that it perceived that the Civil Constitution would involve as its consequence the ruin of Catholicism, had become far better satisfied with the measure, and were eager for its immediate enforcement. These enemies of all religion were aware that for the present they could not attain the full accomplishment of their designs, but they were content to bide their time. Ere long they were to carry matters entirely their own way.

The Assembly, then, or, rather, its majority, was well satisfied with its work, and not only remained unmoved by the Exposition, but was exasperated all the more against the clergy who had framed it. Then was let loose that flood of calumny against the whole clerical body which was rapidly to poison the popular mind. It was held up to public obloquy as the enemy of the Constitution, which was adroitly confounded with the Civil Constitution of the Clergy; for in the eyes of the people to be an enemy of the Constitution was to be opposed to the inauguration of the golden age which

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they were assured it was to bring about. Thus were the passions of the ignorant, unreflecting multitude inflamed to madness against the faithful clergy, and no imputation was too gross or monstrous not to find a ready credence. In this emergency the bishops behaved with the utmost discretion. They followed the rule which has always guided the Church whenever the State has enacted laws contrary to God's law and her own. They offered a passive resistance. They continued to exercise their pastoral office without paying any attention to the new Constitution ; those whose bishoprics had been suppressed did not consider themselves as dispossessed ; those who had received an extension of territory confined themselves to their former limits ; they nominated as usual to the vacant parishes ; in short, they treated the new law in all respects as a nullity ; the sole notice they took of it being to bestow greater care on instructing the clergy and faithful in the true principles of the Church's constitution.

The bishops of Brittany were behind none in the vigour and prudence which they displayed at this critical juncture. Several of their pastorals and manifestos have been preserved, and bear witness at once to their sound theological learning, their zeal for the faith, and their uncompromising firmness in denouncing error, tempered with that moderation and paternal forbearance which in all ages is found to distinguish the Catholic bishop ; who, conscious of being the divinely-appointed shepherd of the flock, and of enjoying the special assistance of the Holy Ghost in the discharge of his sacred trust, speaks with a tone of Apostolic authority which none but he knows how to assume. The example of the bishops was followed by their clergy. Solid works issued from the cathedral chapters, and even from the humble presbytery of many a parish priest. But space forbids us

to enter into details, in themselves most interesting, and we must recur to the more immediate subject which we have in hand.

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#### CHAPTER IV.

##### *Enactment of the Oath to be imposed on the Clergy.*

THE Constituent Assembly had been guilty of the folly and madness of thinking that it could do without God, and concoct a human system of religion, civil in its essence and in its administration, such as the philosophers of the day had imagined; but their production has justly been described as ‘still-born.’ It fell into contempt as a lifeless thing from the day of its birth. True Catholics rejected it with abhorrence, while those who had lost the faith did not really believe in it. All the science and ingenuity of man cannot construct a Church; and when worldly legislators, applying themselves to the attempt, cast aside the divine hierarchy of the Catholic Church, a despicable failure is the invariable and necessary result. The whole power of the State, however, as wielded by the Assembly, was to be exerted to impose its own invention on the nation. This new religion suited the majority, for it got rid of the Pope and provided them with bishops and priests according to their liking; that is to say, civil functionaries. This was in accordance with their view of reducing everything to the civil order. It also adapted itself admirably to a second system, the consequence of the first, which they had been successfully labouring to establish, and which is a more perfect engine of despotic power than regal absolutism had ever possessed, namely, *centralisation*.

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zation. The Assembly had already made great strides in this direction, for it had effaced, suppressed, expunged everything which possessed an autonomy of its own. It had destroyed the provincial administrations and handed them over to the State, in order to make Paris the exclusive centre of government; and Paris it had converted into a great workshop of revolution. With one stroke of the pen it had appropriated to the State all ecclesiastical property. All this it had done, and a great deal besides, exercising an authority more tyrannical than the most absolute monarch who ever sat on the throne of France had wielded or attempted to wield. One institution remained, which is independent in virtue of its essential constitution, the Church; and this was now to be absorbed in the all-devouring State by the Civil Constitution of the Clergy. Thus was the State to be master of all, even of religion itself. It was Rousseau's dream about to be realized.

If the Assembly had been actuated by any reasonable policy, and had not been urged on by a blind impiety, it would have paused when it saw the antagonism manifested throughout France to its recent decree; it would have abstained from enforcing it and endeavoured to come to some arrangement with the bishops, as the latter had themselves often proposed. In this manner it might have obtained many of the changes it desired, many even which in themselves were not desirable, but which, nevertheless were admissible with the sanction of the Holy See, and which the Pope—like Pius VII. afterwards in the Concordat made with Napoleon—would, no doubt, have sanctioned in the interests of religion and to obviate a schism. Thus would Catholic consciences have been quieted, and tranquillity maintained. But any such compromise would not have suited the enemies of religion, who, foreseeing the ruin of the Church in the

Civil Constitution of the Clergy, were bent only upon hurrying on its enforcement. In this object they were seconded by the local municipal authorities, who even surpassed the Assembly itself in the vehemence of their revolutionary zeal, and in several places were already adopting violent measures in order to compel the acceptance of the new decrees by the clergy, although no law to that effect had as yet been passed.

In no part of France was the indignation excited by the Assembly's sacrilegious acts stronger than in Brittany, although the popular displeasure did not, as in some of the southern provinces of the kingdom, break forth in any disturbance of the peace; and nowhere also did the animosity of the revolutionary authorities and their abettors assume a more virulent character. Mgr. de La Laurancie, the excellent Bishop of Nantes, was at Paris in October of that year, 1790, superintending the printing of a new Breviary for his diocese. The district authorities of Nantes, impatient to exercise their new powers, wrote to order him back to his diocese, under pain of having his stipend withheld. The threat was not likely to make much impression on a man of Mgr. de La Laurancie's character, but, as the civil power was backed by the new decrees, he thought it better not to furnish any pretext for accusation by prolonging his stay in Paris. He was also anxious to be with his flock at this trying time. Accordingly, at the end of the month he returned to his diocese. The great majority of his clergy hastened in person to offer him their homage, and to assure him of their unshaken fidelity to the Church, of which he was the intrepid defender. One of them, an aged priest, was heard to express himself, on leaving Mgr. de La Laurancie's presence, in sentiments of enthusiastic love and admiration, adding with what heartfelt sincerity he had renewed to him the oath

of obedience and attachment which he had formerly made to his Bishop at his ordination. These innocent words were retailed and distorted from their simple meaning, and the report was diligently circulated that the prelate had summoned his clergy for the purpose of making them swear to use every means at their disposal to oppose the Constitution. The administrators of the department affected to be seized with indignation, and the Bishop would have been immediately sentenced to imprisonment but for the firm resistance of one well-principled man amongst them, M. Frémont, who thus incurred the implacable resentment of the revolutionists, and had shortly after to provide for his safety by flight.

Of all the agencies employed in preparing and promoting the Revolution, one of the most powerful was that of the clubs, those tumultuous assemblies in which everybody was free to promulgate the wildest theories—the wilder and more extravagant the more certain to gain a favourable acceptance; in which bold and designing demagogues harangued an ignorant crowd upon the most difficult and delicate questions, the solution of which was equally beyond the competence of orator and hearers; inflaming their imaginations, exciting their passions, and impelling them to deeds of violence and bloodshed. Nantes was not behindhand in this respect, and its club was among the most formidable in France for the audacity with which it discussed every possible subject and passed its censures alike on men and measures. Mgr. de La Laurancie's affair was, of course, made matter of discussion, and his conduct did not fail to be represented in the most odious colours. Blindly credulous of the charges with which the venerable prelate was assailed, an exasperated populace began to utter the most alarming menaces against him. The good pastor, strong in his innocence,

would fain have remained with his flock in this hour of peril to its faith, but his friends, knowing his life to be in imminent danger, and seeing no attempt, but the very contrary, made on the part of the authorities either to protect him from violence or to allay the popular ferment, prevailed upon him at last to withdraw secretly from the town. So poor was Mgr. de La Laurancie, who had continued his accustomed almsgiving notwithstanding the great reduction to which his revenues had been subjected, that he had to borrow a small sum of money to defray the expenses of his journey. The lender, flattered at having been able to render a service to his Bishop, unhappily could not hold his tongue. Immediately it was noised abroad that Mgr. de La Laurancie was raising money to effect a counter-revolution ; lists of the subscribers were invented, and it was asserted that on the road to Paris, whither the Bishop had returned, there had been found among his baggage chests full of plate, which he had carried off from the cathedral. These calumnies could have been easily disproved, but that would not have suited the authorities, who, without occupying themselves about the matter, despatched certain of their number to denounce the Bishop at the bar of the Assembly, as having refused to acknowledge or execute the nation's decrees—inasmuch as he had replied to a deputation sent to him that he did not recognize the authority of the National Assembly in ecclesiastical matters, although he respected it in all things wherein religion was not concerned—and as having subsequently taken to flight. They accordingly prayed that he might be arrested and prosecuted before the tribunals, a new bishop appointed to his see, and means taken to compel the factious to obey the decrees of the Assembly. These accusations found a ready ear ; for the Left, irritated beyond measure at that

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moment by the recent appearance of the ‘Exposition of Principles,’ were already occupied with devising those very projects of compulsion which were urged by the Nantes deputation. It is true that difficulties which the men of the Revolution ought to have felt to be insuperable stood in the way. Every form of worship had been pronounced free. Liberty of conscience had been declared to be one of the principles of the Constitution, and, indeed, one of the inalienable ‘Rights of Man.’ Could it be denied to Catholics, who formed the immense majority of the nation? What right, on its own showing, did the Assembly possess of stigmatizing the protestations of the clergy as acts of revolt and calling for their punishment? What right had it to impose on a Catholic people and on their pastors a form of religion against which their consciences rebelled? Here was a dilemma, which was not, however, to perplex the new legislators long, although it was probably felt to be a difficulty by the Committee for Ecclesiastical Affairs (the same which had concocted the Civil Constitution of the Clergy), before which the charge against Mgr. de La Laurancie was brought, and which, to the surprise and disappointment of the Left, decided against the legality of rigorous measures.

Hitherto none of the clergy had been displaced; the curés who rejected the Constitution continued to serve their parishes and receive their stipends, although they were subjected to many local vexations, and were objects of the rancorous hostility of the clubs. Some of these had consulted one of the most active committees of the Assembly, the *Comité des Recherches*, or Committee of Inquests, which was chiefly composed of ardent Jacobins, touching the conduct to be pursued towards ecclesiastics. Voidel, its president, had replied, ‘Dare all against the clergy; you will be supported;’ and they were every-

where acting in accordance with this advice. It was to this very committee that the complaints against Mgr. de La Laurancie were now referred. This committee being, as we have said, full of ultra-democrats, with whom liberty of conscience, as proclaimed by the 'Rights of Man,' was a leading principle, ought to have experienced no difficulty in dealing with the subject. It was a question of forcibly imposing a new religion on the Catholics of France—for such, and justly so, did they esteem the newly devised State-system to be—a religion which their consciences rejected; and, in fact, the committee did not experience the least difficulty in the matter, for no sense of inconsistency interfered—it never has interfered with men of their class on similar occasions—with their deciding, in the face of their own cherished doctrines, against the rights of conscience when pleaded for Catholics. The committee, accordingly, did not deliberate long, and its president forthwith proceeded to present to the Assembly the project of a law by which bishops and priests were to be compelled to swear to the Civil Constitution of the Clergy; prefacing his project by a report which he made in the name of the *Comité des Recherches*, and of several other committees, denouncing a large proportion of the clergy as having combined in a league against the State and against religion, prompted solely by ambitious and self-interested motives. It is difficult to say which was most remarkable in this document, its arrogance or its audacious mendacity. The conduct of the Breton bishops and clergy in particular was subjected to detailed animadversion; the rest was a tirade of invectives against the Bishops of Rome, as Videl called the Popes, and against every order in the Church, which, while affecting a hypocritical respect for the 'religion of his fathers,'—for it was still judged prudent by even the most ardent revolutionists to

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throw a certain veil over their ulterior aims—he held up in the persons of its ministers, from the Vicar of Christ downwards, to obloquy and hatred. Such was the language of the men who professed to be the staunch defenders of liberty. They took under their protection the most criminal of offenders, rioters, assassins, and all the fanatical writers for the press; these last had full licence to print and circulate their subversive doctrines, but to priests, who ever inculcate principles conservative of peace, morality, and good order, no liberty was to be granted; nay, they must be forced to accept a measure which their consciences condemned, or, on their refusal, be declared as, *ipso facto*, dismissed from their functions. The history of these events might, indeed, excite our wonder, but that we know, from the experience of our own day, that it is always thus with the men of the Revolution. They have ever the names of liberty and equality in their mouths while forging chains for their fellow-countryman; and as for religious liberty, of which they proclaim themselves the champions, with them it means only the liberty of the irreligious to persecute and oppress the Church.

Voidel's report to the Assembly was seconded by Mirabeau, who regarded religion as a mere political institution necessary for the common people, and whose impassioned eloquence rendered him the most formidable of the Church's enemies. He declaimed with violence against the 'Exposition of Principles,' talked theology while declaring that he was no theologian, and presented his own views on the subject of jurisdiction with an assurance, or rather, we may say, an audacity, which was one of the secrets of his oratorical success. He concluded with menaces against those ecclesiastics who, by persevering in thus closing their minds against the spirit of liberty, should lead men to despair of their

conversion to the Constitution and consequently of their *aptitude for citizenship*. Here we have the crime of *incivism* broadly and boldly stated. Barnave, a Protestant, who was animated by a bitter hatred of the Church, joined in supporting Voidel's project of law, or Bill, as we should call it in our Parliamentary language. In vain did the gentle Bishop of Clermont undertake, with a patience truly marvellous, to enlighten the minds of his hearers and incline them to more moderate counsels, or at least to induce them to grant such a delay as might enable the clergy to consult the Pope. In vain did the Abbé Maury, at that time the energetic and brilliant advocate of the Church, with an eloquence scarcely inferior to that of Mirabeau, an irony as biting, and a perfect acquaintance with the subject, which his adversary wholly lacked, convict him of egregious error, and even put him and his supporters to silence by exposing the absurdity of his theology, demonstrating at the same time by irrefragable proofs the justice of the cause for which he was himself pleading—his triumph was limited to the mortification of his opponents. The Jansenists joined the Left in pressing for the adoption of the measure. Camus, their leader, made a speech which carried along with it all the constitutional party, the only portion of the Assembly which there might have been any hopes of favourably influencing. The request for adjournment of the debate was accordingly rejected, and Voidel's project of law adopted that same day, November 27, 1790.

The oath was thus worded : 'I swear to watch with diligence over the faithful committed to my direction. I swear to be faithful to the nation, to the law, and to the King. I swear to maintain, with all my power, the French Constitution, and, in particular, the decrees relating to the Civil Constitution of the Clergy.' It will

be seen how artfully the oath to the political Constitution, which the clergy would never have refused to take, was coupled with the oath to the Civil Constitution of the Clergy, which was repugnant to their consciences ; moreover, it was made to occupy the prominent position. This was a cunning and malicious stratagem, devised for the purpose of conveying the general impression that every ecclesiastic who refused to swear refused fidelity to the nation, to the laws, and to the sovereign, thereby rendering them popularly odious. A delay of only eight days was granted for the taking of the oath by all the bishops and curés sitting in the Assembly. The clergy who refused were to be accounted as deposed and others installed in their place.

It has been a question with some whether Maury on that day did not injure the cause he advocated by the bitter reproaches, richly merited as they were, which he addressed to the Assembly. The constitutional party was the party of order, and was not, as a whole, disposed towards the adoption of rigorous measures. At that epoch, when joined with the Right, it formed a majority in the Chambers. Not a few were beginning to hesitate, while some were even heard to mutter that the Jansenists, with their primitive Church, would ruin everything. Mirabeau himself, it is said, would have been content to dispense with the oath, and to limit his demand to the withdrawal from the recalcitrants of the stipends that had been awarded when the ecclesiastical property was seized by the State. But whether or no a more temperate orator might have succeeded in obtaining a favourable vote on that particular occasion, there can be little doubt but that the evil day would only have been postponed, not averted. There was a predetermined intention, even on the part of the moderate partisans of the Revolution, to reduce the Church to a mere function of the State ;

whilst among the party at their back, which was urging them on, and which was soon to carry everything before it, there existed a deep and ferocious animosity against the clergy, an animosity so strong that, in order to crush them, they did not hesitate flagrantly to violate, as we have seen, the Constitution which they had themselves just decreed and had sworn to maintain, thus virtually abrogating one of the chief articles of the famous ‘Rights of Man.’ This hatred of the clergy was the expression of that same hatred of Christianity which burns so fiercely in the breasts of their modern representatives ; for the clergy, so far from having done anything to deserve ill of the self-styled patriots of the day, had established many claims on their gratitude. They had been foremost in advocating all useful reforms, especially those which were designed to benefit the people ; they had been the first to associate themselves with the Tiers ; and on the memorable night of the 4th of August, when the nobility came forward to resign their old feudal privileges, the clergy, in a like spirit of generosity, had renounced their own immunities.

As soon as the iniquitous law had been passed, the unhappy monarch was urged to affix his signature to it by the same arguments which had been used to obtain his sanction to the Civil Constitution itself. Louis endeavoured to temporize, and sent an ambiguous reply. Meanwhile he was despatching most pressing letters to the Pope, beseeching him to make every possible concession, and relieve him from his cruel embarrassment. But his hopes from that quarter were vain, for it was impossible that the Holy See could ever approve the late acts of the Assembly. Nearly a month went by, and the monarch had hitherto evaded either an immediate acceptance or refusal of the law submitted to him. The Jansenist Camus meanwhile was busily engaged in pushing on the

Assembly. He knew that Louis was waiting in hopes of some compromise being effected with the Holy See, and, so far from desiring any such result, this was precisely what he and his party dreaded. The Jansenists wished to break with Rome. ‘The bishops,’ he said, ‘declare that they await the sanction of him whom they call the Sovereign Pontiff of the Church, as if the Church had any other than Jesus Christ, its founder.’ The Left, composed of men who were soon to cast out and revile the Redeemer’s name, vociferously applauded, and a member of the Right asked Camus what was his religion, since he certainly could not call himself a Catholic. To the Jansenist leader this was a matter of small account; he gained his point. A fresh application was made to the King, who sought a further delay by simply signing his former ambiguous letter, to which hitherto he had not affixed his name. The Left was furious. Louis was evidently waiting for instructions from Rome, and loud were its protests against the impropriety of making ‘the destinies of a great nation depend upon the caprices of a foreign prince.’ Camus now succeeded in procuring a resolution that the President should repair to the King for the third time in order to obtain his consent. Meanwhile the violence of the Tribune was beginning to work upon the populace of Paris, as, in fact, it was intended to do. The Keeper of the Seals told Louis that the faubourgs were about to rise if he did not satisfy the Assembly. ‘It matters little to me,’ the King replied, ‘that they should desire to take my life, for I am weary of it.’ But the Minister knew that if Louis was not personally timid, there was one unfailing expedient for exciting his fears. ‘It is not your life, Sire,’ he said, ‘which is menaced, but the lives of all the clergy, whom your hesitation is about to abandon to popular fury.’ To this representation the King was

infatuated enough to hearken. He accepted the decree, thereby not only violating his own conscience, but giving up to persecution and death the very men whom he desired to protect, unless they too were prepared to obey man rather than God. It is remarkable that the decree which was to make so many martyrs was signed on the Protomartyr's day, December 26, and that two years later, on that same day, he who put his hand to it was himself to appear at the bar of that tribunal of blood, the Convention. The giving his sanction to a law which his conscience condemned was not the only act of deplorable weakness of which this unhappy monarch was guilty, but as we do not purpose to follow up the course of events, we are spared the pain of any detail. Louis was to make a terrible expiation. His offences were to be washed out in his tears and in his blood. But his own bitter captivity and tragic end, the Temple and the Guillotine, have made us well-nigh forget that by one sinful act of compliance, and by a weakness deserving, in a monarch especially, the severest censure, he had a direct share in sending to the scaffold hundreds of innocent victims, priests of God, and a countless number of men and women, who suffered death rather than betray the faith. Or, if his faults have not always been forgotten, we cannot but think that from motives of natural compassion they have scarcely received the amount of condemnation which they deserved.

The Assembly had now associated the King's name and authority with their work. When his consent was announced, it was received with prolonged and deafening applause by the Left. What followed has been compared by a Church historian to the last great judgment. The grand separation was now to begin, and with it 'the purification of the French clergy and the regeneration of

Catholic France.' The very next day, Grégoire, so notorious for his revolutionary fanaticism, without waiting for the expiration of the allotted term, hastened to proclaim his defection. He mounted the tribune, took the schismatical oath, and justified his act in an artful speech, calculated to delude and seduce the unwary into following his example. He denied that the Assembly had any intention of entrenching on the spiritual rights of the Church. The very title of *Civil Constitution* of the clergy proved, he said, that the oath regarded only matters of the political order, so that no consideration could possibly interfere with the performance of this duty of patriotism, which was to cement the union between pastors and their flocks throughout the kingdom. Grégoire knew well how untrue was the assertion he was making, but the artifice had its effect on not a few. Sixty ecclesiastics who had seats in the Assembly took the oath after him, amongst whom were eight Breton deputies (two, however, not being natives of the province), and on the ensuing day their example was followed by thirty-five more, including some curés of Brittany. The Left were in high spirits, but they had not yet seen the end, and their pleasure was soon to be considerably damped by the retraction of several among the clergy who had been surprised into giving an assent, the full bearing of which they did not comprehend. The Assembly now angrily forbade any retraction being made from the tribune, while it continued to permit all who took the oath freely to speak and state their reasons.

On the 2nd of January, the Bishop of Clermont, availing himself of the declaration made by Grégoire and applauded by the Assembly, that it had no intention of entrenching on the spiritual province of the Church, made a last effort at conciliation, and rose to protest that the clergy willingly submitted to the authority of the State in

all civil matters, but as it was not from the State that they received their mission, so neither was the State empowered to define the limits within which they should exercise it. The violent outcry which here interrupted the speaker plainly proved the sense which the Assembly really affixed to the Constitution which it had framed. Voices from the Left loudly demanded that the Bishop should take the oath, ‘pure and simple,’ without explanation. The prelate had brought with him a form of oath agreed upon in conjunction with his colleagues, which, had there been any sincerity in the disclaimer made by Grégoire and by others in the name of the Assembly—a disclaimer which had always been received with applause when put forward with the object of pacifying the scruples of the doubtful and inveigling them into acquiescence—ought to have been deemed satisfactory. As he could not obtain a hearing, the Bishop descended from the tribune, declaring that his conscience did not allow him to take the oath, and leaving the form which he had brought with him on the desk. This was its tenor : ‘I swear to watch with diligence over the faithful the care of whom has been or shall be confided to me by the Church ; to be faithful to the nation, to the law, and to the King ; and to maintain with all my power, in all that appertains to the political order, the Constitution decreed by the National Assembly and accepted by the King, always excepting those things which depend essentially on the spiritual authority.’ On the day following he was given to understand that it could not be accepted, a result easy to foresee. If any may be disposed to think that the attempt was utterly futile, at least it must be allowed that the clergy of France, so far from shocking the prejudices and irritating the passions of the day by manifesting a rigid, unyielding disposition, on the contrary carried the spirit of concession to the utmost limits

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consistent with respect for their sacred duties. Refusal to sign was, however, treated as treason to the nation, and denounced in furious language, designed to influence the popular mind against the whole clerical body.

The 4th of January was the day fixed for the expiration of the period accorded to the clergy in the capital for taking the oath, and it was to be a day for ever glorious in the annals of the Church. The galleries of the Hall were thronged, and an immense multitude had collected without; all the near approaches being from an early hour, through the connivance of the Left, densely crowded with an ill-disposed mob, whose groans, yells, and threatening cries penetrated within the very walls. The Assembly ruled that the non-juring clergy should not be allowed to state their reasons for refusing the oath, a manifest injustice, inasmuch as to the others full liberty of speech was granted as before. The apostate Grégoire again harangued the Chamber in support of the oath. It in no way, he said, touched spiritual things, and, besides, the Assembly did not require 'interior assent.' It was thus, by false statements and the enunciation of false principles, repugnant to every honest mind, that this agent of Satan sought to seduce his brethren.

At all costs the clergy must be made to take the oath. During the whole course of the sitting, notes and slips of paper were being diligently circulated in the Assembly, with these words and the like: 'Make an uproar; redouble your groans. Stir up the galleries; they seem to have gone to sleep.' To excite the fury of the crowd admitted into the body of the House was, indeed, one of the unworthy means commonly adopted by the Left in order to intimidate that numerous party which forms so large a portion in all assemblies: men wanting in fixed convictions or in the courage to support such

opinions as they may entertain, or who, from one cause or another, are impulsive and irresolute. It was thus that the Left succeeded in carrying through many of their most violent measures. But they had other men to deal with now—men who had set their faces as a flint, who were ready to die for the truth and to keep their consciences pure. Menaces and clamour, however, silenced all attempts to speak, to remonstrate, to explain ; the Right declaiming in vain against the flagrant partiality exhibited. Two o'clock now struck ; it was the hour fixed for calling on each ecclesiastic to take the oath. The cries outside, threatening with *la lanterne* all who refused, were now redoubled with fearful violence. A member thus apostrophised the President, Emmery, who, be it observed, was a Jew : ‘ You hear those rascals, they have destroyed the monarchy, and now they wish to annihilate religion. The Assembly is not free. I protest ! ’ But the shouts and menaces without had no effect on the noble band of confessors. ‘ Trouble not yourself,’ said they ; ‘ for the clamours of a deluded people will be no guide to our consciences.’

The first summoned to the tribune by the Jew President was the Bishop of Agen, who, in terms at once dignified and Christian, refused to take the oath. In spite of interruption and cries, he was able to make his profession of faith. The Abbé Fournés, a curé of the same diocese, was called next. ‘ You wish to bring us back,’ he said, ‘ to the discipline of the first ages of the Church. Well, gentlemen, with the simplicity of the early Christians, I will tell you that I glory in following the example of my Bishop, and in walking in his steps, as Lawrence in those of Sixtus, even to martyrdom.’ The Left could scarce contain itself for rage. The *appel*, however, continued. Le Clerc, Curé of La Combe, who was the next summoned, began, ‘ I am a child

of the Catholic Church. . . ? It was plain what was to be expected from him ; voices immediately exclaimed that he must take the oath, ‘ pure and simple,’ and when a member objected that Grégoire had been heard, the President coldly reminded the ecclesiastics that the Assembly had decreed that they were to limit themselves to saying, ‘ I swear’ or ‘ I refuse.’ The deputy Foucault protested that this was tyranny, for that even the Pagan Emperors, who persecuted the martyrs, had suffered them to pronounce the name of God and declare their fidelity to their faith. The President was then about to proceed, when the deputy Bonnay represented that by continuing to call upon the ecclesiastics to take the oath singly, they were exposing them to danger, as their names were passed on from the galleries to the angry populace round the doors. Upon this, the President summoned the priests to take the oath collectively. A deep silence followed ; then one single renegade stepped forward, and took the oath amidst the vociferous applause of the Left. Two other priests wished to take it with certain reservations, but they could not obtain a hearing. One of them loudly expressed his indignation that their mouths should thus be stopped. He was willing, he said, to take the oath in accordance with the sentiments of the Assembly, which had declared that it did not mean to entrench on the spiritual. The President, who overheard this remark, wishing to encourage him, confirmed the truth of his assertion, at which the Left applauded. But if so, why not consent to a change in the form of the oath, as suggested by the Bishop of Clermont? A last effort was now made by the deputy Cazalés, who hastened to ascend the tribune to beg the Assembly formally to confirm this statement of the President. But the Assembly had not the smallest intention of conceding the point ; their applause was but a lure thrown

out to beguile the clergy into compliance. Nevertheless, as the President had spoken plainly, and the Left had applauded, a certain embarrassment was created, and a pause ensued.

The Bishop of Poitiers profited by the temporary silence to make his profession of faith. He was seventy years of age, had been thirty-five years in the episcopate, and was not going, he said, to dishonour his old age by swearing against his conscience. The Left murmured, but silence still prevailed. Cazalés renewed his demand, when Mirabeau at last rose to extricate his friends from their difficulty. All the President could have meant, he said, was that, as a matter of fact, the Assembly had not touched the spiritual. As to himself, he was opposed to any change in the form of the oath. Clearly all hope of a compromise had vanished. When the President again summoned the clergy to take the oath in a body, a magnanimous silence was the sole reply. Then the sitting was closed, and the bishops and clergy left the Hall with a firm step, traversing the ranks of an enraged multitude, unmoved by all the insults, menaces, and even outrages to which they were subjected. ‘We have got their money,’ was Mirabeau’s observation when all was over; ‘but they have kept their honour.’ These faithful men were now to enjoy a great consolation in the return of twenty of their brethren, whose eyes had been opened by the proceedings of the day; others had preceded them; so that, finally, out of three hundred and five ecclesiastics sitting in the Assembly, only seventy adhered to the schismatical Constitution. Amongst the retractors were some of the Breton clergy, who, on the following day, in order to repair the scandal they had given, desired to mount the tribune, but they were refused a hearing and repulsed, and when afterwards they attempted to lay their written retraction on the desk, the Secretary threw it in their faces.

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We have given this account of what took place in the Constituent Assembly with reference to the Civil Constitution of the Clergy and the imposition of the oath, with somewhat of detail, because in so many histories of the time, the facts, when not positively misrepresented, are very inadequately related; and because in the interests of religion, not less than of historical truth, it is important to show what was the attitude of the French clergy, and the part they enacted, in the early days of the Revolution. A prejudice, if we are not mistaken, widely prevails in some quarters to the effect that by their obstinate attachment to the *ancien régime* and to absolute monarchy they became implicated in the odium which despotism, feudal distinctions, and bigoted opposition to all liberal reforms, were exciting at that period throughout France. True it is that the clergy are always the friends of order, that they inculcate submission to existing lawful authority, and will be found, as a rule, in antagonism with a restless spirit of innovation; but even the brief account we have here given will have served to show that it would be an error to suppose that the French clergy of that day were inimical to judicious and reasonable changes, or that they offered a factious opposition, or, indeed, any opposition whatever, to the introduction of a more liberal constitution. So far, indeed, was this from being the case, that many of their body, as we have seen, were only too readily disposed to adopt, while others, at least, had not learned to mistrust, the new ideas in both the political and the social order which so widely prevailed. Again, so far from having been objects of general hatred—always excepting the free-thinkers and those whose minds the new philosophy had more or less perverted—it is evident that they enjoyed the respect and love of the nation at large, particularly of the lower classes and wherever the

infidel propaganda had not tampered with the public conscience. The Revolution, it must be remembered, is always, in its essence as well as in the direct aims and intention of the initiated, who urge on the movement, pull the strings, and put the puppets in motion, anti-christian. Hence one of its primary objects is to make religion hated in its ministers, to hold them up to popular execration by representing them as opposed from selfish motives to that which the foolish, credulous multitude are led to look to as the cure and charm for all their evils, to denounce them as wanting in patriotism, as guilty of *lèse-nation*—treason against the nation, that worst of all crimes wherever the sovereignty of the people has been proclaimed—in short, to traduce and calumniate them in every possible way; and such were the tactics, only too successful, employed by the revolutionists of the year 1790.

We shall not follow the Constituent Assembly or its successors, the Legislative Assembly and the Convention, in their impious and sanguinary career, the leading features of which are no doubt familiar to the reader. We will now return to Brittany, and to the more immediate subject of our narrative, the sufferings of its faithful clergy and people. But our account, as we have already observed, must necessarily be but a partial one, for to give a full and detailed history of the persecution of the Church, even in Brittany alone, would occupy at least twice the space which we have at our disposal. We must, therefore, limit ourselves to such a sketch of the progress of affairs as will enable the reader to understand the position of the confessors of the faith in that province, of whom many were soon to win the crown of martyrdom.

## CHAPTER V.

### *Consummation of the Schism. Election of Constitutional Bishops.*

OUT of the hundred and thirty-four bishops of France four only took the oath ; they were, as will be expected, the four already named as voting for the Civil Constitution of the Clergy, namely, those of Autun, Sens, Orleans, and Viviers, besides the suffragan Bishop of Bâle. The subsequent lives of these unhappy prevaricators sufficiently evidence what manner of men they were. Throughout France, taken generally, the same disproportion prevailed between the non-juring clergy and those who consented to take the schismatical oath as that which existed in the Assembly, but in many of the provinces, and especially in those dioceses where the ecclesiastical spirit had been well maintained, it was far greater. If any proof were needed that it is the maintenance of this spirit which is the safeguard of the clergy, and conduces more than anything else to make the salt preserve its savour, we may instance the clergy of St. Sulpice, who had kept up the traditional sacerdotal spirit of their saintly founder, M. Olier. Of the forty-three priests of which this community was composed not one fell away.

In the southern provinces of France there were very few defections. In the diocese of Bordeaux, for example, only twenty-five out of four hundred and fifty priests took the oath. Brittany enjoyed the same honourable distinction, and scarce one in twenty of her priests

was betrayed into schism. In Paris, indeed, and elsewhere in some of the provinces, the clergy protested at the risk of their lives. Thus, at Sept-Chaux, in Champagne, on the priest ascending the pulpit to explain to his parishioners his reasons for refusing to take the oath, a man who had come to the church armed for the purpose, deliberately shot him dead in the act of making his confession of faith. But even where violent measures of intimidation were not adopted, as they were in the capital and elsewhere in some of the provinces, every abominable artifice was employed to inveigle the clergy into compliance. The Abbé Royou<sup>1</sup> says that posterity will never credit the deep and dark plots that were laid, and the shameless impostures that were employed, especially in Brittany, to deceive and seduce the country clergy. For example, it would be contrived that they should hear from multiplied sources that a certain priest, one who enjoyed high consideration in the province, had taken the oath; fraudulent lists of clergy stated to have sworn would be sent to them, or they would be visited by commissioners charged with communications of a false and insidious character; sometimes it would be attempted to ensnare them with cajoleries, sometimes to intimidate them by threats. Again, letters written by ecclesiastical superiors for the instruction and encouragement of the pastors during this season of trial would be intercepted, and the authors denounced as conspirators and traitors. When all these circumstances are taken

<sup>1</sup> The Abbé Royou, a native of Quimper, who had held the professorship of philosophy at the College of Louis le Grand, was a priest of much ability and zeal. During the early part of the Revolution, the journal which he conducted, *L'Ami du Roi*, was of eminent use in the provinces, and particularly in Brittany. For he not only advocated sound principles, but enlightened the provincial clergy, removed from the theatre of events, as to what was going on; thus preserving them from being deceived by the lying assertions of the revolutionists.

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into account, we have reason to consider the proportion of Breton clergy who were led astray as, comparatively speaking, very small.

The Assembly had by no means expected so general and so strenuous an opposition as it encountered. It had, doubtless, imagined that the prospect of deprivation and the dread of an angry mob would triumph over the scruples and overcome the reluctance of a large majority of the clergy. It must be here observed that, while every means was employed to hold up the clergy to popular execration, the Assembly formally professed to punish refusal only with deprivation, and had even fixed a certain retiring pension for such bishops and priests as might decline to take the oath. It was easy, however, to foresee that this engagement would soon become a dead letter, and that persecution must inevitably follow in the wake of schism. It now became a serious question with the legislature how to fill the places of the episcopal body. It had at its service only four complaisant bishops; seventy-nine had therefore to be found in order to make up the number of eighty-three, to which it will be remembered it had reduced the hundred and thirty-four existing sees. Notwithstanding the suppression of many parishes, the Assembly was in a similar dilemma as regarded the parochial clergy. An article of the new constitution required that a bishop should have previously exercised the pastoral office at least fifteen years in the diocese to which he was appointed, and every parish priest elected must have in the same manner served five years as vicaire. To carry out these rules under present circumstances was clearly impossible, but the Assembly without difficulty at once modified the conditions for eligibility to meet the exigences of the moment. There was another article, however, which called still more urgently for change, that which regarded

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canonical institution. The bishop elect was to receive it from his metropolitan, and the metropolitan from the oldest bishop of the *arrondissement*. It was now settled, provisionally, that the bishop elect should apply to the Directory of the department to designate some constitutional bishop—any such was to be good for the purpose—who was thereupon empowered to proceed to confirmation and consecration. This last measure was immediately needed for the consecration of a bishop already elected for the new constitutional see of Finisterre, as Quimper was now styled, who was thus to lead the van of schism in one of the most Catholic provinces of France.

The Bishop of Quimper, Mgr. de Saint-Luc, had died on the 30th of September of that year, 1790. He had foreseen the approaching schism, and his mental sufferings helped to shorten his days. It was on a bed of sickness that the decree of the Assembly promulgating the Civil Constitution of the Clergy was signified to him. He repeated two or three times, ‘This is my death-blow,’ and four days later God had removed him from the evil to come. But during this interval he had drawn up a protestation against the decree, thus giving an example which was followed by many other bishops. The document was signed on the day of his funeral by the Chapter of Quimper, eighty rectors, and two hundred other members of the clergy who had come to attend his obsequies. The Chapter, disregarding the new schismatical ordinances, proceeded, according to the regular practice, to name Vicars-Capitular for the administration of the diocese. The Ecclesiastical Committee of the Assembly, which attributed to itself the authority at the very least of a General Council, immediately ruled that the Chapter, having no longer any legal existence—for the cathedral chapters had all been suppressed by the new Civil

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Constitution—had no right to appoint Vicars-Capitular. On receipt of this decision of the Committee, signed by its president, Expilly, the Directory of the department of Quimper proceeded to organize a new election according to constitutional forms. This election took place, notwithstanding all the efforts used by the Vicars-General to prevent it. It was the first which was held, and merits notice on that account. A glance at the scene will suffice to prove what sort of resemblance it bore to the proceedings of the primitive Church, the vaunted model of the innovators. Amidst the confused din of a rabble of men and women, the body of electors met in a church under the presidency of a layman. Many of these electors, who spoke only their native Breton, did not understand one word of what was being said ; meanwhile the hubbub continued without interruption, and at last the name of Expilly was shouted out, and was received with applause. He was rector of St. Martin-de-Morlaix in the diocese of Léon, and, having been deputed to the National Assembly, was the same who, as President of the Ecclesiastical Commission, had lately declared the Vicars-Capitular to be deprived of their office, to which circumstance, no doubt, he owed the suggestion of his name on this occasion, and his consequent election. It was certainly not owing to his merits, although previous to these unhappy times he had not shown himself deficient in virtue, at least externally. If that virtue was sincere while he presided over his parish of St. Martin at Morlaix, his sojourn in the capital after his election as deputy, and his intimacy with men of infidel principles, had stifled in his heart all genuine sentiments of piety. But the Abbé Tresvaux throws a doubt upon his ever having really entertained such sentiments, for, notwithstanding his exterior propriety of demeanour, clear-sighted men, who had closely observed

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him, considered that all these appearances were deceitful. Such was the testimony which an ecclesiastic of merit, who had known Expilly well, gave of him personally to Tresvaux. It was, however, not to his former religious decorum, but to his revolutionary fanaticism, the contempt he professed for his superiors, the bishops, and the large share he had taken in the compilation of the Civil Constitution of the Clergy, that Expilly was indebted for the miserable distinction of being chosen as the first schismatical bishop in the kingdom of France.

The departmental administration immediately invited him ‘to come amongst his faithful people, attached to the religion of Jesus Christ and to the constitution decreed by the National Assembly:’ a gross and impudent falsehood, for nowhere was this constitution more cordially detested by the people at large than in Brittany. The Vicars-General of Quimper in vain addressed a touching letter to Expilly with the object of dissuading him from presenting himself in a diocese where he would not be accepted by the clergy, who had declared beforehand that they would not communicate *in divinis* with one who should be elected according to forms unsanctioned by the Church. They had nothing to allege against him personally, they said, and had he been chosen canonically they would have received him with joy. But Expilly did not so much as vouchsafe a reply, possessed as he was by an insane ambition, and confident that the law imposing the oath, which was then under discussion, and, in fact, was passed ten days later, would enable him to dispense with the suffrage of the Breton clergy, and ensure him a fresh body of pastors attached to his own person and party. In this hope he was so far not mistaken that materials existed for manufacturing a body of constitutional clergy from the refuse

of the suppressed convents, religious who had cast away their vows, and from amongst those priests who had proved faithless in the hour of trial. These last were commonly men who had entered the sanctuary without a vocation and from interested motives, not a few of whom were at that moment labouring under ecclesiastical censure, or had incurred the suspicion of their superiors, and were glad, therefore, to escape from the trammels of discipline and the restraints of supervision by joining the schism. The main difficulty in the first instance was to find a consecrating bishop for the elect of Finisterre, as by and by there was to be the more insurmountable difficulty of furnishing him and his compeers with flocks. For then, as now, France, as regarded the bulk of her population, was divided into true Catholics and infidels. The former abhorred the schismatical church which they were invited to join, while the irreligious and the unbelieving, whatever eagerness they might exhibit in promoting its establishment, would certainly not supply a permanent congregation, seeing that it was not their practice to frequent any place of worship at all.

When Expilly applied for consecration to Mgr. de Girac, the Bishop of Rennes, which by the new constitution had been erected into the metropolitan city of the Breton bishoprics, that prelate protested against the quality of metropolitan ascribed to him, but which the Church had never conferred upon him,<sup>2</sup> and formally refused to consecrate and install the applicant. He also demonstrated to Expilly the vice of his election, and endeavoured to convince him of the sin he would commit by exercising episcopal functions without a legitimate mission, earnestly entreating him to meditate seriously on the anathema pronounced by Jesus Christ on the pastor who does not enter by the true door of the sheep-

<sup>2</sup> Tours was the true metropolitan city of Rennes.

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fold; but his charitable exhortation made no impression on the hardened man.

The bishop elect was bound by the new constitution, in case the metropolitan should refuse to consecrate, to apply in succession to the bishops of the *arrondissement* or province, beginning with the oldest. If all refused, he was to lodge an appeal with the tribunal of the district. But of what use was it to make applications which were certain to entail as many mortifying rejections, and of what avail to prosecute Mgr. de Girac, who, there could be no doubt, would persevere in denying to the intruder canonical institution? In this dilemma the Assembly came to Expilly's rescue with the decree already mentioned, permitting consecration by any bishop whatever, if only he had taken the oath. Such a one was found in the person of Talleyrand, who was prevailed upon to perform the sacrilegious ceremony, although it is said that on the very night previous he had well-nigh recoiled from fulfilling his promise through a remnant of shame, as we may believe, and a natural reluctance to put the seal on his apostasy. Indeed, Expilly himself, we are told, was for a moment shaken in his resolve. Be this as it may, the voice of conscience was in both cases stifled, and, on the 24th of February, in the church of the Oratory, since converted into a Protestant temple, Talleyrand, Bishop of Autun, assisted by two other episcopal renegades, conferred consecration on Expilly and Marolles, the latter having been chosen to the newly erected bishopric of the department of Aisne, a rite performed without commission from the Pope, without examination of the candidates, without profession of faith, without oath of fidelity to the Holy See, and in spite of the remonstrances of the Chapter of Quimper and of the Bishop of Soissons, who was still living.

But though Talleyrand had been able, albeit sacri-

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legiously, to confer valid consecration, he was powerless to confer mission in dioceses which were not under his jurisdiction. The two miserable men had therefore to seek their mission from the State. The National Assembly, which had made them, received these, its first creations, with deafening applause, for thither, immediately after the ceremony, they repaired, invested with the insignia of their usurped dignity, and three days later appeared before Louis to take the oath of fidelity to the monarch, an engagement which they were not long to keep. But Expilly was in no hurry to go and take possession of his see, dreading as he did the reception he would meet with from the faithful clergy of Brittany, and thinking it prudent to wait until the parishes had been provided with new pastors entertaining sentiments conformable to his own. After this first schismatical consecration no difficulty stood in the way, as the new constitutional bishops were able to manage the whole affair among themselves, and fill up their numbers by mutually conferring on each other, after their fashion, canonical institution. Their organization was thus effected during the three first months of the year 1791.

Up to the time when the oath was imposed, although the clergy had been the object of furious declamation and of many vexatious prosecutions, their persons had been pretty generally respected, but from this date they began to be exposed to more direct and systematic attacks. The bishops especially were placed in a very critical position. The wolf was entering the fold ; could the shepherd of the flock be silent ? and yet, if they spoke, they were sure to be treated as rebels to the law, and have the violence of the rabble directed against them, while every breach of public tranquillity thence resulting would cause them to be denounced as the authors of the disturbance. Such was the position in

which the Assembly had placed men who had simply preferred their duty to a base and sinful compliance. The Episcopate of France was nobly equal to the trial; everywhere, at every fresh step in the late iniquitous proceedings, they had publicly protested both by word and in their pastorals and other writings, but the accusation brought against them of instigating their flocks to revolt was utterly false and groundless. We have seen how the resistance which they urged their people to make to unchristian laws was only a passive resistance, and, even in those provinces where the population did eventually rise in arms, the clergy had in no way given the impulse, yet, as it is needless to add, the blame was always laid upon them. Brittany, to which we must confine ourselves, will furnish sufficient examples of this injustice. The zeal which the bishops manifested in guarding their flocks from the poison of error was regarded as a crime, for which they were immediately denounced to the civil authorities, who, on their part, were always eager to proceed against them. Mgr. le Mintier, Bishop of Treguier, Mgr. de la Marche, Bishop of Léon, and Mgr. Amelot, Bishop of Vannes, were the first to experience the effects of their malevolence. Nevertheless, this disposition was not as yet general. The Breton people were warmly attached to their pastors, and displayed a marked aversion to the constitutional priests who were about to take their places; and even many of the municipalities had not as yet been sufficiently revolutionized to regard with any degree of favour the promulgation of the law imposing the oath, or be willing to accept the new order of things. At the commencement of the year 1791 the commune of Theix, a parish near Vannes, remonstrated in very strong terms against the imposition of the oath, and declared their resolution to accept no pastors in the place of those they had at

present until the Church had pronounced on a point of such vital interest to the religion Catholic, Apostolic, and Roman, which they professed and desired to profess until death. This protest was ill received by the district authorities, who sent in reply a pamphlet in favour of the constitutional clergy, drawn up by a member of the departmental administration. The municipality of Theix immediately returned the document, saying that it was opposed both to faith and morals, and begging the authorities to send them no more such writings, which, so far from attaching them to the Constitution, only served to inspire them with a still greater disgust for it. Other communes of the same department (Morbihan) made similar declarations, and several of the smaller towns manifested in like manner their opposition to the innovations which the civil power had made in ecclesiastical matters and to the measures which it was preparing to adopt against the clergy. Indeed, more than twenty parishes of that department alone addressed petitions to its Directory against the decrees of the Assembly; that of Sarzeau was one of the most remarkable for its outspoken boldness, but all were identical in substance, and evinced the firm determination of the Breton peasantry to cleave to their faith at the peril of all they held dear, and even of life itself.

The Bishop of Vannes was held responsible by the ‘patriots’—such was the self-assumed title of the partisans of revolution—for the protests that had emanated from so many parishes in his diocese; and the hatred they were known to entertain towards him, coupled with their loud threats of compelling him to take the oath, afforded the strongest grounds for dreading the excesses to which they might proceed. Under the influence of this apprehension, some of the good people of Vannes held a meeting at Bondon, a place not far from that

town, to which the neighbouring peasantry repaired, in order to consult upon the measures to be adopted for the protection of their Bishop, as well as to protest against the recent decrees of the Assembly. The result of their deliberation was drawn up and sent to the Directory, to which they accorded two days for a reply. The appointed time having elapsed, a body of peasants provided with arms marched to Vannes to receive their answer and to watch over the safety of their Bishop. Meanwhile the Directory, in its alarm, had sent to Lorient for troops, and on the arrival of the peasants treated them as rebels; moreover, the National Guard, as soon as they had been joined by the soldiers from Lorient, mustering in all fifteen hundred strong, fell upon the peasants on the road to Rennes, killed some, and took others prisoners. A corps of dragoons, composed of young 'patriots' of Lorient, rushed to the episcopal palace with the object of forcing Mgr. Amelot to take the oath, but the prelate escaped by a garden gate, and succeeded in concealing himself in the garret of a cottage. Fresh bands of armed peasantry were, however, on their way to Vannes, who, having halted at Theix, were with some difficulty dissuaded by the priests of that place from prosecuting their intention, and induced to return to their homes. Such was the part taken by the clergy in one of the rare instances of anything resembling active resistance on the part of the Breton peasantry; but this did not save them from being denounced as the authors and abettors of the whole affair, and the Vicaire of Theix, M. Dorso, was summoned before the tribunal at Vannes to give an account of his conduct. It was not difficult for him to exculpate himself, but this did not hinder the municipality from writing to the deputies of Morbihan a furious letter of accusation against the clergy, which was read for the edification of the Assembly in its sitting

of the 19th. The following may serve as a specimen of its style and of that which was commonly employed : ‘Our hearts are lacerated at having seen the blood of our fellow-citizens flow. The fanaticism of the priests would fain have deluged us with blood, and their desire was in part fulfilled. They have hearts of bronze, and are strangers to every sentiment of humanity ; their sole wish is to plunge us into all the horrors of civil war. It would take us too long to detail the perfidious means they employ to this end. These fanatical and sanguinary priests seek to renew the crimes of the Cardinal de Lorraine, by preaching murder and carnage in the name of the God of peace.’ The allusion is to the tragedy of *Charles IX.*, in which the Cardinal of Lorraine (who, be it observed, was really at Rome at the time) is represented as blessing the daggers which were to be used at the massacre of St. Bartholomew. They proceed to mention how a curé had given the crucifix for his flock to kiss, and had told them that in the cause of heaven they could assassinate without sin.

The faithful peasantry of Vannes had already been denounced to the Assembly on the 14th of February by a certain Sieur Viillard, a lawyer of Saint-Lo. In his place, as deputy, he had called attention to what he described as the disturbances in Morbihan, which, so far as his knowledge went, must have been limited to the meeting at Bondon, for the attempt of the country people to come to the defence of their Bishop on the 13th of February could not, in those days of slow communication, have been known at Paris on the 14th. He proposed a decree for sending commissioners into the department to restore order, summon the disturbers of the peace before the courts of justice, and suspend the functions of the refractory municipal officers. He also proposed that the Bishops of Treguier, Léon, and Vannes should be summoned to

the bar of the Assembly. All these proposals were adopted, three commissioners were despatched, and gendarmes ordered to arrest the prelates. The first two were at a distance from Morbihan, so could not possibly be held responsible for events occurring there ; but they were continuing to rule their dioceses with zeal, and to keep diligent watch over their flocks, and this was quite enough to form a head of accusation against them. Mgr. le Mintier, Bishop of Treguier, had long been a marked man, and the subject of frequent vexatious proceedings. He had already been prosecuted before the Tribunal du Châtelet in Paris (a court which took cognizance of all the crimes of *lèse-nation*) during a whole year, on account of a Pastoral issued by him in 1789, in consequence of the King having signified to all the bishops his desire that prayers should be offered to implore the mercy of God on France and to beseech Him to turn away the evils which afflicted and threatened their country. It is needless to say that there was nothing in the Bishop's Pastoral calculated to excite sedition or create disturbance, neither was it found possible to substantiate any charge against him. So the matter was at last dismissed, but the hatred of the revolutionists remained unabated, and the opportunity had now offered for wreaking their vengeance. Mgr. le Mintier, however, succeeded in concealing himself, and after a while he emerged from his hiding-place and resumed his functions ; but in the month of April following, finding himself insulted and menaced in his palace, he took refuge in Jersey, after holding an ordination as his last episcopal act.

The Procureur-Général of the department of Finistère had, early in February, informed the Assembly that the prolonged residence of M. de la Marche, the *ci devant* Bishop of Saint-Paul-de-Léon, as he called him (for Léon

was one of the suppressed sees) fomented disturbance in the district. ‘M. de la Marche,’ he said, ‘continues to exercise his functions as heretofore.’ This was the head and front of his offending. The Tribunal of Morlaix accordingly received an injunction to proceed against him. The administrators of that district had, during the previous year, given respectful heed to the Bishop’s remonstrances against the suppression of his see and chapter, and, in consequence of their conscientious reluctance to obey the behest of the civil power, the Chapter of Saint-Paul-de-Léon was the last in Brittany to undergo the forcible suppression to which all the rest had been already subjected. But a ‘reform’ had by this time taken place in the local administration, and its officials were sufficiently indoctrinated with revolutionary principles to have learned the approved way of treating a Catholic bishop. They told him he was a disturber of the public peace, and that, if one drop of blood was shed in the department, he should answer for it with his head. They concluded with recommending him to leave a place where he was kindling the fires of fanaticism and discord, and warned him that his resistance to the law would force them to apply for orders which should not be allowed to remain without effect.

The decree for the apprehension of the three bishops now furnished them with the desired opportunity. No sooner had the Directory of the department of Finisterre received the Assembly’s injunction, than it took immediate measures for carrying it out. A gendarme was despatched to notify to the Bishop his summons to the bar of the Assembly. This man had directions to proceed forthwith to deliver its letters to the Procureur-Syndic at Morlaix, and receive his orders. This delay gave time to the Bishop to effect his escape. He had already been privately warned, two days before, by a

gentleman of the neighbourhood, of the intentions of the authorities, and knew that the *maréchaussée*, the name by which the gendarmerie were then known, had been called out. He knew, moreover, that the inhabitants of Saint-Paul and its vicinity were manifesting a disposition to offer active opposition should any violence be done to him. Dreading the effusion of blood, and yielding to the entreaties of his clergy and of other persons of all classes, who represented to him that his further stay could only be fraught with peril not only to himself, but to the peace of the town, he sought a temporary place of concealment, and later, with the help of some gentlemen of the neighbourhood, made his escape by night in a small smuggling-boat, containing, literally, nothing except barrels of brandy. After giving his blessing to his friends on the beach, the venerable prelate seated himself on one of these barrels, and thus made his perilous passage of above a hundred miles in safety. From the hospitable shores of England he addressed a pastoral letter to his flock, the copies of which fell, however, into the hands of the administrators of Finisterre, who, no doubt, destroyed them.

Mgr. Amelot was the only one of the three bishops upon whom the authorities succeeded in laying their hands. He was arrested and sent as a criminal to Paris, where his arrival was announced to the Assembly. It does not appear, however, that he was ever summoned to the bar. The time had not yet come when the mere mockery of a trial was sufficient to dispose of an accused person, and it must have been palpable that nothing could be gained by allowing Mgr. Amelot to plead his own cause and state facts as they had really occurred. Anyhow, the matter seems to have been dropped, and some months later he was able to leave Paris and take refuge beyond the frontier.

Mgr. Cortois de Pressigny, Bishop of Saint-Malo, Mgr. de Girac, Bishop of Rennes, and Mgr. de Bellescize, Bishop of Saint-Brieuc, had all removed to a distance from their dioceses, whence, however, they continued to warn, instruct, and encourage their flocks. One legitimate bishop alone now remained in Brittany, Mgr. Hercé, Bishop of Dol, and he, too, was shortly compelled to retire and seek a retreat at Mayenne, where his family resided. The posts of these prelates were, in fact, no longer tenable. Singled out as the first objects of revolutionary hatred, stigmatized as fire-brands and conspirators, they would either have speedily fallen victims to the fury of the rabble, or have escaped this fate only to suffer close incarceration, thus sacrificing the sole remaining possibility of fortifying and directing their flocks by secret communication from their distant places of retreat. No other course but expatriation was therefore open to the Bishops, a course which the sanguinary persecution about to ensue was so soon to force upon the great bulk of the second order, the devoted priests of the Church of France.

The departmental administration of Morbihan now hastened to convoke an electoral assembly in order to choose a constitutional bishop. A large number of electors attended whose attachment to their religion ought to have deterred them from taking any share in the proceedings. But while some acted from weakness, many, no doubt, did so from ignorance or want of due consideration. Days of trial had suddenly come upon them, and the duty of abstention in certain cases which would compromise conscience, was not perhaps clearly before their minds. At any rate, they gave a proof of their good intentions by the re-election of their Bishop, Mgr. Amelot. They were immediately informed that this choice was inadmissible, since he had refused the

oath. The revolutionary party now took measures to ensure better success, and contrived to make the next choice fall on M. Guegan, Rector of Pontivy, who was sitting as deputy in the Assembly. As he had taken the oath, the ‘patriots’ were confident that he would accept the proffered episcopal chair, but they had mistaken their man. Although he had committed one act of criminal weakness, he shrank from intruding himself into the place of the legitimate pastor, and wrote to the Pope begging him to indicate the course which he ought to pursue in case he should be further pressed on the subject. Pius VI. replied in a letter in which kindness and firmness were admirably blended, demonstrating to him the gravity of the fault he would commit should he yield either to solicitations or to threats, and perform the sacrilegious and schismatical act to which he had been invited. M. Guegan obeyed this paternal injunction, and thus preserved himself from participation in the schism. In the following year he suffered deportation. The Directory of Morbihan, by M. Guegan’s unexpected refusal, found itself obliged to summon the electors afresh. The choice fell this time on Le Masle, Rector of Herbignac. He was a man past seventy, and had a great reputation in the neighbourhood, where he was regarded as quite a shining light. He had talents for preaching, which had probably helped not a little to obtain him admirers and blind men as to his true character; for unfortunately he was not always careful to observe in his private life the precepts which he publicly enforced so eloquently in the pulpit. He had, however, been hitherto successful in concealing his delinquencies and imposing on the world. He had accepted the oath, but not, he said, all its consequences; and he had told his parishioners that he had decided to take it because he could not make up his mind to abandon

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them to some ravening wolf, who would come to disperse and kill the sheep, since an intruder could have no power or authority to administer the sacraments. And now, by one of those inconsistencies into which temptation is sure to betray those whose hearts have departed from God, he was about to become himself a ravening wolf by his intrusion into the see of Vannes.

By the middle of March the civil authorities had completed the number of constitutional bishops for Brittany. For their new see of the Côtes-du-Nord, Jacob, Rector of Lannebert, a little village near Paimpol, was chosen. The man thus called to take the place of the true Bishop of Saint-Brieuc, unlike his brother apostate, Le Masle, was moral in his conduct, but very deficient in ecclesiastical science. He had, besides, an extremely rustic exterior, and was altogether so below par both in capacity and manners, that no one would have thought of him to fill so high a station if constitutional bishoprics had not been, so to say, going a begging. He had not the virtue to resist a temptation so flattering to his ambition. He fell never to rise again, for he persevered in his error until death.

To the metropolitan see of Rennes—or of the North-West, as it was styled—erected by the new Constitution, Le Coz was appointed. He was by far the cleverest of the schismatical bishops—to call him the ablest would be to employ a term hardly applicable to any of these men—and one who had done, and was to do, most extensive mischief. Although born in an obscure rank of life, he had been enabled to pursue his theological studies, and by his proficiency had obtained a Professor's chair, first at Quimper, and afterwards at the College of Louis-le-Grand at Paris. Thence he returned to Quimper, and, continuing his professional career, was promoted to be Principal of the College at that place. He also

cultivated literature, and had showed some taste and even, it is said, some slight talent for poetry. His morals were without reproach, and he enjoyed credit for zeal as well as for learning, but he was much more a man of letters than either a theologian or a priest, and generally it may be said of him that his predominant passion was the desire of worldly advancement and distinction. From the first he had ardently embraced revolutionary principles, and the so-called patriotism which he displayed procured him the post of Procureur-Syndic of the district of Quimper. He threw himself heart and soul into the defence of the Civil Constitution of the Clergy, and used his pen for the vindication of that work of iniquity. In the pamphlet he put forth he strove to demonstrate that every one of its articles tended to the restoration of the ancient discipline, and to bringing back the purest days of primitive Christianity. To prove his thesis, he added to a great deal of false reasoning a number of unfaithful quotations, and interspersed the whole with satirical sallies against the Church of France. It was a shallow composition, easy to refute, and, in fact, it was speedily and satisfactorily refuted by several competent pens, but it was welcomed with enthusiasm by many ignorant laymen, whose heads were filled with the new-fangled notions, and who had been self-transformed into doctors of theology. Such persons eagerly seize on any flimsy production which seems to furnish them with arguments and embodies their vague ideas. The Directory lauded the pamphlet to the skies, caused the manuscript which Le Coz had presented for its approbation to be printed at the expense of the department, and sent copies to all the other eighty-two departments of France. Inflated by this encouragement, Le Coz turned a deaf ear to the grave and charitable remonstrances addressed to him by his superiors; but,

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although he had defied them to refute his arguments, he evaded and ended by formally refusing a meeting which the Vicars-General had proposed to him. Already in heart a schismatic, he was soon to prove himself one of the Church's bitterest enemies. Such a one was marked out for the disgraceful elevation now offered to him through his election by the department of Ille et Vilaine to the constitutional metropolitan see of the North-West.

Mgr. Girac, the true Bishop of Rennes, the same who had refused consecration to Expilly, was at that time in Paris, and to him Le Coz addressed a hypocritical letter, informing him of his election. In it he spoke of the astonishment and perplexity into which this choice had thrown him, a state from which Mgr. de Girac could by one word relieve him. He did not precisely say what this one word was to be, but left it to be inferred by alleging the example of the Bishop of Angers, who was falsely reported at that time to have taken the oath. ‘I throw myself at your feet,’ he concluded, ‘and implore you to return to a flock which cannot fail to be dear to you, and on which the restoration of your friendship cannot but make the most salutary impressions. One word, Monseigneur, and my joy, as well as that of many other friends of religion and of our country, will be at its height.’ To this equivocal letter, in which Le Coz disguised what might be his ulterior intentions, Mgr. de Girac sent a reply which merited the eulogium of Pius VI. He asks Le Coz what that word is which he entreats him to pronounce. It could not be his own resignation, for M. Le Coz must well know that this would not suffice to render the see vacant, since the alliance which a bishop contracted with his flock could not be dissolved by him at pleasure. His resignation, however absolute, is but the expression of his desire, until accepted by his hierarchical superior. But were he even pusillanimous

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enough to abandon his pastoral charge at a moment when the faithful were exposed to such grievous trials, whoever should be named to replace him by an Assembly which had not received from the Church the necessary powers, and should, moreover, be instituted by men lacking all spiritual authority for the purpose, would be an intruder, destitute of the jurisdiction indispensable for the exercise of episcopal functions. The word, then, which he is solicited to utter can only be the acceptance of the oath. The rest of the letter was directed to the hopeless effort of opening Le Coz's eyes to the nature of the step which he was evidently about to take; but the Bishop was addressing a man who was hardened by pride and wilfully blinded by worldly ambition. Of obscure extraction, and not possessing talents of a sufficiently high order to enable one thus circumstanced to aspire to the mitre, he knew that by the help of the Revolution alone could he attain to the dignity of bishop; and this dignity his soul craved with an unholy longing. It was not long before he had set the seal on his errors by receiving sacrilegious consecration.

Mgr. de La Laurancie will be remembered as one of the earliest objects of revolutionary hostility. In the beginning of March the department of the Loire Inférieure proceeded to fill his see. Minée, the man chosen to take his place, was the son of an apothecary of Nantes. He had led a dissolute life in early youth, but after a while he reformed his ways, at least in some outward fashion, and went to Paris, where he managed to ingratiate himself with one of the Vicars-General of the diocese, through whose interest he was admitted to holy orders. Later, he was made curé of the parish of the Trois Patrons at Saint-Denis. His conduct there was far from edifying, and, when the Revolution broke out, his reputation being at a very low ebb in his neighbour-

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hood, he became anxious for a change. To men of this sort, such times held out hopes of obtaining advancement without having to take on themselves the burden of a virtuous life. Accordingly he affiliated himself to the Jacobin club, embraced the schism, and was promoted to be curé of Saint-Thomas-d'Aquin in the *faubourg* Saint-Germain, one of the new parishes erected by the civil power. Such was the man selected as chief pastor for the diocese of Nantes. Now for the manner of the election. The electoral body was convened to meet on the 11th of March, in the Dominican convent, whence it adjourned to the Cathedral, whose consecrated walls were now to echo with the violent harangues of men whose impiety was equalled only by their ignorance and self-conceit. The candidates were three in number, unhappy priests who had taken the oath; two of these anticipated for themselves a favourable majority, but their hopes were disappointed through the manœuvres of the President, Coustard, who, by his ardent support of the Revolution, had become the idol of the day with the 'patriots' of Nantes. He happened to owe the sum of 6,000 francs to one Vassal, an inhabitant of the place. This man was brother-in-law to Minée, and privately offered to cancel the debt if Coustard would get his relative chosen bishop. Coustard consented, and by his influence with the electors disposed them in favour of one who, although a native of the city, was entirely unknown to the greater part of them even by name, and who, had he been better known, had nothing to recommend him, but the very reverse. This may be taken as a specimen of the way in which episcopal elections were managed by these self-styled restorers of primitive purity. Minée accordingly was chosen bishop of the Loire Inférieure, and, on April 10, was consecrated at Paris along with his pretended metropolitan Le Coz.

Such were the men who were about to intrude themselves into the places of the venerable prelates who had occupied and ruled the nine ancient sees of Catholic Brittany.

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## CHAPTER VI.

*Ill reception of the new Constitution in Brittany.  
Publication of the Papal Briefs.*

DURING the months of January, February, and March, 1791, the Assembly was, as we have seen, occupied in organizing its Constitutional Church. Each sitting was ushered in by the announcement of the submission of one or more priests, the election of some new bishop, or the denunciation of some old one. The most honourable and respectable portion of the clergy had refused the oath. Those who had taken it were men whose characters were either notoriously bad or, at least, equivocal. Some were actuated by a love of repose and the desire to retain their places, while others were possessed with the desire of emerging from an obscurity in which their insignificance would naturally have kept them. These last were not satisfied with taking their oaths before the local municipal authorities, but they must needs send addresses to the Assembly, that their names might be inserted with commendation in the *procés verbaux*. The Assembly received these addresses most graciously, sometimes causing them to be printed for distribution, and always bestowing extravagant laudation upon their authors. Thus the vanity of these men was flattered, and the Assembly consoled itself for the mortifying refusal of so many ecclesiastics of merit and distinction. The oath

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was demanded of the clergy of Paris at the very beginning of January, and active measures were soon after taken for exacting it from those of Brittany.

To appreciate the trial to which the priests were exposed, but through which an overwhelming majority passed with unswerving fidelity, we must consider all the plausible pretexts which to timid minds might seem to excuse acquiescence. The Holy See had not as yet issued any public and formal condemnation, for the Brief by which Pius VI. solemnly condemned the Civil Constitution of the Clergy, and promulgated the sentence of excommunication against all who should swear to it, did not appear till the 10th of March. True, they who were acquainted with the constitution of the Catholic Church and its essential rights, as priests cannot fail to be, could not be in any uncertainty as to the import of the coming Pontifical decision ; and, indeed, as a matter of fact, it was generally known that the Civil Constitution had been very ill received at Rome, so that on both accounts no one could seriously expect that it would ever obtain the Papal sanction. Moreover, the clergy could consult their superiors, the bishops, although of this there was no need, seeing that these faithful shepherds had taken care not to leave either priests or people in ignorance of their duty at this crisis. Still, the Sovereign Pontiff had not yet addressed them from Peter's Chair, and there were persons busily engaged in disseminating erroneous information on the subject. False briefs were actually in circulation. Some of these which were unfavourable to the decrees of the Assembly, that body did not fail to stigmatize as criminal impostures, punishing severely all who had helped to distribute them, but it acted very differently in the case of reports and documents of an opposite character. Here it was all tolerance ; and if it did not take an active part in propagating these forgeries

it certainly encouraged their fabrication and publication. Languinais, a Breton lawyer, and a fanatical member of the Ecclesiastical Committee, did not scruple to write to his friends and countrymen, informing them, ‘on unquestionable authority,’ as he declared, that the Pope and Cardinals had resolved not to interfere in the affairs of the Church of France; consequently it was plain that neither faith nor morals could be compromised by the oath. Moreover, he said that from all quarters news reached them in the capital that the whole, or nearly the whole, body of ecclesiastical functionaries had taken it, except in a few departments. This circular was signed by four other deputies who were members of the Committee. It is only fair to take these bewildering reports and assertions into account when estimating the force of the temptation which beset a body of men many of whom were entirely without private fortune, and who not unfrequently had to support some destitute relative, such as an aged mother or portionless sister. The miserably small pension of 500 francs (£20) offered to the non-juring priests could not avail to save them from want in the event of deprivation; yet neither the love of kindred, nor the prospect of temporal ruin, nor the dread of graver consequences, could shake the constancy of the faithful parish priests of Brittany, and, in fact, the number of those who allowed themselves to be led astray, or to be so far intimidated as to take the sacrilegious oath, was, as already noticed, relatively very small.

Although as yet the Assembly had decreed no penalty against recusants, but had even assigned them a small pension, the danger incurred was only too patent. So early as the month of January, the declamations and vexatious proceedings of the civil authorities had begun to work fatal effects. A young priest of Moncontour, Joseph Marie Le Clerc, one of a family remarkable for its

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piety, had early discerned the true character of the Revolution, and from its first dawn had seen in it the enemy of both the altar and the throne, nor had he concealed his sentiments, which were therefore generally known. His frankness rendered him only the more obnoxious to the partisans of the new ideas, and one evening, as he was returning from a sick call in the suburbs, he was mobbed by a number of young men, who covered him with mud and filth. A far worse outrage was soon to follow. M. Le Clerc's attachment to the faith made him an energetic opponent of the oath, and he expressed his opinions on the subject both openly and strongly. This was sufficient to mark him out for vengeance. Accordingly, one night, when returning from the house of a relative, he was set upon by some ruffians who threw him down on the ground and cruelly maltreated him. Although scarcely able to drag himself home, he uttered no complaint, and refused even to disclose the names of his assailants, whose persons he had recognized. In spite of his sufferings he insisted two days afterwards on saying Mass as usual, but he had been mortally injured, and after enduring most acute pain for eleven days, he expired. He was the first victim of revolutionary fury in Brittany, which was soon to count so many martyrs among her devoted clergy.

It was a terrible time for priests and people when the oath came to be exacted, for though, as we have said, the great body of the clergy stood firm, Catholic hearts were saddened by some shameful and scandalous defections. Amongst those who fell away, were priests who had hitherto enjoyed a considerable measure of public esteem; but these cases were very few, and were no matter of surprise to persons of discernment who had been personally acquainted with the ecclesiastics in question: indeed, the Abbé Tresvaux tells us there

were those who foretold with almost perfect accuracy which priests would take the oath and which would refuse.

Those ecclesiastics who exercised some public function, curés, vicaires, and heads of seminaries, were alone bound by the new law to swear fidelity to the Civil Constitution ; and few of these failed in their duty. The defaulters consisted chiefly of the untitled clergy, from whose ranks men of no merit or consideration stepped forth unsummoned to take the guilt of apostasy on their souls, thus plainly betraying the motive by which they were actuated. For the taking the oath was a mode of advertising their competency for the posts which were continually falling vacant through the fidelity of their brethren. Nor were they disappointed, as a rule, of their expected reward. A certain number of religious hastened in like manner to join the schism. There could be no question as to the character of these unhappy men, their own behaviour and the public scandal given by not a few of their number were soon to furnish the plainest evidence. The number of the jurors did not bear the same proportion in all parts of Brittany, but everywhere a very edifying fact was noticeable ; scarcely a single instance of apostasy occurred in the higher ranks of the clergy ; the Vicars-General and the Canons of the Cathedrals, with two exceptions, one of these not a native of the province, remained faithful. The heads of seminaries were equally firm ; one only, the Superior of the Vannes Seminary, being guilty of an act of weakness, which he speedily retracted. The same may be said generally of the rectors, the apostates coming chiefly from the inferior clergy and religious who had renounced their vows. The diocese of Rennes, however, had to deplore several losses ; but here, as elsewhere, it was noted that they who fell away had been entirely wanting

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in the ecclesiastical spirit. The defections took place chiefly in the two cantons of Rhetiers and La Guerche, where the priests had been remarkable for their want of gravity and their love of amusement. Indeed, it was generally observed that the rectors who in the different towns of Brittany accepted the oath had not been regarded as ornaments of their profession or models of exemplary conduct.

They who lack the faith are always deceived in their calculations where the order of grace and supernatural motives are concerned. The firmness of the true children of the Church invariably takes them by surprise, and so it was with the Constitutional Assembly in 1791. When it was seen that, not only the vast majority, but the worthiest, the ablest, and the most respected of the clergy rejected the Constitution, the Assembly immediately applied itself to devise measures to counteract their influence; the zeal they displayed in maintaining the fidelity of their people being qualified by the revolutionists as a sowing of discontent and an incitement to disturbance. Accordingly, on the 5th of February a decree was passed interdicting all ecclesiastics who had not taken the oath from preaching in any church whatever; this violation of the vaunted ‘Rights of Man’ offering a strange contrast to the toleration extended to the wild licence and violence of the clubs, which met at their pleasure everywhere and anywhere. A deputy, M. Montlauzier, derisively asked the Assembly to decree that the non-juring clergy should be permitted neither to print, write, hear confessions, say Mass, or read the Gospel; while another deputy, M. de Folleville, proposed, as an amendment, that they should be permitted to say Mass within the walls of a private house. The time was approaching when what these deputies said in irony was to become a bitter truth; when

priests were to be debarred from making their voices heard in any way, saying Mass, or exercising any act of Catholic worship, even within the walls of a private house. They little thought, any more than did the Assembly, which resented the jest, that very soon even that last consolation would be denied to Catholics.

We have mentioned that in the first instance a small pension had been assigned to non-juring curés, the maximum being an annuity of 500 francs, nevertheless Lanjuinais cautioned the Assembly against an imprudent generosity, for the double reason of sparing the public treasury and not offering an inducement to the clergy to refuse the oath or to retract it if taken. A condition was added, that these curés should have abandoned all measures for exciting disturbance—what that meant we know—and should have peaceably resigned their cures to their successors. On such conditions this modest allowance was likely to be often withheld. The liberality of the Assembly, however, whether to the non-juring clergy or to the bishops, to whom a retiring pension had been voted of 10,000 francs (£400) at a time when they little anticipated having all but the whole Episcopate on their list, never, in fact, cost the Treasury much, and soon ceased altogether to be paid.

The Breton peasantry remained far from passive spectators of the imposition of the oath upon their clergy. At Liffré, in the diocese of Rennes, the members of the municipality having met in order to summon the rector and his vicaires to take the oath, the women congregated together and, forming themselves into a battalion, marched boldly towards the assembled municipals. Four of their party, selected for their greater fluency of speech, harangued these depositaries of authority in such energetic terms that they judged it discreet to yield for the present. On the morrow, however, they denounced the district for

its resistance. Nor was this the only instance in which the zeal of the Breton women displayed itself. At Ploumaugot, in the diocese of Saint-Malo, the rector, a man of weak character, after promising to refuse the oath, took it at High Mass, where he was surrounded by National Guards. M. Androuet, his vicaire, a holy priest, whom we shall have occasion to mention later, indignant at this act of apostasy, then and there stripped himself of his surplice in the choir and left the church. A deep impression was made on the people, but it was the women who gave expression to the feelings shared by all. They rushed on the guards and, wresting the men's muskets from their hands, broke them on the rails of the sanctuary. Then, forcing open the door of the sacristy, where the cowardly rector had sought refuge, they compelled him to retract his oath ; which, however, when he was delivered from the fear of these Amazons of the faith, and had fallen again under the terror of the authorities, he unhappily renewed. Facts like these suffice to prove that the population of Brittany in their opposition to the schism acted of their own free will, and not, as the revolutionists pretended, in blind obedience to the dictates of the clergy. Often, indeed, throughout France at this time cases occurred in which it appeared that the pastor was rather controlled by his flock than the flock by its pastor ; and, if we step a little beyond the frontiers of Brittany, we shall find the people of La Rochelle attempting to set fire to the house of a canon who had betrayed the faith by accepting the oath. Short of such extreme and rare instances, however, it may not be hazardous to presume that if some curés were intimidated into taking the oath, there were others, even in Brittany, who refused it in order not to forfeit the respect of their people, or—to state the case more favourably for these weaker Christians—who, without that seasonable support

to their sense of duty, might have yielded to temptation. But the men who ruled the Assembly, and who had long so completely renounced all religion as to be unable even to comprehend its influence on others, could not, or would not, believe that there was enough faith in the hearts of the people to make them reject the innovations imposed by the law; and therefore they always attributed the expression of aversion to the instigation of the bishops and clergy. We have seen how the municipalities in some parts of Brittany were still composed of upright men and good Christians, who lent their support to the true pastors. Thus in the rich and populous parish of Plougerneau, in the diocese of Léon, when the Abbé Pouliquet, its rector, a distinguished man, who in after times was to fill the see of Quimper, presented himself before the mayor and municipality at the head of his clergy, and, after setting forth in energetic language the reasons which deterred him from compliance with the sacrilegious law, placed a written profession of faith regarding the Church, which had been signed by himself and his priests, in the hands of the authorities, they received it with perfect respect, declaring that liberty of religious opinions having been proclaimed, they would not exact the oath from their parochial clergy; moreover, that they were themselves faithfully attached to the Catholic religion, and would refuse to give their adhesion to the Civil Constitution, until it had been accepted by the Bishops and the Holy See.

If the Sovereign Pontiff had so long delayed his formal and public condemnation of the late decrees of the National Assembly, it was that he might the more thoroughly examine the strange innovations which it pretended to introduce on its own authority, and thus be enabled more fully to expose its true character, should milder measures in the meantime have failed to recall

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men to their duty. At last, on the 10th of March, 1791, Pius VI. addressed a Brief to the Archbishops and Bishops in the Assembly, condemning the Civil Constitution of the Clergy, and unmasking its errors. It was published, notwithstanding all the efforts made by the partisans of the schism to suppress it, and had the happy effect of determining the conduct of many who were hesitating what course to pursue.

The sacrilegious consecration of Expilly and Marolles drew forth a fresh Brief from Pius VI. on April 13, confirming the mandate issued by the French Bishops to the faithful of their dioceses, forbidding them to communicate with the intruders. This Brief was addressed to all the clergy and faithful of the kingdom. Herein the Pope explained the motives of his protracted silence; related his endeavours to dissuade the King from accepting the Civil Constitution of the Clergy; spoke of the tears he had shed and the public prayers he had caused to be offered for that end; the commission with which he had charged the two ministers of State, the Archbishops of Vienne and Bordeaux, for the same object; and the violence which had been done to the King to extort his consent. After commending the zeal and fidelity of the bishops and clergy who had refused to take the oath, the Pontiff proceeded to point out the vices of the new Constitution, declaring the election of new bishops as well as the erection of new sees to be an act unlawful, sacrilegious, and contrary to the Canons, and all elections of parish priests made by the district authorities to be in like manner null and void. In particular he denounced in most forcible language the hypocrisy, mendacity, and sacrilege of which Expilly had been guilty, and enjoined the flock whose superintendence he had usurped to reject him with abhorrence. Further, he commanded all ecclesiastics who

had taken the oath to retract the same within a period of forty days, which were to count from the date of the Brief, and addressed the most touching exhortations to the bishops, canons, parish priests, and all other ecclesiastics as well as laity who had remained faithful, to continue firm and steadfast in their union with the Holy See, the Chair of Peter, separated from which they would be severed from the Church. He concluded by expressing a hope of seeing the schismatics repent and acknowledge their errors—a hope which was very far from being realized, at least as respected the great majority. Not one of the wretched men elected to fill the constitutional sees of Brittany was moved by the solemn judgment pronounced against them by the Vicar of Christ, while those who had not as yet received episcopal consecration hastened to consummate their guilt by participating in that sacrilegious act. In the case of Expilly, Le Coz, and Minée, this ceremony had been already performed, and they now prepared to install themselves in the sees they had usurped.

## CHAPTER VII.

*Installation of the schismatical bishops and clergy.  
Beginning of the persecution.*

ON the eve of Palm Sunday, which in the year 1791 fell on the 16th of April, Expilly repaired to Quimper to take possession of the see. It was a bright and clear spring morning when the false pastor made a halt outside the town to wait for the civil authorities, who were to form his escort; for it was to them and to the mob, deluded or suborned by revolutionary demagogues, that these creatures of the civil power had to look for countenance and support, and, indeed, for all the honours of their reception. But no sooner had the procession begun its march, than an unusually thick mist enveloped the whole scene, so that it was under a canopy of gloom heavier than that of a November fog that the intruder proceeded to place himself in the seat of the venerable Conen de Saint-Luc, whose successor he pretended to be; a meet presage of the dark and dismal career on which the infatuated man had entered, and which only three years later was to have so fatal a close.

The reception which he, in common with the other intruded bishops, met with was little calculated to flatter their vanity. They were accompanied, indeed, by military bands, and by a crowd of revolutionists who had long cast religion to the winds; but all that was truly respectable, whether among the clergy or the laity, held aloof, and shunned them as the pestilence. Good

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Catholics shut themselves up in their houses, and the day of installation of the false pastor was a day of mourning in the city.

So it was also at Nantes, where Minée installed himself in Passion Week. His entry wore all the appearance of a military *fête*. Such of the National Guard as had been able to provide themselves with uniforms went out to meet him at a league's distance from the town. There he alighted from his carriage, believing that his arrival would thus be attended with more popular effect, and accomplished the remainder of the way on foot, amid the plaudits and vociferations of an uproarious crowd. But such assemblages are ill satisfied with only using their lungs, their hands must also find congenial work to do ; so, when the mob observed that the Sisters of St. Charles were in no hurry to ring their convent bells as the procession passed their door, they would have forced their way in and sacked the house, had not something accidentally occurred at the moment to divert them from their purpose. And here it may be observed that a curious incident marked Minée's entrance into the Episcopal palace. Some repairs were going on which prevented ingress by the regular approach, and he had to make his way up through a breach opened for the occasion in a terrace wall ; thus literally verifying those words of our Lord : 'He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber.'<sup>1</sup>

Minée was much disappointed with his reception at Nantes. After being more than a week in the place, not a single titled ecclesiastic or any of the principal inhabitants had visited him. Even the Mayor had not shown him the slightest attention. Nor could this be matter of surprise. For, independently of the religious

<sup>1</sup> St. John x. 1.

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motives which kept the great body of the faithful at a distance from him, no person with any sense of self-respect could associate with a man whose conduct set at defiance all the common decencies of life. One of Minée's first visits was to the club, which all sensible persons, including those who did not venture to arraign the new Constitution, regarded as a source of danger to the town, while his connection with Coustard, the sworn enemy of their revered Bishop, Mgr. de La Laurancie, and with other fanatical 'patriots,' was not calculated to raise him in the estimation of the well-disposed portion of the community. Minée keenly felt his isolation, and the mortification he experienced would have led him to abandon his post from sheer disgust, but for the emoluments attached thereto, and the opportunity it afforded him of harassing the faithful Catholics.

But before he could commence his proposed measures, he must be formally installed. This ceremony took place with all the pomp of a military display. The artillery thundered from the Castle, and the vessels in the harbour joined their salvos. The troops were treated to a banquet in the court of the College, and there, intermingled with the soldiery and women of ill-fame, might be seen the constitutional priests, themselves giving the worst example by their intemperance and loose discourse. The schismatic bishop was not ashamed himself to appear at the board, and drink with them to the health of the friends of the Revolution. A kind of procession was then organized to make the circuit of the town, in the course of which he affixed his 'pastoral' to the doors of the cathedral. The preamble contained a pompous flourish about his vocation to the episcopate, but the gist of this strange document was to announce the suppression of seven parishes of Nantes, and to threaten with the animadversion of the nation all who should

venture to declare that they were not validly suppressed. On the day previous to this miserable ceremony, several young priests who had taken the oath, hearkening to the voice of conscience, had made their retraction, and Minée's first efforts were directed to alluring or intimidating them into a return ; but in this he failed.

The installation of Le Masle at Vannes was very similar to that of Minée at Nantes. It took place on May 22nd, the fourth Sunday after Easter, amidst a concourse of troops and National Guards, but in presence of a very small proportion of the inhabitants ; for, out of a population of ten thousand, not two hundred attended. Jacob accomplished his intrusion at Saint-Brieuc on Whit-Sunday, a perfect hurricane raging during the whole proceedings.

The usurpation of his see by Minée drew forth a most touching and energetic address from Mgr. de La Laurancie to the clergy and faithful of his diocese. That prelate, it will be remembered, had repaired to Paris when threatened in his palace by the revolutionary mob of Nantes, whither also he was followed by a denunciation to the Assembly from the administrators of the department. The accusation was most favourably received, and, although no immediate step was taken against his liberty, the bishop found that his prolonged stay in Paris, exposed as he was to the ever-active animosity of the Clubs, could be productive of no good result. Accordingly he retired, while this was yet possible, from the capital, and took refuge in Germany ; but the sorrow he felt at his enforced exile brought him to the very borders of the grave. From the place of his retreat he then issued a pastoral, dated the 12th of May, 1791 in which he declared that the civil power had no authority to dispossess him of his see ; that he was still Bishop of Nantes ; and Minée, by the fact of his intrusion, a

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schismatic and a usurper; moreover, that every curé deprived by the civil power, still continued to be the true and only pastor of his parish, and that both the suppression and the union of parishes were invalid. He forbade all persons to recognize Minée's authority in any way, or accept any office from him; he withdrew the faculties of those priests who had taken the oath, and placed an interdict on his cathedral and upon all the altars within its walls. The deep affliction manifested in this document was only too well warranted by all that was taking place in Brittany now that the schism was installed; nevertheless it was but the beginning of troubles.

Had anything been needed to heighten the aversion of the Bretons to the new Constitution, it might have been found in the character of its partisans. Those families which had been noted for inattention to their religious duties almost invariably favoured the schism, while avowed unbelievers and those whose lives were morally disreputable—men who hitherto had never been seen within the doors of a church—were now amongst the most ardent supporters of the intruded pastors. Everywhere the great mass of the population kept aloof from them, and in the rural districts well-nigh the totality, for the revolutionary and irreligious classes, amongst whom alone the apostates could find adherents, were almost exclusively confined to the towns. Those parishes whose curés had taken the oath were naturally the most exposed to perversion, but even in such places the faithful always formed the large majority. In many of the smaller towns the constitutional curés could not get themselves installed, or, if they so far succeeded, they found their position intolerable, because the people fled from them as though they were plague-stricken, and they had to officiate in empty churches. Sometimes the

mayors were men who had kept their faith, and, where this was the case, the intruders did not even meet with official countenance. Thus at Vezin, in the diocese of Rennes, the constitutional curé on arriving found no one in the place ; all had absconded, the mayor and municipal officers included. At Noyal-sur-Vilaine, in the same diocese, the church doors had been closed and barred so effectually that the hireling pastor had to force his way in through a window ; a circumstance which much impressed the parishioners, for their good rector had told them that he who would come to take his place would not enter by the door.

At Carfantain, in the diocese of Dol, M. Valette, the rector, was about to celebrate Mass, when orders arrived from the department of Ille-et-Vilaine not to allow him to have the sacerdotal vestments, and almost at the same moment the schismatical nominee made his appearance in the sacristy and proceeded to vest himself. M. Valette, leaving him there, ascended the pulpit and informed the congregation of what had occurred, adding, ‘I shall not oppose by force the orders which the department has issued ; I exhort you also to bear with patience the insult offered to your pastor ; but I hope that I shall be allowed to say Mass elsewhere. Those who choose to attend that of the intruded priest can remain here ; I shall go and say Mass for the others.’ The whole congregation immediately rose to a man and followed the rector out of the church, so that the schismatic found himself entirely deserted. The district authorities of Lesneven, after naming constitutional priests for the parishes composing it, despatched, on the 15th of May, a certain Le Gall to Plouguerneau. It will be remembered that it was here that the municipality had refused to put in execution the decree of the National Assembly regarding the imposition of the oath. When Le Gall made his

appearance, attended by some of the district officials and members of the club at Lesneven, a general consternation spread through the parish. It was Sunday, and the hour for Mass was approaching, when the schismatic priest left the inn where he had alighted, and proceeded to the church. Preparations had been made for offering the Adorable Sacrifice, but now the building was utterly deserted, not so much as a single member of the municipality being visible within its walls—all were gone. Le Gall, much disconcerted, left the church without saying Mass, and the place also, with his whole company; but it was only to return later with six hundred armed men and four pieces of ordnance, to take forcible possession of his cure. Indeed, all these constitutional priests were so well aware that the rural populations were entirely opposed to them, that they seldom ventured to go to be installed in country parishes without being accompanied by a strong military escort. Nor were these precautions superfluous; for, although the Bretons are not an aggressive people, they are a sturdy race, as are the Breton women also, of which, indeed, we have already seen an example, and it was not without extreme irritation that they endured the violence which was being offered to their faith.

Never had there been so much talk about liberty as at the beginning of the Revolution. The era of emancipation, it was said, had set in; Frenchmen had hitherto been abject slaves, and it had needed nothing less than the entire upsetting of the old order of things and substitution of the new to restore to them the enjoyment of the most sacred rights of man. Among these sacred rights, unlimited 'liberty of conscience' certainly held a foremost place in the revolutionary creed, and it was embodied in the famous Principles of '89, which were to regenerate France. But now it had become plain that

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this vaunted liberty of conscience, while including every conceivable variety of heterodox opinion and the wildest forms of unbelief, admitted a notable exception in the case of Catholics ; they alone were excluded from profiting by what was nevertheless represented, not as a privilege, but as the inherent right of our common humanity. From the very first, indeed, the pretended patriots manifested a disposition to tyrannize over the consciences of all who adhered to the true faith ; but the hatred of Christianity, which animates the Revolution and constitutes, as we may say, its dominant spirit, caused its adherents in 1791, as it still causes them at the present day, not only to act in open contradiction to their own boasted principles, but to violate all the laws of natural equity, and even to overlook the most obvious dictates of political prudence. For regarded merely from a political point of view, and apart from every moral and religious consideration, the Assembly could not have committed a graver fault than by setting itself in opposition to the religious convictions of the vast majority of the French people by its Civil Constitution of the Clergy ; a fault which it enhanced by its obstinate determination to extort from the priesthood an oath which their consciences refused, and by persisting in imposing schismatical pastors on parishes which abhorred and rejected them. The administrators of the districts, who had been chosen for their revolutionary proclivities, seconded the central authority with all their energy, although they could not but be well aware that the men whom they were compelling the people to accept as their pastors were very commonly destitute of all religious principles, or notorious for their immoral lives, often for a combination of both, their sole recommendation being that they had accepted the oath.

The constitutional bishops and clergy understood and

practised the principles of liberty in a like fashion. Irritated by the opposition which they encountered, they did not scruple to adopt the most violent methods to enforce submission and gain proselytes, willing or unwilling. Expilly, Minée, and Le Coz particularly distinguished themselves by their animosity against all who would not be partakers in their schism. Expilly, who had been made a member of the council of the departmental administration in Finisterre, was always calling for severe measures against his former brethren. Le Coz was more smooth-spoken ; he was one who talked a great deal about charity, but it was a false and perfidious profession, for in his heart he hated the Catholics full as much as did Expilly. As for Minée, he made no attempt at disguise, and showed himself an open and unrelenting persecutor from the moment of his installation. Not that he directly enjoined the acts of violence perpetrated by his adherents, but he excited them thereto by the determination he manifested to get himself recognized as bishop, no matter by what means. When his pretensions were denied, he would give vent to loud complaints in the hearing of the unprincipled men who formed his habitual retinue, and this was quite sufficient to urge them on to deeds of cruelty and even bloodshed.

When Minée appeared for the first time in public after his installation, at the Rogation processions, he was bedizened with tricoloured ribbons and wore an enormous national cockade in his cap. Thus ticketed and advertised as a creature of the Revolution, he marched along the streets, expecting to receive the homage commonly rendered to the pastor of souls. Several persons convicted, or only suspected, of not having done him proper obeisance, or of having laughed as he passed by—an offence, it may be observed, which Minée's harlequin attire was not unlikely to have provoked—were dragged

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ignominiously to prison, after being subjected to gross ill-treatment. Amongst others, a young priest of Nantes all but died of the blows he received from the soldiers and other satellites of Minée, who burst like so many demons into the house which he occupied, because some one accused him of having looked out at a window with an insulting air, with his hat on his head, when the procession was passing. Now, as the shutters of the house had been kept closed, the misdemeanour, such as it was, could not have occurred. The Wednesday procession was signalized by some of those shameful scenes of which the Revolution furnished such countless examples even in these comparatively early days of its course. The most absurd calumny was sufficient to infuriate a mob whose violence the civil authorities took no measures to restrain, because it was playing their game and doing what they desired to see done. As the procession was making its way along the Quai de la Fosse, and came in front of the house of M. Montaudoin, a respectable merchant and a friend of Mgr. de La Laurancie, a cry was raised that the prelate had been seen on the balcony of M. Montaudoin's house, disguised as a servant, some said as a miller, insulting the procession as it advanced along the Quai. Immediately a number of soldiers and National Guards broke into the house with fixed bayonets, burst open doors, shattered furniture, tore the tapestry hangings to shreds, ripped up beds, penetrated into M. Montaudoin's private study, threw his papers about, and compelled him to open the chest in which he kept his mercantile accounts, under the absurd pretext that Mgr. de La Laurancie might be hidden in it.

But before the day closed it was to witness a still more revolting scene. After the completion of the exploit just described, the procession moved on to the General Hospital, the chapel of which establishment

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had recently been transformed into a constitutional parish church. It was served by an intruded priest named Pimot, who under a bland exterior concealed a merciless soul. He now complained to Coustard, who was present along with several other ardent ‘patriots,’ that not one of the thirty Sisters who had charge of the sick, and not one of the children in the asylum, assisted at his Mass, and that the Religious used all their efforts to prevent the inmates from accepting the ministry of the pastor whom the nation had provided for them. Hereupon it was decided that the Sisters should be flogged, and the order was executed on the spot, with such savage brutality that one of them died in consequence the next day and the life of another was seriously endangered. Although the barbarous order did not emanate from Minée, yet he was in the house when the matter was discussed, and a word from him to Coustard would have prevented the infamous sentence from being carried into effect, but that word was not spoken, and he suffered his partisans to do as they listed.

The Sisters at the General Hospital were not the only Religious thus cruelly treated. The Sisters of St. Charles also were subjected to a similar outrage; but the fury of Minée and his abettors was not yet satiated. At no great distance from Nantes, at a place known as Les Couets, was a celebrated Carmelite convent which had been founded by Françoise d'Amboise, Duchess of Brittany. Minée visited it soon after his arrival; the persecution of women seeming to have been his particular vocation. Presenting himself at the convent grate, he asked for the prioress, and announced himself to her as the bishop of the diocese. She replied that Mgr. de La Laurancie was not dead, nor had he resigned. Then Minée delivered himself of a long harangue, in which he laboured to prove that he was

the legitimate pastor, but when he found that his arguments made no impression, he broke off with this question : ‘ You are resolved, then, Madam, not to recognize me as your bishop ? ’ ‘ Yes, Sir, quite resolved,’ was the firm reply. ‘ You will repent it,’ added the false pastor, as he retired. A few days afterwards a band of National Guards, accompanied by a crowd of women of the very lowest class, with whom some even of a superior rank had not been ashamed to associate themselves, appeared before the convent. In a moment the walls were scaled and the door broken open. The nuns were saying office in the choir, not did they cease for the hubbub which reached their ears, but continued their sacred psalmody. All intervening barriers were soon overcome, and the mixed mob of soldiery and populace rushed in, and, laying hands on these consecrated virgins of the Lord, dragged them violently from the choir, the women whose station entitled them to be called ladies showing themselves even more destitute of humanity than the rest ; but where revolutionary fanaticism got possession of the women’s hearts in those terrible days they were in every way worse than the men. After suffering the most outrageous treatment, the poor nuns were ejected from their convent and driven like a herd of cattle to Nantes. Even the sick were torn from their beds, and, being hurried off half-dressed, had to walk barefooted along the rough road, so that their path might be traced by the marks of blood which they left on the way. They were all shut up in the Castle of Nantes, where, however, they did not remain long, as their families hastened to reclaim them.

The intruded priests imitated their leaders, and exhibited the same ferocious intolerance. All means seemed good to them by which they could constrain the people to communicate with them, even to forcing

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the Blessed Eucharist into the mouths of sick persons who had refused their ministrations. Their first act on arriving invariably was to declaim against the true pastors of the Church and all who adhered to them. The language employed might be more or less violent, but what it lacked in violence was sure to be supplied in mendacity, directed equally to the purpose of exciting animosity against the faithful clergy and people and bewildering or intimidating the faint-hearted and irresolute. Indeed, it seemed as though nothing were too vile or outrageous to be said or done against the Catholics. In some places they were led through the streets seated backwards on an ass and holding the animal's tail in their hand. This was the way in which the constitutional Curé of Verton, whose sixty years had not taught him common decency or humanity, punished his parishioners when they refused to hear his Mass, not being ashamed himself to lend a hand, and in fact, as some semblance of justice was still observed in the civil courts, he was mulcted in considerable damages for grievous injuries inflicted on a woman who endeavoured to resist being so ignominiously treated. At Nort similar violence was offered to a woman, and her condition was such that she died a few days afterwards in consequence of the ill usage she had received ; but in this case the instigator of the outrage contrived to escape the punishment he merited. Nor were these singular and exceptional cases, others might be recorded, and many, doubtless, have passed into oblivion with the names of the victims.

But even where the constitutional priests did not proceed to these brutal excesses, they failed not to bring misery and disorder into the parishes where they established themselves, by their unscrupulous efforts to compel the people to assist at their ministrations. Division

was thus excited in households, relatives and friends were estranged from each other, and domestics, after years of faithful service, turned adrift on the world. Sometimes the father of a family, influenced by human prudence, would conform, and wish to constrain his children to do the like, who, to save their consciences, were forced to abandon the paternal roof. Workmen and labourers lost their employments, the schisinatic priest being often himself the first to denounce them, and thus procure their dismissal where the master lacked the Christian courage to resist. But it was the wives and children of the so-called patriots who were the greatest and the most frequent sufferers. In many cases these had remained faithful to their religion, and they became in consequence the special objects of invective on the part of 'the false pastors, who would declare publicly from their pulpits that the most rigorous measures ought to be applied to force the rebellious to 'make their salvation'—*faire leur salut*, as the French have it; a doctrine which they would not have found language sufficiently strong to reprobate had it been propounded by a true Catholic. Many a hitherto peaceful home was thus made desolate, and the Abbé Tresvaux, who had personal knowledge of what took place in Brittany in those times, says that there were women and children who literally drooped and pined away from finding themselves suddenly deprived of the love of husband or of father. 'Patriotism,' as understood by the men whom the Revolution had perverted, seemed to wither up all common sentiments of humanity and even of natural affection when it became a question of resisting the law, in other words, the expressed will of the sovereign nation. The nation by its representatives had willed the new Constitutional Church; to reject that Church was therefore treason against the nation, and these bigots of the

new idolatry only too faithfully followed the doctrines promulgated from the pulpit.

The following may be cited as an instance. At Pontivy dwelt a surgeon, a widower, with three young daughters. The Abbé Tresvaux, who is our authority for this story, knew the man well ; he had warmly embraced the cause of the Revolution, but could not induce his children to agree with him, who, encouraged in their steadfastness by a devout servant, clung firmly to their faith. Matters were in this state, and would probably have proceeded no further, when the schismatic priest took possession of the church. Then, at this unhappy man's dictation, the father, who personally was indifferent to religion, insisted on his daughters going to Mass, and on their still refusing, being obstinately determined to break their resolution, shut them up in a loft over his barn, giving them for food only bread and water, and for beds a shake-down of straw. At the end of a fortnight, however, means were devised for their escape, and the Catholics of the place, who had admired the constancy of these young girls, joined together to assist them in earning an independent living. This anecdote may give some idea of what the faithful were already called to endure, while as yet liberty of worship for all, Catholics included, was recognized by the State.

But family division, with all its bitter consequences, was not the only result of the baneful influence exerted by the schismatic curés. The true pastors, driven from the churches, could celebrate the august mysteries only in isolated places or in chapels attached to the châteaux of the gentry. The people came in crowds, and Mass was said with closed doors. But their enemies were ever on the watch, and oftentimes a band of National Guards, who were continually scouring the country, would burst in upon them before warning could be

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given of their approach, and, firing upon such as attempted to escape, would drag all they seized to prison. Thus many were killed or maimed, the chapels were plundered, and their owners shamefully maltreated. Not unfrequently these raids were headed by the intruded priest in person. Such acts of violence, however, were done in contravention of the existing laws, and accordingly the directories resolved to adopt what they were pleased to style preventive measures—measures the professed object of which was to repress disorder, but which were to consist, as we shall shortly see, not in punishing the perpetrators of the outrages, but in restricting the liberties of the legitimate pastors, on whom was laid the blame of all that had occurred.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### *Douars against the Clergy. The persecution legalised.*

It may easily be imagined that if the simple faithful had begun to suffer persecution, the clergy would not be exempted from its rigours. At present, however, the law did not enable the schismatics to bring any penal enactment to bear upon them; all they could do was to assail them indirectly, by endeavouring to compel their flocks to attend the constitutional Mass. But the apostates hated them with a bitter hatred, and this hatred was intensified by the fact that everywhere they encountered an insurmountable obstacle to their assumption of parochial authority in the attachment of the people to their true pastors. Driven from the presbyteries without being allowed time so much as to remove their personal effects, the curés, as we have seen, did not abandon their sacred charge. On the contrary, they continued to make the most strenuous exertions to maintain their people firm in the faith. This was an intolerable offence in the eyes of the intruders, which, indeed, they were not long to lack the means of punishing with a semblance of legality.

Animated by the Papal Briefs, the prelates of the French Church had issued fresh pastorals, in which they powerfully enforced the injunctions of the Holy Father. Numerous retractions were the immediate result on the part of those among the clergy who had yielded through

timidity or had been surprised into an acquiescence which their maturer judgment condemned. The desertion of such men was a severe blow to the schism, for they may be said to have formed its sole respectable members. The bishops sitting in the Assembly had, on the 3rd of May, addressed a reply to the Sovereign Pontiff, in which they declared themselves ready for all sacrifices ; they did not desire to trouble the civil order, they had used all their endeavours to induce the Assembly to have the projected changes invested with canonical forms, but all their overtures had been rejected, and they had met with nothing but insult and injustice. However, they begged the Holy Father not to give a thought to them, but to consult only the interests of the Church. Accordingly, they laid their resignations at his feet, in order that without hindrance he might adopt the measures best calculated to ensure peace. This letter was subscribed by all the other bishops, and afforded the most evident proof of the disinterestedness and moderation of the men who were daily branded as fanatics and conspirators. Yet this very document was made an item in the list of accusations brought against them ; nay, it was denounced as the climax of their offences. Pius VI. did not accept their resignation. He knew well that such a measure would in no way conduce to the restoration of peace, and would only be a source of triumph to the revolutionists, who sought, not a mere change in some points of discipline, but the destruction of the Church and that of Christianity itself. When the Pope's Briefs had become publicly known, as well as the pastorals of the bishops, all Paris was in a ferment, and on the next day, the 4th of May, an effigy of the Holy Father was borne to the Palais Royal, where a mock trial was held, in which the 'criminal intentions' of Joseph-Ange Braschi, as the Vicar of Christ was styled, having been

certified, the effigy was condemned to be burned and its ashes scattered to the winds. The sentence was executed accordingly, and the figure of the Pope, with his Brief in his hand, was consumed amid the deafening shouts of the mob. After this scene at the Palais Royal, the position of the bishops and clergy became more insupportable than ever. Such of the prelates as had not already retired were speedily driven from their dioceses, either by formal orders emanating from the authorities or by the outrages of the rabble. A like treatment befell the faithful priests throughout France, who were compelled either to fly or to hide themselves, and celebrate the sacred mysteries in secret.

At the period which we have now reached all the ties which bind together the political and social fabric had been virtually dissolved, the National Assembly which had wrested the sovereign authority from the hands of the King, was every day, in its turn, becoming more powerless, while the Jacobin Club was proportionately gathering strength and usurping its place ; it was there that the decrees pending before the Assembly were discussed, it was thence that orders were issued to that body, and the club could at a moment's notice summon its army, the mob, to enforce them. The provinces were more or less in the same condition ; for the municipalities, which were generally composed of revolutionists, constituted so many centres of authority, which interpreted the law at their pleasure ; when they did not go fast or far enough, the sovereign people, led by some demagogue, would take the matter into its own hands. France, in fact, was in a direful state of anarchy. The aristocracy were flying the country, and emigration was becoming general ; but the clergy kept their posts as long as it was possible for them to remain. The Assembly, indeed, had at last passed some important

decrees, with the alleged object of obviating for the future such disorders as had disgraced Paris during the Easter of that year whenever the Catholics had attempted to fulfil their religious duties.<sup>1</sup> They were to be permitted to hire buildings in which they could celebrate their own worship; but this permission was hampered with conditions which rendered the pretended boon illusory. For instance, it was enacted that these buildings should be closed if anything were said in them which was opposed to the Constitution, and in particular to the Civil Constitution of the Clergy. The preacher was also liable to prosecution before the tribunals as a disturber of the public peace. Anyhow, the law remained a dead letter, for, as we have said, it was the Jacobin Club, and not the Assembly which ruled, and it took care that Catholics should find it impossible to avail themselves of the liberty which was nominally ceded to them. Under the pressure of this new power, which it had itself fostered and encouraged for its own purposes, but which had now completely outgrown its control, the Assembly continued its evil course, and, on the 19th of June, passed a decree which ordered the public accusers (*procureurs du roi*, as they were called), under pain

<sup>1</sup> It is only fair to Talleyrand to mention that he exerted himself successfully at this time to obtain a fresh recognition by the Assembly of that liberty of worship which was already laid down in the Constitution as one of the 'rights of man.' He also succeeded in obtaining an enactment that no non-juring priest could be hindered from saying Mass in any church whatever. Talleyrand's penetration and natural sagacity had by this time enabled him to judge what were the prospects of the Constitutional Church. He saw its hollowness and its absurdity, and, well persuaded that its warm supporters would soon turn against it and upset it, he, like the rat who leaves the falling house, resigned his bishopric and returned to civil life. The Abbé Goutter joyfully accepted the reversion, an act which he had reason to repent. For, three years later, he was arrested as a royalist and confined in the Conciergerie, without being allowed time even to take away his clothes. Sentenced to death by the Revolutionary Tribunal, he was executed on March 26, 1794.

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of deprivation, to pursue as disturbers of the peace all those ecclesiastics who, after they had been displaced and their successors installed, or even after due notification received of their appointment, should continue to discharge any parochial functions.

To what straits this law reduced the clergy may be readily conceived, bound, as they were, by a sacred duty to discharge these functions in behalf of their parishioners when needed ; as, for instance, to celebrate their marriages, which would otherwise have been invalid in the eye of the Church ; yet by so doing they at once exposed themselves to prosecution by the civil power, whose agents eagerly seized every opportunity of harassing the recusants. The decree was accordingly carried out with rigour, and the faithful priests were continually arrested and taken before the tribunals. Many about this time betook themselves to a voluntary exile, and amongst them some of the Breton clergy, reserving themselves, as they hoped, for better days. But we have already seen that active persecution had not awaited this decree of the Assembly. Thus, previous to the 19th of June, the Directory of Ille-et-Vilaine had taken upon itself to order all non-juring priests to remove to four leagues' distance from their parishes as soon as the constitutional curé arrived. That of Finisterre, not satisfied with this measure of restriction, had assigned to them a place of compulsory residence, after the fashion of Italian and German Liberalism at the present day. This was as early as the 21st of April, and on the 1st of June it confirmed the decision of the municipality of Brest, which took upon itself to imprison seventy priests in the Carmelite convent of that town. The Directories of Morbihan and the Loire Inférieure soon followed the example thus set them ; but the Directory of the Cotes-du-Nord surpassed the rest in fanaticism. On the 19th of June, it banished all

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priests to a distance of six leagues from their parishes as soon as the constitutional curé should make his appearance, and wherever they were located they were to be subjected to the close supervision of the municipality, which could remove them to a still greater distance if it pleased. Every priest who administered a sacrament was made liable to six years' imprisonment, and the recipient to six months, while those who circulated the Pope's briefs or the Bishops' pastorals were threatened with like penalties. In this last provision, the Directory had the authority of the Assembly; in all the rest it had acted in flagrant opposition to the decrees of that body, which at the time allowed the non-juring priests to say Mass in any church, even though it had been dedicated to the official worship. No risk, however, was incurred in dealing thus with recusant priests, and, in fact, on the very day on which the Directory promulgated this decree, the Assembly was passing a law which, as we have seen, would invest it with the fullest sanction. Many of those who had lent themselves to these tyrannical measures were by no means men of extreme opinions, and, taken individually, would have been inclined to use their powers with moderation; but they were urged on by the more violent spirits. One of the chief instigators in this work of persecution was the club of Saint-Brieuc, composed of fanatical 'patriots' and of men who were entirely under their control, and stimulated to action by a constitutional priest conspicuous for his revolutionary principles and the absence of any other, whether moral or religious.

It will be remembered that the oath was at first imposed only on bishops, vicars-general, superiors of seminaries and the professors, on the principals of colleges, and the parochial clergy; but on the 15th of April, 1791, a new decree required the oath to be administered

to all priests indiscriminately who were charged with the office of public instruction, and to all professors, even laymen, as well as to the chaplains of hospitals and prisons. This last measure was a most disastrous blow to the Church of France, and may be said to have completed its disorganization. Hopes might have been entertained that the utility of the services rendered by ecclesiastics who devoted themselves to the education of the lower classes, and to ministering in hospitals and prisons, might have obtained for them the privilege of being overlooked, the highest favour which could then be hoped for. But the Assembly recoiled from no act, however oppressive in its character or cruel in its effects, which might serve to destroy the influence of the Church, and deliver over to that abstraction called ‘the nation’ all authority, whether civil or religious. Persecution henceforward spared neither the homes of the indigent nor the asylums of the sick and suffering. Many of these poor people generously confessed the faith by refusing to communicate with the schismatical priests. This was enough to bring down upon them the vengeance of the civil power, and cause their expulsion from the asylums which Christian charity had opened to them. The poor in the Hospital of the Incurables at Rennes especially distinguished themselves by their firmness. This was the more admirable in their case, because the head chaplain of the General Hospital, of which that of the Incurables was a dependency, had taken the oath, and was anxious to draw them into the schism. Encouraged by two faithful priests, these poor creatures held out boldly for the faith, and neither entreaties nor menaces could move them. It was thought that possibly the constitutional bishop might be able to overcome their resolution. Le Coz was accordingly induced by one of his vicaires, the Abbé Lanjuinais,

an ardent revolutionist, to pay a visit to the hospital. He first presented himself to the Sisters who tended the sick, and Lanjuinais, who accompanied his chief, exhorted them to do him honour as their pastor ; but, far from complying, the Superioreess, Mdlle. Dubreil, answered that she recognized in Monsieur the principal of the College of Quimper, because he had occupied that post prior to his intrusion into the see of Rennes, and so long as the visit lasted she persevered in addressing Le Coz only by the title of ‘Monsieur le Principal.’ Le Coz then passed on to the wards, where he found only those whose infirmities rendered them unable to move from their beds ; the rest had absconded or had hid themselves in garrets and out-of-the-way corners. Amongst the sick there was one poor creature who was suffering acute pain. The intruder, at Lanjuinais’ suggestion, drew near to give him his blessing, but the man, rallying all his strength, sat up in his bed, and energetically told Le Coz that he wanted none of his maledictions. The false pastor, baffled, had to withdraw, but punishment was not slow to follow. The municipality of Rennes ordered the chapel of the hospital to be closed, and, at eleven o’clock that night, the head chaplain of the General Hospital came, accompanied by four soldiers, to remove the Blessed Sacrament, and set a seal on the tabernacle.

The communities of women throughout Brittany displayed a courage equal to that of the Sisters who had nursed the Incurables. There were very few defections from amongst them, and their houses up to the time of their suppression were subjected to vexations of the most harassing description. Their inclosure was no longer respected, and, under the pretext of searching for concealed priests, bands of armed men were continually making forcible entrance, to the consternation of the

Religious, who were at the same time plied with every conceivable argument to persuade or compel them to conform. None were put to a severer trial than the inmates of the Madeleine at Nantes. This convent offered an asylum to penitent women, who desired to repair the errors of their past life, and the civil authorities disgraced themselves so far as to endeavour to induce these women to become the accusers of the nuns who directed them, calumniating these ladies most vilely in presence of their charges ; nay, more, there were members of the administration who actually advised some of these poor women to return to their former evil courses, promising them protection ; but, to the confusion of these tempters, out of a hundred penitents not one was found who had the meanness to say a word against their superiors, or who would hearken to the proposals made to them. Then Minée used his endeavours to persuade the community, or the penitents at least, to acknowledge his jurisdiction, but his delegates met with as little success as had the civil authorities. All declared that they would live and die in communion with Mgr. de La Laurancie ; first of all, because they regarded him as their legitimate pastor, and next, because, as long as it was in his power, he had always been to them a generous benefactor. The constancy of their penitents drew down various persecutions on the nuns, but for the present no violent measure was employed against them.

Notwithstanding all the exertions of the authorities, and their unscrupulous use of the power they possessed, the Constitutional Church was establishing itself very slowly and laboriously in Brittany. There were not enough schismatic priests to fill all the *cures*, and accordingly in many of the parishes, during the greater part of the year 1791, the true pastors were still able to

exercise their ministry with tolerable freedom. Yet the intruded bishops, who were as active as the civil authorities in beating about for recruits, were by no means nice or hard to satisfy in the matter of qualifications ; indeed, they were ready to accept all who presented themselves ; priests who had been suspended for some grave fault, or whose notorious ignorance and incapacity had hitherto excluded them from the sanctuary ; religious who had broken their vows and become the scandal of their Order, all were welcome to the constitutional net. These hirelings soon showed themselves in their proper colours, giving themselves up to intemperance or licentiousness, sometimes to both conjoined. Their own partisans—such, at least, as retained a remnant of moral sense—were ashamed of them. ‘These jurors, it must be owned, are a sorry lot,’ exclaimed a municipal officer of Nantes one day in a large assembly. ‘If they could only have played the hypocrite for a single year, people would have attended their Mass, and the Constitution would have gone on swimmingly. How is it the good sort of people do not take the oath?’ So strong, indeed, was the persuasion that all ecclesiastics of doubtful reputation would conform, that the authorities were unfeignedly astonished when they met with a refusal from a bad priest. An ecclesiastic of the diocese of Rennes, notorious for his irregular life, was summoned by the municipality to take the oath. He declined, and, perceiving a look of surprise in the countenances of the officials, he said, ‘I see very well what is passing in your minds, but let me tell you that, bad as I am, I have not lost my faith, and that is why I cannot take the oath.’

Not only, however, did the greater part of the constitutional clergy lead scandalous lives, many of them

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entertained the wildest political opinions. The *ancien régime* was the object of their bitterest invectives, because they conceived that it was owing to its tyranny that they had been left in the obscurity which, indeed, they justly deserved. From their pulpits they were ever declaiming, not against abuses, for these had all been swept away along with much that was both valuable and venerable, but against those good institutions which still remained and which the Revolution was labouring to destroy, as well as against all that was most eminent in the clerical body. At Nantes, the sermons of Minée, who had a glib tongue, were made up of a vapid eulogy of the Constitution and its founders, laudation of his partisans and colleagues, and not a little of himself, together with fierce denunciations of the Catholic clergy, especially of the bishop, Mgr. de La Laurencie, against whom he never wearied of repeating the foul slanders which schismatical malice had invented. Nor was it only from the pulpit that the intruders inveighed against the faithful clergy. They were not ashamed to appear also at the clubs, where the demagogues habitually indulged in language of the most ribald description. Thus it may be truly affirmed that the greater part of the vexations and persecutions which the Catholics had to endure in 1791 was provoked by the constitutional clergy with the hope of weakening the influence of the legitimate pastors. But in this expectation they were disappointed, for their injustice to these innocent and virtuous men, their own disreputable conduct, their contempt of the most sacred rules of ecclesiastical discipline, which they carried so far as often to be seen eating and drinking before going up to the altar—all, in a word, combined to disgust and repel the true children of the Church; and as for those who were ranked among its adversaries, although for the present they

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supported the schism as furthering their ulterior purposes, the disgraceful behaviour of their confederates, men who after all called themselves Christians, and who had received the sacerdotal unction, only served to desecrate still more and degrade in their eyes the religion they had themselves renounced, and were banded together to destroy.

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## CHAPTER IX.

### *Imprisonment of priests. Sufferings of clergy and laity.*

IT was at this time that a great event came to absorb the whole attention of the public mind. Louis XVI., a virtual prisoner in his palace, deprived of all authority and forced to witness horrors which he was powerless to prevent, fled secretly from the Tuileries with his family on the night of the 20th of June, intending to take refuge in Montmédy, a strong fortress of Lorraine, but, from a concurrence of unfortunate circumstances which seemed to follow this unhappy monarch in every step of his life, he was recognized, arrested at Varennes, and brought back to Paris. The priests at that time were held accountable for everything which went amiss. Of course, therefore, they had plotted and brought about this attempted escape of the King: such was the cry raised in Brittany and throughout the provinces generally. ‘The Breton “patriots” pretended,’ says a contemporary writer, ‘that the whole Catholic clergy were accomplices in this project, which was to upset the Constitution, and they found means to get the charge at once believed, absurd as it was, by numbers of persons of all classes.’ No sooner did the news reach Nantes than the priests

became the objects of a violent persecution. Their houses were searched under the pretext of ascertaining if they contained concealed arms, inflammatory documents, or secret correspondence with the enemies of the State. At the same time they were themselves assailed with menaces and insults and held up to popular execration in songs, as scurrilous as they were profane, which were bawled about the streets. But these things were but an indication of what was quickly to follow. Bands of National Guards, reinforced sometimes by troops of the line, proceeded to hunt out the priests, both in town and country. The arrests were generally made in the night, and those whom they could seize were dragged ignominiously to prison. This operation was performed almost simultaneously throughout the diocese, the departmental authorities issuing orders that all priests when arrested should be transferred to Nantes.

These confessors had much to suffer on the way. To excite the populace against them, they had been everywhere denounced as traitors to their country, and at all the towns and villages along the road mobs were collected, who no sooner descried the *cortège* approaching than they began vehemently shouting, '*A la lanterne! a la lanterne!*—Death to aristocrats and traitors!' The guards also, among whom often were bad men from their own parishes, spared them neither humiliations nor ill-usage. Many were forced to make the whole journey on foot, notwithstanding their advanced age and infirmities; others were mounted, only the better to render them objects of derision. Thus two priests would be set back to back upon an ass, and exposed in this situation to the brutal merriment of the rabble. In some cases their hair was torn from their heads, and they were otherwise cruelly maltreated. As the parties severally arrived in Nantes from all directions,

the captives were taken, amidst the insulting shouts of the populace, to the seminary, which was turned into a prison, and were placed under the supervision of an apostate Carmelite whom the schismatics had appointed as superior. Sentinels were then posted at the doors and even in the dormitories.

When the prisoners saw themselves all assembled together, one of them, raising his voice, said to his brethren, ‘See, we have all entered the lists; let not one of us lose his crown;’ and all, in fact, proved steadfast under trial. Notwithstanding the efforts made by the pretended superior to shake the constancy of some among the younger priests, he did not succeed in making a single pervert; indeed, they would not so much as listen to him. The wretched man then endeavoured to render the condition of his prisoners as intolerable as possible, and, dreading the effect which their example might have on some five or six students (so to call them), youths deficient alike in talents and morality, but who formed the whole hope of the infant Church, he preferred the most abominable charges against them, in consequence of which they were transferred, some to the prison of Bouffay, where they were associated with common felons, and the rest to the Castle. Their removal, too, was effected in the most inhuman manner, priests who were in the height of fever being dragged from their beds at the risk of their lives. Those who were confined in the Castle were for the most part crowded together in a garret, which, from its situation, was infected with a fetid odour, while during the day it was exposed to the full blaze of the sun and during the night to all the vicissitudes of the weather, for it would seem that the windows were not even glazed. The historian of the Breton persecution makes mention, in particular, of two worthy priests, both

seventy years of age, MM. de La Marre and Le Roux, who were consigned to this vile prison after having been led through the town on a holiday, when the streets were thronged with a low rabble which vociferously clamoured for their heads. Thither also was conducted M. Herbet, the Vicaire of Paimbœuf, on an ass, bound back to back with M. Bécavin, a young subdeacon, who was to perish in the massacre at the Carmes in the September of the following year. M. Herbet was at first cast into a dungeon full of filth and vermin, where he was left without food for twenty-four hours, and, strange to say, it was his own uncle to whom he was indebted for this treatment. Two other rectors, those of Bouvron and La Trinité-de-Machecoul, had to suffer much ill-usage; the first, M. Delamare, nearly dying from its effects. M. Muaud, a missionary priest, having been detected under the disguise of a gardener, was seized and subjected, during a journey of many miles, to continued insults and blows. He was then thrown into the common prison. Touched with the sad lot, spiritual as well as temporal, of his fellow-captives, the good man began to instruct the criminals, teaching them how to pray, and exhorting them to patience and repentance; but this was a work so hateful in the eyes of the schismatics, that M. Muaud was removed to a solitary cell where he could hold communication with no one.

It is not possible to ascertain the exact number of the priests incarcerated in the prisons of Nantes at that time, but it must have been considerable, for most diligent search had been made to discover the retreats of all who had concealed themselves about the country; the usurpers of their *cures* were also forward in the work of priest-hunting, and it was to their presbyteries that the National Guards used to repair, in the first instance,

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to obtain the information they needed. The schismatic incumbent would often put himself at their head, and the effect of his presence was rather to increase than to moderate the violence of these men, especially in the houses of those good people whom he knew to be averse to his ministrations.

The department of Finisterre rivalled, nay, exceeded, that of Nantes in ferocity. It will be remembered that, even previous to the passing of the law of the 19th of June, they had imprisoned many priests in the Carmelite convent at Brest. Not a few of these arrests were attended with revolting acts of barbarity. Confinement in such a city as Brest was in itself a cruelty and a peril to the ecclesiastics, for it contained a very corrupt and disorderly population, which had been rendered peculiarly mischievous by a diligent revolutionary propaganda. This rude and ignorant rabble were ready to lay murderous hands on any one denounced as being hostile to the Revolution, and such all the priests brought into Brest were represented to be. No effort was made by their escort to shield them from menace and insult; on the contrary, they were ostentatiously paraded through the town, the mob pursuing them to the very doors of the prison with yells and clamours for their immediate execution, intermingled with that song of ill omen, the ‘Marseillaise,’ and the terrible ‘Ah ça ira,’ the herald of death to so many victims of revolutionary fury. The Père Elisée, Superior of the Discalced Carmelites, a man remarkable for his piety and virtues, and even for the services he had rendered to the town of Brest, narrowly escaped being massacred, along with two other ecclesiastics, on his way to prison. M. Squazen, Curé of Saint-Pierre-Quilbignan, a neighbouring parish, was on the very point of being hanged by the sovereign people. They had seized him, and were already drawing down

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the lantern, to pass the cord round his neck, when his guards succeeded with some difficulty in rescuing him from their hands and getting him into the Carmelite convent. The names of other priests are recorded whose lives were imperilled on this occasion. In the month of July there were no less than seventy confessors huddled together in this one house in Brest ; they were guarded by armed men, who dogged their steps wherever they went, following them into the chapel and into their very rooms, so that they were never alone ; while the populace, excited to madness by the false accusations circulated against them, would gather in crowds in front of the building, threatening to break in and put the traitors (as they called them) to death. The magistrates of Brest, becoming alarmed, informed the departmental administrators that they could not answer for the lives of the prisoners, and begged that they might be removed to a quieter locality. The administrators themselves were not ill disposed to hearken to so reasonable a request, but Expilly, who was then at Paris, being consulted on the subject, replied that the priests were very well at Brest ; so at Brest they remained. This trait of resentful cruelty shows how completely the revolutionary spirit had quenched all humanity in the breast of this miserable man.

The people also had their share of suffering in these days of tribulation, but their faith seemed to wax all the stronger as the persecution increased in intensity. Liberty of the press, which had been decreed as early as August 24, 1789, had proved a fruitful source of corruption by deluging France with publications subversive of all moral and religious principles ; but, on the other hand, the friends of religion and order had largely profited by it to issue a number of good books suited to the capacities of all classes and calculated to furnish

an antidote to the poison which was being so widely diffused. A printer of Saint-Brieuc, Jean-Marie Prudhomme by name, deserves honourable mention for his laudable exertions in publishing works written in defence of the faith, or for the instruction and encouragement of the people. He was himself a fervent and courageous Christian, and it was to him that the Vicars-General of Quimper were in the habit of applying to print and circulate their manifestos, which they were unable to do in the episcopal city. He also printed the protests of other bishops and ecclesiastical bodies, and shrank from no labours by which he could serve the Church. No wonder that he became the object of the hatred and persecution of the revolutionists ; the wonder is how he should have escaped the guillotine during the Reign of Terror.<sup>1</sup> But not only were the faithful instructed and fortified generally through the medium of the press, they were also exhorted individually to be constant in offering their prayers and penances to God to move Him to have compassion on His afflicted Church. A *quarantaine* of pious exercises which comprised a daily recitation of the *Miserere* and a touching prayer for mercy, accompanied by fasting, was in very frequent use among Christian families during this year ; while the devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus began to be cultivated with a spontaneity and a fervour which seemed to be the effect of a special inspiration, as though Heaven would teach this faithful people that at this Fountain of Divine Love were to be sought those healing waters which would restore and save France. By the enemies of religion this beautiful devotion was hated with an instinctive and deadly hatred ; they saw, or feigned to see, in the little prints and pictures of the Sacred

<sup>1</sup> This worthy man survived until the year 1832, when he died at the age of eighty-seven.

Heart which were distributed, a token and a symbol of a counter-revolution; and to be discovered with such a symbol about the person was soon to be equivalent to a sentence of death. Catholics needed, indeed, all that supernatural consolation which prayer and devotion could afford amidst the woes which weighed so heavily upon them. Impiety everywhere triumphant, schism forcibly established, the bishops in exile, the clergy imprisoned or obliged to keep themselves concealed, ecclesiastical property put up to auction, many churches closed and many desecrated, religious houses suppressed, distress and destitution prevailing among the lower orders, public morals becoming more and more corrupt from the want of any restraining curb, and the Revolution daily assuming a more terrible and sanguinary aspect—such was the scene of desolation presented to their eyes, while personally they were every day experiencing greater difficulty in fulfilling the essential duties of religion and incurring greater peril in the manifestation of their faith.

How real this peril was the following instances may serve to show. The civil authorities had not deprived the communities of women (hitherto spared) of their chaplains, but they were not allowed to admit any secular person to their sacred offices; and the better to ensure compliance with this prohibition, the entrances to their chapels from the street had been nailed up. A few women of Rennes, in order to enjoy the consolation of being present at Mass, so far as possible, had collected at the door of the Carmelite chapel one Sunday morning, and were looking through some cracks in the door which gave them a glimpse of the priest at the altar. Here they were observed by a band of National Guards, who, seizing hold of them, flogged them on the spot in a manner both cruel and indecent. A female

servant, one of the group, happily escaped their hands, and ran home in a state of the utmost excitement. Her mistress, the mother of three priests, all exiled from their parishes, was so affected by the sight of the poor girl's distress and by the revolting story she had to tell, that she fell down insensible and died a few days afterwards. These wretches, with a dastardly brutality, always singled out the weakest and most helpless—captive priests and defenceless women—as the objects of their vengeance. Here follow two examples of their exploits in this line.

A poor woman was going one day to hear Mass at a parish in which the legitimate pastor, as was usual, had been permitted to remain until his successor was appointed. On her way she met a party of men who, knowing or guessing her intentions, treated her so cruelly that the poor creature died shortly after of the injuries she had received. Again, in a village six leagues distant from Rennes lived a woman remarkable for the firmness of her faith. The schismatic had taken possession of the *cure*, and had the support of a considerable number of the parishioners, who were able to intimidate the half-hearted and irresolute. Possibly this may have been one of those places, already mentioned as being in this neighbourhood, where the priests had failed to give that edifying example which builds up a flock in the solid love of their faith. Be this as it may, so it was that, from one motive or another, almost all attended the intruder's Mass. But this woman, in spite both of threats and entreaties, persevered in going every Sunday to hear Mass in an adjoining parish which had not yet been deprived of its pastor. Her constancy was to be put to a severe trial. One market day, the National Guards, bent on procuring themselves one of those diabolical amusements in which they delighted, rushed to

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this woman's house, dragged her into the market-place, where they shaved her head before all the people, and, setting her on an ass with her face to the animal's tail, paraded her through the streets, singing lewd songs as they went and assailing their victim with both execrations and blows.

God who supported the primitive Christians in the days of Pagan persecution, ministered strength to these Breton women under the indignities and barbarities which they were called to suffer, so that they exhibited a spirit of confessorship truly heroic. In some cases, indeed, attachment to their faith led them to brave their persecutors at times when duty did not require its manifestation. Thus a girl of Loudéac, meeting the schismatic curé in a lane, threw her apron over her face, and ran away screaming, ‘The wolf! the wolf!’ Some of these poor people could give on occasion very pertinent answers. At Ploumiliau, in the diocese of Treguier, was a woman remarkable for her readiness in this way. Having ceased to go to church from the moment the intruder arrived, and being questioned by some of her fellow-villagers, not so well grounded in the faith, who had been cajoled into attending, as to why she had deserted them, she replied, ‘Do you think that the Church is that mass of stones you see there? The Church is the assembly of faithful Christians, united in one faith;’ and then she referred them to the words of the Catechism to show that it was she who had adhered to the Church while they had forsaken it.

Rarely did their attachment to their religion impel these Breton women to any act of violence, but there were, it must be allowed, some few exceptions. In several parishes the women collected together to receive the ‘wolf’ with a shower of stones, which made him take to his heels as fast as they could carry

him. Indeed, as a rule, the women showed themselves bolder than the men and more regardless of consequences, as was exemplified in the conduct of some washerwomen of Rennes, of whom the following story is related. They were down by the river engaged in their usual employment when, as his ill luck would have it, the Sieur Bazin, Le Coz's episcopal vicar, took a walk in that direction. He was specially obnoxious to all good Catholics, for, not only had he taken the oath, but he had enticed one of his cousins, a Carmelite novice, to abandon her convent and join the schism; and, to crown his misdeeds, he had contracted a civil marriage with her. It was an out-of-the-way place, where there were but few passers by, and the opportunity proved too tempting; so these stout dames pounced on the unhappy man, flogged him soundly, and then ducked him in the stream, telling him that, if his mother had been mindful to correct him in that fashion when he was a child, he would never have disgraced himself by taking the oath. Without exactly approving of this act of lawless retribution, we frankly confess that we do not grudge the Sieur Bazin a castigation which he so richly deserved.

## CHAPTER X.

### *The amnesty. Renewal of the persecution.*

THE fever of excitement into which Paris was thrown by the flight and capture of the unhappy Louis was shared by every party in the Assembly, where the ultras clamoured for the King's deposition and the immediate proclamation of the Republic. The time, however, was not yet ripe enough for such extreme measures, and the moderate party succeeded in forcibly putting down a popular rising organized by the Jacobins and dispersing the mob gathered in the Champs-de-Mars ; showing thereby what might have been easily effected at an early stage by a little show of firmness and timely severity. The Assembly, however, to content the Jacobins so far as might be, suspended the King's powers until the Constitution which had been in process of elaboration ever since 1789 should be completed and ready to be presented to Louis for his signature. This empty formality took place on the 3rd of September, and, ten days later, the King accepted the Constitution by a message to the Assembly, which he concluded by requesting that an amnesty might be proclaimed which should include all offences connected with the Revolution. The Assembly consented, and, in virtue of this favour, the priests incarcerated throughout France were legally entitled to their liberty. It was not, however, without much reluctance that many of the provincial directories could bring themselves to let go their prey ; and, in fact, that of

Finisterre, which was under Expilly's influence, did not release the prisoners until the 24th of September, just ten days after the proclamation of the decree, and then not without again assailing them with the coarsest invectives and coupling their liberation with the most rigorous conditions. They were forbidden to return to their late abodes, and were ordered also to remain at a distance of twelve miles from their former parishes. They were further compelled to provide themselves with passports, to obtain which they had to traverse Brest from one end to the other, exposed to every insult and outrage at the hands of a populace which vied in ferocity with that of Paris or Marseilles. But this peril past, a sweet consolation awaited them ; for scarcely had they issued from the town when they were met by numbers of the good peasants of the Bas-Léon, who, approaching with every mark of sympathy and respect, offered them an asylum in their houses and a share of their daily bread.

The Constituent Assembly had now completed its work, and its dissolution was fixed for the 30th of September, 1791. The conscientious men whom it counted amongst its members, but who had always constituted the minority, resolved that they would not appear to consent by their silence to the many iniquitous acts which that body had sanctioned. Accordingly, on August 31, one of their number disclaimed before the Assembly all participation in the encroachments which, during the last two years, had been made upon religion, the royal authority, the constitutional principles of the monarchy, and the rights of property. Two hundred and ten deputies immediately arose and gave their adhesion to this declaration. Not content, however, with a general verbal protest, the sounder portion of the clerical members drew up another of their own, which embodied a lucid exposition of true principles in regard to religion, monarchy, and liberty.

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One hundred and fifty deputies, amongst whom were twenty-six bishops, signed this declaration. It was all they could now do; but from the moment that they consented to take part in the deliberations of an Assembly which arrogated to itself the right to discuss and regulate matters which appertained to the ecclesiastical and spiritual power, the clergy of France had accepted a false position, as they had now learned by bitter experience.

A new Assembly was convened without loss of time. It was called the Legislative Assembly and it met on the 1st of October. Its members had been elected while the whole country was still in the state of intense ferment caused by the King's attempted flight. He was falsely represented as having intended to join the emigrants and return with a foreign army to re-establish the *ancien régime*. Hence the general irritation. In all parts of France the revolutionists had been loud in declaring that, for the security of the country and the preservation of liberty, none but thorough-going patriots must be chosen, men devoted to the Constitution; and unfortunately they had it fully in their power to control the elections. The nobility had either emigrated or took no part therein; the persecuted clergy, of course, could not show themselves; the demagogues, in short, were complete masters of the situation. Most of the deputies elected were obscure individuals, generally of very ordinary capacity, or young hot-headed men, known only for their revolutionary exploits or extreme opinions; and well-nigh all were alike without religion and without experience. An imprudent law had excluded every one from re-election who had sat in the Constituent Assembly. Compared to the new men, 'the old members,' says the Abbé Jager, 'were angels. Democracy had made immense progress; those whose

subversive principles would have placed them on the left in the Constituent Assembly now formed the extreme right.' On the other hand no advantage, but rather the reverse, accrued from the exclusion of those violent democrats who had sat in the late Assembly, such as Robespierre, Marat, Danton, and the like; for instead of returning to the places whence they came and resuming their former occupations, they remained in the capital and betook themselves to the clubs of the Jacobins and Cordeliers, where they exercised a much more powerful influence than they had ever possessed in the Chamber. With such an Assembly as had now been got together what could the Government do? What could the King do? He was a king without subjects, to whom even the outward forms of respect were denied. Yet it is from this moment that Louis XVI. begins to assume an aspect of moral dignity which he had hitherto lacked in our eyes, for he was henceforward to display in matters of principle and conscience a firmness which goes far to atone for his many former acts of weakness and reprehensible compliance.

Although the amnesty granted by the Constituent Assembly had restored the incarcerated priests to liberty, it did not free them from persecution, which soon recommenced more hotly than ever. This was to be expected; for the Civil Constitution of the Clergy continued in full vigour, and the same provincial administrators who were determined to impose it on the people were still in power. The system of calumniating the clergy and denouncing them to the Assembly, where every accusation against a priest was greedily welcomed, proceeded as before. Every movement or disturbance which spontaneously arose from the resistance of the Catholic populations to the innovations forced upon them was represented in exaggerated proportions and always attri-

buted to the instigation of the priests. One instance may suffice. M. Ruello, the Rector of Loudéac, who had sat in the Assembly, had been weak enough to take the oath, but he redeemed his error by a courageous retraction. Alarmed at the dangers which during the month of April threatened the clergy in Paris, he returned to his parish, where he was joyfully welcomed. Very soon the oath was again tendered to him and he again rejected it. The civil authorities, a few months later, bethought themselves of providing a successor by the usual means of a sham election. The choice fell on an unfrocked monk, Le Breton, who had been Prior of the Abbey of Redon, and had taken an active part in the preparation of the Civil Constitution.<sup>1</sup> On the first Sunday in October, a courageous Catholic stood forth after Mass and asked the people which of the two they would have for their curé, M. Ruello or the new one who was about to be sent to them. ‘We will have M. Ruello,’ shouted aloud almost the entire congregation. The peasants who had come in from the country round with their sticks in their hands now hastened out of the church and drew up in the neighbouring square, with the obvious determination of showing fight to the ‘patriots.’ The National Guards rushed to the spot with loaded muskets, but at this juncture some of the townspeople intervened and succeeded in prevailing on both parties to separate without bloodshed. M. Ruello had withdrawn from the neighbourhood before

<sup>1</sup> Tresvaux, who had seen a portrait of the prior, says that he was represented with long hair, after the fashion of the day, and in quite worldly attire. Le Breton had always averred, from the very commencement of the Revolution, that he had entered the Benedictine Order purely from human motives, and even made it his boast that he had never been a fervent religious. After his appointment to the cure of Loudéac, he distinguished himself by giving a ball at the presbytery on All Saints Day. In 1793 he abandoned his priestly functions and enrolled himself among the National Guard.

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all this occurred, and was far too peaceable and moderate a man to have counselled any violent measure, had he been on the spot; yet he was denounced to the Assembly as having excited sedition in his parish, and the accusation went the round of France.

Other parallel cases might be quoted. Disturbances naturally arose, but those who accused the Catholics of fomenting them were themselves the real authors of the troubles. It was they who seized the churches and installed the schismatic curés, and if the Catholics retired into a barn or private house to celebrate Mass, they pursued them thither, imprisoned or drove away the priests, and ill-treated the families which had harboured them. It was by proceedings such as these, and by countless other vexations, that the populations were sometimes irritated beyond endurance and rose against the authorities, who to them were ministers of injustice, or roughly handled the schismatic intruders themselves. With such manifestations of popular indignation the priests had no more to do than they had with the ducking of Le Coz's vicar. Most of them were at a distance, and their very absence was one of the main causes of the popular irritation, while those who still lingered, concealed in or near their parishes, although they used all their influence to maintain the Christian perseverance of their flocks, were foremost in enjoining moderation and forbearance; moreover, they were the persons best able to ensure the quiet demeanour of the people. But this influence was, in fact, the very gravamen of their offence. The revolutionists vainly flattered themselves that, if the legitimate pastors could be completely disposed of, their flocks would submit to the inevitable, take up with the State clergy, attend their Mass, and give no further trouble. They were simple enough to believe this, because, being themselves devoid

of faith, they knew not its power over those who possessed it. It was in order, then, to get rid of the Catholic priests that they thus persistently denounced them as the disturbers of public tranquillity.

All this while the law, it must be remembered, expressly recognized the freedom of religious worship, nevertheless similar tyrannical proceedings were taking place throughout France. The schismatics, protected by the Government, were in possession of presbyteries, schools, episcopal palaces, and churches. The Catholic clergy, stripped of everything, were compelled, if they would say Mass, to retire to oratories and private chapels ; too happy if even there they might be left in peace. But no ; the populace, especially in the towns, excited by the clubs, would leave them no retreat. They assembled in crowds, and fell upon the congregation as they quietly entered or left their place of worship, and cruelly ill-treated them ; the women in particular, as we have seen. When such disturbances were reported, the authorities, instead of punishing the rioters and protecting the Catholics in the exercise of their just rights, saw no better way of preventing their recurrence than by closing the chapel or oratory, which, in official language, was styled removing the provocation. Scenes of this description were again frequent at this time in Paris, where, after the disorders which had disgraced the capital during the Easter of that year, the effervescence had subsided, and there had been a temporary lull. The Paris Directory, indeed, had made some commendable efforts to obtain the observance of the law as regarded liberty of worship ; by no means, it is true, with entire success, yet with sufficient result to render the practice of their religion possible to Catholics in general, without any serious danger. Where the directories in the provinces were disposed to moderation, the same line had been pursued,

but this was very far from being their usual character; moreover, when they did not go with the stream, the directories themselves were often violently thwarted by the municipalities and the clubs. This was especially the case after the Legislative Assembly had passed the decree of the 29th of November, of which we are about to speak.

The subject of the so-called refractory priests had been taken up almost immediately by the Assembly, which accepted without examination all the denunciations forwarded to it from the provinces. The troubles which were beginning to manifest themselves in the Angoumois drew forth a furious declamation from Isnard,<sup>2</sup> the deputy of the Var, who declared that impunity was the sole cause of this social disorganization, and asked whether men would only begin to feel the dangers of leniency when French blood should dye the waves of the ocean. At another sitting this fanatic exclaimed, that where it was question of political liberty, to forgive was a crime; and he proposed, as the only measure adequate to meet the emergency, the banishment of all the priests from France. So violently irreligious was this man's speech, that even Le Coz, who had been chosen as one of the deputies to the new Assembly, and who, as a constitutional bishop, was not squeamish in the matter of free opinions, was moved to indignation, and said that Isnard had promulgated a code of atheism. Isnard, smarting under the accusation, thought it worth his while to exculpate himself from the charge in a letter to one of the journals, in which he said: 'I have studied nature; I am not a fool; I must therefore believe in God.' This

<sup>2</sup> Isnard, the son of a perfumer, belonged to the party of the Girondists, then in the ascendant, the leaders of which were before long all to perish on the scaffold. Isnard alone managed to escape, and having lain in concealment during the Reign of Terror, was, in the mercy of God, ultimately led to repentance.

was about the sum of his belief and that of his Voltairian associates, who were called together to legislate for Catholic France. The Assembly, however, was as yet not quite prepared for so sweeping a measure as the general exile of a whole class of citizens, although this, its first suggestion, was received with thunders of applause by the Left. After the debate had been prolonged for fifteen days, a law was passed, on the 29th of November, containing a preamble of eighteen articles, the substance of which was as follows—

All non-juring priests must present themselves every eight days to the municipality to take the civic oath. Those who should refuse were to receive no further pension. By the mere fact of their refusal, also, they were to be suspected of rebellion and of evil intentions against their country, and, as such, placed under the special supervision of the authorities. If present in a commune where troubles arose of which religious opinions were the cause or the pretext, non-juring priests were to be subject to temporary removal by the Directory, upon the advice of the district; and, if reason should appear, they were to be denounced to the tribunals. In case of disobedience to the injunction of the Directory they were to be prosecuted, and punished with imprisonment. Every ecclesiastic convicted of having provoked disobedience to the law and constituted authorities was to be subject to two years' imprisonment. The churches and edifices employed for the State worship could not be used for any other. But citizens might hire other churches or chapels for the exercise of their religion under the control of the police; this permission, however, was not to be extended to ecclesiastics who had refused the civic oath. The Directory of every department was to draw up a list of such recusants, with observations on their behaviour, to be transmitted to the

Legislative Assembly, which would thereby be enabled to come to a resolution with regard to an *ultimate measure* for the extirpation of rebellion. The preamble set forth that the civic oath was a pledge of fidelity to the law and of attachment to society, which every citizen ought to give, and that the minister of any worship who should refuse to take it would thereby show that his intention was not to respect established order, and, failing thus to recognize the law, he voluntarily forfeited the advantages which it guaranteed to him. The rest of the preamble was occupied with pointing out the source of the late disorders, namely, the dark machinations of the priests.

We may here observe that the civic oath was not the oath to maintain the Civil Constitution of the Clergy, as some historians have erroneously supposed. Whoever took the civic oath simply swore fidelity to the nation, to the law, and to the King, and engaged to maintain the Constitution with all his power. Some ecclesiastics thought that this oath might be conscientiously taken, but the great majority of the clergy judged otherwise, and regarded it as a snare. For how, in fact, could any one attached to his faith swear fidelity to that anti-catholic piece of legislation which the late Assembly had concocted? How engage to maintain with all his power a Constitution which declared, for instance, that religious vows were contrary to the natural rights of man, as well as any other binding promise made by man to God. The non-juring priests of Paris addressed the King, imploring him to exercise his right of veto against the unjust and tyrannical law of November 29. The appeal was not needed. Louis bitterly repented the sanction he had given to the imposition of the previous oath upon the clergy, now especially that he beheld its evil effects. The Holy Father's condemnation was also present to his mind, and his own religious principles

made him recoil from tearing up Catholicism by its last remaining roots. Accordingly he made this noble reply : ' I will die rather than sanction such a measure.'

The directories of the Breton department, although they had been forced to comply with the letter of the amnesty by releasing the priests, had soon recommended active proceedings against them. The dispositions evinced by the Legislative Assembly were too much in harmony with their own for them not to take full advantage of them ; nay, they ran ahead of that body by adopting a course of persecution which had not as yet received its sanction, and in recommending further measures of a still severer character, which as yet the Assembly had not discussed, although, as we have seen, it was very soon to hint at their probable adoption. ' When it is question of saving the country,' says the administrative council of the Finisterre, in an address to the Assembly, dated the 18th of November, ' we must not limit ourselves to measures of strict justice. Be assured, the evil is at its height. Knowing, therefore, its magnitude, you will frame a rigorous decree. The amnesty having restored liberty to the incarcerated priests, their presence in their parishes has created fresh disorders. The most efficacious law would be one which would banish them from the soil of France.' Some days later a memorial, couched in still more violent language, was sent up, complaining of the intimidation exercised against the constitutional clergy, accusing the non-juring priests of preaching rebellion, and specifying an intention of arresting the ecclesiastical disturbers of the peace, a measure which had become necessary, and which, it was hoped, would be approved by the Assembly. Expilly had a worthy assistant in an episcopal vicar called Gomaire, who likewise belonged to the departmental administration of Finisterre, and fully equalled his principal in hatred of the faithful clergy. He was

originally from Lorient, but had incurred suspension in the diocese of Vannes. He had then passed into that of Léon, where he had somehow succeeded in obtaining the post of chaplain in a private family at the time when the oath to the Civil Constitution of the Clergy was imposed. Such a priest was, as we may say, made to order for the new Church; he accordingly pushed himself forward, and his ‘patriotic’ zeal won him the confidence of Expilly. This man had recently been made president of the department, and he it was who drew up, or dictated, the violent address sent up to the Assembly. Later on he contracted two or three civil marriages, and gave so much scandal as to fall into general contempt.

The department of Finisterre had not waited for the sanction of the Assembly to begin to act; indeed it had already begun to act when it forwarded its request for approval. On the 22nd of November it had issued decrees of arrest against two priests, which were followed, only four days later, by a general order to arrest all non-juring priests and detain them in the Castle of Brest. An active persecution now commenced; the priests were taken up and treated as so many malefactors wherever the authorities could lay their hands upon them. The arrests continued during the whole of December, and at its close there were fifty confessors imprisoned in the Castle, eleven of whom had been transferred from the seminary of Quimper. These latter arrived at Brest on the 6th of December, at six o’clock in the evening, and were marched off to the Castle amidst the yells and execrations of the rabble, who, pressing violently on the file of guards which formed a hedge on either side, endeavoured to seize and take summary vengeance on the prisoners. Some screamed ‘*A la lanterne!*’ others shouted that they should be flung into the sea. At last they were safely consigned to the

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Castle under the convoy of the Procureur-Syndic of the district and two members of the municipality, one of whom never ceased loading them with abuse, and threatening them with the utmost rigours of the law; to which M. Boissière, who had been secretary to the late Bishop of Quimper, Mgr. de Saint-Luc, calmly replied that, so long as the laws were opposed to the interests of religion, their consciences forbade obedience, and that they were ready, with God's help, to suffer all things, even death itself, rather than yield compliance. Once lodged in the Castle, they were informed that they would not be permitted to speak with any one from without except in the presence of the sentinel and in the French language, and that only for the space of a quarter of an hour; neither would they be allowed the use of pen, ink, and paper, but would be provided with the necessary materials when they wished to write; in other words, their letters were to be inspected, and the contents reported to the authorities.

Not satisfied with imprisoning the clergy, the department continued to send up address after address to the Assembly, dictating the course to be pursued, in terms like the following:—‘There is no better means for inspiring priests with respect for the law than to punish their disobedience by fines, and these ought to be levied at once.’ Thus, after being despoiled of their benefices, the faithful clergy were to be robbed of their last slender resources; and these were slender indeed, for the Government allowed them but a very small pension, and paid it also in assignats, that is, in paper currency of a very depreciated value. Their needs were great, for their captivity was a hard one, and their diet very scant; nevertheless, no one was admitted to see them, or allowed to supply their necessities. At last an elderly lady, who had long been in the habit of visiting the prisons,

obtained access to them, and profited by the opportunity to furnish additional food and clothes to those who were most in want. In another part of the Castle a number of criminals were imprisoned; these men wrote a joint letter to the priests who undeservedly shared their imprisonment, recommending themselves to their prayers and soliciting alms; and these generous confessors, forgetting their own needs, made a little collection amongst themselves to enable these poor creatures to have a better meal than usual, accompanying the contribution with a letter full of kindness.

As a last resource the incarcerated priests appealed from the tyranny of the local authorities to the justice of their sovereign. How they succeeded in preparing and safely transmitting their letter we are not informed; perhaps their gaolers allowed it to pass, knowing how fruitless any such application must prove. We are told that the King shed tears when he read it, but he was well-nigh as powerless as the imprisoned priests, and utterly unable to effect their liberation.

Brest was not the only place of detention in the Finistere; Quimper also had its prison. Here the Abbé Dulaurents, Canon and Vicar-General of the diocese of Quimper, having also formerly been Rector of the University of Paris and Grand Master of the College of Navarre, was confined. He was now past eighty, and almost completely blind, yet, in spite of his age and bodily affliction, he could not obtain leave to retire to his relatives in the country until they had made reiterated applications for his release. Another canon and vicar-general, the Abbé Guesdon, who was as old as the Abbé Dulaurents, and was deprived of the use of his legs, shared his captivity, but was not so fortunate as to obtain his liberation; in his case the administrators were inflexible. It must not be supposed that the priests were

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unmolested at this time in the other departments of Brittany ; very far from it ; but, as before, Finisterre distinguished itself by its zeal and activity in the bad cause. Nothing, indeed, could exceed the passionate eagerness which the authorities of Quimper displayed in calumniating and persecuting the non-jurors. Yet in the documents of the time, when everything which could be discovered to the disadvantage of the clergy would have been gladly recorded, not a trace can be found of any offence committed by them, nor even of any act of imprudence. Their whole crime consisted in their inviolable attachment to their faith, and their rejection of the schism, a rejection which was interpreted as disobedience to the law.

We have now arrived at the close of the miserable year 1791, only to begin another still more miserable, at least more full of horrors ; but these horrors were the legitimate outcome of the work which had been done in the three preceding years, a work of impiety and destruction on which the year 1791 had set its seal.

## CHAPTER XI.

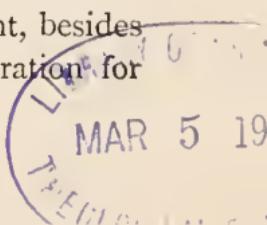
### *Enforcement of the Civic Oath in defiance of the Royal Veto.*

UP to this time the main accusation brought against the priests was that they were the instigators of the troubles which had arisen in their parishes. But the beginning of the year 1792 was to see a fresh order of charges prominently arrayed against them. They were accused of obstructing the payment of the taxes, and the sale of corn, of holding communication with the enemy, and enlisting soldiers for the army of the emigrant princes. Bread was very dear, the insecurity of the times interfered with the free circulation of grain, and the sovereigns on the other side of the Rhine were preparing to invade France. All these calamities were laid at the door of the clergy, and a hungry, impoverished, and excited populace, which had been led to expect the beginning of a golden age, believed these calumnies, absurd as they were, which the revolutionists disseminated as proved and recognized facts. Moreover, every device was adopted for bringing odium on the priests. The following stratagem adopted at Nantes may serve as an instance.

It would appear that in some places the non-juring clergy were still allowed to say Mass in churches which had been seized by the State for the official worship. Such a practice is in itself open to much

objection, at least in ordinary times, but these were not ordinary times, and the clergy were ready to accept for their poor bereaved flocks any advantage which conscience did not absolutely forbid. Nor was there any danger of a misapprehension, such as might arise in seasons of tranquillity, from the habit of officiating in the same edifice with heretics and schismatics. One day, the faithful who were accustomed to assist at the Mass of a legitimate priest, at a certain hour, in one of the churches of Nantes, were much surprised to find the false pastors occupying the altar. They turned hastily to leave the church, but were headed back by armed men. It was in the midst of the confusion caused by their efforts to escape and their loud remonstrances, mingled with the threats and blasphemies of the National Guards, that the apostates went through with their sacrilegious Mass. But they failed not afterwards to accuse the Catholic clergy of having collected the people together, with the object of raising a disturbance and obstructing their ministrations. In consequence of this imputed offence, most of the churches were now closed to them; but this did not content the ‘patriots.’ A secret plan was arranged for seizing some of the clergy, but it was not communicated until late at night to those who were to be the active agents. Thus it was hoped that no tidings of the plot would reach the ears of the priests, but that they would come at their usual time, on the following day, to a church at which they were still allowed to officiate. Accordingly, by the appointed hour, the sacristy was crammed with ‘patriots,’ but their malice was doomed to disappointment, for some of the National Guards had enough conscience or compassion remaining to warn the intended victims of the trap laid for them, and they thus escaped for a season the imprisonment that awaited them.

The Directory, which was the accomplice in all these acts of injustice, now promulgated a decree which obliged all priests in the department to come to reside at Nantes, that they might be placed under the supervision of the civil authority. The Directory of the Côtes-du-Nord went still further, and, on the 15th of February, decreed the seizure and imprisonment of all the priests in the department. The order was carried out in the most cruel way. There was at Dinan an old fortress which, having been turned to no purpose since it had served as a place of confinement for the prisoners taken during the last war between France and England, had fallen into complete decay. This wretched building was selected as a fit prison for the priests. Hither, accordingly, they were hurried, sometimes in fetters, sometimes accoutred in mockery as National Guards, sometimes in company with common malefactors. The Abbé Tresvaux says that he himself saw a priest forced to follow after a horse, to which he was tied as one animal might be fastened to another. A gendarme was mounted on the horse, and the priest was surrounded by a group of young miscreants who added to their insults the accompaniment of a violin, just as they might have done had they been parading a monkey or a bear. At Jugon, a little town near Dinan, the priests were treated with peculiar inhumanity, being obliged to pay for the dinner of their guards, as well as their own, and confined at night in a dingy place, which was a receptacle for all the filth of the town with a scanty allowance of straw thrown into it to serve for their beds. At Dinan their persons were searched, and many of them robbed of such articles as they had about them. Here also they had to pay for their own food, although they were owed arrears of the small stipend allowed them by Government, besides having to make their gaoler a large remuneration for



acting as their cook ; and when some persons offered to perform this office at a cheaper rate, they were refused and sent away. The heartless man, likewise, exacted payment for the most trifling commission he might be asked to execute, and for all this did not spare them insults and abuse. They suffered the same, and worse, at the hands of the municipality, who had them repeatedly searched, stripping them for the purpose in a most immodest way. Pen, ink, paper, manuscripts, relics, devotional pictures, and even some of their prayer books, had been taken from them, and they could not speak or write to any one without permission, and then only in presence or subject to the inspection of their guards. Secular persons detected in endeavouring to converse with them, or manifesting sympathy for their sufferings, or so much as suspected of doing so, were imprisoned. The bad, close atmosphere of that part of the Castle in which they were confined having caused the sickness and death of one of their number who arrived by the first convoy, the prisoners were afterwards allowed, at the discretion of the gader, to walk on the platform of one of the towers, but this indulgence was dearly purchased by the insults they received, not only from himself and his subordinates, but from passengers in the streets below. More than once even shots were fired at them. But all these sufferings were doubtless light to these confessors of the faith, compared to what they experienced from the fall of one of their brethren, who had the weakness to give way and purchase his liberty by an act of apostasy. With this sad exception, they all nobly persevered and supported unshaken the rigours of their captivity unto the end. How close and vexatiously minute was the watch kept over the non-juring clergy at this time may be exemplified by the treatment of M. Rouault, the Rector of Vezin, who

had retired to Rennes after his expulsion from his cure. Having been sent for by one of his parishioners who lay dangerously ill, he visited him, and gave a catechism to a child. On his return to Rennes, he was seized and taken back to Vezin, chained to the bookseller who had sold the catechism, in order to be confronted with the sick man and the child.

In all these acts the authorities, nothing loath, were urged on by the constitutional priests, who, furious at seeing their services unattended, were always provoking the interference of the civil power and soliciting measures of merciless severity against those priests who continued secretly to minister to their flocks. Hence it was very difficult to remain concealed even in country places. The constitutional clergy had their spies everywhere, who kept a watchful eye on those Christian families which were known to be devoted to their religion. On the least suspicion of a priest being hidden in any of these homes, a domiciliary visit was made, and every corner searched, every outhouse and barn ransacked, the gendarmes plunging their bayonets into the hay or straw, without any concern as to what injury they might inflict on those whom they suspected of being concealed amongst it. The châteaux were also explored in the same fashion under the pretence of looking for arms ; and, if a priest were found, he was dragged to the nearest town amidst the yells of the rabble that always attended these proceedings. Such was the spectacle presented throughout France, but especially in the departments of the west.

Pius VI., deeply grieved by the deplorable state into which the Church of France had fallen, issued a Brief on March 19, addressed to all the clergy and people of the kingdom, with the double object of supporting and encouraging them under their trials and moving,

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if possible, the schismatical bishops and priests to return to Catholic unity. The contempt into which the State Church had fallen had already produced several retractions among the second order of the clergy, but some even of the constitutional bishops were known to be inwardly torn with remorse, and, indeed, it is said that several of them were in secret correspondence on the subject with the Holy See. This circumstance must have encouraged the Holy Father to hope that his Brief might determine them to renounce their schism, and seek reconciliation with the Church; but, notwithstanding the union of paternal tenderness with Apostolic firmness which was displayed in the document, it produced no effect upon the leaders of the schism. Those few among them who were well disposed probably lacked the courage to retract, and as for the great bulk of their colleagues, no hope could be entertained of men many of whom, such as Minée, for instance, sinking day by day into lower depths of iniquity, were probably already meditating the abandonment of their sacred profession; while others, such as Le Coz, Expilly, and Le Masle, were so eaten up with pride, that to confess themselves in the wrong would have been almost a moral impossibility; others, again, of whom Jacob may be taken as the type, seemed too stupidly ignorant either to realize their own position or to feel what was implied in the weight of the Church's censures.

But if the Brief of the 19th of March was powerless to touch the hearts and consciences of the schismatics, it irritated their tempers beyond measure, and became a fresh pretext for pursuing all, whether lay or clerical, who were known to be attached to the faith. The diocese of Rennes was the theatre of many cruel proceedings, of even a worse character than the one to which we have alluded. Towards the close of Lent a couple of

hundred ruffians, who had accoutr'd themselves as National Guards, made an inroad on several parishes which, owing to the difficulty of finding substitutes, still possessed their legitimate pastors. These men scoured women and girls, drank to excess, and carried off the peasants' bread, killed their fowls under the pretence that their owners were aristocrats, drove away the priests, and closed the churches. At Moutier the aged rector, a man greatly respected, narrowly escaped being hanged by these miscreants; yet he had received them charitably when they invaded his house, giving them all the provisions he had by him, and sending to buy more when they had emptied his larder. In return for his hospitality, they required him to take the oath. 'No, gentlemen, no oath; never, never,' was his reply. Then they abused and threatened him, and were actually preparing the cords to string him up, he declaring all the while that he was ready to die, as he had lived, for the Catholic faith. Whether or no these ruffians found little sport in hanging a man who was willing to be hanged, so it was that they desisted, and contented themselves with pushing him out of his house and flinging his furniture into the street. To a complaint of the parishioners, the district administrators replied that this expedition ought to have taken place a year sooner. Another band of these marauders drove away the Curé of Acigné, and gave themselves up to many excesses in the parish, destroying the mayor's furniture and hacking a crucifix to pieces with an axe. A detachment of National Guards was on this occasion sent from Rennes to put a stop to these disorders, but on their arrival they found the leaders of the band to be such 'excellent patriots,' that they allowed them quietly to depart, only remarking that their civism was perhaps a trifle too enthusiastic.

While the authorities were thus indulgent, the con-

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stitutional priests found matter of pleasure and amusement in exploits of this sort. During Passion Week, a troop of the same description invaded the parish of Martigné-Ferchaud and its neighbourhood, attacking and rifling the houses of the peasants who did not attend the schismatic Mass. This was a plea for every act of depredation. In the house of a farmer they found a little catechism compiled to enlighten the faithful and warn them against the schism. This was quite enough to condemn honest Jean Chantebel, so he was dragged off to prison. The next day a sort of committee was held, which ordered the catechism to be burned. Fagots were piled before the prison door, and the National Guards, with their colonel, were present at the ceremony. Chantebel was brought out, and commanded to commit his catechism to the flames. ‘My catechism is a good one,’ replied the sturdy farmer; ‘you may do what you please with me, but I will never consent to burn a book which contains the true principles of the faith.’ He was now assailed with every manner of threat and insult, and the colonel, taking the lighted torch, held it to Chantebel’s hand and scorched it. All was in vain, for this good Christian evinced an unflinching courage which showed that he was ready himself to be committed to the flames rather than betray his faith by the smallest act of compliance. The disconcerted demagogues now took counsel together, and decided on parading their prisoner through the streets of Martigné mounted backwards on a horse and holding the tail in his hand. To this he made not the slightest objection, and rode through the town with an air of as much tranquillity as if he had been receiving an ovation instead of being made an object of mockery and scorn. Many of the spectators were moved to tears; but Chantebel’s wife, who was among them,

cried out to him, ‘Hold firm; it is for the good God, and He will reward you.’ The National Guards, at last, feeling that they were getting the worst of it, abandoned their cruel sport, and made off.

Another peasant, a labouring man, whose name is unrecorded, showed a like magnanimous spirit. The soldiers, unable to get him to walk to the church, determined to drag him the whole way. There were twenty-eight *echaliers*<sup>1</sup> between his house and the town, and at each of these his captors stopped and, making him lay his head on the cross beam, threatened to cut it off if he continued to resist. Thus this noble Christian may be said to have suffered in will twenty-eight martyrdoms in the course of an hour. The legitimate pastors who were still permitted to remain, because their places were not yet filled, had themselves often to endure very rigorous treatment. The Curé of Saint-Sulpice, for having given his flock instructions on the marks of the true Church, was condemned to be shaved and to wear the *carcan* for four hours. The *carcan* was an iron ring attached to a stake, and fastened round the culprit’s neck, who was thus subjected to a species of pillory. This degrading punishment was to be followed by imprisonment for six years. The Rector of Noyon-sur-Vilaine was sentenced to three years’ detention for having preached on the unity of the Church, and upon his appealing to the tribunal of Saint-Malo he was given his choice between publicly retracting his doctrine or undergoing imprisonment for life. He chose the latter, as did also his vicaire.

On the approach of Easter the fury of the persecution was redoubled, the schismatics being aware that the Catholics would be anxious to perform their Paschal

<sup>1</sup> Rude fences, made of the boughs of trees placed transversely and resting on posts, to keep the cattle from straying.

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duties, and that the priests who remained concealed about the country would use every effort on their part to enable them to fulfil their obligation. Here was a motive for increased watchfulness and more stringent severity. Early in April the department of the Ille-et-Vilaine issued an injunction for all priests who had been superseded to bind themselves by oath neither to say nor to do anything in contravention of the Constitution ; if not willing to enter into this engagement, they were to repair to Rennes within fifteen days after the publication of the decree ; they were also on their arrival to give in their names, as well as the names and addresses of those with whom they lodged, to the secretary of the municipality. The priests could not in conscience take this oath ; many of them, therefore, obeyed the injunction and repaired voluntarily to Rennes ; others would not leave their desolate flocks, and preferred running the risk involved in disobedience, to abandoning their sheep to the wolf. As soon as the fortnight had expired, the gendarmes and national guards began scouring the country for the purpose of hunting out and seizing the refractory clergy. Every day priests might be seen arriving at Rennes in the most deplorable condition, many of them only half-clothed, for often they had been hurried off with such precipitation that they were not able to take even needful apparel. Among them were aged men, eminent for their virtues, whose grey hairs could not protect them from the grossest insults ; others sick or infirm, and scarcely able to drag themselves along, yet compelled to make the whole journey on foot. Christian families opened their houses to these confessors, and here at first they had the consolation of privately saying Mass ; this was also a great boon to the faithful of the city, whose curés had been banished to a distance of twelve miles. But soon the

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schismatics perceived that the people resorted to these houses, and were all the more angry that their own churches remained deserted. Whereupon, they proceeded, as usual, to rouse up the clubs, which, in their turn, brought their influence to bear on the department, demanding the incarceration of the priests. But in this they were not for the time being altogether successful, though the Directory charged the municipality to renew its exertions in repressing all disturbance of the public order; an injunction which was quite sufficient to encourage every manner of persecution.

Accordingly, every house in which a priest had found an asylum had now a mark of suspicion set upon it, as had all who frequented it, who were often subjected to barbarous ill-treatment. Heavy fines were inflicted on priests for saying Mass, as well as on those who attended it. Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament was likewise interdicted. But these were by no means the only vexations. The priests, with a view to economy, were in the habit of having their meals in common; this practice was now forbidden, and at the same time they were prohibited from associating together, whether indoors or out of doors, in any number exceeding three, on pain of imprisonment. Soon they were debarred the liberty of walking beyond the city, and were required to present themselves twice a day before the municipality at appointed times. When the heat became excessive, they were allowed the shelter of a small apartment, so small that it was often crammed to suffocation, and in this stove-like atmosphere they had not unfrequently to wait whole hours. Yet, if they showed themselves in the streets, it was only to encounter insult, and they could rarely reach the municipality without having to run the gauntlet of a derisive crowd. If one of them was too ill to leave his lodging, a municipal would make

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his appearance and compel him to get up and, if unable, or, indeed, in any case, assail him with a volley of abuse. Such for four months was the condition of two hundred and fifty ecclesiastics belonging to Rennes and the neighbouring districts. By-and-by it was to become still more intolerable, preparatory to their final imprisonment and deportation. The priests at Nantes were treated in a similar manner. It will be remembered that, by a decree of January 25, the ejected curés in the department had been compelled to return to that city. Here, also, they were restricted from walking in the country, lest they should take occasion to minister to the spiritual needs of persons living in the neighbourhood, and were not permitted to go more than a mile and half from the cathedral. Like their brethren at Rennes, they were obliged to attend a muster-roll at the municipality twice a day, the way to which was lined with a crowd of people who loaded them with the coarsest abuse. This was encouraged by their enemies in the hope that they might be betrayed into some expression of irritation which could be used against them; but, these tactics having failed, persons were suborned to approach them with pretended tokens of sympathy and compassion, which others, posted for the purpose, were to resent as an affront to the authorities, and so get up the semblance of a riot, which might be made matter of accusation against the priests.

We have already related how Mgr. de Hercé, Bishop of Dol, had found himself compelled to retire from his diocese to his relatives in the adjoining department of Mayenne. That department formed one of the new constitutional bishoprics under the name of Laval, its chief town, and, together with those of Angers and Mans, had been joined to the five bishoprics of Brittany retained by the new arrangement, and placed

under the metropolitan of the North West, that is, the schismatic bishop installed at Rennes. The administration of Laval was not more tolerant than its neighbours, and, indeed, had preceded that of Ille-et-Vilaine in the race of persecution by summoning all the non-juring priests habitually residing in the department to repair to Laval within eight days. Unjust as was this law, Mgr. de Hercé prepared to obey it, notwithstanding the remonstrances of his family. ‘God forbid,’ he said, ‘that I should suffer so precious an opportunity to escape me of confessing the Name of Jesus Christ. I owe this example to the priests, and shall be too happy to be their leader in captivity;’ and so he went with his brother, the Abbé de Hercé, and M. Desvauponts, who were his two Vicars-General. At Laval he met about four hundred priests of the dioceses of Mans and Angers, who had been found domiciled in the department of Mayenne. At first they were simply forbidden to go beyond the limits of the town, which thus became their prison, but they were required to report themselves daily to the authorities, and the official who presided on these occasions, in calling out the names in succession, took particular care, when the bishop’s turn came, to style him plain Hercé. But this was by no means the only affront which the prelate received; on the contrary, he seemed to be specially singled out for contemptuous treatment, of which the following incident may be cited as an example. Like the rest of the clergy, he had been compelled by a new law to give up the sacerdotal dress, but had still retained his pectoral cross. The eyes of the ‘patriots’ were offended at this symbol of episcopal rank, and one of them had the insolence to bid an infamous woman who was standing by go and tear it from his neck. From this indignity, however, he was saved

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by the ecclesiastics who surrounded him ; it was the sole occasion upon which they resisted any act of violence, for mere personal outrages they bore, not only patiently, but willingly. The faithful of Laval, who had vied with each other in showing these ecclesiastics all the respect that was their due, would fain have shielded them from maltreatment, even at the peril of their lives, and numbers of times these worthy citizens came forward to offer Mgr. Hercé and his companions their protection against the insults of the mob. But these generous soldiers of Christ would not consent to lose one particle of the glory of suffering in such a cause. ‘Leave them alone,’ they would reply ; ‘they know not the pleasure they give us in adding to our merit as confessors of the faith.’

All these proceedings, it should be observed, were unauthorized by the existing law. It is true that they were sanctioned by the Assembly’s decree of the 29th of November, but the King had refused to sign that decree, and had also sent frequent proclamations into the provinces, enjoining perfect freedom of religious worship ; but these royal mandates had met with no respect, except in quarters where order was still preserved owing to the circumstance that the departmental administrations still numbered among them good and faithful men ; elsewhere they seemed to serve no other purpose than that of irritating the local authorities, who loudly denounced them as obstructing the execution of measures which were absolutely necessary for the maintenance of public security.

## CHAPTER XII.

### *The Legislative Assembly. Its antichristian measures.*

WE are now approaching the time when the persecution was to enter on a new and more terrible phase ; and it could not be otherwise, considering the antichristian character of the Assembly sitting in the capital. The Constituent Assembly had, it is true, included in its ranks men most hostile to Christianity, but the time had not yet come for them to take the lead, or even to manifest all their designs. The majority of that body, as was before observed, did not aim at the destruction of religion. Even men who were imbued with the Voltairian philosophy, and were themselves unbelievers, still reckoned that some religious faith and worship was good for the people, but they desired that it should be a religion and a worship which was subject to the control of the State. This object the Assembly hoped it had accomplished by framing the Civil Constitution of the Clergy, but it had encountered an invincible obstacle in the fidelity of the bishops and of the vast majority of the priests, as well as in the repugnance of the masses. The Assembly, then, had failed in creating a Church ; it had only produced a schism. Now, however, circumstances were changed. The Catholic clergy were crushed—dispersed, imprisoned ; the members of the present Assembly, with very few exceptions, were the avowed

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enemies of Christianity, the populace of the great towns had been trained to impiety, and were ripe for any deed of violence. No serious resistance was to be apprehended. As for what was styled the fanatical portion of the community, it must be indoctrinated with new principles or put down by force of arms.

Any one who had followed the debates in the Legislative Assembly at that time would have clearly seen that nothing less than the destruction of Christianity was resolved upon. It is not to be supposed that that body really believed in the culpability of the clergy, though it suited its purpose to appear to credit the denunciations taxing them with factious and seditious conduct. A few may have been so far blinded, but the great majority knew perfectly well the true state of the case, and that the troubles in the provinces arose from the pertinacity with which it was attempted to force the consciences of the people and impose on them a religion which they abhorred. Some of the deputies, indeed, free-thinkers as they were, but men of candour and common sense, had the courage openly to declare their conviction on this point, and to indicate the true sources of the disturbances. The Assembly could not gainsay their arguments, for they knew that this was the simple truth; but another motive was at work, which all such reasoning failed to reach. What matter the guilt or innocence of these men? Christianity must be destroyed. What to put in its place they had not as yet resolved, but it was about this time that we begin to hear of ‘the Great Being,’ the ‘religion of nature,’ ‘civic altars,’ and meet with frequent allusions to a new worship, such as primitive man was supposed to have offered before a ‘monstrous theocracy’ had been set up for the misery and enslavement of the human race.

But to get rid of Christianity, the Catholic priests must

be got rid of, and so long as they remained on French soil, this was clearly impossible ; the very sight of them kept up the memory of the old faith. As for the new clergy, no one thought of them ; they would offer no impediment. Accordingly the destruction of the ancient clergy was a thing absolutely determined upon and ostentatiously avowed by the Jacobins, for the clubs were always more out-spoken than the Assembly. We find the butcher Legendre, during a discussion on the subject at the Jacobin Club, exclaiming in true slaughter-house style, ‘Let the refractory priest carry his head to the scaffold or his body to the galleys.’ With him deportation was too mild a punishment. ‘You exterminate noxious vermin,’ he said ; ‘you do not merely remove them out of the way. When the gardener sees a caterpillar, he puts his foot upon it.’<sup>1</sup> Such, then, was the project of which we mark the development in the beginning of the year 1792—the extirpation of Christianity by the death or banishment of the whole priesthood of France. The troubles were simply a pretext, as those who alleged them well knew, but it was necessary to accuse and malign men whom it was resolved to exterminate. The King, no doubt, would not consent to sacrifice the clergy, therefore he too must go.

Besides the non-juring priests, however, there were the teaching bodies, whom the existing laws did not affect—Christian Brothers, who conducted primary education, priests of the Oratory, who directed colleges, and the Congregations of St. Sulpice and St. Lazare, who formed the young clergy in the seminaries. Again, there were learned ecclesiastical bodies, such as those of the Sorbonne

<sup>1</sup> Legendre subsequently adopted more humane sentiments, and on the final triumph of the Convention over the Terrorists, who, after the fall of Robespierre, made several violent attempts to regain the command of the Assembly, even proposed a law for restoring to the families of innocent victims their confiscated property.

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and of Navarre, and a great number of Congregations of nuns devoted to the instruction of youth and the care of the sick and poor. The Constituent Assembly had excepted all educational and charitable congregations when it had decreed the suppression of the religious orders, though from the terms of the decree it appeared that this toleration was only provisional. The Congregations of men devoted to higher education had, however, become completely disorganized on account of the refusal of their superiors and professors to take the oath, and the Lazarists and Sulpicians were in the same condition. All that could be said to be in practical operation were the Congregations dedicated to primary instruction, the Christian Brothers and the communities of women. Great efforts were made, as we have seen, by the constitutional clergy, after their installation, to prevail on these religious communities to acknowledge their authority, but in this they had signally failed. The continued vexations to which they had been since exposed had not shaken the courage of these religious women ; but although as yet no legislative enactment had been passed against them, the authorities afforded them no protection. Municipal officers entered their convents at all hours under one pretext or another ; the nuns were continually obliged to appear in person before the tribunals in order to obtain a certificate that they were alive and entitled to their pension ; next they were deprived of their chaplains, and schismatic priests were sent to say Mass in their chapels ; but the religious invariably absented themselves and practised their devotions apart. Nor were other and more violent measures spared. The history of those times abounds in examples ; as, for instance, at La Rochelle, where bands of armed men burst into the convents, summoning the nuns to take the oath of fidelity to the schismatic bishop, and,

on their refusal, brutally insulting and even flogging them. But what is strangest of all is to find the lower orders lending themselves as instruments in the attack on those holy women who had been their special benefactors, devoted, as they were, to the service of the sick, the poor, and the fatherless. Thus the daughters of St. Vincent de Paul had been compelled to abandon fifty of their houses in consequence of the increasing persecution and outrage to which they were exposed.

In the eyes of the present Assembly the Congregations which imparted religious instruction to the children of the poor were specially obnoxious, because they were engaged in implanting the very principles which it aimed at extirpating. True, these poor women could not be accused of exciting religious disturbances, nevertheless the question of their suppression was declared to be one of 'urgency for public order,' or, as a deputy more frankly stated the case, it was urgent to suppress these Congregations, because they diffused through the country and instilled into the minds of children 'the poison of aristocracy and fanaticism ;' that is, they taught a religion which it was desired to destroy. And so, on the 6th of April, a decree of the Legislative Assembly abolished all Congregations, whether of men or women, engaged in education, as well as all that were devoted to the care of the sick. To his credit, be it said, the schismatic bishop of Ille-et-Vilaine, Le Coz, raised his voice against this measure of wholesale destruction. 'Surrounded as we are with ruins,' he exclaimed, 'will you destroy still more ?' To which a deputy replied that there was no question as to the suppression, but simply as to the mode ; meaning that the measure itself had been definitively resolved upon long before. 'You deprive six hundred thousand children of the means of learning how to read and write,' retorted Le Coz ; but he was told that the

Directory would see to that. On the same day, which was Good Friday, a law was passed forbidding the wearing of any ecclesiastical and religious dress. It was proposed by Torné, the constitutional bishop of Bourges, formerly a Court preacher, now an enthusiastic Jacobin. He said that this abolition was a matter of political importance, though superficial persons might regard it as 'a paltry question of toilet.' If, when the religious bodies had all been suppressed, people were to see these costumes gliding about, they would seem like so many shades. Would not these posthumous decorations be so many stepping-stones to the counter-revolution? This mingled imagery of gliding costumes, shades, posthumous decorations, and stepping-stones threw the Assembly into a fever of enthusiasm. Vociferous cries demanded an immediate vote, and when a member gravely remarked that they could not vote before they had time to reflect, a sentiment so antiquated evoked only bursts of laughter. Another deputy ventured to suggest some prudential reasons against the measure, but he was speedily talked down, and the abolition was voted almost unanimously. Fauchet, the schismatic bishop of Calvados, hastened to take off his *calotte* (clerical cap) and to put it in his pocket, and Gaivernon, the schismatic bishop of Limoges, laid his pectoral cross on the bureau, as a patriotic gift, while Torné indicated by significant gestures his regret that, not having his own about him, he was unable to make a similar offering. At the same time, the priests took off their bands. All this was done amidst a tumult of applause.

It was well known that the King would not sanction the late decrees, but this was only an additional motive for enacting them. The Assembly desired to extract another veto from him in furtherance of their own designs. In the meantime his consent was practi-

cally dispensed with, and the law was punctually obeyed in those departments and communes where the Jacobin party was master. Indeed, many departments had been beforehand with the law ; for instance, the Lazarists of Vannes had already, without any assignable reason, been turned out of doors, in the depth of winter, at eight o'clock in the evening ; but the decree of the Assembly came to give a fresh impulse to the zeal of the authorities. All who remained of the teaching bodies were speedily dispersed, and the children of the poor abandoned to ignorance and vice. Still the clergy had to be got rid of, and fresh calumnies must be invented, fresh crimes laid to their charge, to authorize more decisive measures against the non-jurors ; the land must be swept clean of their presence. The King would certainly again interpose his veto ; so much the better. The clubs and revolutionary press would be lashed into fury by his refusal, and thus the ruin of the throne, as well as of the altar, would be facilitated. The programme was carried out. On May 24, we find a Breton deputy, a doctor of Morlaix, declaring that, at the instigation of the priests, a man had murdered his wife, his children, and his father-in-law because they followed the constitutional curé. It is needless to say that this absurd accusation was but a text for declaiming against the faithful clergy. Several severe measures were suggested by different deputies, amongst whom figured two Breton lawyers. The proposal of Guadet, deputy of Bordeaux, an avowed unbeliever, was finally accepted. Deportation was decreed on the denunciation of twenty citizens, provided the opinion of the district were in accordance therewith. If not, there was to be an examination by the department, in order to verify the assertion that the presence of these ecclesiastics was prejudicial to public tranquillity.

The King, although he had lately manifested his

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habitual weakness by consenting to the disbanding of his own guard, a body of six thousand men, thus leaving himself helplessly exposed to the rage of his enemies, had the courage to refuse his sanction to this persecuting law, although he was importuned and even menaced by his ministry. The murmurs of the revolutionists were now heard on all sides, and the Directory of Morbihan had even the impertinence to write to Louis, taking him to task for his opposition to a salutary law, universally demanded by the public safety. They concluded by telling him that even were they to perish victims of the insufficiency of the law, they would have the courage to supply for its absence until the King consented to accede to the general desire by sanctioning the decrees of the 25th and 26th of May. It did not require much courage to brave the powerless monarch or to persecute the unresisting priests. But such was the style of the day. It attained its object; for none are more credulous than the ignorant populace, none more ready to believe in the existence of horrible conspiracies and of traitors in disguise; and the unreasoning panic of the multitude is the too frequent prelude of violence and bloodshed. Every measure had been taken to pull down the feeble barriers which still surrounded the throne, and Louis, seeing his ministry constantly assailed, had sought protection by throwing himself into the party of his enemies, and choosing his administration from among the Girondists, in the hopes of either gaining them over or lessening their influence by opposing them to the Jacobins, in all which he completely failed. In this ministry there are only two names which have been much remembered; that of Roland, who was completely under the influence of his wife, the famous Madame Roland—both, however, equally animated by a deep hatred against Christianity—and that of Dumouriez, who was the best man of the set. He was

an energetic and courageous general, and at that moment immensely popular for having caused war to be declared against Austria. Dumouriez honestly desired to protect the King, as, indeed, did two or three more of the ministers, who, brought into near relations with him, could not withhold their personal esteem. On Louis sending for Dumouriez to consult him as to the formation of a new ministry, he reminded the King that a sanction of the decree of deportation was but the consequence of the law to which he had formerly consented. Bitter, indeed, to Louis must these words have been. He did not attempt to excuse himself. ‘I committed a great fault then,’ he said; ‘and I reproach myself with it.’ Dumouriez represented to him that by his refusal he would not save religion, but would endanger himself, his crown, and his family. Louis was affected even to tears, but this time he held firm. ‘I expect death,’ he replied sadly; ‘and I forgive my enemies beforehand.’

The terrible 20th of June, that day of mortal agony to the royal family, when the mob invaded the Tuileries, was soon to follow, but it does not come within the scope of this narrative to describe the horrors enacted in the capital. All through the provinces the Jacobins were exciting a furious agitation against ‘refractory priests,’ whom the King’s veto, they said, was shielding from punishment. Everywhere they were hunted out, ill-treated, and imprisoned. The south of France especially was the scene of many cruel deeds. Men went about armed with scourges of ox-tendons, beating and laming priests, women, and even children. In some places they fired upon such as they saw entering any Catholic chapel. The Curé of Sainte-Marguerite was slain at the foot of the altar, and another priest of the same place was likewise murdered. Many citizens were

also butchered for attempting to check these outrages. But we must limit ourselves to Brittany. The Jacobins were not idle there. At their instigation the department of Finisterre passed a fresh law on the 1st of July, which left the priests the sole alternative of deportation or imprisonment. It quoted the recent crime committed, as it said, at their instigation, which had been brought before the Assembly as a proof of their fanaticism. The accusation was the more preposterous that the man in question had acted under the delirium of fever, and was acquitted, on trial, of having had any deliberate or voluntary purpose. Other calumnies, equally absurd, were propagated, and the entrance of the Prussian armies furnished a fresh source of invective, as every priest was held to be a sympathizer with the enemies of the nation.

But, great as was their present suffering, the position of the priests was to be far worse after the 10th of August, the day on which Louis XVI., a dethroned king, was consigned, with his family, to the prison of the Temple. The protection with which the sovereign's name surrounded the clergy had been but feeble, yet it had acted as some check on the rage of their enemies, as was proved when the royal authority was annulled. No sooner had the news reached Rennes, on the 12th, than the fury of the mob exhibited itself in the most terrible menaces against the priests. Their death was loudly demanded that evening at the Jacobin Club, and when, on the following morning, they found the streets full of troops as they proceeded to the Hotel de Ville to answer their daily summons, they immediately apprehended that they were themselves the objects of this military demonstration. A joiner had usually called the muster-roll, but on this occasion he was replaced by a *ci-devant* doctor, holding some municipal office. He kept them long enough to allow a crowd to collect, and then in a short and brutal

speech taunted them with disorderly conduct and breach of the law, after which, rising abruptly, he bade them follow him. They did so, ignorant of their destination, and, passing through a bristling hedge of National Guards, issued into the street. After having been paraded about the town, making long halts at different places, they were lodged, two hundred and fifty in number, in the Abbey of Saint-Melaine, which had been converted into a prison. The place was empty of everything, provisions included, and many had not yet broken their fast. They had long to wait for any food, but what they felt more than any bodily privation was their being denied the liberty of saying Mass. The municipality decided that there was no room for deliberation on this point. They were also refused the very necessary refreshment of air in the abbey garden, and cannon was planted close to the building, the sentinels receiving strict orders to fire on any who should even show themselves at the windows facing the town. It was the height of summer, and the daily arrival of other prisoners to occupy the already crowded space was a great aggravation to their sufferings. Add to this, that every effort was made to embitter their captivity. Municipal officers and soldiers would enter to insult them while they were collected at meal-time; and, what was worse, their guards seem to have conspired together to deprive them of sleep at night, by singing obscene songs and shouting out hideous blasphemies in their hearing, mingled with threats of death, especially against two of their number well known in the place for their abundant alms. They would also fire off their muskets, or rap loudly on planks placed there for the purpose. One of these ruffians was overheard one evening saying to his companion, who was yelling with all his might, ‘Hold your tongue; wait till they have gone to bed.

If you tire yourself now, we shall not be able to keep them awake.' They would even enter the dormitories at night, and go round, lantern in hand, which they would put close to the faces of the captives as they slept or were striving to sleep, taking a fiendish pleasure in startling them, and telling them, with bursts of derisive laughter, that they had come in to see if they were comfortable. At last the abbey would contain no more, and then the Church of Saint-Melaine was also used as a prison.

The patriots of Nantes were similarly excited by the events of the 10th of August. There also the populace clamoured for blood. The number of the imprisoned was soon swelled by the arrival of nearly four hundred ecclesiastics from the departments of Sarthe and Maine-et-Loire. They had been cruelly ill-used on the road, particularly at Angers, and robbed of nearly all they had about them. They were tied two and two together, and thus marched along, the commander of the troop ordering his soldiers to load their muskets and fire on any who deviated from the straight line. No attempt was made to shield them from the gross insults of the mob, which, indeed, was got together for the very object. At Ancenis, where they were shut up in a small chapel for the night, an ingenious cruelty had suggested the painting of death's heads and poniards on the walls, coupled with sanguinary inscriptions. About midnight, two members of the Jacobin Club burst into the chapel, one of whom was at the head of forty armed men, who were ordered to mount into the gallery and load their muskets with three balls ; the other meanwhile ascended the pulpit, where he gave vent to the most appalling blasphemies against God, and the vilest insults against the priests. They were constrained to listen in silence. A word, a gesture, would have been the signal of death to

them. The National Guard, stationed to receive them at Nantes, were animated by some feelings of humanity. They loosened their bonds, and received them kindly. Shut up in the Castle, a municipal officer visited them to propose to them to take the oath of liberty and equality, but neither threats nor promises could move them. This new oath had been decreed by the Assembly subsequently to the King's dethronement, in order to prepare men's minds for the establishment of the Republic. It was thus worded : 'I swear to be faithful to the nation, and to maintain liberty and equality to the utmost of my power.' Some theologians considered that this oath might be taken without injury to conscience, but the greater number absolutely rejected it.

The fury of the revolutionists in Paris now knew no bounds, exasperated as they were by the advance of the foreign armies and the news of the siege of Verdun by the Duke of Brunswick. Levies were being rapidly made, and the Jacobins insisted that the citizens marching towards the frontier ought not to leave behind them the enemies of liberty. The detestable project was then formed of massacring the clergy and the 'aristocrats' detained in the different prisons of the capital. The incarcerated priests were very numerous, for a great many had flocked in from the country, believing that they would find greater facilities for concealment in so large a city. The monsters who had resolved on their death thirsted for gain as much as for blood, and accordingly they suggested to them that it would be well to provide themselves with all the money they could procure, as they were about to be deported. The 2nd and 3rd of September were the days fixed for the horrible butchery, which took place in all the prisons of Paris, and continued even during the following day. Many Breton priests were numbered among the martyrs, and

two<sup>2</sup> were among the few who escaped ; but into the details of these frightful scenes we shall not enter. Suffice it to say that the victims of the September massacre, reckoning priests and religious alone, are estimated at no less than one thousand and eighty-six.

The terrible days of September coincided with the meeting of the electoral bodies for choosing deputies to the new Chamber, which, under the name of the Convention, was to supersede the Legislative Assembly. It can easily be imagined that, aided by the excitement of recent events and the influence of the all-powerful clubs, the most advanced revolutionists were elected. It was under these gloomy auspices, which the future was too fully to verify, that the Convention commenced its sittings on the 21st of September, and its very first act was to decree the abolition of royalty in France.

When the Constituent Assembly had proscribed religious vows and dissolved the monasteries, it had permitted those religious who still desired to live in community to remain in some house belonging to their Order, not allowing them, however, to retain more than one house in each department. This state of things continued until the month of August, 1792. But the Revolution had made fearful progress since the period when this indulgence had been granted. On the 4th, a deputy had proposed a decree for the evacuation and sale of the religious houses. It was adopted, and by this barbarous enactment fifty thousand persons (to reckon nuns alone) who had devoted themselves to the service of God, and who believed that they had secured an asylum for the rest of their days, were thrown helpless

<sup>2</sup> One of these, M. Le Roux, was saved by giving his watch to a National Guard ; the other, M. de Kerevenant, also confined at the Carmes, contrived to escape and hide himself in a loft. Both of these priests returned to France when religion was restored.

and destitute on the world. True, a small pension had been promised to them, but soon it was to become impossible for them even to claim this pittance, for an oath repugnant to their consciences was made the condition of its payment. No attempt was made to provide these women with so much as a temporary shelter, nor were they allowed to take away even the most necessary articles which belonged to them. Many were so aged, that they had no longer living relatives with whom they could seek a refuge ; others had none who were accessible. Such was the case of a Canadian, an Ursuline of Vannes, who, ejected from her convent, knew not whither to turn. She sat down sadly on a stone ; providentially a charitable lady observed her, and compassionately took her to her own home. The expulsion of most of the communities took place in October. Many of the nuns in Brittany sought an asylum in farm-houses inhabited by good Christians, where they laboured with their hands, edifying all who knew them by their virtues. Their conscientious observance of their religious rule, so far as circumstances permitted, gave the lie to the assertions of the revolutionists, who had represented them as captives sighing for their liberty. Their consequent irritation against these holy women was to manifest itself later, when they were to be sought out and cast into prison. The Urbanist of Fougères, well known under the name of Sœur Nativité, was amongst the ejected nuns of Brittany. Ten years before the date of the Revolution, at a time when no one would have credited its possibility, this holy girl had visions of the persecution which religion was to undergo in France. She made them known to her confessor, who committed them to writing at the time. The only community of women spared for the present were the Hospitalières, whose care of the sick rendered their services very valu-

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able, but soon revolutionary fanaticism was to disregard every consideration, not only of individual right, but of public utility, and they were to be forced to abandon the hospitals where, at the cost of every sacrifice save that of conscience, these generous-hearted women had persevered in their arduous labours so long as it was possible for them to remain.

On the 7th of September, the priests imprisoned at Rennes were given their choice between taking the oath of liberty and equality and deportation. One and all refused it; even the aged and infirm, whom the law of deportation had expressly excepted, preferred sharing expatriation with their brethren to profiting by their temporary exemption. Although the priests earnestly begged for a delay of twenty-four hours to arrange their affairs, they were mercilessly hurried off to Saint-Malo at once, most of them by tens and tens on carts such as were used for conveying criminals, and exposed during the whole journey to the insults, not only of the rabble, but of their guards, who tortured their ears with obscenities and blasphemies. On Friday they were offered only flesh meat, but, suffering as they were in the cause of the Church, they would not, even under such circumstances, hold themselves dispensed from observing her precepts, and, save for the kindness of some of the good people of Tinteniac, they must have kept an absolute fast that day. On the morrow, when halting at mid-day at Châteauneuf, the prisoners were placed on the glacis in a blazing sun and offered no refreshment. The inhabitants were afraid to notice them. At last, a woman approached them with some provisions, and then others took courage and followed her example. Such are mere specimens of the studied inhumanity with which these priests were treated, but many a time they had reason besides to expect imme-

diate death, a fate which befell numbers of their brethren in other parts of France on their way to the ports. Indeed, in the capital there was a regular plot among the Jacobins to get them assassinated on their road by the ferocious hordes which they had at their disposal, and the passports with which they were furnished were jocularly called by the sanguinary Manuel,<sup>3</sup> ‘passports of death.’ And so they proved to many, who were cruelly murdered, some being literally hacked to pieces, while others, again, were wantonly mutilated.

The Breton prisoners, however, reached Saint-Malo alive, and were immediately shipped on board two vessels, the captains of which were almost compelled by the authorities to put to sea in spite of the stormy weather. Before embarkation, they had been again searched, and the rest of their money taken from them, bills of exchange on Jersey being given them instead, but, as these were not at once negotiable, they arrived in that island in a state of complete destitution. The priests of the Côtes-du-Nord, detained in the Château of Dinan, were also sent off to Jersey. After the September massacres in Paris, the particulars of these horrible events were read to them, and they were menaced with the same fate. Under this expectation they remained until the 20th, when thirty-eight were selected, and hurried off for embarkation at Saint-Servan. The vessel encountered a tremendous storm, and, being dragged from its anchors in the roads of Dinan, was in great peril during the night of driving upon the rocks. With the return of day the tempest abated, but the condition of the priests, huddled together and shut down in the hold, where they were nearly stifled for want of air and utterly exhausted by sea-sickness, moved the compassion of the captain, who, believing them unable to

<sup>3</sup> Procureur-Syndic of the Commune of Paris.

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make the voyage without some previous rest, desired to put them ashore for a while at Saint-Malo. But the authorities would not permit the vessel to enter the port, and even threatened to fire upon and sink it if it did not pursue its course. The captain then steered for Saint-Servan, where the poor captives were allowed to disembark, and were kindly provided for by the inhabitants. They were finally landed at Jersey on the 26th. Thither the priests continued to flock during the months of September and October, for many who were still at large voluntarily sought refuge in that island on account of its vicinity to France. They cannot at that time have been far short of a thousand in number. Later, the priests collected in Jersey amounted to no less than four thousand. They were received with the utmost kindness, and had the consolation of finding one of their own bishops, Mgr. Le Mintier, settled in the island, God in His goodness seeming thus to have provided them with a helpful resource in the hour of their utmost need.

Space forbids us to follow the confessors in their exile. Many, as is well known, found a refuge in England, and Catholic France has never forgotten her debt of gratitude to this country for the generosity and hospitality which it extended to her priesthood. Many a prayer has in consequence ascended for England to the throne of mercy, and has powerfully helped, we doubt not, to bring down the numerous graces of conversion which have been witnessed in our day. The priests detained at Nantes, who were professedly at liberty to choose their place of exile, desired to be taken to England, but their wish was disregarded, and they were transported, four hundred in number, to Spain. Those exempted from deportation through age or infirmities remained in the Castle, where they were afterwards among the victims

of Carrier's ferocity. Spain became the asylum also of the priests of Vannes, and of many others who voluntarily sought shelter there. The respect, nay, veneration with which they were received by the populations of that Catholic land must have contrasted strangely with the treatment to which they had been used of late. The bishops and clergy of Spain showed them all sympathy and kindness, and supplied their wants with an exceeding charity. Many found a refuge in other lands, but the greater number congregated either in Jersey or in the parts of Spain bordering on France, for they were under the mistaken impression that the present violent state of things could not last, and wished to be at hand to re-enter their country as soon as circumstances might permit.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### *The Reign of Terror.*

IT would be difficult adequately to describe the affliction of the faithful Catholics of France when they saw their pastors departing and themselves deprived of all those means of grace and of spiritual consolation which the Church provides for her children through their ministry. Brittany especially, notwithstanding the persecution, had up to this period continued to enjoy, albeit under great difficulties, the ministration of many of her priests, for it had been impossible hitherto to provide schismatical curés for all the parishes, and thus a good number of the rural districts had been able to preserve their true shepherds. Hither Catholics from other parts resorted for the supply of their spiritual needs, but when the proscription became general this resource was no longer available. The desolation of so Catholic a country as Brittany under these circumstances may be readily conceived. There were even persons, we are told, who actually went out of their minds from grief or who sank and died under the crushing affliction. Nevertheless, the number of clergy who still remained in France was considerable, and in Brittany there were perhaps few parishes of any great size which did not harbour one non-juring priest, sometimes more. Needless it is to say that they were obliged to observe the utmost precautions. In the country, woods, caves of the earth, abandoned quarries

and mines, often served them for shelter, at other times the humble cottage of some peasant or the out-house of a farm; while by day a field of standing corn or the rushes of some stagnant pond would afford them its friendly cover when the priest-hunters were prowling near. In the towns concealment was more difficult, for their enemies were Argus-eyed and never rested; but here also the ingenuity of the faithful devised many hiding-places in the walls, ceilings, chimneys, and even in the furniture of their houses, which many a time defied the closest search of the domiciliary visitors.

The priests were always carefully disguised, and it was usually only by night that they went out to administer the sacraments. When Mass was said anywhere, it was generally an hour or two before the first streaks of dawn were visible. The Abbé Tresvaux relates how he had often been present when the Adorable Sacrifice was offered in some cottage, either in a garret the roof of which was in a complete state of decay, or down in a cellar; a table such as is usually found in the peasants' cots serving as the altar, with a sheet hung up behind it instead of a reredos;<sup>1</sup> these, with the necessary vessels for the Holy Sacrifice reduced to a portable form, were the sole furniture of the improvised chapel. The faithful in repairing to the place made long circuits to avoid notice, none spoke above their breath, and they took their departure in the same stealthy way. When danger was less apprehended these meetings would sometimes be held in the daytime, but always with the strictest

<sup>1</sup> Father Sweeney, in his Lecture on the present persecution in Switzerland, gives a picture of a similar scene at Porrentruy, where the Catholics, driven from their own parish church by an infidel Government, assembled, to the number of 4,000, and heard Mass in a barn outside the town. 'A table served as an altar, and the only decoration was a white sheet nailed against the wall to serve as a reredos' (*Switzerland in 1876*, p. 32).

care to elude observation. The windows were carefully darkened, so that the feeble light of the candles burning on the altar might not be visible outside. It was under circumstances such as these, which recalled the worship of the primitive Christians in the Catacombs of Rome, that the priests of France, for well-nigh ten years, celebrated Mass at the peril of their lives, and thus kept alight the torch of faith in their unhappy country. So great was the devotion of these generous men, that the same Abbé is able to declare that he knew not one who ever thought of abandoning his position, while, on the other hand, he was acquainted with several who, having been deported in September, returned, towards the close of the year, to share the labours and perils of their brethren.

Although open persecution had now begun against the Catholic clergy, yet there were few victims in Brittany before the beginning of the year 1793. The revolutionists believed that they had made a total clearance of the ‘refractory priests,’ and that all whom they had not shipped off had betaken themselves to voluntary exile, so sedulously had those who remained concealed their intention and subsequent hiding-places. One of these happening to die about this time caused a worthy family at Saint-Brieuc which had harboured him much embarrassment. They were afraid, and with good reason, of reporting his death, so they placed his body by night at the corner of a street with his name affixed, and thus avoided compromising themselves.

The trial and execution of the King excited profound indignation among the Breton people, and added to the hatred they already felt for the revolution and its abettors on account of the many vexations and sufferings which they had personally endured. We are now approaching the time of the Vendean rising, in which, however,

Brittany took but a partial share, those districts which bordered on the scene of the conflict alone being actively implicated. The incidents of this heroic struggle have found several historians, whose narratives, of course, include the events which took place on the soil of Brittany. Our object, however, being to record the sufferings of the many Breton martyrs and confessors, especially of those who, not having figured on the political or any other public stage, have left no record save in tradition or in the narratives of some of their contemporaries, we shall not follow the course of those events except so far as they are connected with our immediate undertaking. As regards even the horrors perpetrated by Carrier at Nantes we shall be brief, because they may be found amply detailed in so many histories of the time. A conspiracy conceived and organized by a Breton gentleman, M. de la Roirie, failed owing to his death occurring while he was staying at the house of his friend, M. de la Guyomarais. An indiscreet confidence made by a young man who had gone to Paris placed the secret of the plot in the hands of Government, and led to the apprehension of M. de la Guyomarais, together with his family and several friends, who were all sent to the capital to be arraigned before the Revolutionary Tribunal which the Convention had lately instituted, and which, during the sixteen months of its existence, was to shed so much innocent blood. La Guyomarais with his wife was condemned to death, the children being spared, as too young to be accused of plotting against the State. Fourteen persons, all Bretons except one, suffered under the same charge, including the priest who acted as preceptor to the children, and two young ladies, one of whom, Madame de la Fonchais, had not been in any way connected with the conspiracy. It was a sister-in-law who had taken part in it, but

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Madame de la Fonchais could not exonerate herself without implicating her, and preferred to die.

Although La Roirie's plot had been thus defeated, risings took place throughout all that region included between Nantes and the Poitou, which is designated as Le Bocage. The district round Pontivy took up arms about the same time, as also did that of Lamballe. It has been the habit of historians who were partial to the principles of the Revolution, and would fain gloss over some of its most execrable deeds, to palliate the atrocious treatment of the priests by attributing the war in La Vendée and in Brittany to their instigation. Assuredly, if ever insurrection were justifiable, it was that of La Vendée, directed as it was against the impious and sanguinary men who had usurped the authority of the State, had murdered the legitimate sovereign, and were labouring to abolish Christianity throughout the land; but, as a matter of fact, the charge is utterly untrue, as a moment's reflection might show. The greater number of the clergy were in exile, many in prison, while those who were at large sedulously concealed themselves, their hiding-place being known only to a few discreet persons. The Abbé says that he saw many a concealed priest during those terrible days, but never did he meet with one who had any relations with the insurgents save for the purposes of his sacred ministry. To emerge from their retreats was, indeed, almost certain to cost them their lives. Witness the case of M. Cran, the Vicaire of Boué. He had remained hidden in his parish, secretly ministering to the spiritual needs of his flock, when he was urged by the leaders of the Catholic army to go to Savenay and bless a white banner. He behaved on that occasion like a worthy member of the Church, exhorting the youth in arms to bring no dishonour on their cause by an evil life, and ever to show compassion and a

forgiving spirit. He then returned to his asylum, but it had now become known to the revolutionists, who arrested him and conveyed him to Nantes, where he was condemned and executed on the same day. Some priests, of course, accompanied the Vendean army : how should it be otherwise ? These Christian heroes, who fought for the cause of faith and justice, could not be deprived of spiritual aid ; accordingly, they had chaplains with them to whom they ever manifested the greatest respect. Moreover, when the Vendean army passed to the right bank of the Loire, the mass of the population followed in their train in order to escape from the barbarity of the republican soldiers, who were ravaging the country with fire and sword. No alternative was left to the concealed priests but to do as the rest or remain to meet certain death.

It is much to be deplored that some acts of shocking cruelty disgraced the rising in Brittany in a few of the cantons. The treasured wrath of these ill-used populations, outraged in all they held most dear and sacred, found vent in some terrible reprisals, but, with the exception of these crimes, committed in the exasperation of the first outbreak, few acts of inhumanity are recorded of the insurgents, while those of the republicans were so horrible, that the pen, as our authority, the Abbé Tresvaux, tells us, often refuses to describe them. About this time, two priests of the diocese of Saint-Malo, M. Le Moine and M. Barre, were butchered by the republican soldiers. They were together in the *bourg* of La Chapelle-Bouëxic when the alarm was given of the approach of an armed band. They hastened to seek shelter in a neighbouring wood, but the soldiers caught a sight of them running across the high road and fired at them. M. Le Moine dropped, wounded in the shoulder, and wished his companion to pursue his flight, but M. Barre

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refused, saying, ‘We will die together.’ The two priests were completely disguised, but when M. Le Moine was questioned by the soldiers, he replied at once that he was Vicaire of the parish of Carente. They extracted the ball, which had only lodged in the fleshy part of the shoulder, but this must have been solely for the sake of recovering it, for they left the wound unbandaged and bleeding. M. Barre refused to state either his name or his profession. M. Le Moine was taken to the neighbouring château of Muce by some of the troops, who also apprehended on the way a joiner, living hard by, who had been denounced as a suspected person. A rosary and a catechism found upon him served as his death-warrant. He and the priest were shot together on the following morning in the forest, a grave being first dug to receive their bodies. M. Le Moine was so weakened by the loss of blood that he was unable to stand when he was executed. M. Barre had been taken to the *bourg* of Maure, the inhabitants of which were careful to say nothing to compromise him, and when a soldier of the detachment recognized him as a priest, one of the good people endeavoured to persuade the military that he was a farmer of the neighbourhood, but M. Barre, when called upon to confirm the assertion, would not save his life by a falsehood, and replied that he was a priest. He was put to death with circumstances of refined barbarity. His cheeks as well as the fleshy parts of his arms and legs were chopped off, so that his whole body was one ghastly wound. He could still stand, and fell only when they hamstrung him. Thus they literally hacked him to pieces in the inn garden, and then paraded his limbs through the place on the points of their bayonets. Details still more horrible the Abbé consigns to silence. Not a complaint escaped the martyr’s lips during this death of torture. All he was

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heard to say was, ‘My God, have pity on me !’ Writing in the year 1845, the Abbé Tresvaux says that his memory was still held in veneration at Maure.

The sacrilegious spoliation of the churches now began. They were rifled of all their sacred vessels, sacerdotal ornaments, crosses, reliquaries ; the civil officials employed as agents in this work not seldom appropriating to themselves precious objects which the Government designed to convert into money. Tresvaux says that he often saw the district administrators carrying away armfuls of chalices and ciboriums, which were defaced and broken into fragments by paviors’ clubs in order to be taken to the mint. Chasubles, copes, and church-linen were sold by auction for the lowest sums, as the people generally abstained from bidding, in order to avoid having any share in the work of spoliation. The parochial churches were at first partially excepted from plunder, for worship was still carried on in them, but this was not to last long.

Two parties in the Convention were at this time struggling for the ascendancy, the Jacobins and the Girondists. So long as they had been united in a common purpose, a semblance of unanimity had existed, but no sooner were the republicans in undisputed possession of power than the fight for mastery began between the factions. The Jacobins were the most numerous ; they were known as the Mountain, and desired to rule by means of blood and terror. The Girondists, led by the Bordeaux deputies, were regicides also and unbelievers, but they were less ferocious than the Mountain, and outside the Assembly were favoured by all the more moderate revolutionists. But the Mountain had for its ally the all-powerful municipality of Paris, the Commune, as it was called, and was supported by incendiary writers, such as Marat and Hébert. This is equivalent

to saying that they had the Parisian rabble at their command. On the 31st of May the Convention was invested by 30,000 armed men, who demanded the arrests of twenty-five deputies, the leaders of the Girondist party. The Assembly tamely submitted to intimidation, but the protestation published by the proscribed deputies created much excitement throughout France, and led to what was called *federalism*, which was, in fact, an armed rising against the Mountain. It met with much sympathy in Brittany, and the departments of Ille-et-Vilaine, Morbihan, and Finisterre even levied troops to free the Convention from the oppression of the Commune of Paris. These troops were beaten and dispersed before reaching the capital. A terrible vengeance was soon to be exacted by triumphant Jacobinism.

It may be observed in passing that, notwithstanding the violence of the persecution and the exile of the bishops and most of the clergy, the dioceses were not left without government. They had administrators ruling them in the bishops' names and communicating, as they were able, with them; and it was sometimes from the depths of a prison that the vicars-general continued to exercise their spiritual authority. The law which condemned returned emigrants to death within twenty-four hours was extended, by a law of the 17th of September, to all priests who had been sentenced to deportation or who had voluntarily obeyed that decree. Two priests of Vannes, MM. Després and Racapé, were executed at Redon in virtue of this law. M. Després suffered on the 28th of October. M. Racapé's behaviour before his judges was full of Christian boldness, and he did not fear to express the horror he felt for the schismatic oath. The scaffold had no terrors for him, and, as he walked to the place of execution on All Saints' Day, he sang the canticle well known in Brittany, having been com-

posed by the Ven. Grignon de Montfort : ‘*Allons, mon âme, allons au bonheur véritable.*’ The people of Redon, much attached to their faith, collected with reverence the martyr’s blood and preserved it. The executioner was so touched by the piety and gentleness of both the sufferers, that he loudly expressed his regret for the part he had taken in their death, renounced his profession, and died soon after inconsolable for the crime he had committed in shedding innocent blood.

Although all now trembled and crouched before the power of the Convention wielded by the Jacobins, with the exception of La Vendée, which was making an heroic resistance to its tyranny, this hateful Assembly feared lest its authority should not be sufficiently respected in the provinces, particularly since the outbreak of federalism. It accordingly sent commissioners—representatives of the people they were styled—whom they chose from amongst the most ardent of the Jacobin deputies, which is all one with saying the most inhuman and bloodthirsty, and invested them with unlimited powers. The directories and municipalities of the provinces had been guilty of many acts of flagrant injustice and oppression, but the horrors perpetrated by these proconsuls were to throw all preceding barbarities into the shade. Carrier, an obscure lawyer of Auvergne, and Le Carpentier, a man of lower origin, were sent into Brittany. Carrier’s name will go down with execration to the latest posterity as one of the most appalling monsters of cruelty which even the French Revolution nursed into being. One of his theories—for these men of blood were full of theories—was that France was too populous for a republic, and required thinning. This sentiment he openly broached, and it must be allowed that his practice corresponded with his theory, which is not invariably the case with those who are in the habit

of cherishing pet views. He was charged by the Convention to carry on a war of extermination against La Vendée, and he faithfully fulfilled the injunction, executing all, whether royalists or suspected of being such, who fell into his hands, men, women, and children. The guillotine was at work daily on the Place-du-Bouffay at Nantes, and, as Carrier did not think it got on fast enough, he would have some five hundred shot every night.

Passing over these and similar horrors, we must not omit to mention the death of the old and infirm priests who, as we have said, had been excepted from deportation and were detained in the prisons of Nantes. They were first removed to the *Entrepôt*, a building heretofore used for mercantile purposes, where all the victims devoted to death were huddled together, and were then put on board a vessel on the Loire, having below the water two plug-holes which could be opened at pleasure.<sup>2</sup> The priests had been rifled of all they had about them, which, however, they were told would be restored to them at a château to which they were to be taken. Then they were left to their fate, bound two and two together with cords. They knew well that they were doomed to die, and made their confessions to each

<sup>2</sup> No less than fifteen thousand victims are said to have perished at the *Entrepôt* alone, including those who were taken there for the *noyades* and the numbers who died of the pestilential epidemic produced by the dense overcrowding within its walls. Four hundred little children, some of whom were quite infants, perished in these *noyades*. A design was on foot to save these innocents. Carrier sent for the promoter of this humane object: 'So, you want to save these children,' he said. 'Wretch! I will have you guillotined;' and he sent the children that very evening to the *noyade*. A detailed description of this terrible *Entrepôt* and of the horrors perpetrated by the infamous Carrier will be found in Lamartine's *History of the Girondists*, bk. liii. This monster is said to have given up to death more than 30,000 persons. Vengeance overtook him at last. He was guillotined with two of his chief accomplices, Pinard and Grandmaison, in December, 1794.

other. Carpenters stationed in boats were meanwhile removing the planks from the holes. The water entered rapidly, and the vessel soon sank with all on board. Four of the priests had succeeded in escaping, and had got on board a Dutch galliot, but they were seized and drowned the next day. M. Brianceau, a priest of Nantes, although aged and tightly bound, managed to free himself from the cords and, being a good swimmer, reached the bank. He found temporary refuge in a house ; the inmates were kind to him, but begged him to depart before daylight lest their own safety should be compromised. Seized with a panic, they next day reported to the district authorities what they had done. Search was immediately made, M. Brianceau was retaken, and once more condemned to be drowned, his hands being previously chopped off to prevent him from again delivering himself. One priest alone out of the ninety-four escaped with his life, M. Landeau, Rector of Moisdon. This *noyade* took place on the night of the 14th of November. It was followed by another, on the 9th of December, of seventy-four priests, forty-eight of whom had been lately sent from Angers ostensibly for deportation. Carrier, indeed, in hideous sport, called these drownings of priests his ‘vertical deportations.’ These horrible executions were due, doubtless, to the personal ferocity of Carrier, but they were in full accordance with the spirit which reigned in the Assembly, to which he wrote in boastful style of his achievements.

Never had hatred of religion been carried to such an excess. The tribune of the Convention rang continually with the most frightful blasphemies. The all-powerful municipality of Paris had, at the request of their Procureur, Chaumette, abolished all public worship in the capital, and ordered the destruction of every monument which recalled the memory either of Christianity

or of the monarchy, and the melting down of all the gold and silver vessels of the churches, which, after being thus sacrilegiously plundered, were now closed. This was the completion of the act of spoliation in the preceding June. Some of the vilest of the populace, dressed up in the rich vestments of the church of Saint-Germain-des-Prés, defiled in procession before the Convention, followed by a bier with its mortuary pall, a ceremony intended to figure the interment of religious worship in France. Dubois, deputy of one of the Paris sections, presented himself at the bar of the Assembly and proposed an oath by which all should bind themselves to have no other worship than that of reason, liberty, equality, and the republic. The oath was taken. It was on the 22nd of November, 1793, that religion was thus formally abolished. The 7th of the same month had witnessed the abjuration of Gobel, constitutional bishop of Paris, and of a number of his clergy, who with him renounced their sacerdotal character. In its ardour to encourage these abjurations, the Convention went so far as to offer pensions to those who should make them, and a register was opened in Paris to receive the declarations of all who wished to *unpriest* themselves (*se déprétriser*). Throughout France the same scene was enacted. No less than thirty of the intruded bishops gave a like scandal, and eleven of them married. Thus was for ever dishonoured that schismatical Church which had boasted of restoring the fairest days of Christianity, and to obtain whose triumph the Catholic priests had been so cruelly persecuted. But the object of the enemies of religion had, as they conceived, been attained, for the constitutional clergy had only been a tool in their hands for the subversion of the faith. The Abbé Royou relates how, as early as the close of 1791, a deputy of the Assembly who was deeply initiated in the designs of the

revolutionists, being one day reproached with the degradation brought upon religion by ministers so contemptible as were the State clergy, replied, ‘Why, that is just what we want! When the people have become disgusted with these wretched apostates, we shall say to them, “You are great fools to pay for maintaining ministers whom you despise. Leave them to those who desire their services.” We shall have on our side Jews, Protestants, deists, atheists, and even good Catholics. We shall have the majority of the nation with us, which will be glad to rid itself of an intolerable burden.’

The example of the Terrorists of Paris was followed in the provinces, and Brittany was not behindhand. Although no actual law had been passed decreeing the spoliation and closing of the churches, they had nevertheless been plundered and closed by the orders of the commissioners, an act sometimes accompanied with shocking profanations. At Saint-Goueno, the revolutionists, including an apostate monk, took the chalices of the church to the public house and used them as drinking-cups at their breakfast. Having seized a pious girl of the place, called Anne Plesse, they tried to compel her to join in their profanation, but neither solicitations nor menaces could overcome her resistance; so they took her away with them, and had her cast into prison, where she was frequently threatened with death; and her turn would probably have come at last, had not Robespierre’s fall and execution occurred in time to save her and many more from the guillotine. At Quimper, a revolutionary commissary of the name of Dagorne, after placing all the garrison under arms, in the presence of from eight to ten thousand of the country people, who had come into the town to celebrate the feast of the patron saint of the diocese, took the sacred vessels out

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of the cathedral, and applied them to the most abominable purposes both in the church and in the public square.

Le Carpentier, Carrier's worthy colleague, was specially active in the work of destruction. He was animated by the most furious hatred against religion, and made it his boast that he had buried the Sunday. The church bells, of which there were many beautiful chimes in Brittany, were broken up for the sake of the metal, as were also the altar balustrades and even the iron railings of the cemeteries. To this period must be referred the destruction of the Calvary of Pont-Château in the diocese of Nantes, erected by the Venerable Grignon de Montfort, and an object of pious resort from all parts of Brittany. During the first months of the year 1793 the revolutionists continued to prosecute their course of sacrilege and demolition, sparing no work of art, however beautiful, and no memorial of antiquity, however venerable. Pictures were pierced and torn, statues destroyed, painted windows smashed to atoms. At Nantes the crucifix which had stood in the Cour des Comptes was dragged through the streets, and the rich tapestry which had decorated its walls was publicly burned. In the same city the image of Notre Dame de Bon Secours, dear to the piety of the Breton sailors, was broken to pieces and the chapel desecrated. The cathedral was left utterly bare, and even the tombs were violated, Minée not only permitting, but actively seconding the work. Similar devastation took place in the other large towns of Brittany; crucifixes, holy images, and the relics of the saints being subjected to the same sacrilegious treatment as they had met with at the hands of the Protestant Reformers of the sixteenth century. The image of Ste. Anne d'Auray, so much venerated in Brittany, was burned, and that of Notre Dame de Roncier incurred

the same fate. The people looked on with shuddering indignation, but the Reign of Terror had crushed all active spirit of opposition. Nevertheless, in one instance, namely at Morlaix, where the ‘patriots’ wanted to demolish the image of Notre Dame du Mur, which was much venerated by the inhabitants, the civil authorities interfered, dreading the excitement which would have been caused in the place. Many precious relics were concealed, those of the church of St. Pierre at Nantes so carefully that they have never been found to this day.

But it was not the cathedrals or churches of the towns alone that suffered. Even the rural churches and chapels did not escape the axe of the devastators, who also destroyed the many way-side crosses for which Brittany was remarkable, and which, having not seldom been erected in memory of historical events, were an irreparable loss. But the mania to destroy and obliterate every vestige of Christianity was so strong, that Tresvaux says he had seen men climbing on to the roofs at considerable personal risk to tear off the crosses which the slaters in that religious land were in the habit of fixing there. They would even force their way into private houses to deface or destroy any devotional object they could discover. He saw an old woman led off to prison because a picture of the Sacred Heart of Jesus had been found in her prayer-book, and poor girls similarly treated for having been surprised saying the Rosary. ‘Who could repeat,’ he continues, ‘the blasphemies which were continually issuing from the mouths of these impious men, or describe the infernal joy they manifested in destroying all that religion had consecrated to the worship of God? I have still a vivid recollection of the fury of a sergeant whom I saw breaking open the tabernacle on the High Altar of a parish church, and tearing out the

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velvet with which it was lined. One possessed with the devil could not have worn a more frightful aspect.' It is true that the wretched man was a Protestant, and, as such, was animated by the usual hatred of his sect against Catholicism, but the rebel children of the Church were equally filled with rage against their mother, and displayed a fanatical frenzy not surpassed by that of the early Calvinists. Many valuable liturgical books perished at this time, being torn up and used for cartridges.

But if it is sad to recall all this destruction of holy and venerable objects, the moral ruin which was being effected throughout France presents a still more painful picture. The enemies of every religious symbol and memorial were also the sworn foes of purity, of virtue, and of all that is good and true. Not satisfied with their own detestable practices, they tried to authorize and legalize vice by offering premiums for its encouragement. Thus it will scarcely be credited that fifty francs were awarded to women for every illegitimate male child whom they should bring into the world. The law of divorce had already been passed by the Legislative Assembly, but the Convention gave it further developments, by which the marriage-tie was rendered still less binding. The solemnities of Holy Church had been replaced by feasts after the Pagan model, accompanied by profane dances and orgies. Every effort, in short, was being made not only to destroy the religion of the people but to corrupt their morals. In Brittany these efforts signally failed, save as regarded the populace of the cities; the great mass of the population took no part in the national feasts, but preserved their faith and their morality alike untainted. The most deplorable evil of all, however, because it affected future generations and not the present alone, was the want of a Christian education for childhood and youth. All those estab-

lishments which had hitherto provided it were suppressed, and in the new elementary schools which had replaced them, the teaching of religion was positively proscribed. Happy those children whose parents had preserved the faith, and who transmitted it to their offspring. As for those who did not enjoy this blessing, they were doomed to grow up knowing God and His holy law only through the blasphemies which were continually meeting their ears. It is to this cause, which was in operation for so many years, and which affected all branches of education, that is chiefly attributable that rank growth of impiety, ignorance, and indifference which has been the bane and curse of France even down to our own time.

Minée, as was to be expected, had hastened to divest himself of his priestly character and to abjure any small remnant of Christianity which he might hitherto have preserved. He had adopted every phase of the Revolution, and had shrunk from none of its worst excesses; as, indeed, may be inferred from the fact that he had merited the eulogium of the monster Carrier, who, on the occasion of his abjuration of ‘sacerdotal impostures,’ called him ‘le brave Minée.’ Many of his associates also lost no time in renouncing their priesthood, and eight of them contracted civil marriages with women of the lowest class, bringing forward the hitherto concealed children of their illicit unions to be legitimized. Some of these men made this disgraceful parade for the purpose of avoiding suspicion, for, on the 12th of August, the arrest of ‘suspected persons’ had been decreed by the Convention without any definition of the precise import of the term. Under this law, such of the nobility as had not yet fled, all the religious who had refused the oath, many relatives of deported priests, and, generally speaking, those, in whatever class, who had manifested

hostility to the principles of the Revolution or had made open profession of attachment to the faith were deprived of their liberty and consigned to the houses of detention, of which there were one or more in every town, the convents being commonly applied to that purpose. Here they had much to suffer, and, indeed, at Nantes, where, owing to the devastating war, great scarcity prevailed, they were all but starved.

Carrier on his arrival in Brittany had visited the Convent of La Trinité, at Rennes, where were detained those priests who had been exempted from deportation, but had subsequently been arrested. After brutally apostrophizing them, he exclaimed, ‘Who will rid me of these *calotins*?<sup>3</sup>’ to which the commandant of the National Guard, who had given proof of his revolutionary zeal by flogging a woman to death, because she was in the habit of going to hear Mass at Montgermont, replied, ‘Citizen, with twenty men it would be but half-an-hour’s job.’ The prisoners thought that they heard their death-knell, and one of them contrived to make his escape before Carrier left the house, by getting down into a dry well, which, as it happened, had an external aperture. This was M. Duval, the Rector of Pleurtuit, who long survived these terrible days. The other priests, numbering one hundred, were taken to Mont-Saint-Michel. On leaving Pontorson, the last halt on their miserable journey, word was brought that the tide was rising, so that crossing was impossible. ‘Well,’ replied the brutal commissioner in charge, ‘if they swallow a good draught of water, it won’t hurt them.’ The National Guard, however, refused to be parties to such a murderous act. They had orders, they said, to take

<sup>3</sup> An abusive term derived from the *calotte*, or cap, worn by the clergy.

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the prisoners to Mont-Saint-Michel, not to drown them on the strand (*sur la grève*), and they obliged the commissioner to turn back to Pontorson.

Amongst the captives was the schismatic bishop, the notorious Le Coz, once the idol of the ‘patriots,’ now disowned by them and classed with those very men against whom he had excited so much persecution ; for the schismatic clergy who did not abjure their priesthood and give some pledge of irreligion, such as marrying or loudly blaspheming, were regarded with nearly as much suspicion as the true confessors, although they were not so much hated or as hardly dealt with. Le Coz was making his way from Rennes when he was arrested ; compelled to alight from his horse and chained to some Catholic priests just seized, he was taken to La Trinité and afterwards to Mont-Saint-Michel. Jacob and Le Masle were also imprisoned, as were other priests who had not taken the oath of abjuration. Many of these gave far from edifying examples in their several houses of detention, although they subsequently made a great parade of their sufferings in the cause of the faith. Le Coz was not immoral, but, unhappily, he did not repent. Pride and vanity were his bane, and he now looked upon himself as a glorious confessor, and even composed some verses of a religious kind, appropriate to the occasion. He was much better treated, however, than were the faithful priests, for he was assigned the whole town as his prison, where he could poetize at ease, while they were nearly dying of misery and starvation in close confinement. When the Vendean army entered Brittany and were about to lay siege to Granville, they sent a detachment to liberate the captive priests at Mont-Saint-Michel. Three only ventured to profit by the precarious advantage, MM. Delaunaye, Prior of Rillé, Le Mercier de Montigny, Vicaire of Taillis, and

M. Faligant, Vicaire of Acigné,<sup>4</sup> and they had afterwards reason to repent of having done so. Le Coz, not believing that the Vendean would take the same lively interest in his lot, thought it well to hide himself while the royalist soldiers were there, so the gaoler obligingly lowered him into a deep vault, throwing down some large *galettes*<sup>5</sup> at night to keep him alive. Among other rodomontades of Le Coz in after times, he declared that he overheard a consultation between the Vendean and the priests as to what should be done with him, and that it was decided that he should be taken to headquarters and burned alive. How Le Coz could overhear anything in that underground dungeon it is hard to understand, but the story is in every way too absurd to need confutation. He told other palpable falsehoods as to his own behaviour at this time, the object of all of them being self-glorification.

After many successes leading to no practical result, the royalist army was utterly routed at Savenay on the 22nd of December, 1793. Those who escaped the carnage of that day sought refuge in the forest of Gavre and in the parishes on the banks of the Vilaine, where the inhabitants gave them cordial hospitality. An historian of the Vendean war, himself a Vendean,

<sup>4</sup> M. Faligant alone escaped death, but he was subsequently arrested and confined in the Château of Saint-Malo, where he heard the confessions of a hundred Vendean before their execution. Amongst these royalists was a Carmelite of Poitou, who, addressing the president of the sanguinary tribunal before which they were arraigned, summoned the unjust judge to appear before the tribunal of God in three days. This man, who was more cowardly than cruel, and who did evil from a motive of fear, was seized with fever as he left the court, and died at the close of the three days. Another judge replaced him, who had the courage to be more humane. The condemnations were in consequence henceforward less numerous, and thus M. Faligant was spared, but he was taken back to Mont-Saint-Michel, where he suffered imprisonment until the year 1795, when the priests were all released.

<sup>5</sup> A kind of cake commonly eaten in France.

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thus extols the generous devotion of the Breton peasantry: ‘So long,’ he writes, ‘as La Vendée shall preserve its name and the memory of its misfortunes, so long will it recall with sentiments of the liveliest gratitude the kindness it received from these good Bretons, who were the instruments employed by Providence to save the precious remnants of the avengers of the throne and the altar.’ The scattered Vendeans after a while united together in small bands, which under the name of ‘Chouans’ continued for some years to wage a partisan warfare and to harass the republican troops. Too feeble to attempt any important enterprize, unassisted as they were by foreign support, their prolonged resistance only served to keep up the irritation of the republicans, and thus occasion the shedding of much innocent blood, particularly that of the priests, to whom every popular disturbance was always imputed.

In the December of this year Rennes had to deplore the execution of a worthy and well-known priest, M. de Rengervé. Zeal for the salvation of souls led him to accede to the solicitations of some Breton emigrants about to join the Vendean army, who, desiring to secure his services as chaplain, induced him to return in their company to Brittany. He was arrested on the road, together with three of his friends, and transferred to Rennes, where they all suffered on the 18th of the month. On the 23rd another priest, M. Chanterel, who belonged to the diocese of Angers, was also guillotined at Rennes. At Nantes, the *noyades* and the guillotine not doing their work fast enough to content Carrier’s greed for blood, he had ordered, as we have said, other subsidiary massacres; fusilades, in which several priests perished whose names are unrecorded. Tresvaux mentions other victims who were personally known to him; among them was a venerable old man, eighty

eight years old, the Abbé of La Roche-Saint-André. He was living quietly at his own house, when he was seized and taken to Nantes, where he was condemned for having been found in a country which was in a state of insurrection, and executed on the same day. As he ascended the scaffold he sang with a firm voice the Psalm, *Lætatus sum in his*,<sup>6</sup> expressive of his joy at going to Heaven. A few days after, the military commission at Savenay condemned to death M. Gohier, a priest of the diocese of Nantes, who had been arrested at Clisson while engaged in the discharge of his sacred functions. Five other martyred priests are also mentioned by Tresvaux, two of whom were massacred by the republican troops without form of trial. At Vannes M. Le Fellic, who had remained ministering to his parishioners in concealment, suffered also on the 11th of this same December.

Several enemies of religion, by a just retribution, also met their doom towards the close of the year 1793. Coustard, the persecutor of the worthy Bishop of Nantes and the ferocious supporter of Minée, had been sent as deputy to the Convention. Cruel as he was, he recoiled from voting for the King's death. He thus incurred the hatred of the Jacobin terrorists. Accused of being a federalist, he fled to Nantes, where Carrier soon found him out, and sent him back to Paris. There he was guillotined in company with Philippe Egalité. Coustard, who had shown himself so blustering a bully to defenceless men and women, was almost lifeless with fear at the sight of the scaffold. A few days previously another Breton partisan of the constitutional clergy, Le Hardy, a doctor of Dinan and deputy for Morbihan, was guillotined also on the charge of federalism, but in reality for the same unpardonable offence, the not having voted for

<sup>6</sup> Psalm cxxi.

the death of the ‘tyrant Louis Capet,’ but only for his detention in prison.

The law against emigrants, condemning them to death if they returned, was enforced at this time with great rigour, and a reward was promised to any one who should denounce them. The consequence was that in places where the authorities would have humanely connived at their presence, they were often drawn into notice through the cupidity of vile informers. Thus it was that young Kerambrun perished on the scaffold at Saint-Brieuc. He had only received the tonsure, but his piety and attachment to the faith had made him specially obnoxious to the ‘patriots.’ For security he passed over into Jersey, where he acted as tutor in an emigrant family, but the desire to see his parents led him to return and visit Treguier. The authorities turned a blind eye to his presence, but the thirty francs’ reward tempted a miserable wretch, who had been formerly acquainted with the young man, to betray him. He first went to see him, and, embracing him, expressed great joy at so unexpected a meeting. He then hastened to denounce him. This traitor became an object of detestation in the neighbourhood, and his life was made a burden to him. In his last illness he was haunted by the memory of his crime, and complained that young Kerambrun was stifling him. By a law passed on the 28th of December, the criminal tribunals were authorized to proceed after the manner of the Revolutionary Tribunal of Paris, which did not allow the accused any legal defence. These tribunals, being always composed of ardent revolutionists, were, as a general rule, most merciless, and those of the five Breton departments were as cruel as the rest. The streets of Rennes sometimes literally ran with blood from the numbers guillotined at the same time. Nantes, where Carrier urged on the

work of death, was a positive charnel-house, and the waters of the Loire became so tainted by the corpses of the drowned as to be unfit to drink.

It was thus, in the midst of blood and terror, that the year 1793 was drawing to its close. The execution of Louis XVI. marked its commencement, and from that date the most atrocious laws, the most sanguinary acts, and the wildest extravagances of impiety followed in rapid succession. It was the year in which Voltaire's diabolical desire seemed about to be realized, for, so far as the malice of man could reach, Christianity was abolished throughout the land. On the 10th of November, the worship of reason had been set up in its place, and inaugurated in the capital; an actress, personating the Goddess of Reason, being borne in triumph through the streets and seated in the cathedral of Notre Dame on the altar of the Living God, to receive the homage of her insane worshippers.<sup>7</sup> The madness of impiety could not well go further. The Terrorists strove to extend this abomination to the provinces, and the smallest town in Brittany had its statue of the Goddess of Reason. It was often an image of the Blessed Virgin transformed into the revolutionary idol by having the red cap of liberty put on its head and a pike in its hand.

<sup>7</sup> The Père Beauregard, preaching in Notre Dame towards the end of the reign of Louis XV., seemed to have a sudden vision of the days of sacrilege which were drawing nigh, and, to the amazement of his hearers, who thought he had lost his wits, exclaimed, 'The time approaches when an infamous Venus will be enthroned in the place reserved to the Saint of Saints.'

## CHAPTER XIV.

### *Martyrs and Confessors.*

THE first martyred priest of whom we find mention in the year 1794 was M. de Montigny, one of the three who had profited by the presence of the Vendean army to regain their liberty. He might have saved his life by pleading compulsion, but he would not purchase it by a falsehood. Shortly after, MM. Bérard, Pontgérard, Herbert, and Deslongrais also shed their blood. M. Bérard had returned from Jersey out of pure love for souls. He was detained some time in prison, apparently because he was seized with an epidemic which was raging there. During this interval he reconciled to God many victims condemned to die. As soon as his health was sufficiently restored, he was put on his trial, and sentenced to death, not only as a refractory priest, but because he had about him certain symbols of rebellion, as they were styled. These were little pictures of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, so odious to the revolutionists. M. Deslongrais had lain concealed at Rennes, and there had continued to exercise his ministry with great zeal. He was at last captured, loaded with blows, and carried off to prison. Here he found a constitutional priest of the name of Picard, whom Le Coz had ordained. This man, noting the peace which shone on the confessor's countenance, while he himself was gnawed with remorse, opened his heart to him, and abjured the schism. When M. Deslongrais

returned from the tribunal, his face was radiant with joy, and he said to his fellow-prisoners, ‘To-morrow by this hour I shall have ceased to live ; I am happy at shedding my blood for my God.’ He took part in the evening recreation of his companions with a tranquillity which surprised them all. The next morning he received Holy Communion, the Blessed Sacrament having been secretly conveyed to him, breakfasted cheerfully, and, after making his private devotions, had the prayers for the agonizing recited for him. All around were in tears, whatever their belief or unbelief. This finished, seeing that he had a little time to spare, he conversed awhile with his companions. An hour before he was led to death he resumed his devotions, and on the way to the scaffold, which was erected in the square of the palace, ceased not to speak of God to the people. On arriving, he saw a pile of lighted faggots, and, thinking he was going to be burned alive, a momentary shudder came over him. The fire, however, was lighted for the purpose of consuming the sacred objects which had been found about him, when arrested, including the holy oils. This profanation caused him intense pain. The executioners, being tired with their morning’s work, handed him over to some youths who were being taught how to manage the guillotine in order to inure them to deeds of blood, a common practice at that time.<sup>1</sup> These scholars in the science of butchery performed their office so clumsily, that they caused the martyr terrible suffering, and it was only at the third attempt that they succeeded in decapitating him.

The military commission, established at Savenay after the Vendean defeat, was continuing its bloody work, and

<sup>1</sup> Even children were thus employed ; some, it is averred, at their own urgent request. One little boy at Nantes, however, is said to have been beaten by his father because he shrank from shedding blood.

amongst the victims condemned to be shot were several priests. One of these was M. Judic, belonging to the diocese of Nantes, who, when the non-juring priests were driven from their *cures*, had returned to his native place, where he secretly ministered to the faithful. Arrested in a field while saying his office, he was dragged before the sanguinary tribunal together with a young subdeacon of the name of Orain, who had been seized the same day. Both had been cruelly maltreated on the way to Savenay. Being asked who they were, they replied, 'We are the disciples of Him whom you persecute.' 'Well,' rejoined the judge ironically, 'since you belong to Jesus, you have no reason to be uneasy, as He has millions of angels at His command : ask Him to send some to your rescue.' 'No doubt but that He could rescue us,' replied the confessors ; 'but nowhere is it written that He is pledged to do so. We are content to die for Him, and all we ask of Him is that He would sustain our courage and recall you to Himself. You are about to send us to death ; we do not dread it. You judge us now, but one day God will judge you.' M. Orain was young and tall, and had a very engaging countenance. The military who sat on the commission promised to save him if he would enlist in the republican army, but he steadfastly refused, saying, 'My heart has remained faithful, and my hands pure. I would rather die than fail in this fidelity and give up this purity.' M. Richard, Vicaire of Pont-Château, was another of the victims at Savenay. Notwithstanding the decree of deportation he had remained concealed in his own parish, and the respect entertained for this excellent priest was shared even by the 'patriots' of the place. The very gendarmes, meeting him one day, allowed him to pass, with a friendly word of advice to use more precautions. But they were not all so kindly disposed ; and one

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of these men, whose animosity against the priests was notorious, surprised him at last when engaged in the work of his ministry. He had just time to confide the Sacred Species, which he had with him, to a Sister of the third Order of St. Francis before he was seized, bound, and taken to Savenay.

The republican troops, however, were by no means always at the trouble to hand over the priests they captured to the tribunals, but often massacred them on the spot where they had found them, or at no great distance from it. Such was the fate of M. Bouvion, Rector of Maumusson, venerable alike for his age and virtues. He was seized one evening at the house of his brother-in-law, whither he had gone after visiting a sick person. Both were taken to a neighbouring village, receiving blows and insults the whole way. As the soldiers were preparing to shoot them, M. Bouvion requested to die last, in order that he might be able to exhort his brother-in-law to make a holy death. His petition was granted, but when he raised his hand in the act of giving absolution, one of the soldiers barbarously slashed it with his sabre. The insurrectionary state of the department of Morbihan caused the search for concealed priests to be very hot in that district. Several were arrested and sent to Lorient, where they were condemned and executed. The persecution was no less violent in the Côtes-du-Nord, and during the months of January and February several priests suffered at Saint-Brieuc. On the 16th of March, M. Riou, Rector of Labahan, was guillotined at Quimper. He had been in prison since the beginning of the year, and some members of the tribune, wishing to save him, tried to make him pass for a sexagenarian and, as such, exempt from the law of deportation. The president lent himself to the artifice, for, when the prisoner replied to the customary

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question concerning his age that he was fifty-nine, the magistrate told him that he was mistaken. ‘We studied together,’ he said; ‘you were my senior, and, as I am now fifty-nine and two or three months over, you must be sixty. But M. Riou’s love of truth was too strong to allow him to save his life by a falsehood. He was not sixty, he replied; and was accordingly sentenced to death and executed.

The military commission which the so-styled representatives of the people had established at Saint-Malo was at first not expeditious enough to please them; they reproached it for its laxity, and soon no room was left for further complaints. In the space of little more than a month six priests were executed as ‘Vendean brigands;’ the simple fact being that they had been apprehended in districts through which the royalist army had marched, having been necessitated for self-preservation to follow in its wake. To these six must be added a venerable Carthusian, a native of Angers, named De Genouillac, concerning whom some interesting particulars are recorded. He belonged to an ancient family, and in his youth had adopted the military career. At the siege of Bergen-op-Zoom, in 1747, being a captain of infantry in a regiment selected to lead the way in storming the breach, he promised God that if he came safe out of this danger he would consecrate himself to His service as a Carthusian. All the men composing the forlorn hope which he headed were either killed or wounded. He alone escaped unscathed. A ball had struck him, but had been flattened against a New Testament which he had about him, and inflicted no injury. At the conclusion of the war in 1749, M. de Genouillac hastened to fulfil his vow, notwithstanding the remonstrances of his family, who were desirous to obtain him a dispensation from the Holy See. He entered the Carthusian Order,

in which he continued for forty years, until the religious were expelled from their houses. He then took up his abode with his brother, but when the latter emigrated he would not accompany him, and remained at the house of a farmer, a tenant of his brother, in La Vendée. Compelled, for his own safety, to follow the royalist army into Brittany, he fell into the hands of the republicans after the battle of Antrain. Being condemned, he was shot, with nearly thirty others, on the Grève of Saint-Malo. He was in his seventy-sixth year, and died with much courage, but he was so enfeebled by the fatigues he had undergone, that he had to be carried to the place of execution.

Several priests of the Cotes-du-Nord who had voluntarily obeyed the law of deportation had been intercepted at sea and, after being robbed of all they possessed, brought back and detained in prison ever since, first at Saint-Brieuc and afterwards at Guingamp, in flagrant violation, not only of justice, but of law. It was now resolved to send as many of them to Guiana as age or infirmities did not render utterly unfit to bear the voyage, this colony having been lately chosen by the Convention as the place of deportation for the ‘refractory.’ Twenty-six were selected, and the 16th of March was fixed for their departure. The last farewells between these brethren were very touching. Companions during months of suffering, they were now to be parted for the remainder of their sad journey, but they mutually encouraged each other to patience and constancy by those motives of faith which had hitherto sustained them in their afflictions, looking to a blessed reunion in Heaven. As usual, the prisoners suffered much on the road from the hard-heartedness of their guards, but the good people of the towns and villages through which they passed did their best to alleviate their privations. At Brooms, indeed,

some charitable persons were put in prison for having attempted to assist them. Montauban is mentioned as having nobly distinguished itself, and even the mayor of the place generously joined in showing kindness to the sufferers. In the larger towns their reception was very different. When they reached Nantes about midnight, a numerous guard was at the barriers to admit the convoy, and these men, on learning that the prisoners were priests, raised shouts of ferocious joy. They were shut up for the night in an empty hall in the Hotel de Ville and the next morning were taken before the revolutionary commission. Carrier, denounced by one of his accomplices, had been lately recalled to Paris, but his spirit still ruled at Nantes. The priests were kept standing until one o'clock, uncertain of the fate reserved for them, and having tasted no food for twenty-four hours. At last a man with a sinister countenance made his appearance, and, after addressing them with the customary threats and abuse, marched them off with a strong detachment of soldiers to the banks of the river which had been the grave of so many of their brethren. The populace, exasperated by all they had undergone, which they had been taught to impute to priests and royalists, could hardly be held back from tearing them in pieces. They expected, at any rate, to witness a *noyade*, but in this they were disappointed.

The confessors were all shipped on board a Dutch galliot anchored a little way off shore. It already contained fifteen priests from the diocese of Angers, and more than fifty from the department of the Nièvre. The former were all superannuated, and, amongst the latter, one was eighty years old, six were past seventy, twenty-five were above sixty, and twelve were disabled through infirmities. In defiance of the laws, they had been sent, by the orders of the representatives of the people at

Nevers, to Nantes in order to their deportation to Guiana. Their passage from Angers to Nantes had been marked by studied cruelty. Taken out of their prison at twelve o'clock on a cold March night, they were left on the quay, bound two and two together, like so many packages ready for embarkation, until six in the morning, when they were huddled, along with the fifteen old priests from the Angers diocese, into a boat, which dropped down the river to Nantes. Nothing could exhaust the patience of these confessors, which even excited the astonishment of their heartless escort. For instance, a soldier, snatching a crucifix from one of them, struck him with it savagely in the face, at the same time uttering horrible blasphemies, but they were as dumb men, following the example of Jesus in the hands of His tormentors. During the whole of their two days' passage they had nothing to eat except some small pieces of mouldy bread; the commissioner charged with their sustenance appropriating the money to himself under the pretence of buying shirts for the most necessitous, which, it need scarcely be added, he never did. Arrived at Nantes, they were taken to the Dutch vessel and placed at the bottom of the hold. The infirm had to be lowered with cords, and this was done with such cruel negligence that many fell, and one broke his arm. Shut up in this dark hole, they passed the night, and when, owing to a leak in the vessel, the water began to enter, they thought it would be their last on earth. Meanwhile the soldiers, who had closed the only aperture through which air could penetrate, had got drunk, and were dancing and singing ribald songs on the deck. When the guard was relieved in the morning, the priests were permitted to pump the water out of the hold, but for the next eight days they were nearly famished. A National Guard, opening the air-hole, said that if they

would give him twenty-five francs he would procure them some bread. Although they had been often searched yet amongst them they contrived to raise the sum, but the promised food they never saw. At last their repeated solicitations obtained for them a little bad bread and rice, but so great was their exhaustion, that two expired after partaking of this slender meal. Fever soon developed itself amongst them ; no doctor would come near them, and when the vessel became so infected that even the guards recoiled from taking their turn of service, as many as were able to move were allowed to go on deck during the day to wash themselves and their clothes. While these were drying the owners had to keep a watchful eye on them, or they would have been stolen. Such was the deplorable state of the priests of Nièvre and Angers when, as has been said, those of the Côtes-du-Nord were put on board. At the sight which met their eyes these last almost shrank back with dismay, but their poor dying brethren relieved their hunger by sharing their own meagre rations with them.

The priests from the Côtes-du-Nord were removed in a few hours, for the vessel could not possibly hold all, and were passed on to another, where, during the twenty-five days of their sojourn, they were regaled by their guards with an account of Carrier's *noyades* and of the way in which men, women, and children had been stripped naked, bound two and two together, and cast into the water. Many of the bodies, indeed, were still floating on the surface. Here, as usual, the prisoners were very ill fed, for, though the faithful sent abundant supplies, little was allowed to reach their hands. One of their number died from exhaustion, and as for the fifteen old priests from Angers in the other boat, only one survived at the end of the month ; two also of the Nièvre priests succumbed under their protracted priva-

tions. None uttered a complaint, but died blessing God that He had deemed them worthy to suffer for His Name. However, it was not always that their guards were equally inhuman, and on two several occasions they had enjoyed the inexpressible happiness of being able to say Mass at the bottom of the hold ; they had also the consolation of reconciling to the Church two schismatic priests who shared their confinement.

New victims were soon added to those already detained on the Loire. In the beginning of the year 1793, Savoy had been annexed to France, under the name of the department of Mont-Blanc, and from the diocese of St. Francis de Sales and others adjoining many good and zealous priests were sent to Nantes for deportation. Thence they were all to be forwarded to different ports ; those of the Côtes-du-Nord to Rochefort, those of Mont-Blanc to Lorient, and those of the Nièvre to Brest. Fifteen of the last, being too weak to move, were left behind to perish. The brigs containing their brethren were fifteen days reaching Brest, and on the passage three of their number died. During a terrible storm which they encountered, the priests alone preserved their calmness. Touched by the sight of their virtues and persuaded of their power with God, the sailors came and begged their prayers. Presently the wind subsided, and they reached their destination, but only to undergo the same hard usage. They were taken to the sailors' prison, where, owing to the close confinement and want of food, so serious a sickness broke out among them that the doctors insisted on ten of their number being removed to the Marine Hospital, which, notwithstanding the Reign of Terror, was still served by the Filles de la Sagesse.

The priests from the Côtes-du-Nord were more fortunate for a time. They were shipped on board a

corvette commanded by a humane captain and, after reaching Rochefort, were transferred to the commandant's ship, where they also met with kind treatment. But this interval of rest was not to last long. Early in June orders arrived to transfer them to a vessel which lay there, called *Les Deux Associés*. Knowing from report what they would have to endure in this floating prison, they received the news as a sentence of death, a lingering death of torture. Their personal sufferings did not fall short of their expectations, but the pain inflicted by the sacrilegious acts they witnessed and the impious language to which they were forced to listen was harder still to bear. The men who guarded them made a sport of trampling on the crucifix and any other sacred object or symbol of devotion on which they could lay their hands, and, to use the words of a survivor, Hell itself could not utter anything more dreadful than their imprecations. The priests of Mont-Blanc were subsequently added to their number, with twenty-nine from Finisterre and seventeen from Morbihan ; so that more than four hundred human beings were now crowded together in this narrow space. Here for the present we must leave them, for martyrdoms in Brittany are meanwhile pressing thick upon us.

## CHAPTER XV.

### *The Revolutionary tribunals. Their victims, clerical and lay. Horrors of the floating prisons.*

No special notice has yet been taken of one of the most horrible tribunals set up during the Reign of Terror, that of Brest, whose judges appear to have been selected for their signal vices and brutality. The president, Ragmey, had been a member of the Revolutionary Tribunal of Paris, and the public accuser, Donzé-Verteuil, was an apostate religious ; both being notorious for their blood-thirsty disposition. These men made a practice of addressing the prisoners before them in a tone of taunting irony, which was soon exchanged for menaces of the most frightful character. On either side of the accused stood a gendarme with drawn sword, while another was posted immediately in front of him in a threatening attitude. He was sternly forbidden to look at any of the audience, and was placed in a chair so constructed that its occupant was unable to lean or rest himself in any way, a bar on a level with his chest keeping him perforce in a constrained position. He was not permitted to answer more than yes or no to the questions put to him, however important to his case it might be to give explanations. By such a process any one could be made to condemn himself. No priest, however, had a chance of escape, so that any explanations he could offer would not have been of the slightest avail.

The first two victims were guillotined in March, one of whom, M. Devrés, had been exempted from deportation on account of his great age. These were speedily followed by two priests belonging to the diocese of Léon, who had devoted themselves to the spiritual needs of the faithful in the neighbourhood ; they were executed at Lesneven in Holy Week. It would seem as if this sacred season had been specially chosen for these deeds of blood ; for M. Bromelle, of the same diocese, was guillotined on Maundy Thursday, and he had been in prison several months, as had also one of the other martyrs. Shortly before his death, he composed a pathetic canticle deplored the woes of France, and expressing his own resolve to die for the faith. Four more priests were executed during the months of May and June, one of whom, M. Chapalin, priest of Plouguin, was with his sister when he was taken ; she shared his fate. If so near a relative was not spared, we may easily believe that other devout women who harboured priests ran equal risks with the proscribed. For instance, M. Clec'h, a priest of the Treguier diocese, was concealed in the house of two poor Canadian workwomen, Anne and Anastasie Le Blanc, mother and daughter, the former eighty years of age. They were both condemned by the merciless tribunal of Brest and suffered along with M. Clec'h on the 12th of July.

There was a secular community of pious women at Treguier, known as Paulines, of which Sister Marie Gigant was a member. When the Revolution broke out she was expelled from the house, together with her associates, and retired to Taulé, a place not far from Morlaix, where she soon became obnoxious to the schismatic curé on account of her influence with the people. This curé was a renegade monk, a Récollet, known as Père Hyppolite, but more commonly nick-

named in his parish Frère Hypocrite. Mdlle. de Kerléan, a charitable lady of Taulé, having been denounced, was being led on foot, in sabots, by two gendarmes to the prison at Morlaix. They passed the house where the Sister lodged, who, touched with compassion at seeing the young lady in this condition, came out to express her sympathy and to offer her a staff with which to support her steps along the bad road she had before her, for it was the depth of winter. The false pastor, who witnessed the circumstance, immediately pointed out Sister Gigant to the gendarmes, telling them that it would be as easy for them to take charge of two aristocrats as one ; so she also was led to prison. Her family were recommended to abstain from taking any steps to obtain her liberation, for that her best chance lay in being forgotten, but they would not be guided by this prudent advice and presented a petition in her favour, the only effect of which was to draw attention to her. Questioned as to the motives of her compassion for Mdlle. de Kerléan and her attachment to the religion of a fanatical priesthood, her answers were sufficient to convict her ; accordingly she was sent to Brest to appear before its inexorable tribunal, and suffered courageously on the 9th of July.

A cantor of the church of Morlaix, a poor hosier, was executed during the same month. He had been put in prison for having torn the national cockade out of a cap and thrown it on the ground. This offence had been committed at least two years previously, but the revolutionists had good memories. A venerable Capuchin missionary named Le Mevel, Père Joseph in religion, had been exempted from deportation on account of his age and infirmities. He had found an asylum with a widow lady at Morlaix, Madame Lesaulx. There he was arrested together with his hostess, two religious

women, and a young lady named De Forsçantz. Apparently Père Joseph was saying Mass for them, as no other reason can be assigned for their arrest. He was so infirm that he was obliged to be supported on his way to prison, and had to rest on a stone half-way. They were all transferred to Brest, and on the 30th of July were executed. Mdlle. de Forsçantz, who was strikingly handsome, might, it is said, have saved her life at the expense of her honour; needless to say, she preferred death. One priest alone, M. Le Meur, is mentioned as having escaped. He had been sentenced to death by the military commission sitting at Brest, when a lawyer of the place, who had been his fellow-student, generously undertook to save him, although he had himself been classed with the suspected. Through the help of an influential friend he succeeded in inducing the Commission to commute the sentence of death into that of deportation. M. Le Meur was long detained in prison, but was finally released.

It was only on the 22nd of April that the Convention extended capital punishment to those who harboured priests, but many of the Breton tribunals had not waited for the passing of this law. Thus M. de La Billias, a gentleman who lived quietly in his château, and often gave hospitality to priests, was executed at Nantes on the 11th of January, 1794. There was no actual proof against him, with the exception of a portfolio containing the register of many baptisms and marriages which was found in his house. His demeanour was so calm that those who saw him return from the tribunal imagined that he had been acquitted. Madame de La Billias and her two unmarried daughters were all three guillotined in March, the ostensible accusation against them being that they had insulted the constitutional curé during a procession, and distributed pictures of the Sacred Heart

among the peasantry. They denied the first charge, which was a sheer invention, but they candidly owned to the last. At the foot of the scaffold they embraced each other, and then the mother begged to die last, that she might have the consolation of knowing that her daughters had made a worthy sacrifice of their lives. Almost all the Breton tribunals treated the harbouring of priests as a capital offence before any law was passed to that effect. Thus we find a poor girl of Plaintel, with whom M. Dujardin, Canon of Morlaix, had taken refuge, executed at Saint-Brieuc early in this same year, and on the 10th of January the mayor of Pluherlin and the registrar of Linierzel, in whose house the priest of the parish had been discovered, were guillotined together with him at Lorient. On the 20th Madame de Malansac also suffered for having concealed priests; and on the 14th Marguerite Passal, a servant-maid, was sent to the scaffold for having helped the priest of Quistinic to escape from his pursuers.

The cruelty with which the tribunal of Brest treated both clergy and laity has already been described; it remains to mention its wholesale condemnation of the directory and council of the department of Finisterre, which had openly sympathized with federalism. It is a subject of unalloyed pain, for of the twenty-seven men who were condemned without the opportunity of self-defence, and the preparations for whose immediate execution were made before they were put on their trial, none can be said to have given any sure token of penitence. They went to the scaffold singing the 'Marseillaise,' and amongst them were several whose death must be regarded in the light of a just judgment of God. Of this number was Expilly, constitutional bishop of Finisterre. Whether he had any true contrition must for ever remain doubtful. A lawyer who undertook the

defence of the federalists, the same, apparently, as had saved M. Le Meur, saw Expilly on the previous day and said that he was in a very dejected state. Well might he be so, and, if his conscience at that late hour was truly awakened, his remorse must have been excruciating. The circumstances of his execution and that of his companions were such as to render death still more bitter, paraded as they were through the city in two carts, a military band preceding. What a contrast to his pompous entrance into Brest three years before amidst the applause of the revolutionists! When the contents of the first cart had been despatched, the executioner cruelly arranged the heads in such a manner as to be visible to the survivors. Expilly suffered last. He is said to have heard the confessions of several of the condemned, and given them all his blessing at the foot of the scaffold; whether he ever made his own confession does not appear, but he is said to have observed before his trial, the result of which he too surely foresaw, ‘It is a serious thing to have to appear before the tribunal of man and that of God on the same day.’

In the space of four months twelve priests were guillotined at Rennes. We cannot mention all their honoured names, but a few particulars which have been preserved concerning some of them may here find a place. M. Bouttier gave his life, not for the faith only, but as a sacrifice to fraternal charity. He was in concealment when he heard that his brother, who was a peasant at Mézières in the diocese of Rennes, had been apprehended, and informed that he would not be liberated until the priest they were in search of should give himself up. Notwithstanding the remonstrances of his friends, who represented that he was going to certain death, M. Bouttier did not hesitate to surrender himself.

On his way to execution, which took place in the cemetery of Saint-Etienne, he sang the Litany of the Blessed Virgin and recited the prayers which the Church offers for the dead at their interment. Some youths who were employed to shoot him caused this good priest much needless suffering.

M. Orève was hidden in the secluded parish of Cintré, but no place escaped the vigilance of the priest-hunters. One day, seeing a troop of soldiers at the door, he had only time to conceal himself under a bed. The chief of the detachment was in outward manner rough and even savage, but, in reality, he was not a bad man ; his desire was to allow the priests to escape, and he was the means of saving more than one. His method was to leave his men at the door and enter the house swaggering and swearing in true republican fashion, then, after making a pretended search, he would return to his troop saying there was no *calotin* there, and perhaps rate his men for not having kept a good look-out, and so allowed the priest to slip by while he was in the house. He had pursued this plan in M. Orève's case, and the danger seemed over, but, unfortunately, among the party was a man of the true revolutionary stamp, who chose to go in and take a look himself. Spying the priest's legs under the bed, he called to his comrades, triumphantly announcing his success, when the soldiers rushed in and, dragging M. Orève from his place of concealment, wantonly maltreated him by cramming hay into his mouth. He was guillotined along with several nuns, with whom there is reason to conclude he had sought an asylum.

M. Poirier, who belonged to one of the best families in Becherel, and was priest of the parish, remained there in concealment. One evening he inadvertently fell in with a patrol of gendarmes. These men would have let

him pass unnoticed, but here again there was one ill-disposed individual, an inhabitant of the place, who thwarted the more humane inclinations of the others, and insisted on the priest being arrested. M. Poirier is described by a lady<sup>1</sup> who saw him from her window, as he passed to the tribunal, as a tall old man, with grey hair and a most dignified and heavenly countenance. She witnessed at the same time a circumstance which is worth recording, as giving an idea of the barbarity with which the prisoners were treated. The guillotine at Rennes, as in most other places, stood permanently in the public square, all covered with blood, and sometimes with heads exposed upon it. The gendarmes were in the habit, as they went by, of calling the attention of their prisoners to it, and making them look at the fatal scaffold which they were so soon to ascend. ‘Look there,’ said one of them to M. Poirier; ‘take a look at Madame Guillotine.’ The venerable old man seemed to take no notice and did not turn his face as directed, but walked modestly along. Upon which, the gendarme, offended, doubtless, by his composure and disregard of his order, immediately struck him a severe blow on the face, saying, ‘Will you not look there when I tell you? You will soon be there yourself.’ These words were reported by persons who overheard them, but the blow which she saw given was never effaced from that lady’s memory. M. Poirier, in his last moments, gave an example of true Christian

<sup>1</sup> Mother of Mgr. Bruté. She had apartments in the Parliament house of Brittany, under the former chapel of the palace. In the room immediately underneath the sanctuary, now profaned, being part of the office of the Revolutionary Committee, the family had a secret altar, where two venerable priests, one a Dominican religious, the other a Capuchin, offered the Holy Sacrifice daily for nearly two years, during all which time they remained concealed in this same room. It was from one of the windows of her apartments that Madame Bruté saw M. Poirier led to the tribunal (*Life of Mgr. Bruté*, pp. 44, 45).

charity by entreating his relatives to show no ill-will to the man who had caused his death, but even to befriend, when needful, both himself and his family.

M. Emery, another of the afore-mentioned priests, had been in the habit of saying Mass on the wild *landes* of Brittany for thousands of the peasantry, some being posted at a distance to give the alarm in case of danger.<sup>2</sup> Bouassier, the President of the tribunal which condemned him, was an old schoolfellow of his. After sentence of death had been pronounced, M. Emery addressed him in Latin, reproaching him with his crimes, and reminding him of the tribunal of an outraged God before which he must one day appear. The judge turned pale and seemed much agitated, but called on the gendarmes to silence him. In prison he was the support and consolation of his fellow-captives, exhorting them to die with joy, and himself setting them the example by singing the *Te Deum* as he ascended the scaffold. Thence he would fain have addressed the people, but his voice was drowned by a roll of drums.

A striking contrast was exhibited between the feelings of the country folk and those of the townspeople on the occasion of the death of M. Crosson. It was fixed for the day on which there was to be a fair at Rennes, the guillotine being erected in the very field where the fair would be held. When the peasants who had flocked in from the country found what was about to take place

<sup>2</sup> Souvestre gives an instance of a remarkable device adopted by this religious people in order not to be deprived of the blessing of Mass. It was celebrated off the coast near Crozon, which place was at the time occupied by the soldiery. After midnight, a bell from a small vessel, moored at a good distance from the shore, gave the people notice, and hundreds of fishermen's skiffs, bearing the whole population of the neighbourhood, men, women, and children, might be observed putting out to sea and all converging to the same point, the vessel in question, where a priest stood prepared to offer the Adorable Sacrifice in the midst of the watery waste (*Les Derniers Bretons*, p. ii. c. iii.).

they were much distressed, and immediately dispersed, giving no further heed to the fair. M. Tostivint was one of those priests who had generously returned from Jersey to the post of danger. He was recognized and denounced by a man whom he had formerly prepared for his first communion, and was seized along with his host, M. Bédée. Chained together, they were taken to Montfort to wait until Madame Bédée had also been apprehended, when all three were passed on to Rennes. Before dying, M. Bédée wrote a touching letter to his son. ‘When you receive my letter,’ he said, ‘you will no longer have either father, mother, or preceptor. Your property will be taken from you, but the grace of God will still be yours; be faithful to it.’ Both husband and wife behaved with great fortitude in prison; a constitutional priest endeavoured to thrust his ministrations upon them, but met with such a repulse that he never again ventured to offer his services to any of the condemned. They were, however, greatly appalled at the sight of the guillotine, and M. Tostivint, who had been about to suffer first, begged that he might be allowed to follow his friends, in order to be able to support their courage. His petition was granted, and he continued his exhortations to the last, when he himself received the stroke of death.

The criminal tribunal of Lorient was as cruel as that of Ille-et-Vilaine. Its president, Hannoyer, was one of the vilest of men, and had disgraced every profession he had followed. He had been a religious, and on the revolutionary outbreak entered the army, from which, however, he deserted and became a sailor; he ended his naval career by turning pirate. Such was the man selected to sit in judgment on faithful priests and fervent Catholics. During the month of May, this tribunal sent to the guillotine M. Brien, priest of Saint-Maurice,

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and, along with him, a poor weaver of Saint-Vincent-sur-Oust, a pious girl of the same parish, and the mayor of the commune, the only offence alleged against them being that of having afforded hospitality to priests. They were followed by another priest of the diocese of Saint-Malo, M. Mayeux. Two poor women of Sérent, in the diocese of Vannes, where they had all been seized, who, no doubt, had given him shelter, were guillotined with him; indeed, we continually find priests suffering in company with one or two women who had befriended them. Thus M. Carel, Vicaire of Guégon, whose execution at Lorient is the next on record, had for his associate in death Anne Lemaitre, in whose house he had been discovered. Four more priests, one being also a Carthusian, met a similar fate in the course of the months of June and July. The commission at Savenay was meanwhile continuing to shoot Vendéans as fast as they were brought before it, together with an occasional priest who had been necessitated to follow the army on its march into Brittany. Thus perished M. Auffray, in company with a pious couple named Bernard who had harboured him.

The department of Finisterre was so completely disorganized by the annihilation of Federalism that the search for priests was rather less active than elsewhere during the year 1794. We find only the names of two executed at Quimper, M. Riou and M. Raguenez, the latter being taken while administering a sick person; he was guillotined on Palm Sunday. Many priests, as we have seen, suffered at Brest, but they belonged mostly to the dioceses of Léon and Treguier. The numerous executions at Saint-Brieuc in the early part of 1794 had rendered the proscribed more cautious in that district, and accordingly there is an interval between the months of February and May unmarked by the death of any

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priest; but during the latter month the execution of three ecclesiastics caused deep sorrow in the districts where they had ministered. Two of them, named Lageat and Le Gall, were young priests whom compassion for the bereaved state of the Catholics of Treguier had led to return from Jersey. They had been hospitably received by a woman named Ursule Taupin, whose husband was in England, being valet to Mgr. Le Mintier, the exiled Bishop of Treguier. A marriage celebrated by one of them in the month of April was the cause of their arrest, a republican peasant having discovered, by adroitly questioning the bridegroom, that the ceremony had been performed by a Catholic priest. The authorities, to whom this wretched man carried the information, were speedily on the track, and on the 30th of May the two priests were seized, together with their charitable hostess. As they were both dressed like laymen, Madame Taupin was advised to say that she had received them as lodgers in ignorance of their profession, but she at once replied, ‘God forbid that I should preserve a mother to my children who had given them the example of a falsehood !’ So far, then, from seeking any evasion, she said to the military present, ‘I knew these gentlemen to be ecclesiastics, and my house was open to them, as it is to all like them.’ They were sent before the tribunal of Saint-Brieuc at Lannion, to which place it had removed, and were all condemned to death. The priests were guillotined on the same day that they were judged. They recited the *Miserere* on the way to death, and strove to address the people when they reached the scaffold, but the noise of the drums rendered their voices inaudible. They then gave each other absolution, and met the final stroke with courage.

The poor woman was doomed to a longer agony, for she was taken back to be executed at Treguier. As

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soon as the priests had undergone their sentence she was bound and placed on a horse, the guillotine, yet reeking with the blood of the martyrs, immediately preceding her. About three miles from Treguier was an inn, kept by Lageat, the father of one of the slaughtered priests. The military who were escorting Madame Taupin stopped at this inn, causing the cart containing the guillotine to be drawn up before the door. They then forced the master of the house to supply with drink the man who had just executed his son, and themselves drank to enthusiastic cries of *Vive la République*. The ingenious cruelty with which the men of the revolution tortured their victims, instances of which meet us at every turn, is more revolting even than their ferocity ; for, while the latter was akin to that of the wild beast, the former may be said to have been simply diabolical. The effect produced by this scene on the mind of one of the priest's brothers was so terrible that he lost his reason. During this halt, which lasted above an hour, Ursule Taupin remained bound upon the horse's back, having under her eyes the fatal instrument which was so soon to cut short her own life. She was a young mother, with several children of a tender age. Perhaps it was only to try her, for it seems unlikely that they had the power to reverse a judicial sentence of death, but some agents of the revolutionary authorities, we are told, seized this occasion to remind her of her little ones. ‘Swear fidelity to the Republic,’ they said, ‘and you will be saved.’ ‘Never,’ she replied. ‘You are an unnatural mother, then,’ they rejoined ; ‘your children will be destitute’ (the property of the condemned being always confiscated), ‘and will die of hunger. They will be orphans, since their father is an emigrant and cannot return to France.’ ‘My children have a Father in heaven,’ was the answer of this generous woman ; ‘and

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to Him I commend them. I die for religion ; God will not abandon them.' She put on white garments when she went to execution the next day, and suffered without betraying the least sign of weakness, crying out *Vive le Roi !* when in the act of laying down her head under the knife. All Treguier deplored her death. Her husband, on returning to France some years later, was seized and deported to Guiana.

The reader will remember M. Androuet, the zealous priest who walked out of the church at Plumaugat when the rector took the oath. Shortly afterwards that unworthy man read from the pulpit on a Sunday a pastoral of Jacob, the schismatic bishop of the Côtes-du-Nord, and was publicly reprimanded by M. Androuet, whose zeal could not endure to see the people beguiled into error. He was in consequence denounced and imprisoned, but was liberated at the time of the amnesty. He continued to exercise his priestly functions secretly at Plumaugat until 1794, when the republicans, pursuing the remnants of the Vendean army, discovered and arrested him. He was brutally treated, being struck on the face with his breviary, and again with a crucifix so violently as to shiver the latter into fragments. At Saint-Meen they clothed him in sacerdotal vestments and paraded him through the place, and, not content with making him thus an object of public scorn, they endeavoured to asperse his spotless character by reading to the assembled people a list of hideous crimes drawn up by themselves, but which they declared had been found in his house and affected to regard as his general confession. The people, however, knew their pastor too well to be duped by this vile calumny. Arrived at Rennes, the authorities sent him to Saint-Brieuc to be tried. The confessor had thus to undertake a second journey fraught with renewed suffering and ignominy. Seeing

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a little boy crying from pity at the sight, he said to him, ‘My child, it is a happiness to suffer for the faith :’ words which so enraged his guards that they began to strike him, calling out, ‘See what he is doing ! He is trying to make fanatics of innocent children.’ At Bois-Gervilli they shaved him, and, in doing so, cut off some of the skin of his head. He only remarked mildly, ‘You make me suffer a great deal.’ He was then bound so tightly that he was unable to use his hands to take the food which some charitable persons brought him, and they had to put it into his mouth. In this condition he was compelled to go all the way on foot, tied to a horse’s tail and blinded with dust. He terminated his protracted martyrdom on the 30th of May.

A Benedictine nun, niece to Mgr. Le Mintier, suffered soon after. A party of soldiers presented themselves one day, and asked her if she regretted the *ancien régime*. She was too sincere to dissimulate or conceal her sympathies for the Bourbon family, and she answered accordingly. This was enough ; she was condemned and executed for making what were called counter-revolutionary speeches. A fortnight later, a poor joiner of Loudéac was guillotined for having harboured a priest.

The execution of M. Saint-Pez at Saint-Malo was a subject of poignant grief to all who were acquainted with his extraordinary merits. He belonged to a respectable peasant family and had been much valued by Mgr. Hercé, the Bishop of Dol, who made him curé of Aucaleuc. With a generous devotion he had returned from Jersey to labour in the desolated vineyard, and fixed himself at Roslandrieux, his native place. Here his life was that of an apostle. Returning one day from visiting a sick person, as he was passing through Carfentain with a young man who habitually accompanied him, he encountered a party of gendarmes. He made his escape,

but, hearing a cry, he thought that they were murdering the youth who had been with him, and was so affected as to faint on the spot. He was thus easily retaken, and met with the usual savage treatment from his captors. In prison his zeal never allowed him to be idle, and, short as was the time he passed there, he had the happiness of bringing many of his fellow-sufferers to repentance, and all made their confessions to him. One of his nieces, who was also his god-child, was in the prison with him, having been arrested for being found in possession of a catechism. When she saw her uncle arrive, bound with cords, his clothes all torn and his face covered with bruises, she was much distressed, but he met her with a smile and showed great pleasure at seeing her. He was condemned to death by the military commission on the 13th of May. When the executioner came to shave him in preparation for the guillotine, the man had the inhumanity to cut his ears off also. M. Saint-Pez did not utter a word. On his way to death, observing that the two gendarmes on either side of him pressed very closely against him, he said, 'Do you think I am meditating an escape? No; forward! I do not fear the guillotine.' His spirit seemed already in Heaven. When some one offered to aid him in mounting the scaffold, he told him that he needed no help. 'I always go to the altar,' he said, 'by myself.' The executioner, when fastening him to the plank, struck him several heavy blows with his knees, shouting, 'Calotin, you'll not get loose now.' The cords were pulled so tight that a cry of pain escaped his lips, but it was quickly followed by the ejaculation, *Vive Jesus! Vive Marie! Vive le Roi!* Whether from awkwardness or a refinement of barbarity, the executioner, at the first lowering of the knife, only cut off a part of the martyr's face; at his next attempt he severed but a portion of the

head. A cry of indignation then rose from all around, and an officer, advancing sword in hand, said to the man, ‘You rascal, if you do not finish your work, I will plunge my sword into your body.’ It was only at the third essay that the martyr’s head fell. The executioner got off with a punishment of twenty-four hours’ imprisonment, his judges telling him that priests were certainly to be guillotined, but not in that fashion. The virtues of M. Saint-Pez and the courage with which he died inspired so deep a veneration for him, that many Catholics invoked his aid, and four priests who were concealed in the same place, and in hourly danger of detection, believed that they owed their deliverance, which seemed little short of miraculous, to his intercession.

Although Carrier had left Nantes in March, and the military commission for trying the Vendéans had also ceased its functions about the same time, that unhappy town still continued to be the scene of frequent executions. Sœur Bertelot, an Ursuline of the city, who had retired into La Vendée, probably her native country, was sentenced to death on the double charge of refusing the oath of liberty and equality, and of having been found teaching the Catechism to some children. She showed great firmness before her judges, and, when reproached with having given instructions in Christian doctrine, she answered that she was bound by vow to do so, and must fulfil her obligation whenever she had the opportunity. The Ursulines do, in fact, add this engagement to the usual religious vows. She was so enfeebled by the privations she had endured that she had to be carried to the scaffold, but her spirit had lost none of its strength. She had a very sweet and melodious voice, so that people used to go on purpose to hear her when she sang in the choir. On reaching the place of execution she raised this sweet voice of hers

for the last time on earth, and, to the astonishment both of the executioner and of the spectators, began singing a canticle to our Lady. ‘A moment after,’ says the Abbé Tresvaux, ‘she doubtless went to finish it in Heaven.’ A fille de la Sagesse suffered about the same time. Soeur Bertelot’s superioress, Mme. Davesne, and five of her nuns would all probably have shared the same fate but that the epidemic which raged in the prison where they were detained spared the guillotine its work and carried them all off. They had previously undergone a martyrdom of pains and privations. Starved, infested with vermin, and forced to associate with the vilest criminals, whose polluted talk was perpetually offending their chaste ears, nothing could disturb their equanimity. They had a fervent desire to shed their blood for the faith, and assured some of their sisters, with whom they were occasionally able to hold communication, that they were filled with interior consolations.

Many a priest, as we have said, was put to death without any judicial formality. Such was the fate of M. Royer, Curé of Dompierre-du-Chemin, who had remained in spite of the decree of deportation. A detachment of soldiers met him one day near Fougères and bade him shout *Vive la République!* We are told that one must have lived in those dreadful times to realize the horror which good people felt for that cry. M. Royer could not bring himself to utter it; on the contrary, he exclaimed *Vive la Religion!* to which he added *Vive le Roi!* and was immediately thrust through and through by the bayonets of the enraged soldiery. Not a word of complaint escaped his lips; he only murmured two or three times, ‘I forgive you my death.’ Six of his parishioners were also murdered by these men a few days later, and their heads suspended from the steeple of the church of Dompierre. The National Guards

committed similar atrocities. Tresvaux mentions a young deacon who was shot by them, and also the parish priest of Saint-Péran, M. Le Mée, together with an inhabitant of the place. M. Le Mée was buried where he had fallen, and his parishioners, having gone during the night, which was very dark, to exhume his body, beheld themselves surrounded by a remarkable light as soon as they had removed the soil, and this light accompanied them to the cemetery, which was a mile and a half distant. M. Brasseur, priest of La Chapelle-Chaussée, had a wonderful escape. Perceiving a band of priest-hunters, he hid himself in a field of standing corn, but not before he had been observed by a soldier who, coming up close to him, discharged his musket at him. At the same time a ball from one of the man's comrades, who was at his heels, struck the priest on the head. From the rest of the troop he received several bayonet thrusts. They ended with cutting off one of his ears, and, after rifling his pockets, left him weltering in his blood and, as they thought, dead. Some good neighbours, however, on removing the body, perceived that he still breathed, and carried him to the house of his father, who was a surgeon in the place and a great partisan of the Revolution. Nevertheless, he had still a father's feelings, and was deeply affected at the sight of his son thus cruelly mangled. He dressed his wounds, nursed him carefully, and ultimately cured him; and, when the republicans some time after came to his house to seize M. Brasseur and lead him to death, he declared that they should only reach his son by passing over his own dead body. His resolution seems to have daunted them. Anyhow, this good priest survived with his glorious scars to fill his post at La Chapelle-Chaussée for ten years. He knew very well the men who had tried to murder him, and used to say, 'If they were to pay

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me a visit, I would wait on them at table with great pleasure.' Two other priests are mentioned as having been murdered by the soldiery in the Côtes-du-Nord.

The martyrdom of Breton priests was not confined to their own country; for, besides those who perished in the capital, several were executed in the neighbouring departments. Some of those who died for the faith had been far from inimical to the Revolution in its early stages. Plausible reasoners had represented the movement as being solely directed to the reformation of abuses, and it has been seen how not a few of the country priests, unsuspecting of evil and ignorant of the world, believed what was thus confidently asserted and were beguiled into lending it their strenuous support. The good rector of Plaintel, M. Cormeaux, was of the number, and so favourably was he disposed towards the innovations which were first introduced, that he was made president of the council in the department of the Côtes-du-Nord; but his eyes were soon opened to perceive the real aim of the pretended reformers and he broke with them at once. He thus incurred their special hatred and found himself forced, after concealing himself in his parish for some months, to fly the neighbourhood. He went to Paris, where he managed to escape notice during the whole of the year 1792 and a great part of 1793; yet his zeal never left him idle. Called to Pontoise, in the August of that year, to administer the sacraments to a dying man, he was stopped at Franconville on his way back because he was not provided with a passport, which was rigorously required in those days, even for the shortest journey. Taken before the mayor, M. Cormeaux, who was of a singularly frank and open disposition, immediately declared that he was a priest, the Rector of Plaintel in Brittany, and that he had been expelled from his *cure*.

The mayor, who had neither required nor desired this piece of information, was much annoyed at receiving it. ‘Why did you tell me what I did not ask to know?’ he said, reproachfully, in an undertone, in order not to be overheard by those about him. ‘I saw very well that you were a priest, and wished to save you.’ But the mischief was done, and the mayor thought himself obliged to send the good man to prison. He was transferred a fortnight later to the Convent of Récollets at Versailles, then used as a house of detention. As he passed through Saint-Germain-en-Laie, he spoke so touchingly of God to many of the inhabitants whom curiosity had collected round him, that they wanted to liberate him. His imprisonment at the Récollets was a blessing to many, for he did the work of an apostle during his nine months of confinement there. Thence he was removed to the common prison of Versailles, and thence again to one near Saint-Cloud, and was finally brought before the Revolutionary Tribunal. The thirst for blood exhibited by the monsters who composed it seemed like a positive passion, or a sort of hideous mania, for they often sent to the guillotine men concerning whose imputed offences they did not care to inquire, and of whose very names they were ignorant; indeed, many of the members of the tribunal went habitually to its sittings in a state of drunkenness; among whom was an apostate priest, Joachim Vilate, whose ferocity fully equalled that of his colleagues. As it may be supposed, M. Cormeaux did not escape condemnation; he was guillotined on the 9th of June.

At this time the prisons of Paris contained many Breton men and women, guilty of no offence but their high birth and their virtues, and more were soon to be added to their number. During his stay in the province Le Carpentier, Carrier’s associate, had fixed

his residence for some time at Saint-Malo, filling that unhappy city with consternation and mourning. The heads of Vendean and priests fell in such numbers by his orders, that he boasted, when writing to the Convention on the 11th of February, or the 23rd Pluviose, as it was called in the new revolutionary calendar, that 100,000 francs had been realized by the death of these ‘brigands.’ But Saint-Malo contained several rich and distinguished families which had not emigrated, and Le Carpentier was determined to bring them also under the axe of the guillotine and their money into the State treasury. As, however, they were much respected in the town, he probably dreaded an outbreak of popular indignation if they were executed there; so he sent them up to Paris to be judged. Thirty persons were thus despatched in the beginning of June, of whom several were ladies of good birth and remarkable for their virtues and charity to the poor. Amongst their fellow country-women already imprisoned there was a niece of the late Bishop of Quimper, Mdlle. de Saint-Luc. She had joined the Society of the Dames de la Retraite in the year 1782. This was not, strictly speaking, a religious community, since its members did not take vows, but only a pious association which laboured with much zeal for the salvation of souls.<sup>3</sup> When schism made its entrance into the diocese of Quimper, Mdlle. de Saint-Luc wrote an excellent letter of remonstrance to Le Coz, which, like other similar attempts, made no impression

<sup>3</sup> The foundress was Mdlle. Catherine de Francheville, sister of Claude de Francheville, seneschal and chief magistrate of Vannes. The object of the institute was to provide a house of retreat for women who desired to withdraw for a while from the distractions of the world. Before her death she had the consolation of seeing four similar houses established in Brittany—at Rennes, Saint-Malo, Quimper, and Saint-Pol-de-Léon—all of which acknowledged her as their foundress, although her humility would not permit her to be chosen superior of any of them (*Through Brittany*, by Mrs. Macquoid, p. 91).

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on his proud spirit. She was more successful, however, with another ecclesiastic, whom she persuaded to retract the oath which he had been seduced into taking. The association of which she was a member was suppressed along with the religious communities, and Mdlle. de Saint-Luc then returned to her family. Her devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus led to her arrest. She shared with many other devout persons the conviction that this Adorable Heart would take pity on the woes of France, and accordingly she used to paint pictures of It for distribution, in order to increase and spread the devotion amongst good Catholics. She had given one of these pictures to M. Trémaria, which served, as already mentioned, to send him also to the scaffold. The family of Saint-Luc were arrested in October, 1793, at the time when the nobles generally were imprisoned, and four months later Mdlle. de Saint-Luc was transferred to Quimper and put in the common prison with the women confined for theft and other criminal offences, who robbed and cruelly beat her. Here she remained for the rest of 1793, and was still there in March, 1794, when M. Riou, Rector of Labahan, heard her confession on the morning of his execution. She was afterwards sent to the Conciergerie at Paris, as were also her father and mother. Condemned by the Revolutionary Tribunal, they suffered together on the 19th of July. She begged to die first; then, bidding her parents farewell, she said to them, 'You have taught me how to live and, by God's grace, I will teach you how to die.' Ten other Bretons perished at the same time, amongst whom were two sisters of M. Trémaria, two gentlemen of Saint-Malo, both octogenarians, and a boy of seventeen, who was guillotined along with his mother. Neither old age nor youth found mercy in those days.

It might have been supposed that the laws against the

clergy had attained their utmost possible rigour, but this was not so. In many parishes there were still residing faithful priests whose extreme old age or great infirmities had hitherto shielded them from molestation. Many of these were quite decrepit and even bed-ridden. Yet a deputy, a lawyer named Bézard, was found inhuman enough to propose to the Convention that these afflicted men should be arrested. The Assembly adopted the proposal, and enjoined all these priests, under pain of death, to present themselves within two decades—for weeks no longer existed in the republican calendar—at the chief town of their department, in order to their incarceration. It was a pitiable sight to see cartloads of these infirm and aged men arriving from all quarters at the houses of detention, there to endure every privation, with the lack of all that care which their invalid and often helpless state required.

But, if the lot of these incarcerated priests was hard, it was tolerable in comparison with what their brethren endured aboard that accursed vessel at Rochefort. Several narratives were afterwards written by survivors, and all agree in describing their position as truly horrible, and their gaolers, that is, the captain and crew, as monsters of cruelty. But all, from a motive of Christian charity, forebore giving the names of their tormentors. The merchant vessel, *Les Deux Associés*, had originally been a slave-ship. The deck was divided into two nearly equal portions, the after-part as far as the main-mast being allotted to the crew, and the fore-part to the prisoners. An oaken palisade, eight feet high and garnished with sharp spikes, separated them; it ran right across the deck, but there were two doors of communication, defended by guns charged with grape-shot and pointed forward so as to sweep the end occupied by the priests, under the pretext of preventing an out-

break, which their guards affected to dread. Four culverins besides defended the barrier and commanded likewise the whole fore-part of the ship. At each door were stationed sentinels, who were strictly charged to watch every movement of the prisoners; moreover, a warning was posted up menacing with chains and death the slightest departure from the rules laid down. Amongst these was a prohibition against passing through the doors, and orders were issued to fire on any one who should even look through them at the crew.

Four hundred and nine prisoners had to be lodged in a vessel which, indeed, had often carried large cargoes of negroes, and how cruelly those poor creatures were packed together is known to every one: the priests fared no better. The between-deck allotted to their so-called beds, which were mere planks loosely nailed together, was only four or five feet high, yet, shallow as was this space, it was divided into two tiers, so that the occupants thus piled one above the other might be said to be literally entombed; only eleven inches of width being allowed to each. They were also compelled to lie so that the feet of one row should touch the heads of those in front, and, by a gratuitous piece of barbarity, the planks were slanted in such a way that every one's head was lower than his feet. 'We were so closely jammed together,' says one of the sufferers, 'that we could not lie on our backs—but only on our sides, and many had the feet and legs of five or six others upon them. In order to leave no intervals, we were interlaced together so that one had his feet where another had his head. The whole plank was thus covered with bodies, which exactly filled the whole space.' The centre part of the between-deck was crammed with hammocks, in which the rest were stowed away as in so many sacks. The horrors of fourteen

consecutive hours passed in this stove, during the summer heats, by a number of human beings squeezed tightly against each other and receiving air only through one small aperture, which had a trellis of thick wood-work over it, may be rather imagined than described. No wonder that many died positively stifled from want of air. Add to this the torment they endured from the vermin which devoured them and of which they could not rid themselves through their deficiency of linen—for they had been left only two shirts and two pocket-handkerchiefs apiece—as also from the intolerable stench, aggravated as it was by the presence of so many sick and dying men, and the wonder is that any of their number survived to tell the tale of their appalling sufferings.

A report at last got abroad that the plague had broken out in the vessel, and a sanitary officer was sent to ascertain the truth. It is to the same narrator we owe the knowledge of this fact; he tells us that the officer vainly attempted to penetrate between decks. The heat and effluvia were more than he could bear, and, fearing to be suffocated, he hastily regained the deck, saying, that if four hundred dogs had been confined down there they would all have been smothered before morning or have gone raving mad. ‘Death, by diminishing our numbers,’ says the writer of the journal, ‘might also have abated the heat which tortured us, but this alleviation, sad as it was, was pitilessly denied us, and they had the cruelty to refuse us the space which our brethren by dying had left us, in order to keep us massed together as before.’ The visit of this officer, however (he tells us), had the effect of putting an end to this system of filling up the vacancies, which had been continued for four months. During the day the priests might go on deck, but their numbers were so great that it was impossible

for them to move about. Their food was as scanty as it was bad, and, indeed, was barely sufficient to keep them alive. Such as it was, the crew often stole a portion, and some of them were so gnawed with hunger, that they would look into the tubs which had contained the refuse for the pigs, to see if any morsels remained.

This is but a very slight and imperfect description of their physical sufferings; the mental torture they endured was still more excruciating. The Holy Name of God was incessantly blasphemed in their hearing; indeed, it seemed as if the men who surrounded them could not speak without uttering an oath, and to oaths was added language the most revolting. Twice a day they collected to sing or, rather, to shout in chorus that sanguinary hymn of the Revolution, the 'Marseillaise.' This might be called their act of devotion, but to the priests every external manifestation of their religion was strictly prohibited. Even the moving of their lips in silent prayer would call down a very shower of curses and blasphemy, and one of their number was put in irons for having secreted a rosary; their breviaries and books of devotion had been all previously taken from them. Thus debarred from uniting in any common act of worship, their whole occupation, when on deck, was the washing of their linen for which they had only sea-water, and the destroying of the vermin with which they were infested; to which must be added the tasks imposed upon them by the sailors, who thus discharged themselves of much of their labour and chiefly of what was most disagreeable and distasteful to them. To complain was worse than useless, of which the following painful proof occurred. With the permission of the captain, tacitly, at least, accorded, they drew up a petition to the authorities, signed by one priest from each department represented amongst them, but when it was shown to the captain he

flew into a violent passion, and put in irons the twenty-seven priests who had appended their signatures. M. Romagère, who was in after-years Bishop of Saint-Brieuc, and who originated and drew up the petition, continued to the day of his death to suffer from the wound in his leg inflicted by the galling fetters.

Amidst this complication of sufferings, sufficient to crush the spirit of the bravest, God supported His servants in a most wonderful manner, not only giving them a patience which seemed invincible, but filling their hearts with spiritual consolations. The memorable words of one of these glorious confessors, M. Dubignon, well express the feelings of his brethren generally. ‘It is true,’ he said one day to a companion who was tempted to repine, ‘it is true that we are the most miserable of men, but we are the happiest of Christians.’ The look of holy peace which illuminated their pale and wasted faces bore testimony to the joy with which they suffered ; it was a marvel to behold them, one of those marvels which Grace alone can achieve. Another marvel for which they were indebted to the good Providence of God was that, notwithstanding the rigorous searches to which they were all subjected, and especially the new-comers, the Blessed Sacrament which many of the latter brought with them, was never discovered, nor the holy oils with which they anointed the sick amongst them, nor a relic of the True Cross which they possessed.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>5</sup> No one who has read Father Weld’s *History of the Suppression of the Society of Jesus in the Portuguese Dominions* can fail to note the close resemblance between his narrative of the terrible sufferings endured by the deported Fathers and the account given above. It may be hoped that the Fathers were spared the foul blasphemies with which the French priests were assailed, but with this exception the circumstances in both cases were so very similar that the same description might well-nigh serve for either ; the only difference being that the agents in the former persecution were Christians and Catholics, and in the latter men who for the most part had renounced the Christian name.

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In speaking of the patience of the sufferers we must except the schismatic priests, of whom there were a good many, chiefly from the departments of Meuse and Moselle. A deputy of the Convention, sent into those parts, had arrested indiscriminately all the clergy, good and bad alike, on whom he could lay his hands, and had despatched them to Rochefort for deportation. They were at first confined in the Washington, another slave-ship, moored alongside of the *Les Deux Associés*, to which last they were transferred as vacancies occurred from death. Several of these schismatics had entirely abjured the faith and two of them had married. Neither the good example of the faithful priests nor the pressure of their common misery seemed to work any good effect on these hardened men, who behaved unkindly and maliciously to their fellow-sufferers and sneered at them for their fidelity to their religion. When sickness, however, began to decimate the ranks of the prisoners several of their number retracted the oath and some made a Christian death. Others, when the danger was passed, speedily retracted their retractions.

The ever increasing number of the sick at last rendered their removal imperative. Two boats were accordingly moored near the vessel, into which the diseased and the dying were transferred. It would be a misnomer to style these boats a hospital, wanting as they were in everything necessary for the relief or accommodation of the sick. Here these afflicted men lay upon rugged planks, tossed about by every movement of the waves and lacking even necessary food. No doctor visited them, nor would any of the crew go near them, regarding with horror all contact with the occupants of these infected boats. Upon the imprisoned priests, therefore, devolved this charge, which they undertook with the tenderest and most self-sacrificing

charity, sharing with their suffering brethren their own meagre rations, performing every office for them while living, and burying them, when dead, on an adjacent island.

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## CHAPTER XVI.

### *Revolution of the 9th Thermidor. The persecution uninterrupted in the Provinces.*

THE priests of Nièvre, who were detained at Brest, met with no better treatment than their brethren at Rochefort, but their sufferings were more endurable because they were on land, and those who fell sick had the advantage of being tended at the Marine Hospital by the Filles de la Sagesse. It may seem strange that in the height of the Reign of Terror, and in a stronghold of the Revolution like Brest, nuns should have been permitted to continue their ministrations, and this in spite of their having persistently refused to take every oath which had been proffered to them. It was certainly owing to no indulgence on the part of the civil authorities that they had been spared, for several times attempts had been made to enforce against them the decree of the Convention which excluded from the hospitals all women suspected of being ‘aristocrats.’ But the sick sailors, who well knew that the *citoyennes* who would be sent to replace them would be ill substitutes for the tender nurses and mothers they possessed, had always manifested their strong determination to keep them, and had even threatened to set the hospital on fire if they were deprived of their services. It was, in fact, owing to the resolution of these poor men that the community was indebted for the exceptional privilege of weathering out the revolutionary storm.

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The nuns of the Miséricorde de Jesus, who served the Hospital Saint-Yves at Rennes, were not so fortunate. They had been a mark for persecution during the whole of the years 1792 and 1793, the most absurd accusations being successively brought against them. One of their number was imprisoned on a charge so ludicrous that we cannot refrain from mentioning it. She had been seen presenting a crucifix to a dying person, and it was pretended that she was giving absolution, faculties for granting which, it was alleged, had been conferred on herself and her companions by Mgr. de Girac. She was kept in prison for twenty days, and was released only through the protection of her shoe-maker, now a municipal officer—for such was the class into whose hands authority had descended—who was induced to exert his influence in her behalf. The Hospitalières of Saint-Yves, in spite of all the vexations to which they were subjected, maintained their position until the spring of 1794. The superior even succeeded in eluding the vigilance of their guards, for they were most closely watched, and in procuring for herself and her community the opportunity of fulfilling their Paschal duties. This spiritual refreshment came to strengthen them for enduring the long trials to which they were to be subjected. The stroke fell upon them on Good Friday, when they were offered the alternative of taking the oath, required of them as ‘public functionaries,’ or of going to prison. None hesitated, and nine of their number were accordingly incarcerated, the remainder being left for the present in the hospital, where their services were indispensable; but these also were subsequently imprisoned. The sufferings of these pious women in the different gaols to which they were consigned were very great. To relate them in detail would be almost a repetition of much which has already been recorded concerning

the priests. One remarkable instance, however, occurred of the respect which their self-sacrificing charity inspired even in the case of the vile populace of Rennes; for when, on their transfer from a house of detention to the common prison of that city, they were paraded through the principal streets with the view of exposing them to derision, the mob, albeit constantly excited to hatred of religion and of all who were specially consecrated to the service of God, kept silence, and allowed these women who had devoted their lives to the succour of the suffering poor to pass without an insult. The Hospitalières, long deprived of the consolations of religion, had at last the opportunity of making their confession to a priest who was about to be guillotined, as will be related when we come to speak of that martyr's death.

Evil seemed now to have reached its climax; terror had invaded every home, where no one felt secure of liberty or life for a single hour; yet never were there wanting zealous men who, in defiance of every danger, devoted themselves to the offices of their sacred ministry, and they were often wonderfully shielded from harm. Tresvaux says that while Carrier was decimating the population of Nantes he knew an instance in which a curé of the diocese, M. Cosmel, passed into a house where arrests were in the act of being made, bearing the Blessed Sacrament to a dying woman, and that in the face of four gendarmes who were guarding the door. This is but one example which fell under the notice of a single individual; but how many more must have been unrecorded and are now forgotten on earth! The self-sacrifice of good Catholics in concealing priests at the risk of their lives was no less admirable than that of the proscribed themselves. Of this MM. Le Roux and Costiou, of the diocese of Léon, had a touching proof.

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They were hid during the Terror at a peasant's house in a secluded situation. As troops, however, were constantly passing through the district, they feared compromising their host, who had a wife and children, and resolved to leave. Having apprised the peasant of their purpose, he begged them to wait while he spoke to his wife. The man soon returned accompanied by his wife, and, kneeling before the priests, they said, 'Let what God wills befall us, but you have obtained for us such precious graces, that we cannot consent to be deprived of them; we therefore wish you to remain with us.' God rewarded the generosity both of the priests and of this good family. The former were never discovered, neither were the latter molested. Devotion of this sort was very common in Brittany, but it specially abounded in the diocese of Saint-Malo, where the country-people were remarkable for their simple faith and piety. In the parish of Saint-Thurial a man named Pierre Aubin had often as many as thirteen or fourteen priests in his house, and it was thither that they used to resort on Holy Thursday to fulfil their Paschal duties.

Many instances of heroic virtue also are recorded of good Catholics in those trying times, such as that of dying rather than stain their souls with an untruth. Examples amongst the priesthood have been already cited, but they were frequent also amongst the laity. Witness a young man of Nantes, named Sagory, who, although eighteen, looked much younger and might easily have passed as under age, but he preferred death on the scaffold to lending himself to a falsehood. Baltais, a builder of Fougères, acted in a similar way when denounced to the Revolutionary Commission for having superintended the hoisting of the white flag on the steeple of Saint-Léonard. For once in a way the members of that sanguinary tribunal were disposed to

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mercy, and desired to be cheated. Interest had been made for the accused with Defienne, the agent for the representatives of the people, and he had agreed to save the man if he would deny his complicity in the act. Accordingly, when Baltais appeared before his judge, the latter said, ‘Did you help in setting up the white flag?’ ‘Yes,’ replied the accused boldly. ‘Freely?’ ‘Yes, freely.’ ‘Still, you did it under some compulsion?’ ‘No, I was not compelled.’ ‘You know that this is a crime which the law punishes with death. The Commission desires to save your life if you will but say that you acted under compulsion.’ ‘I cannot say so, since I acted freely. I will not save my life by a lie.’ Then Defienne gave him up, and said to the members of the Commission, ‘Your Baltais has done for himself, in spite of all my efforts to save him. He would not tell a falsehood, so I have condemned him.’ A few days after, he was guillotined with twelve or thirteen other victims. Truth, then, as well as faith had its martyrs in Brittany.

Never, not even in Pagan times, was Christian virtue seen in stronger contrast with surrounding wickedness than in those days, and this was particularly the case in Paris, where the men in authority, the most execrable perhaps whom the world ever saw, not only made a parade of their vices and impiety, but were labouring with all their might to make the French a nation of atheists. The fear of God being banished from hearts, the most scandalous immorality had begun to pervade all classes. No curb existed save that of terror, but it was not the evil-doers whom it was used to restrain; for rulers in those days were a terror to the good not to the evil. In the midst of this chaos of disorder and irreligion, there was a man all-powerful at this time, whom memory specially associates with the Reign of Terror, but who

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ventured to pronounce a name prohibited for more than a year save as an object of blasphemy : that man was Robespierre, and that name was the Name of God. He had never advocated atheism ; nay, he had even endangered his popularity by making mention one day of Providence at the Jacobin Club ; but his god was not the God of the Christian, and the vanity of becoming the head of a new religion, coupled probably with the perception that no authority could have any permanence which did not possess the support of some kind of religious belief, was, no doubt, his chief incentive when he rose and proclaimed before the Convention the existence of a Supreme Being and the immortality of the soul. The days were gone by when men could dare to object to what the implacable Robespierre might be pleased to favour, and so his proposal was received with deference, and even with applause, not only in the Assembly but in the Jacobin Club itself, where his speech was read in the evening, and it was decreed that on all those buildings which were employed for the celebration of national festivals the words 'Temple consecrated to Reason' should be effaced and their dedication to the Supreme Being recorded instead.

The cathedrals as well as the parochial churches in Brittany underwent in some places the same transformation. Chapels, however, were often deemed sufficient for the new worship, and so, indeed, they were ; for the people, who took no part in any of the revolutionary follies, avoided with special horror this Pagan ceremonial. None attended save officials, a few ardent patriots, and those who were dragged thither against their will. Such, at least, was the case on the Festival of the Supreme Being kept in the month of June, 1794, in imitation of the imbecile and profane ceremony which had been celebrated in Paris on the 12th of May, Robespierre

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himself playing the part of pontiff. His authority seemed now firmly established; he was virtual dictator, for terror had silenced all opposition. There were many atheists in the Convention, but fear had led them, as we have seen, to join in the applause with which his declaration of belief in the being of a God had been received; and he knew this well. By some it is supposed that his desire, after ridding himself of his sanguinary associates, and of all who could pretend to compete with him, was to reign, like another Augustus, with moderation and clemency. Be this as it may—and it may well be doubted whether that hard and merciless man could ever have learned to practise clemency—it is certain that it was Robespierre's object to establish a regular government, of which he should himself be the absolute head; and for this purpose it was necessary for him to destroy the men who were combined in maintaining a system of extermination which was assuming more terrible proportions every day. What with the help of the Mountain he had done against the Girondists he now designed to effect against the Mountain itself, and send to the scaffold such monsters as Collot d' Herbois, Billaud-Varennes, Carrier, and many more, whose atrocities had made the Revolution infamous. But his intention was perceived, and his heretofore accomplices, now marked out as victims, banded together to destroy him, in which, as is well known, they succeeded.

It would be a mistake, then, to suppose that the revolution of the 9th Thermidor (July 27) was a rising of humane men against this bloodthirsty tyrant. Far from it; for many of those who conspired to crush Robespierre were as bad as himself; some were even worse, although this may be thought by many to be impossible. It was an instinct of self-preservation which

led to the combination against him, and thus, although the 9th Thermidor ‘inaugurated a less sanguinary era of the Republic,’ as the historian Gabourd observes, ‘the victors were worthy neither of esteem nor of gratitude; they obeyed the instincts of fear, they fought in order not to die, and, although their own punishment would have appeared only just, they triumphed and survived their formidable rival. Robespierre perished, not because he was the agent and inventor of the system which was being brought to a close’—though such he pre-eminently was—‘but because he had meant to lay the basis of his power on the dead bodies of his accomplices.’<sup>1</sup> The death of Robespierre and of his adherents, hailed as it was with universal exultation, necessarily produced a reaction in favour of clemency, and his fall was the beginning of a new epoch in Paris. The daily executions ceased; soon the prisons were opened, and a great number of the captives were released. Amongst these was Mgr. de Bellescize, Bishop of Saint-Brieuc. He had been the means, while confined in the Luxembourg, of converting La Harpe, a man of literary celebrity and a former friend of Voltaire. During his detention he had leisure to reflect on the evil fruits which the modern philosophy had produced, and, while these thoughts were tending to open his eyes, the sweetness and patience with which he saw Mgr. de Bellescize bear the tortures of gout touched his heart and led him to seek counsel and instruction from that prelate. He ended by making his confession to him, and from that moment became an intrepid defender of the faith which he had hitherto contemned. If religious persecution, then, did not altogether cease in the capital, it was much moderated, and we find only two executions of priests in Paris after the 9th

<sup>1</sup> *Histoire de France*, tom. xix. p. 237.

Thermidor. It was there that about this time died a Breton priest of much talent and merit, M. Bérardier, whom, not being a martyr, we mention only on account of a curious fact associated with his memory. He had formerly been head of the College of Louis le Grand, and, being by nature very indulgent, he had wanted the firmness required for the maintenance of discipline in that establishment. Many of the students, amongst whom were Robespierre and Camille-Desmoulins, were noted for their excesses from the earliest days of the Revolution ; Camille-Desmoulins, however, preserved a regard for his old superior and saved him from the September massacres. What is more surprising still in a man of his character is that he should have chosen to be secretly married by him during the Reign of Terror.

But if in Paris the persecution of the clergy was suspended, no change took place in the provinces, where the local authorities, not being replaced at the tyrant's death, continued unrelentingly the same sanguinary course. News had already reached Rennes of Robespierre's fall when M. Cottire, of the diocese of Saint-Malo, was executed. The next day, the 4th of August, witnessed the execution of P. Barthélemy, a priest and religious (a Récollet), well known for his zeal and charity. He had a most heroic companion in death, Angélique Glatin. She had been formerly a servant to Madame de Vieux-Châtel, whose confidence she had merited and won. At her mistress's death she had given herself up wholly to works of charity, and was employed by many rich ladies to convey their alms to the poor. Her house was open to the proscribed priests and P. Barthélemy was its permanent inmate. There he discharged the functions of his ministry in behalf of the numerous good Christians of Saint-Malo.

At last he and his hostess were denounced by a treacherous woman who hawked about second-hand articles, and who, peeping through a key-hole, saw them at table together. Adversity only served to display more conspicuously Mdlle. Glatin's greatness of soul. During the few weeks she spent in prison her cheerfulness was unfailing. The good father was ready to shed his blood for Christ, but he was sometimes much depressed. Cases were accordingly here reversed, and this woman became the instrument which the goodness of God had provided to sustain and fortify the gentle and sensitive nature of the priest. Her presence of mind before the tribunal was very striking; it was she who was chiefly interrogated, and her replies were worthy of the martyrs of primitive ages. 'How long has this enemy of the country been hidden in your house?' 'I cannot precisely say how long I have had the happiness of possessing this good religious as my guest, but I know that it has been for a considerable time.' 'What used he to do in your house?' 'He has done, and I have helped him to do, all the good in his power. He has baptized, heard confessions, solemnized marriages, and given many first communions, and I have facilitated these pious ministrations with all the means at my disposal.' 'Imprudent woman! Did you not know to what you exposed yourself? The law forbade these things.' 'Yes, the law which is your law, but the law of my God commanded me to do them.'

They were both, of course, condemned. Mdlle. Glatin heard her sentence without showing the slightest emotion, and returned to the prison blessing God. When the hour for execution arrived she was the first to step forth, and marched to death with a firm step and a cheek unblanched by fear. 'Father,' she said aloud to P. Barthélemi, 'entone the *Te Deum* in thanksgiving that we

are going 'to die for Jesus Christ ;' and it was thus, together chanting that canticle of praise, that they reached the foot of the scaffold. She chose to die last, doubtless that the Father, who had less strength of mind than herself, might be spared the pain of seeing her blood flow. Thus perished this admirable woman, who was deeply regretted and long remembered at Saint-Malo. The mixed crowd who witnessed her execution returned sad and silent from the scene ; even republican ferocity was subdued, and we are told that the officer appointed to preside on the occasion could not touch a morsel of food the whole of that day. He was heard to say several times, ' There was something divine about that woman. I never saw firmness equal to hers.'

A few days later another priest went to death, M. Maréchal. He had been concealed in the house of two noble ladies named De Renac, whose father was in Jersey. A wretched man, who had previously betrayed to death another priest, M. Crosson, who was, as related, guillotined on a fair day at Rennes, played the same execrable part on this occasion. Suspecting that M. Maréchal was concealed in the demoiselles de Renac's house, he went there one morning feigning that he came as a friend to apprise them in haste that a plot was on foot to set their *hôtel* on fire, so that they had best remove at once as well as the priest whom they had with them. One of the ladies who was lying ill in bed, believing this false information, exclaimed in a voice of consternation, ' O sister ! ' her eyes at the same time instinctively turning in the direction of the priest's hiding-place. This was enough. The traitor now knew that his prey was there, and instantly called in the men who were waiting outside. All three were taken to prison, and were guillotined the same day. M. Maréchal had passed into Jersey in 1792, but, returning to France,

had lain hidden in several places. He resided for some time with an old lady at Tinteniac, where he arrived disguised as a National Guard, and passed for her nephew. As he used to mount guard with the rest, no one suspected him, until one day, when they were summoned to assist at the schismatical priest's Mass on occasion of some public ceremonial, M. Maréchal refused to attend, saying that he had not come to Tinteniac to go to Mass. Suspicions were thus aroused, on perceiving which he fled, and remained at Rennes until his arrest at the house of the De Renacs.

Mgr. Bruté,<sup>2</sup> who was an eye-witness of the trial, recalled in after years many of its circumstances : the self-possession, moderation, and courtesy which distinguished the priest's bearing and replies during his short interrogatory, as well as the firmness with which he stated his principles. He remembered well the figures of the two gentle ladies, wearing black caps and mantles, according to the fashion then in vogue at Rennes ; both tall, slender, pale, and with mild and interesting countenances. He observed that Bouassier, the President who knew those ladies well and was fully conscious of the injustice and horror of the sentence he was pronouncing, was evidently moved, for his countenance and speech became frightfully altered. His health, indeed, was ever-after vitally affected, and his pallid face, hollow voice, and frequent sighs betrayed the mental anguish he endured. A few years afterwards he was passing along the Promenade La Motte-à-Madame, when suddenly he heard himself called by his name twice. Seeing no one, he asked who called him, but no reply came. Pre-

<sup>2</sup> He was then a boy of fourteen. His family used often to send him to attend the criminal court and bring them back information, his youth exempting him from suspicion ; for grown-up people seldom dared to go.

sently the call was repeated as before, and some one who was walking under the trees, hearing him again say, ‘Who called me?’ replied, ‘Do you not see that it is the demoiselles de Renac?’ At these words the miserable man was seized with a fit of trembling, went home, and died in a few days. On his death-bed he would fain have called in a priest, but his son, who had been brought up in the school of Voltaire and Rousseau, would permit none to approach him.<sup>3</sup>

Another excellent ecclesiastic was executed on the same day as M. Maréchal; this was M. Saquet, Rector of Saint-Martin of Rennes. He was much beloved in his parish, where he had remained concealed in the house of a good peasant. On hearing that he had been denounced he left his retreat, in order not to jeopardize the life of his benefactor, and hid himself in a field of wheat. Here, after diligent search, he was discovered. He is described by Mgr. Bruté as having behaved on his examination with a singular mixture of dignity, self-possession, and mildness. After the sentence of death had been passed, it was found that the executioner was absent. Returning in about half an hour, the man proceeded, with affected hurry, to prepare his victim for the scaffold in a most brutal manner, roughly cutting away his hair together with the collar of his coat, so as to lay his neck bare for the knife; after which he tied his hands behind his back, and threw his coat loosely over his shoulders. As the martyr passed along the corridor of the courthouse to the guillotine, which stood hard by, the blood trickled down over his breast from the wounds which in his cruel haste the executioner had inflicted. ‘No words,’ says the same eye-witness, ‘could better express his tranquillity and composure than these—that he looked at that moment as he used to look when he was following

<sup>3</sup> *Life of Bishop Bruté*, pp. 68—73.

the processions of the people of his parish on the solemn festivals of the Church.<sup>4</sup> These circumstances are the more remarkable because he was constitutionally timid, and had much dreaded being taken, but, when the hour came, grace triumphed over the infirmity of nature. He recited the *Miserere* as he went to death, and the words were still on his lips as the knife fell.

A desultory warfare continued to be waged in Brittany between the royalists and the republicans. Detachments of the latter were frequently scouring the country in pursuit of their adversaries or for the purpose of hunting out concealed fugitives. One of these moveable columns marched on the 13th of September from Loudéac to Mûr, a parish distant about four miles, the inhabitants of which were deeply attached to the faith. Among the priests hidden there was M. Burlot, who was a native of the place, and had sought refuge with his mother, who was eighty years of age. Whether or no the troops suspected his presence there, they proceeded straightway to Madame Burlot's house. Her son had just time to go and hide himself in a hay-loft, but unfortunately he left his snuff-box and pocket-handkerchief on a bench, and these betrayed him. Rigorous search was everywhere made, and one of the men, plunging his bayonet into the hay, wounded the priest, who uttered an involuntary cry of pain. Dragged from his hiding-place, he was treated with the usual inhumanity, and the soldiers threatened to carry off the whole family to prison. M. Burlot, whose thoughts were all in heaven, strove to console his weeping relatives, and, after embracing his aged parent, accompanied the soldiers, who contented themselves finally with seizing his brother. They arrived early at Loudéac, where the Abbé Tresvaux, who saw them both as they were led through the public square, says M. Burlot

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 39—42.

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was very calm, and seemed to have a deep gash on his left hand. He was executed at Saint-Brieuc, on the 19th of September. His brother died shortly after in prison. Three days previous, M. Restif, another concealed priest, was executed at Rennes. Two servants of a rich lady, to whom, on account of her great age, they could not venture to intrust the secret, had received him into her house. These two women were also condemned to death, but they appear to have succeeded in hiding themselves, and so escaped their destined fate.

In the beginning of October there were executions on three consecutive days in that same city, which had already seen the blood of so many martyrs flow. The first victims were MM. Robert and Le Roux, both of the diocese of Saint-Malo, and M. Gortais, a chaplain of the Rennes diocese. The two former had studied at the same seminary, had received the priesthood on the same day, and had ministered in adjoining parishes. A tender friendship subsisted between them. M. Robert is described as having quite an angelic countenance, which did not belie his heart. M. Le Roux was remarkable both for his virtues and his learning. Led by two villains, a party of soldiers had been directed to the house in the village of Labinais in which the three priests were living. M. Le Roux escaped in the first instance, the others were taken, and, after receiving every manner of insult, were so tightly bound that the cords cut into the flesh. They had also to witness some revolting acts of sacrilege perpetrated in the church, where, it seems, the Blessed Sacrament was privately reserved. Part of the column then went with their prisoners to Bain, while the rest proceeded to ravage a neighbouring parish. In the course of their raid they discovered M. Le Roux, and brought him to Bain. When M. Robert saw his friend, who he hoped had

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escaped, in the hands of the republicans, he was so struck with grief as to be unable to utter a word, but M. Le Roux strove to console him, expressing the joy he felt at sharing martyrdom with him. The confessors were bound two and two with some lay prisoners and sent to Rennes, but the state in which they arrived there baffles description, bruised as they were from head to foot with the blows they had received from the bayonets and sword-flats of the soldiers. Cruel as they were, the judges could not help feeling some regret in condemning M. Le Roux, whose high character and abilities were well known. ‘It is a pity,’ they said, ‘to condemn such a man to death; but then, no doubt, he would do more mischief than others of less capacity. He must die.’ They were all three executed on the 7th of October, M. Gortais singing on the way to the scaffold a pious Lament which he had composed.

On the following day M. Bodin, Rector of the Chapelle Saint-Aubert, was guillotined. He had never left his parish, where, with two other ecclesiastics, he had found an asylum in the house of three sisters, the demoiselles La Gracière. A tiler, employed to repair the roof, caught a sight of the priests and denounced them at Fougères. A worthy man, who got intelligence of this treacherous act, hastened to warn the priests of their peril, but, unfortunately, M. Bodin regarded it as a false alarm, and remained. He was accordingly seized together with the three ladies. When placed on the cart to be carried to Rennes, four hundred people of the place congregated together and wanted to rescue them forcibly from their guards, but the priest earnestly enjoined them to use no violence. They obeyed, and were constrained to content themselves with bewailing their loss with many demonstrations of grief. M. Bodin was well worthy of their regret, as were also his three

parishioners, whose whole time and fortune had been devoted to the service of the poor, and whose house, ever since the breaking out of the Revolution, had been a refuge for God's faithful ministers. They all suffered together. A young man named Tual was executed on the same day. He had only received the tonsure, and was not therefore liable to deportation, although disobedience to the law which enjoins it was made the ground of his offence; but the real cause of his condemnation was a book which he had written, entitled, 'Principles and Rules of Conduct to be observed during Times of Schism and Persecution.' Being questioned regarding the authorship, he not only courageously owned it, but added that he continued to hold the principles advocated in the work. The next day, the 9th, witnessed the death of M. Jourdin, the Vicaire of Janzé. He was arrested at Rennes and speedily condemned. Confined in the Tour le Bat, in a room contiguous to one in which were imprisoned the Hospitalières of Saint-Ives, already mentioned, he had the fortitude to hear all their confessions with calmness and attention, while expecting every moment to be summoned to the scaffold. It was a great act of charity, for these poor women had everything to fear, as they might themselves have to appear at any moment before a tribunal which knew neither justice nor mercy. There was a crack in the wall, through which the nuns were able to speak to him, but he had no means of reaching the aperture except by inserting his feet, which were charged with the weight of heavy fetters, in two holes, supporting himself with great difficulty. But he did not acquaint the nuns with his position, neither did he let them know the fate which momentarily awaited him. On the scaffold he exclaimed, 'Please God that I may be the last victim!' and his prayer seems to have been heard, for he was the last priest who shed

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his blood for the faith at Rennes during the Reign of Terror.

Throughout Brittany this reign had been prolonged, as it was at Rennes, after its cessation in the capital, for at Quimper we find two ecclesiastics of the diocese of Léon guillotined after the fall of Robespierre, namely, M. Le Gall, Rector of Plouenan, and M. Coirigou, former chaplain of the Ursulines of Saint-Paul. They were both harboured by the widow of a rich farmer, named Le Saint, whose house was open to the proscribed. Denounced by a shoemaker, whom M. Le Gall had employed, they were both apprehended on the evening of the 7th of September, M. Le Goff, who long survived as Curé of Saint-Paul-de-Léon, having left the house only two hours before. Anne Le Saint, a religious, who lived with her sister-in-law, Madame Le Saint, was present when the priests were arrested, and, desirous to save her relative's life and spare her young family so sad a loss, took upon herself the whole responsibility of their being in the house, saying that it was she who had received and lodged them. This devoted woman accordingly shared their fate, and was executed with them on the 16th of September. Amongst the martyrs of this period must also be reckoned M. Morel, of the diocese of Dol, who had pursued his apostolic labours during the whole of the year 1793 and up to the time of his murder in November, 1794, when he accidentally met a party of soldiers, by one of whom he was recognized, and who, after inflicting the most cruel tortures on him, put him to death solely because he was a Catholic priest. Such crimes not only went unpunished in those days, but passed altogether unnoticed by the authorities, partly because France was in a state of so much confusion and misrule, and partly because the priests were regarded as outlawed men, who might be killed wherever they were found, like so many noxious animals.

If the fall of Robespierre had not availed to stop the execution of the priests in Brittany, neither had it checked the persecution of the religious. Some, indeed, who had hitherto escaped incarceration, as had the Hospitalières who served the Hotels Dieu at Lannion and Treguier, were now thrown into prison. If the latter had been enabled to pursue their vocation so long in spite of countless difficulties, it was, as in the case of their sisters at Brest, owing to the determination of the sick to retain them, not to any forbearance on the part of the authorities. They had bestowed the tenderest care on the soldiers of the battalion of Étampes, whom sickness had decimated, as if by a judgment of God, ever since their profanation of the cathedral. Bad as these men were, they knew how to appreciate the devoted charity and attention of their nurses, and, so long as they remained in Treguier, the magistrates could not venture to meddle with the nuns ; for no sooner did these soldiers espy any municipals approaching the house of the community, which was attached to the hospital, than they collected together and swore that, if the religious were removed, they would set all the four quarters of the town on fire. After the battalion left Treguier the Hospitalières were soon sent to prison, where their sisters of Lannion were already immured. The nuns of Carhaix in the same department were also imprisoned and very rigorously treated. The women sent to replace the religious as hospital nurses were both dishonest and ill-behaved, and had soon wasted the resources of these charitable institutions. Linen, medicines, everything rapidly disappeared, and at Treguier they even broke up a staircase to provide themselves with fire-wood. Both the hospital physician and the municipal officers now joined in soliciting from the administration the recall of the nuns, but fanatical hatred of religion prevailed over the pressing

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calls of humanity and even the obvious dictates of economy, and the petition was rejected.

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## CHAPTER XVII.

### *Pacification of La Vendée and of Brittany. Renewed efforts of the schismatics.*

THE 9th Thermidor brought no immediate relief to the priests on board the vessels at Rochefort. The sick, however, before long derived a certain amount of benefit ; for the Convention, having selected some moderate men from their body to act as its delegates, sent them into different parts of France with the view of remedying a portion of the evils inflicted during the Terrorist régime. Rochefort accordingly was visited, and the deputies, on learning the frightful condition to which the priests sentenced to deportation had been reduced, appointed commissioners to go on board and inspect the vessels. Descending between decks, the sight which met their eyes made them recoil with horror. There they beheld a mass of human beings, extenuated by famine and disease, covered with rags and vermin, their hair in disorder, their beards long and matted, for their cruel gaolers had denied them the use both of razors and of soap. Moved to pity by their deplorable state, the commissioners spoke a few words of kindness and consolation to the prisoners, the more welcome as it was long since they had been addressed with anything but invectives and curses. A hope was even held out to them of release from their sufferings, but the commissioners did not inform them that France had been delivered from her tyrant, probably in order not to raise expectations which they knew would be premature, and

it was not till long after that the priests learned what had occurred. Doctors followed the commissioners, who ordered the removal of the sick from the boats in which they lay to the adjacent islet of Aix, where they were placed under tents. Here they had the comfort of mattresses and pure air ; but they did not long enjoy these advantages, for no sooner were they somewhat restored in health than they were remanded to the floating prison. Their number was sadly reduced, ten of the Breton priests alone having died during the month of August, some on the island, others immediately after re-embarkation. The same causes continued necessarily to produce the same effects, and it speedily became evident that the sick must be again removed to the land.

By this time a slight change for the better had taken place in the behaviour of the officers. They brought *Les Deux Associés* nearer in shore, and moored her close to the mouth of the Charente, where is a small island, known heretofore as *Ile Madame*, but which had now received the name of *Ile Citoyenne*, its former appellation sounding far too aristocratic to be tolerated by republican ears. Here, about the close of August, the sick were established in tents. A considerable number, of whom five were Bretons, died during the month of September—and no wonder ; for, when we speak of improvement in the treatment of the priests, a diminution of actual ill-usage must alone be understood, as the sick on the island were left in want of everything that could have contributed to their recovery, food, medicine, and proper clothing, while the convalescent were denied all exercise. Five more Bretons died in the month of October, and, as winter approached, bringing frequent rains and violent gales of wind, tents became totally unfit for habitation and, indeed, very unsafe, as on more than one occasion they were nearly blown down. Once

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more it became necessary to re-embark the sick, but another vessel, L'Indien, was now set apart as a hospital, where they were to meet with much kinder treatment.

Although hitherto the persecution had raged as hotly as ever we find that several deported priests returned about this time to Brittany. Possibly it was the very desire to bear a part in the deadly conflict which actuated these heroic men, who were eager, like good soldiers, to fill up the ranks of the fallen. A letter to the Convention from Boursault, one of the delegates who visited Brittany after the 9th Thermidor, and who appears on the whole to have acted humanely, acquaints us with this fact, and in language which manifests the inveterate prejudice still entertained against the clergy. He had, he said, caused the arrest of ‘several non-juring priests whom England had vomited forth to keep alive the civil war.’ Guezno, a deputy of the Finisterre, who was also charged with a mission in Brittany, was more liberal than Boursault, and on the 13th of January, 1795, issued an order directing that no one should be troubled in the peaceable exercise of his own worship. It was from the date of this order that the persecution began to abate, and the judges to act with less severity, ceasing to send priests to the scaffold. Public opinion was also undergoing a change in the commencement of the year 1795, which encouraged those magistrates who were disposed to moderation to be more lenient than hitherto; for men had often been cruel simply from abject fear.

A feeling of indignation was now springing up at Rochefort with regard to the disgraceful treatment of the prisoners detained in the vessels; a strong proof of which occurred one day at a popular meeting of the club of that place. No sooner did the captain of Les Deux Associés enter the room than a general cry arose of ‘Out with

him ! Out with the priest-slayer !' He wished to mount the tribune in order to justify himself, but the way to it was blocked up by the crowd, from which the cry of 'Down with the murderer of priests!' was reiterated with such increasing vehemence that the captain was advised to make his retreat ; which, indeed, he only effected just in time, as words were on the point of being converted into blows. He returned on board his boat greatly dejected, and not a little alarmed by the insult which he had received, dreading probably a day of reckoning such as had overtaken in the capital so many who had figured during the Terror as men of blood. He had now the meanness to solicit from his captives, the horrors of whose position he had for months striven to aggravate in every possible way, a certificate which might protect him from the charge of cruelty. He even went down on his knees to implore this favour at their hands. The same charity which sealed their lips in after times with reference to the names of their tormentors induced the greater part of the priests to accede to this shameless request, at least so far as a vague and general certificate might extend. The claims of truth could hardly admit of more. The subaltern officers, and even the common sailors, were eager now to obtain similar testimonials. The captain of the *Washington*, who made a like application, had also behaved with much inhumanity to his prisoners, especially during the rigorous winter of 1795. For instance, the priests had been forced to receive their daily rations of food on the open deck, where, imperfectly clothed as they were, they used to be kept waiting in all weathers during half an hour for the poor aliments which were distributed to them. Several of their number, in fact, perished from cold, amongst whom was a Breton priest of the diocese of Quimper, M. Le Bis.

The day of deliverance came at last. For a short time

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they had no longer been treated with so much severity, and were even allowed to assemble together for prayer without molestation. The young captain of L'Indien was, indeed, extremely kind to the sick who were transferred to that vessel. He seems to have formed a happy exception to his fellow officers, and Tresvaux regrets not being able to record his name. In the course of the month of January, a gendarme presented himself on board the vessels and signified to the priests that they were to be set on shore as soon as the ice which blocked the mouth of the river should have broken up. Accordingly, on the 6th of February, the two hundred and twenty-three priests who alone survived of the seven hundred and sixty who had entered those fatal vessels were taken up the river to Charente, where they had to spend a night of bitter cold in the boats. After this they had two days' march before reaching Saintes. It was now raining in torrents, and they had nothing but their old tattered garments to cover them. Debarred also for the space of ten months from exercise and enfeebled by all their sufferings and privations, many of them could scarcely totter along. Some, indeed, were wholly unable to walk, and these were placed on cars; all were faint with exhaustion, for, when put on shore from the boats, they had not received a morsel of food since the previous morning, when each had been provided with one sea-biscuit. As they neared Saintes they descried with some uneasiness a great crowd gathered at the door of the Convent of Notre Dame, their destined prison, for they naturally apprehended a renewal of the insults to which they had been subjected so frequently in the previous year on their way to Rochefort; but, to their surprise and joy, they found that this multitude had assembled to do them honour and to testify their love and reverence by every service which they could render

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them; helping the sick to descend from the carts, soliciting the favour of taking some of them to their own homes, and manifesting the greatest pleasure when they had obtained permission. Moreover, they found the convent itself crowded with persons who had come to minister to their necessities and comfort. But we cannot do better than give the scene as described by one who was a sharer in it.

‘Words fail me,’ writes M. Michel, ‘to depict the touching spectacle which met our eyes on entering the convent. It was filled with persons of all classes who had come to contribute, according to their several means, to the relief of our misery. Some brought coats, shirts, and other things to replace our wretched clothes, which were full of vermin; others, anticipating our extreme hunger, distributed bread, wine, meat, vegetables, &c.; others had brought cart-loads of wood, and by kindling fires in all the rooms restored vital warmth to our bodies, which seemed to have lost all their natural heat. You might see persons even of the highest distinction carrying sheets, mattresses, and coverlets, which they left in each sleeping room; physicians, surgeons, hastened to give the assistance of their art to all who stood in need of it; barbers had come to offer to rid us of beards which served as a receptacle to myriads of tormenting insects; washer-women inquired what there was among our rags which might still be of use to us, for the purpose of washing it after putting it in an oven to exterminate its strange occupants; every one, in short, showed the most lively eagerness to offer us assistance of every kind: the generosity of the people of Saintes did not suffer them to forget anything; it overcame the natural repugnance which our very aspect was calculated to inspire; and the disgusting filthiness which was enough to drive every one away from us only served to augment their courage and

charity. As for ourselves, we were so bewildered by this sudden change in our condition, that we were actually struck dumb and could not utter a word. All that we beheld seemed like a dream, and we could not credit the testimony of our eyes.'

The priests had not enjoyed the comforts of their new position for more than a fortnight when God called one of their number to his reward, M. Julien, Vicaire of Glomel. During their hard captivity he had evinced an unwearied charity in ministering to the needs, bodily and spiritual, of his fellow-sufferers, of whom he had day and night been the indefatigable infirmarian, and now, having reached a haven of repose, he sank from an inflammation of the chest, apparently contracted during the journey just described, which he performed on foot and drenched with rain. His death reduced the number of the Breton priests to thirty-six, the survivors of seventy-three who had been confined in the Rochefort vessels. After two months' detention at Saintes they were all set at liberty, through the interest exerted in their behalf by some kind person whose name they never learned. They were now able to return to their families, but so changed in appearance by what they had endured that their very relatives could scarcely recognize them. Many of them also had contracted the germs of fatal maladies which later carried them off. The priests at Brest recovered their freedom about the same time, but of sixty-one who had left Nevers only twelve remained.

The war in La Vendée had never ceased. Charette kept it up in the Bas Poitou and Stofflet in Anjou. That portion of the Nantes district which lies on the right bank of the Loire, as well as other parts of Brittany, was also in a chronic state of disturbance. On both sides, however, a desire had arisen to put an end to this harassing state of things, for the species of

warfare carried on led to no definite result while it inflicted countless evils on the country which was its theatre. The struggle had flagged a good deal ever since the 9th Thermidor, and the Republic, anxious to bring the war to a close, had, on the 2nd December, proffered an amnesty, which was to include the officers as well as the peasants. But the Vendean would not accept a pardon, and the independent spirit they manifested made their foes respect them all the more and feel the more solicitous to bring about an accommodation. After a few non-official preliminaries and private negotiations on the part of the Commissioners of the Convention, a regular treaty was at last concluded, on the 27th of February, 1795, at the Castle of La Jaunais, and soon after ratified by the Government. The Republic not only conceded religious liberty to the insurgents, but engaged to indemnify them for the expenses of the war to the extent of two millions of francs ; several other very favourable conditions were added, the Vendean, on their part, entering into an engagement not to bear arms again against the Republic.

It was made matter of accusation by some against Charette that he thereby abandoned the cause of the Crown, but it must be remembered that the submission to the Republic was in point of fact only nominal. The Convention was determined to make peace, which it eagerly desired, if it were only in order to have more available troops to send to the frontier, but on no other ground could the Government publicly make peace but that of submission to the Republic. The Vendean leaders, however, insisted on the restoration of the monarchy, as well as of Catholic worship. Some secret conditions were accordingly agreed upon, and certain promises held out with reference to the future, which made the treaty provisionally acceptable to Charette,

who was well aware that his jaded troops required rest. Whether or not the Commissioners of the Convention exceeded their powers in the engagements into which they privately entered, or that the Convention deliberately deceived Charette—if deceived he was—as we may easily believe that it would not have scrupled to do, all tends to prove that the so-called treaty was virtually a mere truce, necessary to both sides, but hollow and unsatisfactory from its very nature. On the part of the Vendéans it was but a provisional toleration of a state of things which they still hoped to see changed. Meanwhile they had substantially obtained that for which they had taken up arms, the free exercise of their religion ; for this, and not the cause of monarchy, however intimately in their estimation associated therewith, had been the object of the rising and its primary aim.

The pacification of La Vendée preceded by more than a couple of months that of Brittany, where the royalists, known as Chouans, refused at first to follow Charette's example ; conferences, however, were held at Mabilais, near Rennes, between the royalist chiefs and ten representatives of the people, and, on the 21st of April, the latter gained their point in the same manner as had the Commissioners who negotiated with the Vendéans : namely, by the help of favourable stipulations which the Convention had neither the wish nor the power to fulfil. As one of these conditions, however, was the re-establishment of religion, the treaty had a very beneficial effect on the position of the priests throughout Brittany. The persecution had, indeed, already ceased ; the religious had been released, and the old and infirm ecclesiastics, imprisoned during the previous year, had been set at liberty in the course of the month of March. Those priests who had been in concealment did not even wait for the close of the conferences

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of Mabilais to show themselves and celebrate Mass in public. A curé of the diocese of Quimper, named Jamin, announced his purpose of saying Mass on Easter Sunday on a common in the parish of Saint-Caradec, and an immense crowd in consequence assembled, many having come a distance of three or four leagues. A kind of canopy was erected, under which the priest offered the Adorable Sacrifice in the open air in presence of this vast multitude. It might have been easy for the enemies of religion to see how utterly wasted had been all their endeavours to make the Breton people abandon their faith. The eagerness of the Catholic priests to show themselves was, however, fatal to one of them in the vicinity of Rennes, for some republican soldiers, irritated probably at beholding him publicly exercising his functions, shot him dead at the altar.

Those constitutional priests who had been imprisoned were not the last to recover their freedom—indeed, they were released before the Catholic priests—and the first use they made of their liberty was to endeavour to revive and perpetuate the schism. Although no religion whatsoever had now the official recognition of the State, nevertheless the revolutionists, sympathizing as they did with the schismatics, willingly gave them their protection and facilitated their re-occupation of the cathedrals and parish churches. Fortunately they were far from being able to fill the latter. In Brittany their number had never been sufficient for the purpose, and apostasy during the Terror had further considerably thinned their ranks. Not a few of them also were to pay dear for their renewed intrusion. Enraged against the men who had been the bitter persecutors of their own pastors and the ardent upholders of the Revolution, bands of Chouans would assemble by night in small detachments, arrest them in their own houses, and, after granting them a few

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minutes to recommend their souls to God, shoot them on the spot. A good many schismatic priests thus disappeared in the Côtes-du-Nord during the spring of 1795. These intruders had made themselves so obnoxious by the abandoned lives which the greater part of them led, and by their persecution of the true pastors, many having played the part of spies in hunting them out and giving them up to insults and death, that, although the Breton people had no share in these murderous deeds, they manifested neither sympathy nor regret for the fate of the sufferers. It is needless to say that the faithful priests whose wrongs the Chouan bands took on themselves to avenge would have been the first to reprobate such acts of sanguinary reprisal. We have seen what was the forgiving charity of the martyrs to their persecutors, and can therefore have no doubt upon that point. No justification, indeed, can be offered for these crimes ; all that can be urged in extenuation is that the anarchy of the times, and the total divorce which had existed for so long between law and justice in the country, must have tended to throw men's minds back upon those rude notions of natural right which, in the absence of all legitimate government, seem to lend a kind of sanction even to the worst excesses.

The churches throughout France were now being reopened, particularly in Brittany, where the favourable terms of the late treaty rendered the restoration of divine worship easier ; the civil authorities merely requiring priests to declare in what place they designed to celebrate Mass. There would appear to be nothing in compliance with this formality to alarm the most sensitive conscience, nevertheless some discussion on the subject arose among the clergy, and a few of their number, entertaining an invincible repugnance to holding any communication with the Government, continued

to keep aloof and even discouraged the faithful from attending the churches. Soon, however, an oath of submission to the laws of the Republic was to be imposed, which was due to the intrigues of the schismatics. The deputy Lanjuinais, a fierce partisan, as it will be remembered, of the constitutional clergy—who, however, ought no longer be called by that name, since the Convention had, in the decree requiring the submission in question, expressly repudiated all recognition of a State Constitution of the Church—would have perished on the scaffold with the other Federalists had he not contrived to escape and to keep himself concealed during the remainder of the Reign of Terror, but he had now reappeared on the political scene, and proposed this law to the Assembly, which, as it was subsequently worded, served to renew the persecution against the faithful clergy, but which in no form could offer any difficulty to men who were ready to swear to anything in order to maintain their position. The oath was at first couched in general terms and did not necessarily imply more than a passive submission to the existing order of things; it was even stated in the decree that the oath had no reference to the past political opinions of any one; nevertheless it became an occasion of scruples to not a few, and excited discussions in spite of all the efforts of the ecclesiastical authorities to allay them. It was not long before all ambiguity on this subject was removed, and the oath administered became as potent an engine of persecution as its predecessors had been. Meanwhile the tenacity of the old constitutional party, headed by the ever-active Le Coz, in opposing the restoration of Catholic unity, retained in the schism their old partisans in Brittany, who were chiefly to be found in some cantons of the diocese of Rennes and Quimper. They also, as has been said, held the cathedrals, but upon what title,

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since the State professed no longer to support them, it would be hard to say. The Catholics, it is true, also enjoyed liberty of worship, but it was very precarious even during this temporary interval.

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## CHAPTER XVIII.

### *The Disaster of Quiberon.*

DURING the summer of the year 1795 took place the disastrous landing of the emigrants at Quiberon. It was in every way an unfortunate and inopportune attempt, grounded on mistaken views with respect to the co-operation to be expected and the real position of affairs. The Convention, it is true, was very unpopular throughout France; and, although it had succeeded in ridding itself of the leaders of the Mountain, it was continually torn with factions and had become the perpetual battle-field between hostile parties. The French princes and royalist refugees in England, and the English Government itself, thought therefore that the occasion was favourable for an armed descent on the coast. Yet, apart from the mismanagement which ensured its failure, the attempt itself cannot be considered as otherwise than very ill-timed. Had the emigrants, assisted by the English, landed while the Vendéans were making their victorious march through Brittany, the result might have been very different. Brittany, thus animated, would have probably risen, as the Vendéans had hoped it would when they crossed the Loire; a hope in which they were disappointed, the insurrection never having assumed any large proportions in that province, nor did any army ever take the field there as in La Vendée. But as this proceeded from no lack of sympathy with the cause of the

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monarchy, as was abundantly proved by the favour shown by the people to the Chouans, foreign assistance of any considerable amount would, no doubt, have encouraged action of a more combined and decisive character, and the annihilation of the Vendean army, as well as of the multitudes which had followed it over the Loire, and the *noyades* and fusilades of Nantes might have been thus averted ; the royalists might then have, at least, held their ground until the fall of Robespierre and his adherents and the increased moderation of the Convention had prepared the way for a favourable accommodation. As it was, even after all their crushing reverses, we have seen what good terms the Vendees succeeded in extracting from the Republic. This object had just been secured, and the pacification of Brittany was in progress towards attainment, when the call to arms of the Bourbon princes came to rouse these devoted populations to fresh and worse than fruitless sacrifices.

Scarcely had Charette signed the treaty of La Jaunais when he received a letter from the Comte de Provence calling upon him to take arms again for the royal cause, and telling him that his exploits had rendered him the second founder of the monarchy. This was quite enough to stir the loyal soul of Charette, who now held himself prepared to renew hostilities when the time should come, and to stake all on a fresh venture with undiminished zeal, although he was deeply disappointed that the coast of Poitou was not chosen for the intended landing. Brittany had been judged to offer the best prospects, mainly because the insurrection could not be said to have as yet ceased in that quarter. Hostilities of an irregular and disjointed character had long been kept up (as already observed) by the bands of Chouans scattered throughout the country, and had helped to retard the pacification of the province. The peninsula of Quiberon on

the coast of Morbihan was fixed upon for the descent. Several regiments of emigrants had been formed and provided with chaplains, some of whom were Breton priests ; Mgr. de Hercé, the Bishop of Dol, being appointed to accompany the expedition with the title of Vicar-Apostolic in Brittany. The brother of the venerable prelate, who shared his spirit of self-sacrifice, was associated with him in his hazardous enterprize ; they well knew to what peril they were exposing themselves ; but they had counted the cost and were prepared to pay it. ‘ My brother and I,’ said the Abbé de Hercé, ‘ have no other desire, no other ambition, than to evangelize our land, to bedew with our sweat and, if need be, with our blood, the soil of our unhappy country. We do not hide from ourselves the dangers which will encompass us. We shall march from one village to another, from one district to another, until we are arrested in some city by our erring brethren, there to perish under the knife of the guillotine. But blessed be the Lord ! ’

The fleet arrived in the Bay of Quiberon on the 26th of June, 1795, and the landing was effected without difficulty. No sooner had the neighbouring country become aware of its approach than the people crowded to the coast and welcomed the royalists as liberators. These good peasants might be seen coming in procession, with priests at their head, bearing the Banner of the Sacred Heart, and singing the Church’s hymns. They were at a loss how to testify their joy sufficiently at seeing their countrymen arrive, as they hoped, to put an end to the misery which the Revolution had inflicted on them, the women even wading into the water to assist in the disembarkation. You might have believed that it was a meeting of some great family, the members of which were mutually embracing each other and weeping for very joy. ‘ Good Bretons,’ exclaims an eye-witness of

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this touching scene, ‘I shall never forget the spectacle I beheld. You are the purest and most virtuous people on the earth, and never during the whole time I spent amongst you did I see you belie this fair character.’ But the delight and enthusiasm were heightened beyond measure when the venerable Bishop of Dol landed with sixteen ecclesiastics all vested in their sacerdotal robes. Then the cries of *Vive Dieu! Vive la Religion! Vive le Roi!* burst afresh from the mouths of all, soldiers and people alike kneeling to receive the pontifical blessing. During the crossing, news had reached the squadron of the death in the Temple of the unfortunate son of Louis XVI.; it was therefore one of the first acts of the royalists on landing to proclaim the Comte de Provence king as Louis XVIII. The troops were formed into a great square at Carnac, within which a tent was fixed where Mgr. de Hercé said Mass; he then addressed a discourse to the assembled multitude, at the conclusion of which more than ten thousand voices made the shores resound to the shout of *Le Roi est mort! Vive le Roi!* After this he caused the desecrated church of Carnac to be re-opened and purified, and the same was done in the churches of the neighbouring villages. They were reblessed, to cleanse them from the profanations committed in them, and, provisional altars being erected, the offices of the Church were once more celebrated within their walls, thanksgiving and prayers being offered for the success of the undertaking on which the destinies of France were pending.

Success at first attended the royalist arms; multitudes of Chouans flocked in from all quarters, and, in the course of three days, nearly 20,000 muskets had been served out. The Blues, as the republican troops were called, were falling back in all directions, and the Chouans were eager to push their advantages without delay. Boldness

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and rapidity, indeed, give perhaps the only chance of success to an invasion of this kind ; but, unhappily, this was not the course adopted. To the loss of precious time and to the resolution taken by the emigrants of fortifying themselves in the peninsula of Quiberon as a basis of operation, instead of marching at once into the heart of the country, the disastrous end of this chivalrous but ill-conducted enterprize must perhaps be imputed more than to any other cause. It was decided to await the arrival of the regiment led by the Comte de Sombreuil and of the English contingent. Meanwhile, the Fort of Penthièvre having been captured, the royalists had the inconceivable imprudence to allow the republican troops who had surrendered, and had expressed a desire to enter their ranks, to form a portion of the garrison of a post so all-important to their security. Hoche, the republican general, perceiving that the invaders did not advance, now assumed the offensive. Leaving Rennes, he marched to Vannes, and thence to Auray, driving the royalists out of that place. He then took up his position before the peninsula of Quiberon, so as to intercept their communication with the main land, and there entrenched himself. Before long, through the treachery of the republican soldiers of the garrison, he had obtained possession of the Fort of Penthièvre.

Shut up in the peninsula, no hopes of escape now remained to the royal army save that of effecting a re-embarkation. Sombreuil, who had landed on the 17th of July, could lend no help except that of protecting the retreat on board the English ships. While women and children and the wounded were being crammed into the boats, from eight to nine hundred gentlemen, led on by their young chief, courageously devoted themselves to making head against the advancing enemy. A report was unfortunately circulated amongst them that, if they

laid down their arms, they would be honourably treated as prisoners of war, and this hope tended to enfeeble their resistance. Better to have sold their lives dearly and died with arms in their hands, than to have trusted the treacherous promise which, on the 21st of July, was verbally given them that their lives would be spared. Perhaps not better, however, when we consider their glorious end, which they had time to prepare to meet, not merely as heroes, but as Christian martyrs. Sombreuil and his followers, however, surrendered on the faith of this promise. Historians favourable to the Revolution have denied the existence of any convention or engagement, and the two representatives of the people, Tallien and Blad, afterwards affirmed that none had ever been made; but, when we remember that both these men were regicides, and that Tallien especially had rendered his name infamous by his cruelty, it is impossible to give much credit to their assertions. How little to be trusted were promises made under similar circumstances, the Vendéans had made ample experience. The royalists were so fully persuaded that a capitulation was really granted, that a young Breton had the courage to brave a sea lashed by storm to swim to an English corvette and stop its fire on the republicans. The latter now threw themselves on the royalists, rifled them, and took them into the Fort of Penthièvre; but they were finally removed to Auray.<sup>1</sup>

Mgr. de Hercé had been provided with the means of escape; a boat was ready to convey him and the Abbé

<sup>1</sup> The historian Gabourd is of opinion that the exact truth with respect to the surrender of the royalists will, in all probability, never be known. But he adds that, whether a formal capitulation was agreed upon, or simply a hope held out of an amnesty based on considerations of clemency, the vengeance exercised in the name of the Convention and by its orders was none the less criminal, and will be for ever reprobated by posterity (*Histoire de France*, tom. xix. § iv.).

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de Hercé on board a frigate near the shore, but his charity prompted him to refuse. ‘Shall we,’ he said, addressing his brother, ‘shall we leave without spiritual consolation and aid these unfortunate wounded soldiers, our countrymen and our companions in misfortune? We can now be more serviceable to them than ever. Ah! my brother, let us not forsake them; but let us sacrifice, if need be, the life of our bodies for the benefit of their souls.’ The two brothers then embraced each other, and, returning to the hospital in which the wounded lay, found it already in the hands of the republicans. They were themselves immediately arrested, together with eleven other ecclesiastics, and conducted to Auray.

For a few days the royalist prisoners were not treated with any special rigour. The volunteers and private soldiers were shut up in the devastated church of Saint-Gildas, where the good inhabitants of Auray were not hindered from supplying them with what they needed. The ladies of the place distinguished themselves by their sympathy and charity; they used also to visit the Bishop of Dol in his prison, and esteemed themselves happy to obtain his benediction. But all illusive hopes were soon to be dissipated. Tallien had repaired to Paris to give his own garbled account of what had occurred, and the Comité de Salut Public, faithful to its sanguinary habits, pronounced a virtual sentence of death against all the prisoners, by decreeing that, as emigrants and rebels taken with arms in their hands, they should be brought before a military commission, a tribunal which judged and condemned without any forms of law. The administrators of the district of Morbihan were not one whit more humanely disposed than was the central government, and affected to be convinced that safety could not be ensured but by the death of all the prisoners. Some of the leaders had already appeared before a commission

at Auray, to whom the Comte de Sombreuil so triumphantly proved the existence of an agreement to which he could bring the testimony of three hundred republicans who were within hearing when the promise was given, that the commission declared itself incompetent to pronounce any sentence. Blad, the deputy of Finisterre, who was as cruel as Tallien, when he heard of this declaration immediately appointed a fresh commission composed of men better disposed to carry out his desires. He also set up two at Vannes, where he himself was. Then began that series of executions which never ceased until there remained no more victims to strike. The number of the sufferers is computed to have been about eight hundred.<sup>2</sup>

The Bishop of Dol had been eight days in prison at Auray when a republican officer presented himself to transfer him, together with the twelve priests who shared his captivity, and the leaders of the royalist army to Vannes. A few minutes after the prelate had been summoned he made his appearance, his countenance beaming like that of a just man going with joy to receive the crown of martyrdom, when by one simultaneous movement all the officers threw themselves on their knees. He blessed them, and addressed a few consolatory words to them, bidding them abandon themselves to the mercy of God. Thirty priests are reckoned to have been attached to the expedition, without counting several who followed it charged with other special functions. Of these thirty, fifteen or sixteen only were able to regain the English squadron. The Abbé Pouliquet, of the

<sup>2</sup> When the executions had proceeded for a week, and five hundred had been already shot, the presiding commissioners threatened to acquit the remainder. They were accordingly dismissed, and persons of more accommodating temper chosen in their places. But, to their credit, it may be stated that none of the republican officers would consent to take any further part in the proceedings (Hill's *Story of La Vendée*, c. xiii.).

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diocese of Quimper, and afterwards its bishop, had a very narrow escape, having remained to the last moment, hearing the confessions of the wounded, and refusing to leave until he had finished. He then threw himself into the sea and succeeded in reaching an English frigate. The Abbé de Kerloury had the means of escape provided for him, but he would not desert the young Vicomte de La Houssaie, who was wounded, and whose virtues deserved the interest he felt for him. At Vannes, Mgr. de Hercé, who, as well as his companions, had already appeared before the military commission at Auray, and had been sentenced to death, was put along with M. de Sombreuil into a condemned cell, where formerly criminals had been used to await their execution. The priests were shut up in the parish church of Saint-Patern, where they passed the night, and the emigrants already confined there saw them from the very early morning hours preparing themselves by prayer for their last sacrifice.

At seven o'clock the condemned were all led forth, with their hands tied behind their backs, to the Garenne, the public promenade of Vannes, which had been selected as the place where they were to be shot. The bishop, who preserved his admirable peace of mind, said to the people who followed him on the way bewailing him, 'My good children, we did not come to conquer, but to convert you.' Arrived at the spot where he was to die, he begged that his hat might be taken off that he might make his last prayer with the more reverence. As a grenadier was about to comply with his desire, the Comte de Sombreuil, who with MM. de Broglie and de La Landelle was among the condemned, bade him desist, saying, 'You are not worthy,' and with his teeth, not having his hands at liberty, removed the bishop's hat. A few instants more, and the venerable prelate had entered on eternity. Thus died, on the 30th of July, 1795, at the

age of sixty-nine, one of the most virtuous bishops whom Brittany had ever possessed. His whole episcopal career had been one of self-devotion, and his end was like unto it. He had, as we have seen, made the voluntary sacrifice of his life by refusing the means of safety offered to him ; and, although suffering from illness during the whole time of his imprisonment, he was the consolation of his companions in misfortune, cheering and supporting them by his edifying conversation. The twelve priests who were shot with him met their death with the same Christian courage as their bishop ; amongst them was his brother, the Vicar General of Dol, and six others of the Breton clergy. These were not, however, all the priests who suffered in this affair. Three more, at least, are mentioned, one of whom was shot at Auray with some other prisoners, whose confessions he was hearing up to the last moment ; another had rendered the same service to the royalists at Vannes ; the third was the preceptor of young De Rohan, who was taken prisoner along with him in one of the encounters.

If the disaster of Quiberon is melancholy in one point of view, it rejoices the heart in another. Many of the military were men exemplary in the discharge of all their Christian duties, but there were others who had been remiss and negligent ; in these, however, the stroke of adversity which had fallen on them, and the near approach of death, worked a salutary change, and religion was seen to resume all its power over their souls. Among the first mentioned, the Comte de Soulages, of Montaigu in Poitou, was as remarkable for his virtue and piety as he had proved himself to be for his military talents. He led all the pious exercises by which the prisoners prepared themselves for death while detained at Auray. Another nobleman, the Comte de Kergariou de Locmaria, near Lannion, an elderly man and a naval officer,

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emulated De Soulange in devotion. He had a young nephew of the name of De Volude, the fervour of whose piety made him an object of special interest to his companions. As he looked almost a boy, they assured him that he could easily pass himself off as two years younger than he really was. The idea did not approve itself to him, but he consulted his uncle. ‘Is life,’ he asked, ‘of an equal value with truth?’ ‘Better die,’ replied M. de Kergariou, ‘than purchase it at the expense of a falsehood.’ This was sufficient to confirm the young man in his resolution to perish rather than betray the truth. Those emigrants who had been selected to be first executed, after having appeared before the military commission at Auray, were confined in a chapel which had formerly appertained to a community of religious women, but which the republicans now called the ‘antechamber of death.’ MM. de Soulange, de Kergariou, and de Volude, having been removed there with many others, prepared for death in the spirit of Christians and of martyrs. Straw had been offered them to lie down on, but they declined it, preferring on this last night of their life on earth to spend it in prayer, so they begged instead to be allowed to have a light. There were forty prisoners in all, composed of emigrants, of servants who had followed their masters on this expedition, and royalists of the country who had joined them. The emigrants almost all belonged to the navy, and collected together in one corner of the room, where M. de Kergariou recited the office for the dead, all the rest devoutly kneeling and striking their breasts vehemently as they made their responses. Young De Volude was deeply affected. His sensitive frame made him suffer intensely from the prospect of death, but his Christian sentiments triumphed over all. His boyish face was pale and worn, and his tears flowed abundantly, but they were tears of penitence,

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not tears of mere sorrow. No one, indeed, could doubt his ardent love of God, or his willingness and even gladness to part with life, though by a road so painful to flesh and blood, who noted the long and passionate looks which now and again he raised towards heaven. It was an eye-witness who afterwards described the bearing and behaviour of this youth, which, he said, recalled to mind what we picture to ourselves of those young Christian martyrs of primitive times, whose heroic deaths have consecrated their memory.

Some of the prisoners early in the night felt to need some sustenance, and expressed a wish to that effect ; but the austere De Kergariou simply replied, ‘Let us occupy ourselves with our souls ;’ and it was then that he began the office for the dead. When he had finished, M. de Soulages, still on his knees, spoke with all the fervour of his heart to his fellow-prisoners, the better to dispose them for their approaching end. Then his servant also addressed them, and that in words of such moving eloquence that his hearers were as much surprised as touched. The mind of this man had been nourished with the study of the Sacred Scriptures, and the nearness of death seemed only to inflame his zeal. Both master and servant implored their unfortunate associates to forgive their assassins, and almost all spent a portion of the night in supplicating God in their behalf. They even pushed their Christian generosity so far as to collect the little money and some few articles of value which they still had about them, and give them to the soldiers who were on guard before the window, begging them to accept the present as a token of reconciliation, and charging them to tell their comrades that they forgave them for the death they were about to receive at their hands. As evening closed in, they had been surprised by the entrance of a venerable-looking ecclesiastic. It

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was M. Erdeven, the Rector of Sauzon, who had come to offer them the aid of his ministry. The royalist prisoners, however, had enjoyed the blessing of receiving the sacrament of penance in the prison of Auray before their removal to the chapel, where one of the chaplains of the army prisons spent a whole night in hearing their confessions and fortifying their souls with all those consolations which religion so abundantly supplies. Among their number one alone had not had the opportunity of making his confession ; he knelt down accordingly before the old man, but suddenly started up in alarm, for the thought had occurred to him that their unexpected visitor was a constitutional priest. M. Erdeven, however, quickly undeceived him, telling him who he was, and how the commissary of police had come in search of him on the part of the commandant, who had been earnestly solicited by the ladies of the place to allow him to see them. All the prisoners hastened to make excuses for the abruptness of their companion, for which, as may be supposed, the good priest did not require any apologies. This little incident serves to show the repulsion which the faithful laity felt for the schismatics, whose ministrations, even *in articulo mortis*, we find them always firmly rejecting.

They were now all prepared to make a generous sacrifice of their lives. De Volude was not the only one who had refused to save his life by a compromise of truth. The two young Lasseynie of Limousin, brothers, and knights of Malta, as was also De Volude, the eldest only seventeen and the second sixteen years of age, had manifested the same fidelity to conscience before the Auray commission. Being asked if they had not been compelled by their parents to accompany them, they answered that they would not save their lives by a falsehood, and declared that they had served the royal

cause both from feeling and from duty. Similar was the conduct of young Coetudavel of Morlaix, a lieutenant in the navy, when brought before the Vannes commission. His engaging countenance and youthful appearance interested the president, who said to him, ‘As for you, of course you are under age.’ ‘I perceive your intention,’ replied M. Coetudavel, ‘and am obliged to you for it, but I will not ransom my life by a lie.’ The uprightness, magnanimity, and charity of these noble victims meet us at every turn. We have seen how warmly the prisoners in the chapel at Auray testified their forgiveness of their murderers, but one of them confined in the prison of that town surpassed them in the charity which he showed to his enemies, even at the expense of his friends. The prison was guarded by a feeble detachment of twelve soldiers, and some of its inmates had formed a plan of falling upon them suddenly and so effecting their escape. But when an old officer belonging to the regiment of La Châtre was informed of this design, he condemned it as criminal, and even conceived himself bound in conscience to apprise the republican authorities of the danger, who immediately took measures to render any such attempt impossible.

The dawn of day found the prisoners in the chapel still engaged in their devotions; but soon a gendarme appeared, who, holding in his hand a list of the condemned, proceeded to call by name about half of their number, who were ordered for immediate execution, and now these men, who but an instant before were deplored with tears the sins of their past life, might be seen preparing with a calm and collected air to march to death. They were bound two and two together, and, persevering to the last in their considerate kindness and charity, they stripped themselves of their coats and

gave them to the soldiers, that they might have them before they were pierced with bullets and stained with blood. That gallant gentleman, M. de Kergariou, then said to his companions, ‘ You need no example how to die, but, as your elder, I claim the honour of leading the way.’ He obtained his desire. When they were being bound, he exclaimed, ‘ Let us do still better ; let us walk barefoot, in imitation of the Passion of our Saviour.’ So saying, he took off his stockings, and many did the same. On account of his age, a cart was offered to convey him to the place of execution, which was a good mile and a half distant, but he declined its aid. M. de Soulanges was also of the number selected for execution that morning. It seems hardly credible that in so Christian a place as Auray, the greater part of whose population had zealously favoured the expedition, any individuals should have been found mean and cruel enough to insult the victims on their way to death ; yet so it was : for a group of wretches followed them with hootings and revilings to the fatal field. There they were made to kneel down on the edge of a deep ditch, the soldiers taking close aim at them from the opposite bank. Their fallen bodies were immediately thrown into the ditch, and a little earth was shovelled in to cover them ; for no care was ever taken to ascertain whether the sufferers had ceased to breathe.

This execution was followed by many others, which took place daily at the same hour, until the prisons of Auray had been emptied. Young De Volude and the two Lasseynie brothers were executed on the second day. The prisoners left in the chapel were well aware that their turn must soon come, and continued to prepare themselves for death. One of them, who succeeded in escaping, we are not told by what means, gave a touching description of the scene in the prison.

They used all to gather on their knees round one who was chosen to fill the office which would have been discharged by a priest had any been amongst them ; this was no other than M. de Soulange's valet already mentioned. He was able to render them most essential service, for he knew many prayers by heart, and besides, as our informer tells us, was better instructed than they were in the religious duties incumbent upon them at this solemn time. All listened to his voice and received his pious exhortations with deep attention and recollection. To the last moment this remarkable man, who, notwithstanding his humble extraction and lowly station, had thus became as a father and master to his fellow-captives of gentle birth, so far his superiors in the eyes of the world, continued his assiduous ministry ; but before long he too was led away to die.

While this good servant was helping to dispose the royalist gentlemen to make a Christian end, an old Breton officer, M. Harscouet, of Plouha, was performing the same charitable office for the unfortunate servants of the emigrants, who, although they had only followed their masters and had never borne arms, were included in the same iniquitous sentence. These poor creatures were in a state of great despair, and could not resign themselves to die. M. Harscouet, however, by his pathetic exhortations succeeded, not only in reconciling them to their fate, but in leading them to regard death in such a cause as a glorious martyrdom. The prisoners were confined in a kind of barn awaiting the hour of their execution. Here they spent the time in prayer, the old Breton often reading to them, or charging the other officers to do so in their turn, a chapter out of the 'Imitation of Christ,' the only book they had among them. Thus consoled and fortified, these poor men went to death with the same courage as their masters.

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The republican authorities carried their unsparing cruelty to such lengths as to have even the wounded royalists who were unfit to be moved executed within the precincts of the prison where they lay. Among them perished a noble Breton, belonging to an ancient family of Treguier and a lieutenant in the navy, whose name, M. de Portzampare, deserves a record for his strong faith and piety, of which he left a memorial in an admirable will written by him a year previous, in which he addresses his wife and children in language worthy of a saint. He was borne on the mattress as he lay into the courtyard of the prison of Auray and there shot. So deep was the impression made on the people by the greatness of soul and the Christian sentiments of the royalists immolated under their eyes, that they conceived a profound veneration for their memory and honoured them as the friends of God. The field which was watered by their blood became a place of pilgrimage, and received the name of the 'Field of the Martyrs,' which it has preserved to this day. In the year 1816, the Curé of Saint-Gildas of Auray, M. Deshayes, collected the bones of those who had suffered there and in the neighbourhood, and had them deposited in the ancient Carthusian church, which is not far from the chief scene of their martyrdom. Later, a chapel was added, to contain their honoured remains, and a marble monument was erected over them.

One hundred and fifty of the royalists were taken to Vannes, and their end was as admirable as that of their companions in misfortune at Auray. Shut up, as we have seen, in the church of Saint-Patern, when night came they used to fasten their single candle to one of the pillars of the nave, and then all on their knees would chant the *De Profundis* and the *Miserere*, pray for the

welfare of France, and beg God to forgive their enemies. It was a touching sight to behold amongst them veteran generals awaiting their death with that calm resignation which religion alone inspires ; and, indeed, so striking was the whole spectacle, and so awe-imposing the sound of united prayer from the lips of these doomed men, that the soldiers on guard, from whose hearts every effort had been made to eradicate all belief, felt their old faith once more revive within them and, uncovering their heads, assisted at the devotions with the greatest respect. But they were not long to profit by this edifying sight. Already, on the 30th of July, the day on which Mgr. de Hercé, with the priests and M. de Sombreuil, was executed, twelve prisoners were summoned from the chapel. The Abbé Poulain, chaplain to one of the emigrant regiments, was engaged at that moment in hearing confessions. He rose, and called out aloud, ‘French chevaliers, ever faithful to God and to the king, make an act of contrition : your sins are forgiven you ;’ and he gave them all a general absolution. The prisoners felt themselves at once sensibly strengthened with divine assistance, and twelve of their own accord came forward to take their place between the files of soldiers. They were shot that very evening. The Abbé Poulain was spared for a short time longer, being transferred to the prison of the town. But he was not forgotten ; one day they came to fetch him, and he too was led forth to death. He was about thirty years of age and a very holy priest. God, in His mercy, seems to have provided the opportunity of confession in one way or another to all the victims, some of whom, but for the disaster which had overtaken them, might have continued for years, and possibly even have died, in the neglect of that sacrament. Its marvellous effect in restoring peace to their souls and arming them to

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meet death with fortitude is instanced in a case recorded by the Baron d'Antrechaus, who had the good fortune to escape. He was an intimate friend of the Vicomte de La Villevolette, a naval officer, as he was himself. This gentleman was anything but resigned to the fate which awaited him, and was tempted to murmur against Providence. One day the baron found him in quite a different state of mind, and, struck with the serenity of his countenance, he questioned him as to the cause of so sudden a transformation ; to which M. de La Villevolette, with almost an inspired air, replied, ‘My good friend, I have just been to confession ; I die content.’ ‘To confession?’ rejoined his friend, ‘and how have you managed that?’ ‘Do you see? go there,’ said La Villevolette, pointing to the end of the nave. This was in the church of Saint-Patern of which we have been just speaking. M. d'Antrechaus followed his friend's recommendation ; at the end of the nave he found a priest, himself destined to perish, preparing the other prisoners for death, and becoming to them the instrument of those marvels of grace of which the relater of this incident was himself speedily to make experience. Whether this priest was the Abbé Poulain, Tresvaux, on whose authority we relate this anecdote, does not say.

We cannot do better than conclude this account of the victims of Quiberon by relating the marvellous escape of a young Breton, due to the signal protection of the Blessed Mother of God. Several youths of about sixteen years of age had joined the royalists when they landed. Among them was young Briant, of Peillac, near Redon, who had brothers serving in the army. He reached Quiberon only in time to bear a part in the fatal battle of the 21st of July. Taken with arms in his hands, he was speedily condemned to death along

with his young companions, and led out with them to be shot. They were all placed on their knees in front of the soldiers who were charged with the execution. This youth was very devout to Mary, and in this his extremity he invoked her with fervour. The men fired, and he heard a ball whistle close to his ear, but he was himself untouched. Considering how near the muzzles of the muskets always were to the victims, so that it would seem utterly impossible for those who held them to miss their aim, this may be regarded as little short of miraculous. Young Briant, however, fell forward with the rest, whether designedly or through the shock he had received we are not told. It was late in the evening, and the soldiers after fulfilling their barbarous office quitted the field immediately, leaving the bodies of their victims where they had fallen, without even attempting to give them partial burial. As soon as night had closed in, the young man rose from amidst the bloody corpses of his friends, and made his way for the distance of three miles through the country. After escaping several perils and crossing a deep ditch full of water, no easy undertaking to one whose arms were tied behind him, he reached at eleven o'clock at night the door of a farmhouse, which his well-known voice soon caused to be opened to him. He afterwards married, and his children always preserved a grateful remembrance of the marvellous deliverance which their father owed to the protection of the Blessed Mother of God.

## CHAPTER XIX.

### *The moveable columns. Their murderous deeds.*

THE wholesale slaughter of the royalist prisoners of Quiberon is sufficient to show that even after Robespierre's fall the revolutionary spirit was as cruel and implacable as ever, while the execution of the priests who had followed the expedition solely in the exercise of their sacerdotal functions, proves the unabated hatred of religion which still animated the authorities. For this latter measure no possible excuse could be advanced, for these priests were men who had submitted to the law of deportation, and that law was now revoked ; even those who had disobeyed it and remained in the country being nominally tolerated by the State. We say nominally, because they could not be said to enjoy the protection which full toleration implies. They might rather be said to be let alone for the present, although the State affected to place every kind of worship on a level, recognizing none, and favouring none more than another. This, however, was far from being the case. The partiality of the Government for the so-called constitutional clergy was as marked as was its dislike of the Catholic priests. This disposition on the part of the authorities encouraged Le Coz and his colleagues in their endeavours to re-establish their schismatic Church. Le Coz, in particular, laboured at this work with an indefatigable pertinacity worthy of a better cause. He would fain have induced

the Catholic priests to join the ranks of the schism and thus fill up the gaps which apostacies and numerous retractions had left in its body, and when they showed themselves deaf to his advances he had the hypocritical effrontery to tax them with a want of love for peace and unity.

While the schismatic clergy thus enjoyed as much practical encouragement as could be expected from an utterly godless government, the smallest circumstance was sufficient to rekindle the slumbering hatred with which the true pastors were regarded by their enemies. The death of the excellent Vicaire of Gomené, M. Le Moine, in the August of this year, furnishes an instance. He had remained in the country, and, during the terrible years of 1793 and 1794, had the good fortune to elude pursuit. A curious example occurred in his case, of life being saved by that very love of truth which was ready to offer it in sacrifice. Some of his parishioners having consulted him as to whether it was lawful to tell a lie to save oneself from death, or to deliver a friend from some imminent danger, he replied that death must always be preferred to falsehood. It was not long before he was called upon to put his own rule of morality in practice. Having chanced to meet a band of republican soldiers, one of them asked him if he was not Le Moine, the priest of Gomené. ‘Yes, I am,’ he answered boldly, with a face of perfect tranquillity. ‘That cannot be true,’ exclaimed the other, ‘you are a liar; if it was true you would not say so;’ and they let him go. As soon as the churches were re-opened in 1795, M. Le Moine hastened to celebrate Mass publicly in that of his parish, but his flock was not to possess him long. He was known to have been in communication with three young men who, being summoned to serve in the army, refused to join it; this circumstance drew upon him the hatred

of the republicans. The young men were arrested and, being found provided with pistols and ammunition, they were at once executed, and M. Le Moine was denounced. He was saying Mass at Gomené when several of the faithful came to warn him of the approach of the troops, but he would not interrupt the Holy Sacrifice. ‘If my last hour is come,’ he said, ‘there is all the more reason why I should not shorten my devotions or cease from offering the Holy Sacrifice for those who are assisting at it, and who perhaps will not have any near opportunity of profiting by this grace.’ He finished, and left the church as the soldiers entered the town, and had already climbed the neighbouring heights when he was overtaken by the band. They took him back and led him to the cemetery, where, after causing him to make the circuit of the church, when he came in front of the sacristy window they killed him by a bayonet thrust.

Good priests could ill be spared at that time, for their ranks had been sadly thinned, nor was there any hope at present of filling their places. Ordinations had been interrupted now for several years, the colleges and seminaries were closed. No vocations for the priesthood manifested themselves, and it was hardly possible under present circumstances that they should. The military profession was absorbing well-nigh the whole youth of the country, for, whether willingly or unwillingly, nearly all enlisted. It is true that numbers of the faithful clergy were still in exile, who might be able to return when a brighter day dawned, but they, too, were daily drooping and dying, and many had already gone to their rest. To one who regarded things from a merely human point of view the time therefore seemed fast approaching when the whole Catholic priesthood of France would have died out. Gloomy, however, as were these prospects, they were soon to become darker still. The interval

of comparative tranquillity enjoyed by the Catholics was to be brief indeed. The Convention had at last come to the determination of dissolving itself, but before laying down its authority it was desirous of placing the national representation on a fresh basis. A new constitution was accordingly elaborated, to which fidelity was sworn with as much apparent ardour as to its predecessors. These political changes might have been of little consequence to the interests of religion but for a law regarding the freedom of worship. It was proposed by Génissieu, a lawyer of Dauphiné and deputy for the Isère, a man well known for his hatred of the clergy, and the Convention adopted it in its sitting of the 7th Vendémiaire, 4th year of the Republic, that is, on the 29th of September, 1795. Its preface set forth at length its object, which was not to interfere with the domain of thought, with which civil laws had nothing to do, being exclusively concerned with the superintendence of measures of police and of public security; accordingly the civil authority was bound to protect the freedom of worship, and to punish those who disturbed its ceremonies or outraged its ministers in the discharge of their functions, while it exacted from the ministers themselves a purely civil guarantee against the abuse which they might make of their office to excite persons to disobey the laws of the State. It was in view of this last object that the law now enacted required of all ministers of religion before entering on the exercise of their functions the following declaration, which was moreover to be posted up conspicuously in every building devoted to any kind of religious worship: 'I recognize the community of French citizens as sovereign, and I promise submission and obedience to the laws of the Republic.'

It must be manifest at once that this declaration could not be conscientiously subscribed by the Catholic clergy.

It was no longer question of a mere passive submission to the existing order of things, but of obedience to the laws of a government which was not only unrecognized as yet by the other powers of Europe, but many of whose laws were manifestly opposed to Christian morality. Moreover, they were called upon to decide upon a very grave point, that of the sovereignty of the people, and against the rights of their legitimate monarchs. This was too much to demand of men who had already made so many sacrifices to conscience, and in their meetings to examine the new form of submission the priests were unanimous in rejecting it. Tresvaux says he does not remember that there was a single dissentient voice, at least in Brittany. The Convention before separating had proceeded to enforce the tyrannical act of the 29th of September by a decree passed on the 24th of October, ordering the execution within twenty-four hours of the laws against refractory priests, that is to say, sentence of death against all who should refuse to take the civic oath now imposed. But the faithful priests in Brittany had not awaited the passing of this last decree to provide for their safety. As soon as that of the 7th Vendémiaire had become known, they retired from the churches which they served, and the Catholics, after a few months of consolation, had the grief to see the sacred buildings once more abandoned and profaned which they had hastened to repair and adorn. They also marked with dismay that the men who had taken the most active share in the work of persecution, but who had kept quiet of late while the Government showed itself more favourable to religion, were again openly manifesting that same bitter hatred against the clergy for which they had been allowed free scope as long as the Reign of Terror lasted.

Persecution, then, was evidently again impending, and the new government was not likely to be slow in pro-

moting its renewal. It entered on its powers on the 4th Brumaire, the 26th of October, the national representative body being again styled the Legislative Assembly, which now, however, was composed of two councils, the one entitled the Council of the Ancients, and the other the Council of the Five-hundred. The Convention had ensured the transmission of its sanguinary and oppressive spirit in a manner reprobated by all except those who were selfishly interested in its maintenance, by decreeing that two-thirds of its own members should constitute a portion of the new legislature. A Directory composed of five members was charged with the executive department, who would therefore necessarily possess much influence. The first five Directors named by the Legislative Assembly were regicides, from which circumstance it might easily be concluded what would be their animus towards religion.

The year 1796 opened in Brittany under the most sinister auspices. Civil war still smouldered on, for the royalist bands scattered throughout the province had resumed their arms almost immediately after the pacification of Mabilais, and this state of things was most prejudicial to the safety of the concealed priests, as their enemies continued to accuse them of fomenting disturbance in favour of the royal cause. The late attempt at Quiberon had, no doubt, helped not a little to furnish a fresh stimulus to this calumny, which was nevertheless utterly groundless. The priests were certainly in heart attached to the monarchy, and had preserved their fidelity to the ancient dynasty of their kings, but, above all, they were devoted to the Church, and sought peace as being most in accordance with her interests, the weapons of their warfare being only prayer and self-sacrifice. The republican soldiers, who were continually scouring the country, of which they were the terror and

the curse, were animated by a special ferocity against them. These men were embodied in moveable columns, as they were called, being detachments selected from the different garrisons—for the smallest towns in Brittany at that time were garrisoned—and sent to visit the neighbouring districts, including the most retired. They lived at free quarters on the inhabitants, whom they always pillaged and often killed. If they discovered a priest, they would either murder him on the spot or bring him back with them to head-quarters, rarely returning without good store of booty. Besides these marauders, the country was afflicted with another pest, pretended National Guards, who had assumed the name of *Contre-Chouans*, and were in the habit of entrapping the people by wearing rosaries at their button-holes and affecting Christian and royalist sentiments. These men were drawn from the lowest dregs of the populace and, as it may be inferred, were capable of the vilest acts.

The first victims of the moveable columns was the Père Tournois, a Capuchin. When the religious were expelled from their houses he had retired to his native district, where he continued to labour actively in secret, and when religion enjoyed a short interval of liberty, in 1795, he fixed himself in the parish of Lehon, near Dinan, which had lost its pastor, he having died in prison. The people regarded Père Tournois as a saint, and used to flock to him from all quarters. The renewal of the persecution did not make him leave his post, he persevered in visiting the district round Dinan, but his self-devotion rendered him an object of special animosity to the republicans. He knew this well, and expected sooner or later to meet death at their hands. But the thought caused him no fear; he would often say that he should forgive his murderers, and had only one wish, and that was not to be arrested within the walls of any

house, lest he should compromise the inmates. His charitable desire was to be satisfied. On the 23rd of January, as he was preparing to say Mass in a house at Saint-Solain, word was brought him that a troop of soldiers was in the neighbourhood. He immediately went out, accompanied by two young men who habitually served him as guides. They had gained a common, when the soldiers descried them in the distance, and called out to them to stop. Père Tournois turned round and advanced to meet them, followed by his two companions. The soldiers searched them, and took everything which they had about them. Then an officer who had manifested some interest in their behalf told them that they might go free, but they had scarcely walked ten paces when a volley from the whole troop killed them all three. The soldiers then cut off the priest's right hand and clave his skull in two, scattering the brains on the ground; afterwards, as if they enjoyed their murderous work, they remained sitting close to the bodies during the whole of the day. In the night the people of Quevert, in which parish the ruthless deed was done, gave them burial on the spot, but in 1817 their remains were disinterred and solemnly committed to consecrated ground.

About the same period M. Gauron, the Rector of Lanrelas, who was nearly eighty years of age, was also put to death. After suffering a long imprisonment, he had returned to the parish which he had served for thirty years, and resumed his sacred avocations. A moveable column appeared there one day and inquired for him. The captain said that he wished to speak to him, but that no harm was intended. This he protested on his conscience. As men of this class appeared to have long parted with such an encumbrance as a conscience, the protestation would seem to have had little

value in the estimation of the good people of Lanrelas, for no one would inform the inquirer where their rector was to be found. The column therefore departed, but only to return suddenly on the morrow, when they surprised M. Gauron, who had remained notwithstanding the alarm of the previous day. They kept him prisoner in the church until nightfall, when they brought him out, and pretended that they were going to take him to Broons, but as soon as they were clear of the place they shot him and thrust him through with their bayonets. Another priest of the diocese of Saint-Malo, M. Hazard, perished during the same month. He exercised his ministry secretly in a parish near Bécherel, and was concealed in the *bourg* of Saint-Maugand, where he believed he had a safe asylum, but his abode was discovered and reported to the government commissioner, who sent a detachment to invest the house by night; he was shot as he was endeavouring to escape by a back door.

In the month of February two more priests of the diocese of Saint-Malo were cruelly murdered at Médréac. That parish was without its pastor, but M. Crespel supplied all its spiritual needs with untiring zeal. Young and vigorous, and endowed with a dauntless, joyous spirit, no danger could appal him, no fatigue seemed to try his strength. A band of soldiers in pursuit of priests and Chouans, arriving at the *bourg*, seized and shot him, leaving him, as they believed, dead, but he was only wounded and had fainted. He soon came to himself, and, seeing near him some women who had come to render him assistance, he asked who had *killed* him. ‘The Blues,’ they replied. ‘Blessed be God!’ he exclaimed; ‘and may He forgive them!’ He seems to have been permitted to revive only to add to his merits by making this act of Christian forgiveness, for the

lamentations of the women, when they beheld the blood flowing copiously from the wound he had received, were overheard by one of his assassins, who returned to complete the work of blood. As he drew his sword to deal the fatal blow one of the women screamed out, ‘Do not strike him ! He is a priest !’ ‘I know that very well,’ retorted the man, and immediately clave the martyr’s head with his sabre. The other priest who was murdered in the same place and at the same time was M. Tiengou. He was old and infirm, and on being released from prison had retired to his brother’s house. After arresting him, the soldiers left him alone for a few minutes, and he profited by the opportunity to take refuge among some ruined buildings. Here he began quietly to say his office, but he was soon recaptured and, as the cemetery was hard by, the soldiers took him to it, dug a grave before his eyes, and then, knocking him on the head, threw his body into it. All these atrocities took place in the department of Ille-et-Vilaine.

Deeds of the same sanguinary character were perpetrated in the Côtes-du-Nord. Amongst the martyrs there M. de Rabec is well worthy of notice. He was one of those priests who had beheld with pleasure the dawn of the Revolution, but was soon undeceived, and, perceiving that the real object of the professed reformers was the destruction both of religion and of monarchy, he henceforward devoted his whole energies to preserve all whom he could influence from being inveigled into error. He had no cure of souls at that time, for he had been compelled to give up his parish in the diocese of Mans in consequence of the debts in which his lavish generosity to the poor had involved him ; debts, however, which one of his relatives liberally discharged. Nevertheless, he did not remain inactive, but moved

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about from place to place wherever his zeal and charity could find scope for their exercise, taking no precautions for his own safety. A friend at Dol having one day advised him to beware of malicious persons who were likely to denounce him, he replied, ‘I fear nothing, and if I must die for God and for the Church, I willingly give my life for so holy a cause.’ He made himself very useful in the parish of Mégrit, whose pastor had been obliged to fly and was afterwards imprisoned in the Rochefort boats. During the Reign of Terror M. de Rabec was also imprisoned along with the old priests of the department, but was released in 1795, upon which he returned with ardour to the exercise of his ministry, and on the renewal of the persecution, when some friends recommended him to adopt a few precautions, he replied that his duty as a priest was to sacrifice himself for the salvation of souls, and if to preserve his life he abandoned his ministry, he should have far more cause to dread the vengeance of God than he now had to fear the malice of men. He continued, therefore, to spend himself fearlessly for the spiritual good of the faithful, and to devote the little he possessed to the relief of the poor, for alms-giving had still the same attraction for him as ever. It was not long before the fears of his friends were realized. Every locality in Brittany—and it was probably the same elsewhere—contained at that time its priest-haters and priest-hunters, impious men who made it their business not only to seek them out, but to urge on the authorities when they were not themselves eager in the work of persecution. It was, doubtless, at the instigation of such individuals that a column of fifty men left Broons one day and proceeded to Mégrit. M. de Rabec had just finished saying Mass when he was informed of the approach of the band. ‘O my God,’ he exclaimed, ‘the moment is now come when I am to appear before

Thee!' The soldiers had soon burst open the door and rushed in with their usual impetuosity. They found the priest in the first room they entered; he received them very calmly, and, thinking they looked hot and tired with their march, he kindly offered them some refreshments. This act was characteristic of the man; it was no device to propitiate his visitors, of whose errand he was well aware, but was dictated by that pure spirit of loving charity which seemed ever welling up from his heart. Had it been otherwise he would have been disappointed in his object, for the men showed no gratitude, and, after pillaging the house, carried him off with them, striking him brutally with their bayonets. They had scarcely issued from the avenue leading to the house when the captain, impatient to shed the blood of his victim, bade them halt, and called out four of his band to shoot the priest. The holy martyr, who had borne all their ill-usage without complaint, only again and again calling on God to forgive them and to have mercy on him, when he heard the sentence of death pronounced, thus addressed the men who were preparing to execute it: 'Soldiers, before you shoot me, come and embrace me; I forgive you my death.' These words so touched one of their number that he declared he would not fire; the priest was not an enemy, and rather than shoot him he would prefer being shot himself. The three others, however, inaccessible to pity, discharged their muskets at M. de Rabec, and, after giving him fourteen bayonet thrusts before he expired, stripped and mutilated his body, leaving it on the road in a state of complete nudity. When these savages had departed, the farmers of the place came with their servants, and, taking up the body, buried it in the churchyard of Mégrit.

A few days later another horrible crime was committed by the revolutionists of Lamballe. Not far from that

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town there was an abbey of Bernardins, that of Saint-Aubin-des-Bois, founded in 1137. Situated in the Forest of Hunaudaeie, it had probably not been considered a profitable purchase by the speculators in Church property, for the building had remained unsold. The religious, accordingly, had obtained leave to re-occupy their old house, on the condition of paying rent for it to Government. There they lived in the quiet observance of their rule so far as was possible, ministering to the spiritual needs of the lonely dwellers in the forest, and eking out by self-denial their own very slender resources to relieve the poverty of the numerous poor of the district. They were thus useful members of society, even in the eyes of unbelievers. However, in the beginning of 1796, some armed bands of royalists took refuge from their pursuers in the forest, but it does not seem that they penetrated as far as Saint-Aubin-des-Bois. But, even if they had, these defenceless religious had no means at their disposal for resisting their entrance. Nevertheless, the supposed presence of these royalists in the abbey was made a pretext for the destruction of its inmates. Some young men from Lamballe, belonging mostly to rich or well-to-do families, but hot-headed republicans, under the pretence of fighting the royalists, proceeded to the forest and, on the evening of the 3rd of March, arrived at the door of the abbey. After discharging a volley they burst it open, and rushed headlong into the cloister, shouting, '*Aux Chouans! Aux Chouans!*' A servant came forward and assured them that there were no Chouans there, but, regardless of his asseverations, they pushed on and, entering the cells of the religious, murdered every one of them; after which they stripped them of their clothes and pillaged the house, rifling the sanctuary of its sacred vessels and breaking or tearing to pieces what they were unable or did not care to carry away. Having thus

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glutted their rage and their greed, they returned to Lamballe. The magistrates of the canton drew up a *procès verbal* of the crime and its circumstances, but nothing was done to bring the offenders to punishment. It was sufficient that the victims should be priests or religious for their assassins to enjoy perfect immunity.

About this time two other murders were committed in the same department. The sufferers were laymen, but both were well known to be warmly attached to their faith. The one was a notary of Laurenan named Le Rey, who had frequently rendered good service to the priests, to whom he was heart and soul devoted. Soldiers sent from Loudéac went straight to his house, had him out, and shot him without further ceremony. The other martyr was a peasant of Plémet, Olivier Congretelle by name, who had shown himself firmly opposed to the schism, and given to the inhabitants of the canton a fearless example of Christian fidelity. Moreover, he had made no attempt to conceal his royalist sentiments. Deceived and entrapped by some Contre-Chouans, he was taken by them to the bourg of Plémet, and put to death. After being pierced by their bullets he was thrown alive into a ditch, where they broke his legs with the blows of a spade. During this cruel torture the martyr never ceased, so long as he breathed, to implore the mercy of God for himself and forgiveness for his murderers. In the department of Morbihan it was not entirely to the soldiers that the work of killing priests was committed ; the guillotine was again in full activity, the criminal tribunal of Lorient, now transferred to Vannes, applying to them the barbarous laws which had been in force during the Terror. In the month of March alone no less than seven priests of the diocese of Vannes perished on the scaffold, but they were not the first, for M. Levenas had been guillotined on New Year's Day at

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Lorient. Amongst those who suffered during the month of March, M. Rogue, a priest of the seminary of Vannes, whose character for sanctity had been long established, was peculiarly regretted. He had never been beguiled by the false promises of the Revolution, but had withstood them from the first, and had the happiness to deter several ecclesiastics from falling into the guilt of schism. The parish of Notre-Dame-du-Méné was served from the church of the seminary, the superior of which was also its curé. M. Le Gal, who at that time governed the seminary, knew well the zeal of M. Rogue, and how he spent in the confessional almost the whole time which his office of professor left at his disposal. He would not therefore go into exile before he had assured himself that M. Rogue would replace him in his absence, and render to the parishioners of Méné all the spiritual aid in his power. M. Rogue promised, and kept his word. He escaped all the perils of the terrible years 1793 and 1794, and continued until the close of 1795 in the unremitting exercise of his ministry; but on Christmas Day, as he was returning late in the evening from administering a sick man, he was met by an inhabitant of the place who recognized and arrested him. This man might well know him, for to his kindness he owed his situation in life, and at that very time his children were being charitably assisted by M. Rogue's mother. The traitor took the priest before the members of the departmental administration, who knew M. Rogue equally well, and who, it would seem, would have been well pleased to allow him to make his escape, for they left him at liberty for a considerable time while the denouncer was gone by their orders in quest of the gendarmes. M. Rogue did not attempt to fly, but profited by the time to consume the Sacred Species which he had with him. He apprised those about him of his wish, saying, 'I bear or my

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person my God and your God ; I desire to perform a religious duty, and I request your permission.' Having obtained it, he retired into a corner of the room and communicated himself. No disrespect was shown ; it is even said that all present bowed their heads. M. Rogue was detained for three months, the coldest of the year, in a damp and unwholesome room ; meanwhile a plan was being devised for his escape, but, fearing that the other priests imprisoned with him would be treated in consequence with greater rigour, he declined to profit by it. His arrest caused a general lamentation in Vannes ; even republicans regretted it, and his denouncer was regarded with indignation and contempt by men of all parties. Nevertheless, at the beginning of March this holy man was brought before the criminal tribunal and condemned to death together with two other priests.

The place where the tribunal held its sittings was the old chapel of the house used for the retreats, of which M. Rogue had been the director. As soon as he heard his sentence pronounced, he fell on his knees and thanked God aloud for having judged him worthy, not only to die for the faith, but to receive his summons to death in a place where he had so often announced the divine word and exercised his sacred ministry. A young sergeant who was in charge of him was so struck by the calmness which his prisoner preserved, that on returning he sought out a priest and made his confession, protesting that henceforth he would love and practise religion as much as he had hitherto hated and persecuted it ; for in La Vendée his conduct had been marked by much violence and cruelty. One of the two letters written by M. Rogue the night before his execution was to his mother, in which he entreated her not to cease relieving the family of his betrayer. The other was addressed to the clergy concealed

at Vannes, recommending himself and the two priests who were to suffer with him to their prayers. He said that God had added to the cross He had been pleased to lay upon him that of not being able to embrace them once more ; and another also, that of beholding his poor mother at the tribunal, whither she had come like a true ‘mother of dolours.’ Her sentiments, however, were all that he could desire, and he besought them to pray for her. M. Rogue died pronouncing the words, ‘*In manus tuas, Domine, commendō spiritum meum*,’ There must have been something singularly striking about this martyr, for the soldiers who led him to execution returned declaring loudly that it was not a man but an angel who had been put to death. The veneration for him at Vannes was so great that many persons were observed approaching the scaffold, as soon as he had been executed, for the purpose of dipping pieces of linen in his blood, which were afterwards distributed as relics.

Besides the seven priests who were guillotined at Vannes, another also perished who had succeeded in escaping from prison, but was overtaken and killed on the spot. About this time also, it would seem, M. Feutray, one of the concealed priests who had been formerly attached to the cathedral, was cruelly butchered. He was returning from visiting a dying man, and bore about him the Blessed Sacrament, when he was recognized by three republicans, who instantly set upon him and stabbed him to death with their knives. Tresvaux mentions six more priests who were murdered in the diocese of Vannes in the course of the spring, as also a young deacon, in the diocese of Saint-Malo, who was living in retirement with his family, and had been serving Mass in a private house when the republican soldiers entered the place. The priest succeeded in escaping. Several of the clergy met a similar fate in the Côtes-du-Nord and in

Ille-et-Vilaine. In two instances a terrible sacrilege was superadded to the crime of murder. The priests of whom he speaks were bearing the Holy Viaticum to the dying, and Tresvaux tells us that the assassins were guilty of the most revolting profanations. They then paraded the clothes of their victims in triumph on the points of their bayonets, and afterwards burned the images and overturned the altars in the church of Guenroc, where they passed the night.

The troubles which still continued in Brittany, and which the clergy were falsely accused of fomenting, excited against them the special animosity of the republican soldiery, who, as we have seen, put them to death wherever they could lay hands upon them. Emigrants met with as little mercy as priests ; indeed, the search was directed against the partisans of the monarchy as much as against the ministers of religion, but, as it does not come within the scope of our plan to narrate all the miseries which civil strife inflicted on Brittany, we cannot enter into any details respecting the sufferings of the royalists. It can be no matter of wonder that such of them as remained should have been irritated beyond endurance by the cruelties perpetrated by the republicans and been occasionally provoked into making reprisals. The names of three intruded priests said to have been killed by them about this time are mentioned by Tresvaux, who, however, says that he can neither affirm nor deny the truth of the report, as it came to him only through the organ of the schismatics, the ‘Annales de la Religion,’ a journal whose pages abounded in exaggerations and calumnies. Notwithstanding the efforts of that party, headed by Le Coz, the co-called Constitutional Church languished more and more in Brittany. It could not well be otherwise. When it had the whole force of the State at its back

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it had been unable to fill the churches it had seized, and now that the motive of fear was withdrawn, together with active official patronage, the desertion in which the false pastors generally found themselves, especially in rural districts, may be said to have been complete. Besides, wherever the armed royalists came they would not suffer them to officiate, which was the least evil they might apprehend from their presence. Most of them, accordingly, took refuge in the larger towns, where they were personally secure, but lived in great destitution, neglected and despised. The Abbé Tresvaux, who speaks as an eye-witness, says that, in addition to the odium which attached to them as apostates, their behaviour was not such as to excite any compassionate interest in their behalf. Many of them had fallen into the lowest depth of degradation, keeping company only with the common soldiers and being habitually in a state of intoxication. He could have named, in particular, two renegade Capuchins, who constantly gave this scandalous spectacle to the town in which they lived ; and, indeed, it is worthy of note that the apostate religious were almost invariably the worst amongst those who made themselves conspicuous for immorality, no less than for cruelty, in those days of lawlessness and crime. But whatever the constitutional priests may have suffered from the disturbed state of the province, their position was, at any rate, far more tolerable than that of the faithful and proscribed clergy, who were environed with perils everywhere and could find a safe refuge neither in town nor country. Moreover, the good shepherd, unlike the hireling in this as in all else, does not flee at the approach of danger, but gives his life for his sheep.

Many instances of heroic courage on the part of the Breton clergy have been here recorded, crowned, in the

case of the greater number, with martyrdom ; but there were a few who successfully braved the fury of persecution and remained at their posts during all those terrible years. The names and labours of these devoted men deserve a passing record.

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## CHAPTER XX.

*Remarkable Escapes.*

AMONGST those priests who weathered out in Brittany the stormy years of persecution, M. Orain, of the Nantes diocese, must ever hold a foremost place. His name has been immortalized by a splendid act of Christian charity, in which he risked his own life by returning to save that of one of his pursuers who was in imminent danger of drowning. The good man never himself alluded to the circumstance, the memory of which might have perished but that fortunately there were eye-witnesses who were able to depose to its having actually occurred. M. Orain had been officiating for seven years as vicaire at Fégréac, a small bourg about a mile and a half from Redon, when the Revolution broke out. He not only refused to take the oath but exerted himself so vigorously to preserve his parish from schism, that not a single individual belonging to it fell away. On the very day when the electors were assembled to choose constitutional priests for the district, he delivered a most energetic discourse to his people on the dangers besetting their faith, which left an indelible impression on their minds. He was blamed by not a few for thus openly compromising himself, and, indeed, some of his own brethren did not approve of his conduct, for even amongst the priests

were to be found timid men who, although they would not directly countenance error, shrank from openly condemning it, sheltering their cautious reserve under a pretext of worldly prudence. But there were other and nobler spirits, who justified and commended the freedom with which M. Orain had spoken, esteeming silence as cowardice when the wolf was about to break into the fold. When the decree was issued for the non-juring clergy to leave their parishes, the Rector of Fégréac complied, in order to avoid imprisonment, but M. Orain remained, saying that, as the parishioners had always shown themselves good Catholics, they ought not to be deprived of spiritual succours. Fortunately the curé chosen by the electors refused to take the oath, and would become no party to the schism; so Fégréac was spared this infliction. The life of its pastor during the ensuing years reads like one continued tale of daring adventure, while all that he attempted and effected for the spiritual welfare of his flock, and especially for the religious education and training of the children, while holding his life daily, so to say, in his hands, almost surpasses belief. He survived the Revolution many years, and died in 1829 rector of Derval, where his meritorious labours are no less deserving of record than his perilous ministry at Fégréac during the closing decade of the previous century.<sup>1</sup>

In the diocese of Saint-Malo another priest displayed an equally persevering courage. This was M. Eon, vicaire of Montauban at the beginning of the Revolution. He remained in that town as long as he was able, but his post became at last so extremely dangerous as to render removal imperative. He then adopted the plan

<sup>1</sup> It is in contemplation to publish a life of this remarkable man, for which ample materials exist in his own memoirs as well as in the formal depositions of forty old men of Fégréac and other survivors.

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of visiting in rotation twelve or fifteen abandoned parishes, hearing confessions, celebrating Mass in barns or secluded places, and preparing children for their first communion. Stables, straw-ricks, and fields of high broom, such as are common in Brittany, were his usual refuge, when he took a few hours' rest, but he could seldom venture to spend two consecutive nights in the same spot. Denounced to the authorities, who were everywhere on the look-out for him, precaution was all the more needful in his case, because his short stature was sufficient to betray his identity in spite of any disguise which he might assume. He appeared ten times before the tribunals, and was once in prison for twenty-four hours. How he escaped condemnation it is difficult to conceive, but God brought him safe through all these perils. Brave as he was, the precarious life which he unremittingly led weighed painfully on him, and he felt the bitterness of his situation, especially at the time when so many priests of Saint-Malo were perishing on the scaffold. Their numbers were so much diminished that M. Eon could hardly find any to whom to make his confession. But the thought that he might soon be called to share their fate did not dishearten him. ‘I shall have to die to-morrow,’ he used to say to himself; ‘then I must work to-day.’ And, humanly speaking, except for the devoted attachment of the people amongst whom he laboured he could not have escaped the guillotine.

The diocese of Saint-Malo was, as has been observed, remarkable even in Catholic Brittany for the faith and piety of its inhabitants, of which these good peasants furnished a striking example. They continued to observe most strictly all the prescribed fasts of the Church and used frequently to assemble in some chapel or at the foot of a cross to pray together, especially on Sundays, when

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one of them would read out the Gospel and other portions of the Mass for the day, and a chapter of the Catechism by way of instruction. Avoiding the schismatic clergy as they would the plague, they were ready at any time to walk twenty or thirty miles to find a Catholic priest. ‘When I noticed this,’ observed M. Eon, ‘I felt ready to sacrifice myself daily for them.’ But the prudence and caution they exhibited in guarding their clergy from danger were as remarkable as their attachment to them. All were discreet, old and young alike, even to the children, whom nothing could induce to say that they had seen a priest. The very dogs at the farm-houses seemed to know them and understand the necessity of secrecy, for they are said to have refrained from barking at their approach. Often had M. Eon occasion to notice the signal protection of God in his behalf. One day the republicans were in hot pursuit of him from morning till night, and on four occasions they were so near as to be able to fire at him, but they missed him each time. The next day he heard that they had apprehended four priests and put ten young men to death. For three successive months he had not one quiet night, so pressing was the danger and so perpetual the alarms. He is described as having become as dry as a piece of wood. Yet, notwithstanding the fatigues and privations undergone during these trying times, this excellent priest lived to the age of eighty. He died in the year 1838, having been after the Concordat appointed curé of Gael and subsequently of Beaussaine. He never ceased to show the same zeal for the salvation of souls and the same overflowing charity to the poor which had made him brave the terrors of the persecution ; indeed, he is said to have reserved almost nothing for his personal needs, making himself poorer than the poorest.

The habit of living in the midst of constant danger made the concealed priests and those who harboured them very ingenious in their devices for blinding the eyes of their pursuers, or diverting their attention, if we might not rather believe that it was God Who in His goodness inspired them with ready invention and presence of mind. One day M. Eon was hearing the confessions of some children, whom he was preparing for their first communion, in a house at Montauban. All of a sudden he heard some one shouting outside to the mistress of the house, ‘Open your door, you have got some suspected people in there.’ The woman called her husband, and meanwhile the uproar increased. There was not a moment to lose, for the house was surrounded with soldiers. M. Eon, who feared for his hosts much more than for himself, hastily changed his coat and, going out by a back door, boldly presented himself in the court-yard in the midst of the troop with an ink-horn and pen in his hand as if for the purpose of taking down what might be required. ‘What do you want?’ he said to one of the men. ‘I want to get in there,’ was the reply. ‘I’ll go in a moment and open the door for you,’ he quietly said. Then to another, ‘And what do you want?’ ‘I want my breakfast.’ ‘I will bring it to you directly, and a very good one, too.’ The cool assurance of M. Eon threw the soldiers completely off their guard; they could not imagine that this busy obliging personage was a priest, and after a while they took their departure. Another time, he was sitting by the fire in a house in the country when the soldiers suddenly made their appearance and crowded in. The mistress of the house entered the room at the same moment, and with admirable presence of mind snatched up a switch and, hitting M. Eon with it, cried out, ‘You little rascal, so you’ve not yet gone to look after the

cows !' He rose, and went off whimpering. The soldiers, seeing the woman still following and striking him, were actually moved to pity, and begged her not to be so hard upon the poor fellow. 'Ever since the morning,' she continued in the same angry voice, 'I've been bidding him go and look after the cows, and there he stays idling.' In after days M. Eon used often to relate this anecdote with much zest.

A Capuchin, of the diocese of Saint-Brieuc, named Hervé, but known in religion as the Père Joseph of Loudéac, was another of those priests who escaped all the dangers of the persecution, throughout which he laboured with a zeal that never flagged. He had retired to his native country when the religious were expelled from their houses, and in the spring of 1793 was condemned to death as contumacious by the Criminal Tribunal of the Côtes-du-Nord for alleged participation in the insurrectional movement which the Chevalier de Boishardy had organized in the environs of Lamballe. Under the double accusation of being a refractory priest and a royalist insurgent, he became the object of very diligent and frequent search on the part of the republicans, who used to call him the Capuchin of Roqueton, from the name of his native village, and hated him mortally. Tresvaux says that this religious told him that for eighteen months together he never slept in a bed. Ditches by the hedge-side, furrows among standing corn, broom fields, and haylofts formed his usual refuge for the night. Dogs had even been trained to track him ; but his was not the only instance of this kind, for they had been employed in the case of M. Eon and other concealed priests.

Another religious, Père Noirot, a Dominican, was not less courageous or less fortunate than Père Joseph. He came from Franche Comté, but had been sent by his

superiors to the house of their order at Nantes. Named procurator of the monastery of Morlaix, he remained in that city during the Revolution to labour for the salvation of souls. His coolness and presence of mind often saved his life. He was also the means of saving the lives of several other priests, by providing hiding-places for them which were never discovered. He was one day on the point of being seized, and owed his escape to a curious device which occurred on the moment to an old lady in whose house he was then staying. He was conversing with his hostess in a room close to the front door, when a knock was heard ; some soldiers had come to make a domiciliary visit. There was no time for flight : what could be done ? Now, the old lady was extremely fat, and had a large cloak on, so she bade Père Noirot sit down, and forthwith seated herself in his lap, throwing back her cloak over him so as completely to conceal him from view. The soldiers entered, and the lady received them with perfect self-possession, excusing herself for not rising on account of her age and infirmities, which made moving difficult to her, but the maid-servant, she said, would show the visitors all over the house. It was in this singular fashion that Père Noirot was delivered from a peril out of which there seemed to be no possible escape. The Abbé Tresvaux heard the circumstance from his own lips.

Another trait of the same character is no less remarkable. The demoiselles Esnault, sempstresses at Rennes, were entirely devoted to the faithful clergy, and often harboured them. Sitting at supper one evening with a concealed priest, Mdlle. Esnault heard a knock at the door : a commissioner much dreaded at Rennes as a fierce republican was come to institute a search. There was no issue from the apartment except through the door at which this man was standing. All that the priest

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could do was to get behind a piece of furniture, a poor hiding-place if once the lynx-eyed official made good his entrance. This Mdlle. Esnault was determined he should not do, for, having recognized the man as soon as she opened the door, she clutched hold of him by his hair, and, like one scared and out of her wits with terror, began screaming with all her strength, ‘A thief! a thief!’ In vain did the official tell her he was no thief, but the town commissioner: ‘No,’ she retorted, ‘you have no scarf; you have come in the middle of the night to attack a poor lonely woman.’ Then she began screaming afresh, never loosing her hold of his hair. Wearied out at last, the commissioner, who was perhaps ashamed of being found engaged in a squabble with a woman, or preferred giving up his search to having more to do with such a termagant, was glad to be released and take his departure.

Madame de Rengervé, mother of one of the guillotined priests, displayed a like presence of mind. M. Masson, a priest belonging to the parish, that of Pipriac, was denounced at Bain, and a detachment of five hundred men was sent to surprise him at night in Madame de Rengervé’s house. She rose and went to wake the priest, recommending him to go down to the kitchen and mingle among the servants. Then she had the door opened, asked the soldiers whence they had come, compassionated them for their fatigue, and invited the commandant and all the officers to partake of supper. Madame de Rengervé was a very agreeable woman, and she behaved with such exceeding politeness to these military men, and was so thoroughly at her ease in manner, that they retired quite charmed with their reception, and made no search, saying that there was nothing suspicious there. Fortunately the informer did not venture in, for he would have been sure to recognize

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M. Masson notwithstanding his disguise, being from the same part of the country. This faithful priest had never left the neighbourhood. He was serving a chapel in Pipriac when the Revolution broke out, and for a considerable time was overlooked. He profited by this circumstance to render many services to the Catholics of the canton, and had the happiness of fortifying several of his brethren who were hesitating whether they should take the oath.

In the Easter of 1793, when the authorities summoned him to take it, he replied, ‘You have power over my head but not over my conscience ; you may deprive me of life, but, by God’s grace, I will never take the oath.’ He soon became the object of persecution, not only as a ‘refractory’ priest, but because he had harboured royalists who were making their way out of the country. The search for him became so active, that on one occasion, not knowing whither to go, he passed a whole day hidden in a field covered with fern. Not having had a morsel to eat, he sought at night-fall a house left in charge of a person on whose Christian principles he believed he could depend ; but the panic was so great that he could with difficulty obtain permission to pass the night under its roof, and had to leave very early the next morning, the only food given him being a little broth. That day he had to betake himself again to the hedges and the brushwood. Towards evening he ventured into a field where there was a stack of hay, but a storm came on which drenched him to the skin, so he was obliged to seek refuge under some trees for the night. Such was the miserable life he led for several days, not liking to ask for admission in any house lest he should compromise the inmates. At last he was received by a good farmer of Pipriac. Fear had not closed the heart of this worthy man or of his family,

and they welcomed the priest gladly. He was not the only one to whom they generously gave shelter during the days of persecution, and, when friends warned them of the peril to which they exposed themselves, father, mother, and children would all reply that they should reckon it a great happiness to give their lives in so holy a cause. The sacrifice was never required ; God rewarded and blessed them for their good will. M. Masson also himself escaped. An act of Christian charity on his part must not be omitted. A battle had taken place between the royalists and republicans near Pipriac, in which the latter were beaten, leaving several of their number on the field. In the evening, some one having come to tell M. Masson that among the dead there was a wounded man who still breathed, and to ask whether it would be well to finish him, ‘What !’ he exclaimed, ‘murder a man ? certainly not.’ ‘But he is an enemy of yours.’ ‘What does that matter ? Take me to him at once.’ Then, like the good Samaritan, he had the wounded soldier removed to a house, furnished him with linen, procured him a doctor, instructed him, heard his confession, and never left him until he saw him quite convalescent, full of joy at having been able to show his love for an enemy by saving both his body and his soul.

To these generous examples of charity combined with great presence of mind we will add a few instances of the marvellous Providence of God displayed in the protection of some of His faithful servants. Thus at Nantes, Père Cornillé, a Cordelier, having left his hiding-place one day to go and visit a sick person, was recognized on the quay by a porter and several other persons, who at once began to shout, ‘Here is the *calotin* ! let us seize him.’ A gardener, who had been showing P. Cornillé the way, took to his heels when he saw the tumult,

ran to the house in which the Father resided, and, still trembling with fear, told the inmates that M. Masson was arrested, for that he had left him in the midst of an angry mob. A few minutes after, the holy man surprised them by walking in quietly with his usual imperturbable calmness. He had preserved it during the whole of the turmoil, which for some unexplained reason had subsided, his enemies having either miraculously lost sight of him, or almost as miraculously abandoned their purpose. Three priests of the diocese of Saint-Malo, who were hidden at a place called La Touche in the parish of Plélan, had been denounced to the gendarmerie in the *bourg*. Having reason to suspect that they were in danger, they thought it prudent to leave the place during the night. The sky was cloudless, and the full moon shone with all its lustre. Suddenly they perceived the gendarmes advancing towards them. The path was narrow, there was no possibility of escape, and not a chance of concealment. All that the three priests could do—Tresvaux, indeed, thinks there were more than three, for that several of their concealed brethren had joined them—was to draw up side by side against the hedge and allow the soldiers to pass, remaining perfectly still, while inwardly recommending themselves to Jesus and Mary. Strange to say, the gendarmes passed close to them, almost brushing them with their elbcs, yet not one of the troop noticed their presence, although naturally they could not have failed to see them. As soon as the soldiers had passed on some little way, the priests threw themselves on their knees and thanked God for the signal mercy He had vouchsafed them. One of them, M. Georges, who died curé of Saint-Servan, often related this incident, and the Abbé Tresvaux learned it from an ecclesiastic who had heard it from M. Georges's own lips.

The reader will remember young Briant, whom our Blessed Lady saved at one of the *fusillades* at Vannes. A brother of his who had served with the royalists lay hid in a barn adjoining his father's house. Here a detachment of soldiers arrived one day to seize him. He had only time to cover himself up with hay ; as there was very little of it he was but ill concealed, and the slightest search must have led to his discovery. But M. Briant shared his brother's confidence in Mary, and called upon her to protect him in this perilous emergency ; nor was his appeal made in vain. The soldiers came into the loft, and upset everything that they found there. His sister, who accompanied them, and who believed him to be concealed elsewhere, was on the point of turning over the hay, but for some reason she abstained, and no one so much as touched it.

Some pious ladies, named Coaridoux, living near Saint-Meen, were in the habit of receiving priests in their house. One day they were unexpectedly visited by a company of soldiers, who came to search the premises. At that moment there happened to be a box in which were the sacred vessels and priestly vestments standing unlocked in an ante-room. The men went over the whole house, and examined everything with the minutest care, with the exception of this box, which nevertheless was in full sight, and the contents of which at that epoch would have sufficed to condemn the whole family to the guillotine.

These detached facts, which we have stated on the authority of the Abbé Tresvaux, are gathered from various periods of the persecution. But how many more such marvellous deliverances may have occurred during these gloomy times which have found no pen to record them ! We now return to take up the thread of events.

## CHAPTER XXI.

*The Directory. Its project for extirpating religion.*

IN the midst of their troubles the hearts of the persecuted clergy were cheered by two notable retractations on the part of their schismatic brethren ; the more notable because they were made by men who had travelled far on the road of error, and at a time when it required considerable courage to retrace their steps. The first was that of M. Gobil, Rector of Louvigné, in the diocese of Rennes. He was its legitimate pastor, but had taken the oath and recognized the intruded bishop of Ille-et-Vilaine. He had gone so far as even to renounce his priesthood during the Reign of Terror, when many of the schismatic clergy were guilty of this impiety, and delivered up their letters of ordination with a view of guarding themselves from suspicion and escaping imprisonment. He now published his retraction, which contained a noble avowal of his faults and in which he humbly craved pardon for all the grievous scandals he had given. The other retraction was that of the constitutional bishop of Mont-Blanc, M. Panisset. He was a Savoyard curé, and had been induced to usurp the episcopal see of Chambéry by Grégoire, whom the Convention had sent to Savoy as representative of the people at the time of its annexation in 1793. He had even uttered and printed words of blasphemy against the Catholic priesthood. But grace was nevertheless not silent in his heart, and, after remaining for two years

in a state of uncertainty, hesitating between duty and interest, he retired into Switzerland, where he met several French refugees, and, among them, the celebrated Count de Maistre. He it was who drew up Panisset's retraction, after having had, doubtless, no small share in moving him to a sincere repentance. Le Coz, perceiving the injury which these publications, and especially that of the Bishop of Mont-Blanc, must inflict on his party, had speedily taken pen in hand and warned the 'citizens,' his 'dear brethren,' priests of the diocese, to be on their guard against the snares and precipices which surrounded them. His letter was, as usual, a mass of undigested erudition and shallow argument; indeed, it would have been difficult to find any solid reasons to support so bad a cause. The production was promptly and ably refuted, but Le Coz's pride made him impervious to conviction, and refutations, however complete, only led to multiplied replies on his part.

While Le Coz and his colleagues were free to do and say what they listed, the Catholic clergy were far from enjoying a like advantage. Even such as on account of their age and infirmities had been originally exempted from deportation were now once more thrown into prison. Those priests who were still at liberty were obliged to remain in strict concealment, as in the days of the Terror, emerging from their hiding-places chiefly at night to render spiritual assistance to the faithful, and even then at extreme peril. The Directory, bitterly hostile to religion, adopted for its extirpation means which, if less sanguinary than those employed by the Convention, were not less destructive. The following passage quoted from an instruction given to the national commissioners exhibits its deadly hatred of the priests. 'Weary out their patience,' it said, 'besiege them with your *surveillance*; let it disquiet them by day, let it

disturb them by night ; do not allow them a moment's respite ; without seeing you, let them feel you everywhere at every moment.' These commissioners, often as wicked men as the regicide Directors, carried out their instructions only too faithfully. The Directory was also seconded by the Council of Five Hundred, which shared its animosity against the clergy. Among their most active enemies in that body was Drulhe, an apostate priest. Charged with the office of drawing up a report on the 'refractory' clergy in May, 1796, he painted them in the blackest colours, as the foes of peace and social order, dangerous and sanguinary rebels. He concluded by calling for severer laws against them, and demanded that they should be all subjected to deportation. The proposal was favourably received and, but for its rejection by the Council of Ancients, would have passed into law.

The Council of Five Hundred continued, nevertheless, to occupy itself with the subject, but the few friends whom the priests possessed in that body were using their best endeavours to obtain some alleviation of their position. Dubruel, a deputy of the Aveyron, warmly advocated their cause, and strove to introduce a measure by which a provisional liberty under the eye of the local authorities should be accorded to the incarcerated priests, the sole condition imposed being an act of submission to the laws, with the penalty, in the case of refusal, of simple detention as a matter of precaution for public security. The Council was about to accept this proposition when it received two messages from the Directory, pointing out the danger of restoring liberty to men who would instil fanaticism into the people's minds and revive the hopes of the Chouans. This was quite sufficient to defeat the project. Lanjuinais, an ardent supporter, as we have seen, of the Constitutional Church, had bestirred

himself actively to incite the Directors to this interference. Freedom restored to so many Catholic priests would only throw a fresh difficulty in the way of that tottering body, which, in spite of all the efforts of its partisans to galvanize it into life, was daily losing ground. In the autumn of this year, a Benedictine of Rennes, Dom Hamart-la-Chapelle, made a most edifying retraction, in which he humbly confessed all his crimes and deplored the scandal he had given, for he had not only renounced his priesthood, but had seduced a young lady and contracted a sacrilegious union with her. The constitutional priests at Rennes were extremely irritated at this publication and wished to have Hamart arrested, under the pretext that it was opposed to the principles of the Government, and the printer prosecuted. For the present the generous penitent was able to evade pursuit, but later he was arrested and died under sentence of deportation in the Isle of Ré. Rennes, which had seen the blood of so many martyrs flow, was to behold another priest mounting the scaffold at the close of the year 1796. This was M. Bougerie, a highly gifted ecclesiastic, who, having hitherto escaped detection, was now arrested, condemned to death on the 7th of December, and executed immediately.

The year 1797 began with somewhat better prospects. According to the constitution of the year III. of the Republic, a third part of the legislative body was to be renewed yearly. A very general feeling of dissatisfaction existed in the minds of the better disposed portion of the community with the injustice and tyranny of the Government, and efforts were being made to guide the electors to a more prudent choice of deputies. The first step towards this end was to make the people who acted in the primary assemblies understand the importance to their welfare and that of France of electing

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worthy persons, as upon these men devolved the responsibility of choosing the deputies. In consequence of these exertions, four departments of Brittany which were included amongst those which had to send representatives for the year 1797 selected very good members, some of whom were royalists, while others were, at least, moderate and rightly intentioned individuals. In other parts of France good representatives were also chosen, and this healthy infusion could not but exercise, it was hoped, a happy influence on the counsels of the legislative body. They took their seats at the end of May, and soon found themselves, not only in direct and open opposition to the predominant revolutionist faction, but objects of the scarcely disguised hostility of the Directory. A state of things was thus created which was sure to bring on a crisis before long. Notwithstanding, however, its ill-will towards the moderate party, the Directory thought it prudent at first to relax something of its rigorous treatment of the priests. Those who were detained in prison were released. The churches in Brittany were re-opened and public worship was once more celebrated in them. But this point had been won by the new representatives with great difficulty. Dubrueil had never ceased labouring for the repeal of the penal laws against the clergy, and, even before the elections, had brought forward a fresh project of law to that effect ; and now that the accession of moderate deputies furnished him with several active associates, there appeared to be a fair prospect of success. It was even hoped that the legislature might be induced to abrogate the form of submission to the laws of the Republic, which was repugnant to the conscience of many of the faithful clergy and introduced an element of dissension amongst them. A favourable vote was obtained on the 16th of July, but, to the disappointment of all good men, when

submitted to scrutiny on the morrow, the resolution was declared to be rejected by a majority of six. The joy of the revolutionists, which burst forth in cries of *Vive la République!* cries which were echoed by the galleries, clearly proved that they hailed the result as another victory of impiety over religion.

The recall of the exiled priests had, however, been voted, but coupled with a condition from which most of them were likely to shrink. Meanwhile the constitutional clergy had been preparing to hold what they styled a National Council in the Cathedral of Notre Dame. Brittany furnished its contingent to this *conclavabulum*, and Le Coz was appointed its president. It met at the beginning of August. The object of the schismatics, of course, was to invest their Church with some seeming importance and thus confirm their wavering followers, a precaution by no means superfluous, for at that time a large number of the constitutional clergy of the capital were returning to Catholic unity,<sup>1</sup> recognizing again the authority of their lawful pastor, Mgr. de Juigné, the Archbishop of Paris. There were also retractions in Brittany, particularly at Nantes, where the intruded bishop, Minée, after abjuring his priesthood, had never resumed his functions.<sup>2</sup> One of the great weapons of warfare employed by the schismatics was to decry the ‘Roman Church’ and the Holy Father on all occasions, although at the same time they feigned to acknowledge the Pope as their head and professed

<sup>1</sup> Retractions were numerous at this time all over France, and not unfrequently were made in public, with most lively signs of contrition. Thus we are told by Mgr. Bruté (*Life*, chap. iii.) that at Grenoble one of these prevaricators, after speaking for a while with great and increasing fervour, was so overcome by excess of grief that he actually died in the pulpit while performing this exemplary act of reparation and penance.

<sup>2</sup> This wretched man contracted a sacrilegious union, and fixed his abode at Paris, where he set up as a grocer in the Rue de l’Arbalète. He died in the year 1808, at the age of sixty-nine.

to hold the Catholic, Apostolic, and Roman faith. The enemies of that faith knew well the mendacity of this pretension, as they sufficiently proved by leaving the constitutionalists entirely unmolested. The Republic was at this time making war on the Holy See, and its armies, led by Napoleon and marching from victory to victory, were penetrating into the Pontifical States. It was a good opportunity for Le Coz, who cordially hated the Vicar of Christ, to give vent to his malice in a so-called pastoral, in which he inveighed against that venerable authority which had condemned him and his adherents. Indeed, ever since Rome had been menaced the sectaries were mad with joy. Into the details of the proceedings at their pretended council we have no need to enter; suffice it to say that they had the impertinence to publish what was styled a 'decree of pacification,' in which they offered peace to the Catholic priests, whom, as it may be imagined, they would have welcomed with pleasure if only they would have consented to partake of their schism, but, as this was a hope which they could scarcely entertain, they were glad at least to affect to throw upon them the blame of continued separation.

Towards the end of August, the Council of Ancients confirmed the resolution of that of the Five Hundred for the recall of the exiled priests, which now passed into law and filled with joy the hearts of all good Catholics. Everything gave reason to hope that tranquil days for religion were at last about to dawn upon France. Several deported priests, counting on the successful issue of the discussion, had already returned to their country before it was terminated. But a terrible disappointment was impending. The violent republican faction, being extremely discontented at the moderate line which was in course of adoption by the legislative body, in conse-

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quence of the introduction of better disposed members at the late elections, were meditating a *coup d'état*, which, in fact, they shortly brought about. The President, La Reveillère-Lepaux, a man noted for his impiety, and two other members of the Directory, Merlin de Douai and Barras, were the chief movers in the conspiracy, which drew to itself the most violent members of the late Convention, who had seats in the Council of Five Hundred or in that of the Ancients. General Augereau was now summoned by the Directors to Paris at the head of a body of troops, a step which was in direct opposition to the constitution. Augereau was a man of the lowest extraction, who owed his fortune and elevation entirely to the Revolution, and was therefore its ready tool. On the 18th Fructidor (the 4th of September), the faction headed by the three Directors caused the arrest of all those deputies who had shown themselves the most zealous for the interests of religion and had professed the soundest political views. The two other Directors, Barthélemy and the famous Carnot, were of the number of the proscribed, which included no less than fifty-three members of the two Councils, who were all condemned to deportation without any form of law. The representatives of forty-eight departments, that is, of more than half of France, were thus summarily set aside, and the elections were declared to be annulled. The successful conspirators now recalled into operation the law of the 7th Vendémiaire, 1785, rendering it, however, more severe by substituting for the oath then required that of hatred to royalty and anarchy, and of attachment and fidelity to the Constitution of the year iii. Every returned emigrant was allowed fifteen days to leave the country, after which period, if found on French soil, he would be taken before a military commission and executed within twenty-four hours.

The deplorable effects of this re-action were soon felt. Twenty Breton ecclesiastics who had hastened to return from Spain, to which country they had been deported, were arrested at Rochefort, where they landed in total ignorance of the events of the 18th Fructidor. They were immediately consigned to the common gaol, along with the worst malefactors, and were soon joined by numerous companions in misfortune from all parts of France, who were brought to Rochefort for deportation. Amongst these were a few constitutional priests, some even married ones. They had given offence in some way to the Executive, and were thus included in the sweeping proscription of the Directory, whose President, desirous of founding a religion of his own, to be styled that of the *Théophilianthropes*, hated the very name of a priest. The treatment experienced by the prisoners was very cruel. They had at first but one meal in the twenty-four hours, and that of the worst and most insufficient description, and were so crowded together both by day and by night that they could scarcely breathe. One of them having opened part of a window which was protected with iron bars, in order to obtain a breath of pure air, was fired at by the sentry. The ball missed its intended victim and hit the ceiling, but had enough force remaining to inflict serious injuries on an old priest's head, which it struck in its rebound. These few details sufficiently prove that the revolutionists still hated the clergy with the same cruel hatred as ever, and that, if they showed themselves less inhuman before the 18th Fructidor, it was only because it was expedient to accommodate themselves to circumstances.

In November, an English priest whom Tresvaux calls by the name of Gruchy,<sup>3</sup> was executed at Nantes. Born

<sup>3</sup> The name as given is certainly not English. Possibly, being a native of Jersey, his family was originally of French extraction. But,

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of Protestant parents in the Isle of Jersey, he was, when quite a youth, taken prisoner during the American War of Independence and confined in the Castle of Angers. Falling ill, he was transferred to the hospital, where he was nursed by the Sisters of Charity. Touched by the care he received at their hands, all his remaining prejudices vanished, and he abjured Protestantism. He was now set at liberty but remained in France, knowing to what persecution he would be exposed if he returned home. A merchant with whom he found employment valued him so highly that he offered to bestow on him his daughter in marriage, but the virtuous young man had devoted his life to celibacy. He accordingly declined this advantageous offer; he even left the business, and, through the assistance of a rich and pious widow, was enabled to learn the trade of a joiner. Being employed at this lady's château in Poitou, he became acquainted with the curé, who taught him Latin. He made such progress in his studies in the course of the next three years as to be able to enter the seminary of Luçon, where he followed the usual course of theology. He was always a pattern of regularity and, after receiving holy orders, was sent by the Bishop of Luçon to officiate successively in several parishes of his diocese. When the Revolution broke out M. Gruchy refused the oath, and was compelled to leave the country. He went over to Jersey, where he was ill received by both his family and his compatriots, who seemed to have no toleration for a convert, and who literally drove him out of the island. He had succeeded, however, in converting his sister, but had to leave that of his mother incomplete. In 1795 he returned to France with M. de Beauregard,

whether or no Tresvaux may have erred in the spelling of the name, it is plain that he was thoroughly acquainted with the particulars of the case.

who was charged by Mgr. de Hercé with a mission to La Vendée, and resumed his ministerial labours in the parish of which he had been vicaire. He soon recalled the inhabitants to the practice of their duties by the force of his holy example as much as by his exhortations; but the thought of his mother was always present to him, and he longed to revisit Jersey in order to complete the conquest of her soul. M. de Beauregard, however, who was Vicar-General of Luçon, repeatedly refused his consent, fearing for him the dangers of the journey, but, when affairs had summoned that ecclesiastic elsewhere, M. Gruchy deemed himself at liberty to execute the project on which he had set his heart. He accordingly went to Nantes and asked for a passport, styling himself a joiner. It was being prepared when a municipal officer, who was a married priest, came in and asked to see it. When he read ‘Mathieu Gruchy, joiner,’ he looked at him and said, ‘You lie ; you are a priest.’ ‘I am both the one and the other,’ answered Gruchy. ‘You are a priest,’ resumed the apostate ; ‘you returned to France after being banished, and have merited death.’ ‘Well, then, give it me,’ replied the accused mildly. He was immediately consigned to prison, where he was a source of edification to all his fellow-captives. On his trial he was defended by an able lawyer of Nantes, who, however, failed to obtain his acquittal. As soon as he was condemned, M. Gruchy wrote a touching letter to his mother, which, one cannot but hope, must have accomplished the object for which her son had sacrificed his life. On the way to execution, this holy priest, having a crucifix in his hand, said to the leader of the escort, ‘The last requests of the condemned, when harmless, are not usually denied them. I should like to speak to the officer who denounced me.’ The wretched man could not refuse compliance with the

summons, but came forward pale and trembling. ‘Sir,’ said M. Gruchy, ‘do not imagine that I feel unkindly towards you for having brought about my death. He Whom I adore on this cross commands me to forgive you, and has Himself set me the example. I do forgive you; and if God receives me into His bosom, as I hope, I will pray for you.’ This said, he walked to his death barefoot and with a firm step. The execution of a priest was a triumph to the revolutionists, who paraded him through the streets of Nantes before leading him to the place where he was to be shot. ‘Is it here?’ he calmly asked, when arrived at the ditch already dug to receive his body. Being answered in the affirmative he knelt down, but whether it was from reluctance on the part of the soldiers or from their taking unsteady aim, the first discharge did not touch him. The next only wounded him. It was not until the third that his martyrdom was completed.

This was the third time since 1792 that the persecution had broken out afresh, but nothing could exhaust the patience of the confessors or damp the generous courage of those faithful souls who devoted themselves to watch over their safety and facilitate the exercise of their ministry. Three sisters of the name of Ergault are mentioned as having especially distinguished themselves by the services they rendered to the proscribed priests. One of them was a nun belonging to the hospital at Vannes, but had been driven out for remaining faithful to her vows and refusing to take the civic oath. In the house of these pious women, M. Touchet, Rector of Saint-Hélier, a parish in the suburbs of Rennes, lay concealed. In moments of extreme peril, when a domiciliary visit was imminent, he would go out disguised as a National Guard, accompanied sometimes by one of the sisters, who was possessed of remarkable presence of mind.

When the decree which punished with death all who should harbour priests came to his knowledge, he resolved to leave the house and, as he told them, go and hide himself in the fields, the woods, the ditches, rather than be the occasion of destruction to his entertainers. But they assured him that they should be too happy to die with him, and, as they could only die once, they had sent word to their friends that if any of them were afraid of the new penalty they might send them any priests they had in concealment, and they would themselves cheerfully receive and shelter them ; that they had all made their wills, and even got ready the white garments in which to mount the scaffold. To which the good nun added gaily, ‘I have sewn into the hem of my dress a flint, a match, and a candle, so that when we are left alone in our dungeon I may have light enough to say my office for the last time.’ So, however, it happened, in the merciful Providence of God, that, although these sisters had often three priests hidden in their house at the same time, they were never discovered or apprehended, and, when the persecution was over, M. Touchet resumed his duties, and died Rector of Saint-Augustin about the year 1806.

Although, as has been observed, a certain number of schismatic priests had been sent to Rochefort, this was quite an exceptional occurrence, for the persecution did not touch them as a body, and they were able to close their pretended council at Paris without the slightest molestation. This immunity they continued to enjoy, and they owed it to their accommodating consciences, by which they were enabled to suit themselves to every change of rule and to swear allegiance and fidelity to any laws, however impious. No previous Government had been more strongly bent on the destruction of religion than the Directory, but it aimed at its accomplish-

ment chiefly by unrelenting ill-treatment of those priests whom it was able to seize. This was a measure of extermination less popularly odious than the guillotine, and almost as certain. But the persecution was by no means confined to the clergy. Emigrants who had secretly entered France to arrange their affairs were taken and shot; tradesmen, peasants, and the working population generally, were grievously harassed in the matter of keeping the Sunday, for one of the means adopted by the revolutionists for the extirpation of religion was the introduction of their new calendar, and the forcible observance of every tenth day in place of the Christian Sunday, of which they hoped thus to destroy the very memory. The republican calendar, as the Directory itself publicly declared, was one of those institutions most surely calculated to obliterate the last traces of the royal, noble, and sacerdotal *régime*. Fairs, markets, vacations, all were regulated by the new mode of reckoning time, and every effort was made to oblige the people to work on Sundays and eat flesh on Fridays. Penalties, even, were decreed against those who should sell fish on days of abstinence, or refuse to *sanctify* the republican *decadi* by resting from labour on that day. Although the *decadi* has long been forgotten, yet the miserable effects of the deadly blow thus aimed at all religious observances survive to this day in France, especially in the towns. The country people in Brittany, however, made no account of these impious innovations, which became a source of numerous vexations to them and a very hurtful impediment to trade, particularly during the year 1798, when they were stringently enforced.

The successes which the Directory gained in arms against the Holy See emboldened it in its anti-christian projects. Rome had been seized, and the Pope was a

prisoner at Siena. On all sides there was nothing but distress and affliction for Catholics, beholding as they did the Head of the Church a captive and the prisons crowded with the faithful priests, who were unremittingly pursued and hunted down by the troops. On the 12th of March, 1798, a frigate named the Charente left the port of Rochefort bearing a hundred and ninety-three prisoners to French Guiana. A hundred and fifty-five of these were either priests, religious, or clerics, and thirty-one of them were Bretons. The Charente having run aground in making its escape from an engagement with an English vessel, it became necessary on account of the damage sustained to transfer its living cargo to another frigate, the Decade; the prisoners suffered greatly by the change, as the captain and crew did not share the humane feelings evinced by those of the Charente. Their condition, indeed, was very similar to that of their brethren, four years before, on board the floating prisons at Rochefort. Here also they were confined in the between-deck, and crowded together in a pestilential atmosphere for more than twelve hours of the twenty-four, their hammocks being so piled one over the other, and so closely packed, that the occupants ran the risk either of being themselves smothered or smothering those beneath. A hundred and one priests and some laymen were shipped off later in the corvette La Bayonnaise. These were subjected to the same abominable treatment, stifling confinement at night and exposure by day to a burning tropical sun on the forepart of the deck, at the same time being supplied with a miserably scanty diet. Landed at Cayenne, the governor, a hard and cruel man, drove the exiles into the desert lands of Konamana and Synamari, which had already become the grave of so many unhappy Frenchmen, banished to the colony by the Legislative Assembly and the Convention. A

few survived to return and tell the hideous tale of what they had endured; but we cannot follow this subject into its details, the scene of our narrative being almost wholly limited to the province of Brittany. We must not omit, however, to record one circumstance peculiarly interesting to us as Englishmen, which occurred in connection with the corvette *La Vaillante*, which was bearing to Guiana twenty-five priests, seven of whom were Bretons, together with an equal number of malefactors. What these ecclesiastics had to suffer, especially during the first night, huddled up as they were with all these criminals in a very narrow portion of the hold, it would be impossible to describe. They were literally heaped one upon the other, but their wails and groans, which continued through the whole of that night, failed to move the compassion of the officers, who took not the smallest notice. The *Vaillante* ploughed its way across the Atlantic for eight days, when, fortunately for the sufferers, it was captured by an English frigate. The captain, whose name was Pellew,<sup>4</sup> now stepped on board to visit his prize. His eye was at once attracted by the costume of the priests, and he inquired of M. Bodinier, one of their number and a Breton ecclesiastic, who they were. He replied that they were five-and-twenty priests whom the Directory had caused to be deported to Guiana. The captain immediately took off his hat, saluted them, and said with emotion, ‘I am happy at being able to deliver men who were being sent to certain death. Gentlemen you are the richest prize which I ever made.’ Then he inquired if they had any complaint to prefer against the officers who had been in charge of them; but these holy confessors, forgiving and forgetting all the evil done them, did not permit themselves to bring any accusation

<sup>4</sup> Tresvaux calls him Sir Edward Pellew, the accuracy of which designation we have not the means of ascertaining.

against those who had so grossly ill-treated them. The English captain now gave orders that, in consideration of these ecclesiastics, the crew should be allowed to retain and carry away all that belonged to them. He expressed the horror he felt at seeing the ministers of the altar mixed up with malefactors, and had the latter put in irons, with the intention of landing them on some part of the French coast, while the crew were to be taken as prisoners of war to England. The priests alone were left at liberty on board the *Vaillante*, the captain pushing his courtesy so far as to select for manning the prize such of his crew as were Catholics. It can be readily understood, observes Tresvaux, how such delicate attentions on the part of a foreigner, attentions which so strongly contrasted with the barbarity of Frenchmen towards their own countrymen, expatriated solely for their steadfast attachment to their faith, touched the hearts of these good priests, and it was with much regret that they bade adieu to the noble-minded sailor, their tears and their blessings expressing better than any words they could utter their gratitude for the generous treatment they had experienced at his hands. They were landed at Plymouth, and the sympathy and kindness of which, in common with the other refugee priests, they became the objects in England, soon made amends for their sufferings in the Isle of Ré and in the hold of the corvette.

In spite of the numbers shipped off to Guiana, the prisons of Rochefort were as full as ever; sickness was the inevitable result, and several died. Now, although the object of the Directory was thus directly answered, it was unwilling to allow that object to be too palpably apparent; it had accordingly removed those priests who were either infirm or, from serious illness, were as yet unfit for deportation, to a citadel in the Isle of Ré.

Including some laymen, there were at one time not less than twelve hundred on that island. The space being insufficient, they were really no better off than in the Rochefort prisons, and the food supplied to them was equally poor and bad. As an instance of their cruel treatment it may be mentioned that, flesh meat being given them once in the course of the *decade*, the Friday, when possible, was always in preference selected as the day of distribution.

Several priests met their death during this same year at the hands of the soldiers, who, as we have seen, scoured the country in the form of moveable columns. The Abbé Tresvaux mentions the names of six of these martyrs. One of them, named Duval, Rector of Laignelet, had been hidden five years either in his parish or in the neighbourhood, and had preserved every individual in his flock from schism, so that, when the intruded priest arrived, he could not find one person willing to serve his Mass. Having gone, in the evening of the 9th of February, to baptize a newly-born child in the adjoining forest, M. Duval was betrayed by a young man whom he had loaded with benefits, and waylaid by some Contre-Chouans on his return, the traitor pointing him out to them while in the very act of saluting him. M. Duval was immediately shot. On the following day his servant had the body removed to the presbytery, which was vacant. A surgeon employed, we know not why, to open the corpse, found to his surprise that it exhibited no signs of death, and the blood flowed fresh at the first incision. His sister-in-law personally attested the truth of this fact, which was regarded as a mark of his sanctity. His memory was long held in veneration in the canton.

Another, M. Cochon, of the diocese of Saint-Malo, was concealed in the parish of Plumieux at the house of a baker, who was a good Catholic. He was in the garden

one evening, and the servant-girl had just taken him his supper, when a moveable column from the Loudéac garrison, passing at that moment, overheard her saying, as she left him, ‘Good night, sir.’ This was enough to arouse their suspicions ; they entered the garden and, seizing the priest, led him away to Loudéac. A short time before, the captain of the garrison had been beguiled into an ambush by the royalists ; his lieutenant had sworn to avenge his fate ; and the seizure of M. Cochon seemed to furnish this cruel man with the desired opportunity. The prisoner was accordingly treated with great barbarity. He was handcuffed so tightly that the blood ran down over his hands. ‘Do not bind me so tight,’ he said, ‘I shall not attempt to escape ;’ to which the locksmith savagely replied, ‘What is the use of your complaining ? You will meet with worse things on your road.’ As they passed by Pontgant the soldiers led him to the house of a schismatic priest, who told him that if he would take the oath he could assure him that his life would be saved. ‘No, no,’ replied the prisoner firmly ; ‘I have not suffered so much up to this hour to go and damn myself now.’ The troop marched on, and, when they had reached the spot where their comrades had been betrayed into the ambush, they shot him.

Meanwhile, death was busy with the deported priests in Guiana. One of the few survivors, M. Beauregard of Luçon, who has been already mentioned, subsequently published a detailed account of what he and his companions had to endure. Well might an indignant member of the legislative body call the lingering tortures to which they were consigned ‘a dry guillotine.’ These tropical wildernesses of burning sand were doing the same work most surely, and only needed time to make that work complete. But the Church of Brittany not only had to deplore the loss of many of her faithful clergy amongst

the deported, thirteen perishing in less than six months, but others were dying off in the different countries in which they had taken refuge, while no means of recruiting their failing numbers existed. The year 1798 closed and 1799 began without any improvement in the prospects of Catholics, for the same Government was still in power, and its hatred of religion was so notorious that no hopes could be entertained of any relaxation in the severity with which the clergy were treated. In the course of the first six months of the year 1799, no less than thirty-five Breton priests and one deacon were transferred to the citadel of Ré, whence, since the capture of the Vail-lante, no fresh cargo had been despatched to Guiana. The continuation of the profitless civil war in Brittany, which led to the maintenance of strong garrisons in the smallest towns, and maintained the hatred of the republican soldiers against the calumniated clergy, was a great misfortune to that province ; for it was almost impossible to escape their vigilance. A person, indeed, must have lived at that hateful epoch, Tresvaux tells us, to conceive the minute and multiplied precautions which the faithful had to take in order to fulfil their religious duties without compromising their priests, or to understand the terror in which good Catholics spent these days. As for the tepid and indifferent, they had abandoned every external practice of religion and lived pretty much as heathens. The constitutional priests more than once boasted that they were the means of preserving religion at that time in France, and they put this forward as a justification of their schism, as if it could ever be lawful to do evil that good might come ; but it was anyhow an empty vaunt, for they had too little credit, even amongst their own partisans, to exercise any salutary influence on the people. If they enjoyed an exemption from persecution, every one knew<sup>ed</sup> that it was owing to the community of senti-

ments which existed between them and the revolutionists. If some few were deported to Guiana or to the Isle of Ré, this was merely from an excess of zeal on the part of some governmental agents, who, in their blind animosity to priests, had failed to distinguish between constitutionalist and Catholic ; and it was a mistake which did not continue to occur.

In the month of February we find two fresh victims in the diocese of Vannes. They were discovered through the indiscretion of a maid-servant who had been sent to make some purchases in the small neighbouring town of Locminé. She returned with the provisions exposed to view. Suspicions were aroused in the minds of some gendarmes, who followed her to the house, where three priests were concealed. Two they murdered, the third escaped. Another victim in the course of this year was M. Gavard, an ecclesiastic of the diocese of Rennes. He had passed in safety through all the years of the Revolution, although no danger ever daunted him when it was question of the good of souls. He was denounced at last by a perfidious man who feigned himself desirous of going to confession on the following day. Having ascertained that M. Gavard, who was suffering from fever, would be detained for the present in the house where he was staying, he went in search of a detachment of soldiers, who immediately arrested him. The officer in command did his best to save his prisoner. He bade him keep close to his side, as his soldiers were all drunk and were not under control. He treated him with marked respect and had him to dinner, assuring him that, if he was himself employed to conduct him to Rennes, he would be as safe as if he had remained in his hiding-place. Others, unfortunately, were differently minded. At three o'clock the following morning a detachment of soldiers came to fetch M. Gavard out of his

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prison and, after marching with him some way, shot him on the road which leads to Servon.

Some political changes which took place in the month of June led to the retirement of La Reveillère-Lepaux and of Merlin de Douai, but it produced no amelioration in the condition of the Catholic clergy. Sieyès, the new President, followed the same system in their regard, and contented himself with releasing some schismatics detained in the Isle of Ré. On the other hand, twenty Breton priests were relegated thither during the last half of the year 1799. Although the law no longer awarded capital punishment in the case of priests, yet, as a matter of fact, the local authorities occasionally passed sentence of death upon them. M. Levesque, Rector of Asserac, had a very narrow escape of the guillotine. The passions of the republicans were much excited in the autumn of this year, for the royalists, encouraged by a new coalition of foreign powers, were rising again in La Vendée, and the priests were, as usual, accused of being the instigators of the disturbances. Groundless as was the charge, these prepossessions powerfully influenced the minds of the partial judges before whom they had to appear. M. Levesque was accordingly condemned to be executed at Nantes on Sunday, the 20th of October. His family obtained a respite of twenty-four hours, and that respite saved him. Dupré, a royalist leader, to whom the surname of Tête-Carrée was given, had shared the same prison with the Rector of Asserac, but was set at liberty in the course of the preceding week. Before leaving, he promised M. Levesque that he would come and deliver him. It would not seem that the priest counted much on the fulfilment of the promise; at any rate, he made his last dispositions as one who was certain to die. He rewrote his will, in which his paternal solicitude for his flock and his Christian charity shone conspicuous. No

virtue, indeed, is more constantly exhibited by the martyrs of the Revolution than their heroic love of their enemies. After the example of St. Cyprian, and from a motive of gratitude to those who were to hasten his admission into life eternal, this good priest bequeathed three francs to each of the soldiers, and to all who should have had any share in his death. In a codicil he added, lest he should forget it at the last moment, that he desired to embrace his executioner and to give him also three francs. He ended with an adieu to his good friends till they should meet in Paradise.<sup>5</sup> But Tête-Carrée had not forgotten his promise. At the head of six thousand men, collected in the neighbourhood of Nantes, he entered that city, which was but ill guarded, on the night of the 19th of October. He went straight to the Bouffay prison, where he freed M. Levesque, together with two royalists condemned to death, two others sentenced to deportation, and three more who were awaiting their trial. He also liberated three sailors, limiting himself strictly to political offenders, and leaving the felons to their fate. Having thus effected their bold *coup de main*, with the dawn of day the royalists departed. M. Levesque survived thirty years, and died in his rectory of Asserac.

<sup>5</sup> Tresvaux says he saw the will, the particulars of which he gives.

## CHAPTER XXII.

*The Consulate. Freedom of worship restored.*

ON the 9th of November, 1799, Napoleon Bonaparte, leaving his army in Egypt, returned to Paris and seized on the reins of government. In concert with Sieyès he dissolved the Directory, and, assuming to himself the part of a dictator, set up an entirely new constitution in its place, with three consuls at its head, of which he was the first and chief. In the articles of the new constitution not a word was said on the subject of religion or its ministers. It might, therefore, have been concluded that freedom of worship was no longer to be withheld from Catholics, but the revolutionists in Brittany did not thus understand the matter, and at the close of the year we meet with another victim to the fury of the soldiery in the person of M. Loncle, a young priest of Plouguenast in the diocese of Saint-Brieuc. His death was commonly attributed to the malignant hatred of a constitutional priest, who was the terror of the canton from the animosity with which he pursued the Catholic clergy. This wretched man never went up to the altar without being armed with two pistols and having a loaded gun placed close at hand. It is said that before his death he repented of his crimes. As for M. Loncle, he made the generous sacrifice of his life as soon as he beheld himself in the hands of the soldiers, and prepared to meet death with a calmness which won the admiration even of these callous-hearted men. His father also died a martyr to

Christian duty. He was ordered to convey some goods on the Sunday. ‘No,’ he replied, ‘this is the Lord’s day of rest; I must not work; the law of God forbids me; my servants shall observe that law as well as myself.’ Enraged at this reply, they levelled their muskets at him, and he fell riddled with balls. It was believed that he had an additional motive for his refusal in the suspicion he entertained that the goods he was required to transport formed part of the ill-gotten spoils of these marauding bands.

One of the first objects which occupied the attention of Bonaparte was the distracted state of Brittany and La Vendée, and he commissioned General Hédouville, an able man of moderate principles, to appease the troubles of those districts. An armistice was shortly concluded with the royalists, and an amnesty granted to the departments of the West. If hostilities did not entirely cease at once, they were henceforth confined to a few cantons of Brittany. Aware that it was in defence of their religion that the insurgents had taken up arms, the new Government hastened to adopt measures quite opposite to those of the Directory, and before the close of the year 1799 had changed the formula of the oath imposed on public functionaries and on the ministers of religion to one of a more simple and inoffensive character. It ran thus: ‘I promise fidelity to the constitution.’ This promise was made by many of the priests at Ré and Oleron, who were in consequence released, but others, to the number of eighty, preferred a prolongation of their captivity to an engagement which was repugnant to their consciences, and to which many of the bishops were opposed. Simultaneously with the amnesty had also been issued a proclamation of liberty of worship, which the magistrate was not to be permitted to infringe, the Consuls at the same time expressing a confident

hope, couched in Christian language—language which was a novelty in any governmental declaration of late years—that the ministers of a God of peace would be forward in promoting reconciliation and concord. ‘Let the temples,’ it said, ‘be opened to them once more, and let them, together with their fellow citizens, offer the sacrifice which shall expiate the crimes of war and the blood it has caused to flow.’

For the present this restitution of the sacred edifices was rendered to a great degree illusory, and chiefly profited the so-called Constitutional Church. The priests of this schismatic body, the *asserméntés* as they were called, that is, those who had taken the oath, had succeeded only in forming a clergy without flocks. Under the favour of the late Government they had, in spite of this deficiency, installed themselves in cathedrals and parish churches, and were thus, so far, in possession of the ground. In Brittany, it is true, many parishes had never received a schismatic pastor, partly from the difficulty of finding substitutes for the expelled curés and partly from the discomforts and discouragement attendant on the position of priests, not only without flocks, but exposed to the ill-will and contempt of the populations upon which they had been forced. The Breton clergy, however, did not hasten to show themselves in public, or to return to their churches, not only because, under the influence of their exiled bishops in England and Germany, they were unwilling to make an act of submission to the Constitution, but because, notwithstanding the tolerance of the central government, the local authorities often acted towards them in the most arbitrary manner, a circumstance which continued for some time to keep the faithful clergy in very much the same position as during the persecution, for they still lived in concealment, and celebrated Mass only in private houses.

In February, 1800, the Consuls permitted the exiled priests to return on the condition of their making the following engagement: ‘I promise not to trouble the civil order, to submit to the civil and just laws of the country, and not to oppose the government under which I live. It is in this sense that I promise fidelity to the Constitution.’ This promise—for it amounted to no more and was so worded as to exclude anything beyond a passive acquiescence in the existing order of things—became the occasion of much disagreement amongst the Catholic clergy. Some of the bishops considered that it was permissible, and under their sanction, coupled with the silence of the Holy See, a certain number of priests considered themselves justified in making this qualified promise. But other bishops were strongly opposed to it, particularly those who had taken refuge in England and Germany, such as Mgr. de La Marche, Bishop of Léon, and Mgr. Le Mintier, Bishop of Treguier, the latter of whom pushed his objections so far as even to be unwilling that any should accept the *cartes de sûreté* which General Brune, who had been sent to pacify Brittany, had offered to the clergy; indeed, he had treated them very favourably, releasing unconditionally those whom he found detained in prison at Rennes and at Vannes, and giving them permission to celebrate divine worship. These *cartes de sûreté* were thus worded: ‘N. commander-in-chief of the army of the West. The citizen N. a Catholic priest, can officiate publicly and peaceably both in town and country. I exhort him to aid by means of his ministry in maintaining peace, order, and submission to the laws.’ There appeared to be nothing in this formula to alarm the most delicate conscience; nevertheless, Mgr. Le Mintier considered its acceptance as equivalent to making the promise of fidelity, and the promise of fidelity he regarded as equivalent to an oath of allegiance.

Now (he argued), as priests could not permit themselves to swear allegiance to the new Government, neither ought they to consent to any act resembling it. On the other hand, the prelates who had remained in the kingdom, and who were well acquainted with the difficulties of the situation, thought differently on this point. A vicar-general of Bourges, M. Godard, published a small work on the subject under discussion, in which, without presuming to draw any confident conclusion, which it appertained to higher authority to pronounce, he gave eight reasons in favour of the act of submission. This work was followed by another, in which the meaning to be attached to a promise of fidelity was fully discussed, and the question of its legitimacy, as made to the actual Government, was resolved in the affirmative. As soon as these works became known to the venerable Bishop of Léon, he hastened to indite a reply. He argued, in the first place, that the Consular Government could inspire no confidence; that since the Revolution words had no longer any value; that, in fact, two curés who had made this promise, believing that it bound them only to a passive submission and to abstention from participation in any conspiracy, had been threatened and harassed, the one for having censured a purchaser of national goods—in other words, of Church property—who consulted him on his death-bed, and the other for having condemned divorce. But he moreover contended that the legitimacy of such a promise was doubtful, and consequently that there could be no hesitation as to the unlawfulness of making it; that persons were bound to go, not by their private opinions, but by authority, and that, as the majority of the French bishops then in exile had declared against the act of submission, it was the duty of ecclesiastics to obey their decision.

It must be remembered, in order to make due allow-

ance for the extremely rigid views of the exiled bishops, that they were devotedly attached to the Bourbons, and recoiled from any act which appeared like a betrayal of their cause ; they also firmly believed that there was no real hope for the restoration of religion save in that of monarchy ; in their minds the throne and the altar were indissolubly united, and the Revolution was but a prolonged rebellion against both, which success could never justify. Accordingly, they considered all the acts of any government owing its origin to that rebellion to be marked with nullity in their very essence ; a kind of original sin attached to it, which could not be condoned or expunged. It is needless to observe that the Holy See has never encouraged a pertinacious opposition of this character, but, considering the antecedents, it is hardly surprising to meet with this rooted prejudice against any compromise on the part of a large portion of the French episcopate and clergy with a government which was the offspring of the Revolution. We see things now in the light of what we know was coming, whereas they viewed it in connection with what had passed under their eyes. Every successive form of government which the Republic had assumed had been hitherto bitterly hostile to religion and persecuting in its practice ; but, in point of fact, although its name and form survived, the Republic came to an end on the famous 18th Brumaire. It had succumbed to a Dictator, on whose will henceforth were to depend the turn of affairs and the policy adopted. Now this man had his projects, which for their development awaited only the firm establishment of his power.

The Consular Government, meanwhile, was gradually abrogating the barbarous enactments against the priests which it had found in vigorous operation ; nevertheless, no great confidence could be as yet practically felt,

not only because of former grievous disappointments but because, although the new rulers, so far from following up the system of persecution adopted by their predecessors, professed opposite principles, nevertheless they were very far from according any substantial protection to the Catholic clergy. They simply tolerated them, as it seemed, from mere political motives ; and there was the more reason to judge thus of their conduct because it was chiefly in those parts of the country which had recently been in a state of insurrection that they were treated with indulgence. The Government, in fact, understood that the best way to keep these districts quiet was to refrain from harassing the Catholic priests, and had come to see that they exercised a salutary influence on the population amongst whom they dwelt. The prefect of Nantes, the regicide Le Tourneux, acknowledged as much in a letter to the minister of police, in which, speaking of the country-people of the Loire Inférieure, he said, ‘Such is the stupid blindness of these people, that they cannot be kept quiet except they can enjoy freedom of worship, and have their non-juring priests.’ It was something, and a great deal, too, that this fact should begin to be perceived, and that the priests should no longer be regarded as fire-brands and the instigators of civil war ; nay, more, that they should be acknowledged as capable of contributing powerfully to the re-establishment of order and peace. Bonaparte was soon convinced of this, but he appears to have feared shocking the prejudices of the revolutionists by showing an interest in the fate of the proscribed clergy.

Thus the Government took no steps during the greater portion of the year 1800 to recall the exiles from Guiana. It was not until the 6th of September that a decree was issued to that effect, and then under the

strict condition that they should be relegated to the Isle of Ré, where also the priests who had refused to make the act of submission were detained during the whole of the year. There were others also still confined in different houses of detention. The popular wishes, however, were daily becoming more and more manifest, especially in Brittany, and the new prefect of the Loire Inférieure, little disposed as he personally was to favour the cause of religion, thought it prudent, in consequence of the numerous petitions that kept pouring in, not to oppose the public celebration of divine worship which had already commenced in his department, although the priests had made no act of submission. Thus at Nantes, as also at Vannes, many priests officiated without being molested, a large concourse of the faithful attending, but in both places only in private houses, the churches which had been opened having been taken possession of by the constitutionalists. Throughout the province, the state of things varied according to the humour of the local authorities, for arbitrary caprice, one of the worst evils of the Revolution, still subsisted, and the men in power could at pleasure vex and harass, and even imprison, priests under the slightest pretexts.

But these acts were becoming more rare, and blood, at least, had ceased to flow. The last recorded martyrdoms were those of M. Baron, Rector of Carnac, in the diocese of Vannes, whom the soldiers killed in his own house either at the close of 1799 or the commencement of 1800, and of M. Méheust, who, with M. André, the Rector of Morieux, whose vicaire he was, lodged with a farmer named Josset, who was in the habit of harbouring priests and destitute persons with exceeding charity. The two ecclesiastics, being warned that a moveable column from Saint-Brieuc was approaching the house, hastened to leave it, in order not to compromise

the family ; but the column was upon them almost immediately. M. André, however, had time enough to conceal himself in a deep ditch covered with brambles. Here he remained entirely unperceived, although a soldier was posted close to the spot. M. Méheust was overtaken and captured in a narrow lane down which he had turned, and taken to the neighbouring château of Ville-Gourio. Another column of volunteers from Lamballe, which arrived at that juncture, was very desirous to have him handed over to them, with the object, it is believed, of saving his life, but the commandant of the Saint-Brieuc column steadily refused, pledging himself, however, for the safety of his prisoner, and declaring that he would answer for it with his head. But he had far other intentions. He required M. Méheust to give up all he had of value about him before leaving the château, assuring him ironically that nothing would be lost ; the priest handed to him his watch and thirty francs, but he well understood what fate was in store for him. He therefore begged the leader of the troop not to put him to death within the precincts of the parish of Morieux, where they still were. The troop began its march, and, on reaching the bounds of the parish, M. Méheust knelt down, as he was wont to do, before a cross planted on the hillock of Boulbouté. The commandant seized this moment to signal to his men to fire. M. Méheust fell pierced through and through with balls. Thus perished, on the 3rd of February, 1800, the last martyr priest of Brittany. Saint-Brieuc had in 1791 furnished its first martyr in the person of M. Le Clerc, the young priest of Moncontour, and now it gave the last. M. Méheust, preaching in the environs of Lamballe but eight days before his death and remonstrating with his hearers on the diminution of their piety, had addressed these words to them : ‘ Yet a little while, and

you will wish to have ministers of the Lord. I am well-nigh the only one who remains to you in this district, and me you will no longer have.' These words, which excited little attention at the time, were remembered afterwards and regarded as a prophecy.

Although, therefore, the year 1800 had been, negatively at least, a great improvement on its predecessors through the absence of persecution, it could not be considered as very favourable to religion ; nevertheless, Catholics were beginning to take heart. The exiles in foreign lands were gradually returning in the spring of the year 1801, although it was not without difficulty that such as were unwilling to make the act of submission could effect their entrance into the country. It was now that the deported priests of Guiana, such, at least, as had survived, once more landed on the soil of France. This increase in the number of true pastors in Brittany helped to diminish the already thin ranks of the adherents of the sectaries. Even the indifferent began to prefer the men who had made such sacrifices for the preservation of the faith to those unprincipled prevaricators who had accommodated themselves to every phase of the Revolution, however impious it might be. Abandoned by the Government, to which they had sold themselves body and soul, and receiving no salaries, many of them were reduced to great straits, yet the heads of the party laboured on to the very last by every means in their power—by synods, and councils, and so-called pastorals—to perpetuate schism in the land. But the days of the Constitutional Church were numbered. About this time died the miserable Jacob, the schismatic bishop of the Côtes-du-Nord, without any sign of penitence for his multiplied sacrileges. A short time before, a very different personage had passed away, the venerable Bishop of Treguier, Mgr. Le Mintier.

After his death, the Vicars-General of the diocese declared themselves in favour of the required promise. About this time also, Mgr. de La Marche, Bishop of Léon, authorized the priests under his jurisdiction to make it, using the following form : ‘I, N. — minister of the Catholic worship, professing myself a stranger to every political discussion, present myself to give to the temporal power a guarantee of submission, saving nevertheless the Catholic religion, of which the law guarantees the free exercise. On this condition, I promise fidelity to the Constitution of the year viii.’ Accordingly, in the course of May, 1801, thirty-one priests of the diocese of Léon arrived in their country from England. Others followed their example in making the promise of submission ; those who had hitherto been opposed to it, as were most of the priests of Brittany, taking care distinctly to express that the act was one purely civil, reserving all the rights of the Catholic, Apostolic, and Roman religion. From the priests of those districts which had been recently in a state of insurrection no submission was exacted, the Government fearing to furnish a pretext for the renewal of civil war.

The opposition to the promise had, however, greatly decreased since it had become known that negotiations had been set on foot between the First Consul and the newly-elected Pontiff, Pius VII., for a Concordat which was to put an end to the sufferings of the Gallican Church. Bonaparte, who desired to consolidate his power, for which end it was essential that tranquillity should be restored to the country, had the sagacity to perceive that the best means which he could adopt to attain his object was to restore the salutary influence of religion, and had accordingly entered into a treaty with the Pope concerning the framing of a new organization for

the Church of France. The plenipotentiaries of the Holy See and those of the French Republic finally signed, on the 15th of July, 1801, a Concordat which restored to the Catholic Church a legal existence in France. It was ratified by the Sovereign Pontiff on the 15th of August. The negotiations for this Concordat, which had been concluded under circumstances of most peculiar difficulty, were conducted with such secrecy that its provisions did not become publicly known for eight months after its ratification. There is no denying that it required considerable courage on the part of Napoleon to plan and carry into effect a negotiation of this nature, surrounded as he was by so many powerful and bitter enemies of religion, but he skilfully availed himself of the preponderance which he had acquired by the late victory of Marengo, and his credit was strong enough to close their mouths at this critical juncture. If the act was a bold one, it was, no doubt, one also of high policy on his part, yet we must not withhold from him a certain meed of praise, neither need we deny that he may have retained some religious sentiments and impressions, however vague and imperfect—recollections of childhood, seldom effaced from any Catholic heart—which combined with motives of political prudence to form in his mind a fixed desire to reconstitute the Church of France. Still, while conceding this much, we must add, what from first to last his behaviour towards the bishops and, above all, towards the Sovereign Pontiff abundantly proved, that the Church he wished to see constructed was one that should be docile and disciplined to his hand, a Church which should never become an obstacle in his path, but should be the pliant instrument of his own ambitious purposes.

Our task is now concluded. To enter into any

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details respecting the Concordat and the difficulties and troubles which attended the reconstitution of the Church of France would be to embark on a new subject which, to do it any justice, would require a special treatment of its own.<sup>1</sup> A few subsidiary remarks must suffice.

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## CHAPTER XXIII.

### *The Concordat.*

THE Concordat, which gave a new existence to the Church of France, radically destroyed the pseudo-ecclesiastical organization which the National Assembly created when it decreed the Civil Constitution of the Clergy. Not that, considered in itself, the Concordat was advantageous to religion. It involved many painful sacrifices. Two-thirds of the episcopal sees of France and of its annexed territories were suppressed; Brittany, which had possessed nine, lost four, those of Dol, Saint-Malo, Léon, and Treguier. Moreover, the concessions which, pushing its condescension as far as the essential rights of the Church permitted, Rome had agreed to make to the civil power, were very onerous. Nevertheless, on account of the difficult circumstances in which the Catholic religion was placed at that time in France, the Concordat was welcomed as an inestimable boon. The members of the so-called council which the schismatics were holding in Paris understood that the knell of their Church had sounded, but, to save their self-importance, they affected to make a generous renuncia-

<sup>1</sup> The negotiations that took place between the Holy See and the First Consul on the subject of the Concordat will be found amply and ably treated in the *Life of Pope Pius the Seventh*, which forms the sixteenth volume of this series.

tion in quitting their sees, which they could not retain, and which, in fact, the Government was on the point of requiring them to vacate. Accordingly, after celebrating the feast of the Assumption in Notre Dame they separated never to meet again. By a Brief, dated the same day, and sent to Mgr. di Spina, the Pope's envoy at Paris, the Holy Father, in a tone of paternal gentleness, invited those archbishops and bishops who during the Revolution had occupied the episcopal sees without receiving institution from the Holy See, to return to Catholic unity. The pride of Le Coz was irritated beyond measure by this Brief, and he was especially wroth with Mgr. di Spina for not giving him the title of Metropolitan of Rennes in forwarding that document to him. So far from feeling his heart touched, he considered himself as personally insulted by an offer of reconciliation. 'To accept absolution,' he said, 'would be to declare to millions of Frenchmen who have hitherto placed their confidence in me that I have been, and that I am, an impostor.' Then followed an enumeration of his sufferings and his services, which would be ludicrous if it were not lamentable.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Le Coz had for some time called himself metropolitan of Rennes, instead of metropolitan of the North West, as he was termed in the Civil Constitution; a practice generally adopted by his schismatic colleagues, who felt the absurdity of being styled bishops of rivers, mountains, and points of the compass. He valued himself much upon having had the boldness to oppose on several occasions the inroads of impiety, at a time moreover when such conduct involved no little risk. For instance, in September, 1793, not long before his arrest, he advocated the celibacy of the clergy, which he had also defended from his place as deputy in the Assembly. He wrote also against the desecration of the Sunday and the substitution of the *decadi*. It is only fair to give him what credit may be his due for these and similar acts of courage, but, unhappily, they were all marred by the vice of his position and by the taint of that inordinate pride which in any case would have been incompatible with genuine purity of intention. To figure before the world was his delight; hence he had always pen in hand, and is described by his contemporaries as possessed with a veritable *scribomanie*. Tresvaux says that he considered himself the Bossuet of his age.

The Holy Father had debated the matter some time before he resolved to accept the responsibility before God and before the Church of a new diocesan circumscription of France, which, reducing by two-thirds the number of the Sees, set aside the rights of so many bishops, but, taking into consideration the urgent necessity of the case, and the pressing interests of religion, he did not shrink from an exercise of his power, certainly not exceeding its competency, since that power is supreme, but hitherto unprecedented in ecclesiastical history, at least on so large a scale. Pius VII. accordingly wrote to each of the legitimate Bishops of France on the 15th of August to ask them to resign their sees. It was a sacrifice which the preservation of unity and the re-establishment of the Catholic religion in France demanded at their hands, and he begged them therefore to make it freely. After giving them various reasons to move them to consent, he added that the necessity of the time, of which he himself felt the pressure, obliged him to require their answer in the course of ten days; and that, if within this interval he received no positive reply, he would be compelled to consider them as having resigned. A few days later he sent Cardinal Caprara into France with legatine title and powers to terminate the arrangements concerning ecclesiastical affairs. The bishops of the annexed territories all gave in their resignations. As for the ancient bishops of France, out of eighty-one who still survived, forty-five hastened to accede to the Holy Father's desire. Amongst these were Mgr. Cortois de Pressigny, Bishop of Saint-Malo, and Mgr. de Girac, Bishop of Rennes. The latter, however, while personally ready and even desirous to resign, joined his remonstrance with that of thirty-six of his brethren in the Episcopate, who, collectively or individually, addressed their respectful expostulations to the

Pontiff on the subject, and meanwhile withheld their consent. The Bishops of Léon, of Vannes, and of Nantes were of this number. In the objections made by the bishops who refused to give in their resignations before they had been heard and their reasons weighed, albeit they were couched in terms of much reverence for the Head of the Church, whose supremacy they freely confessed, we cannot but discern a subtle spirit of Gallicanism, a spirit which infected the minds and warped the judgment of so many even good and great men in those times. When, however, it is remembered that those bishops had all generously offered to resign their sees some years before, in order to leave the Pope more free to come to some arrangement with the National Assembly, we must acquit them of being influenced by any merely personal or selfish motive in the attitude they now assumed, and attribute it rather to their imperfect grasp of the prerogative of the Holy See. They thought that they ought to have been consulted, if not convened to debate, on a measure of such paramount importance. But circumstances precluded delay, and it was well that the Church possessed in its Head a power of prompt and vigorous action, in an emergency like the present, which the formalities required by Gallican prejudices would have rendered impossible. The result of their refusal is sufficient in itself to prove that these prelates, with all their virtues, and in spite of all they had suffered for the faith, erred greatly in the line they adopted, for that refusal became the source of a schism which lasted for thirty years under the name of the Petite Eglise. It is but justice, however, to these bishops to add that they were themselves far from countenancing the separation; on the contrary, many of them had recommended their former flocks to recognize the new bishops and submit

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to their authority; but there were wrong-headed priests who took up the question with an ill-directed enthusiasm and, setting themselves against the Concordat, drew a number of ignorant persons to their way of thinking, and thus succeeded in giving consistency to the new sect. It prevailed much in the diocese of Vannes, in some cantons of that of Rennes, and, to a certain degree, in Saint-Brieuc.

If the persecution was now at an end, we must not therefore suppose that days of trouble and vexation had ceased for the Church of France or of Brittany in particular. It would be overstepping our limits to enter on this subject, but we may observe in passing that one of the fruitful causes of mischief and of disturbance was the large admixture, amongst the now recognized pastors of the Church, of the constitutional clergy, men who had never cordially retracted their errors. Moreover, by the terms of the Concordat, the privilege of nominating the bishops had been conceded to the First Consul, subject, of course, to the approbation of the Holy See, and Bonaparte had selected fifteen of the number from amongst the constitutionalists. The Pope, to whom it was a painful sacrifice to admit these men under any circumstances to so high and responsible an office in the Church, but who, in view of the imperious temper with which he had to deal and of the interests at stake, conceded all that he could conscientiously concede, consented to admit them, but only with the express condition that they formally renounced the Civil Constitution of the Clergy, which was the principle of their schism. Le Coz was amongst the fifteen episcopal nominees, having for its affliction been elected to fill the Archiepiscopal See of Besançon. Now, we all know how obstinately attached this man was to his opinions, and how next to impossible it would have

been to get him to think and, above all, to own that he had ever been in error. Others were more or less actuated by the same spirit of indomitable pride. The Cardinal Caprara, the Pope's Legate, was unfortunately a man of little strength of character, and very ill fitted to cope with Napoleon's domineering temper, which would endure no opposition, or to be proof against the seductions of his cajolery, which at other times he brought to bear upon the feeble diplomatist who represented an authority so sacred and interests so all-important. Deficient alike in penetration and firmness, the Papal envoy failed to detect the traps laid for him, and, trusting implicitly to the report of two individuals in whom he confided, suffered himself to be deceived as to the dispositions of the constitutionalists instead of assuring himself personally of their retractation.

Charitable people imagined, when they saw a man of Le Coz's antecedents treated so favourably by the Holy See and enjoying such high promotion, that he had abjured his past schism and formally returned to the bosom of the Church; but he had the unblushing effrontery himself to quash any such benevolent supposition, and to apprise all the world through the public journals that he was entirely unchanged. In a letter addressed to one of his former warm partisans at Rennes he used these words : 'If certain men obstinately assert that I have made any retractation, or signed some declaration contrary to the principles which I have professed, tell them openly that they are asserting what is untrue.' He held much the same language in his first pastoral to the clergy and faithful of the diocese of Besançon, where he speaks, as he always continued to do, of his former ecclesiastical subjects at Rennes, as if he had ever been anything but a usurper of that see. His conduct was in keeping with his language. He sur-

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rounded himself with former schismatic bishops, whom he styled *démissionnaires*, that is, bishops who had given in their resignations, a title to which they had no claim; he harassed and persecuted the faithful clergy, and always gave a marked preference to those of his own party. When Pius VII. came into France at the close of the year 1804 to crown Napoleon, the Archbishop of Besançon was about to present himself before him. The Sovereign Pontiff, however, refused to receive him until he had signed a certain formula, which was also to be presented to all those constitutional bishops who had as yet made no retraction. These were its terms: 'I declare, in the presence of God, that I profess adhesion and submission to the judgments which have emanated from the Holy See and the Catholic, Apostolic, and Roman Church with respect to the ecclesiastical affairs of France. I beg his Holiness to grant me his Apostolic benediction.' Le Coz refused to sign, as did also one other bishop. But when Napoleon heard of their contumacy he threatened to withdraw his protection from them if they persisted in their opposition. This threat had the desired effect. Both Le Coz and his colleague complied with what the Pope required. It is to be hoped that an act which to all appearance was dictated by the fear of man may have been performed with sufficient sincerity to avail in the sight of Him who sees in secret and reads the conscience. Le Coz never seems to have done anything else to repair the scandals he had given. He died in 1815, in consequence of the fatigues he underwent during the hundred days in preaching a kind of crusade against the allies who were come to replace Louis XVIII. upon the throne. Such was the characteristic end of a man who, but for the prominent part he played in the Breton persecution

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and his active promotion of the schism, would have called for no further notice.

It will be obvious how great were the support and encouragement which the priests in Brittany who had formerly taken the oath received from the attitude of the late schismatic occupant of Rennes in their rebellious behaviour towards the Catholic bishops to whom they were now subject. Had they listened to the voice of conscience, or even followed the dictates of reason, instead of manifesting the obstinacy which distinguished the greater number of them, they would have eagerly profited by the condescension of the Holy See in their regard to return promptly to Catholic unity; but pride, which so often leads the way to error, tends most powerfully to retain men in its toils when they have once become entangled therein. Like Le Coz, they were ashamed to acknowledge their faults, and sought vain pretexts to avoid the necessity of any humiliating admission. They were always looked upon unfavourably by good Catholics, who, as much as they could, avoided assisting at their Masses. They have now long disappeared from this mortal scene, and with them also have vanished all traces of that schism which inflicted so many woes on the Church of France. It exists no longer save in history, for even the generation which could remember it has passed away. Eternal truth has prevailed, and the Church of France survives to sustain fresh combats with the same indomitable energy and the same sublime faith and patience, and—who knows?—perhaps to add fresh martyrs to the glorious list which it has already supplied, and to which Catholic Brittany furnished so noble a contingent.









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