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RECOLLECTIONS

OF THE

REIGN OF TERROR.

By the

ABBÉ DUMESNIL

TRANSLATED

WITH NOTES

By

J.C. BROGAN

PROFESSOR OF MODERN LANGUAGES KILLALOE COLLEGE

DUBLIN. M^c GLASHAN & GILL.



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RECOLLECTIONS
OF
THE REIGN OF TERROR.



RECOLLECTIONS
OF THE
REIGN OF TERROR

BY A COUNTRY PRIEST.

EDITED BY BARON ERNOUF.

Translated from the French

OF

THE ABBÉ DUMESNIL,

BY

J. C. BROGAN.



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P R E F A C E .

THE worthy author of the following pages belonged to the number of those non-juring priests who had the courage to remain at their posts through the stormiest scenes of the Revolution. In these recollections, written in 1801, he retraced, for his own gratification and that of his friends, the dangers and persecutions of which he had been the victim at different times, and especially, as may easily be imagined, during the Reign of Terror. He survived his trials several years, without ever caring to leave his beloved parish of Guerbaville, where he died in 1837. The Abbé Dumesnil possessed extensive information, and that of a kind rare enough among the

country clergy of the period. He was, both before and after the Revolution, a zealous auxiliary in the numerous works of charity, performed with unwearied perseverance by the Marquise de Nagu, owner of the Castle of Mailleraye,* to whom frequent reference is made in this work. The intelligent charity of this noble and saintly woman dispensed education with as much liberality as alms. Struck with the talents displayed by one of the children of the parish, named Edward Bignon, who belonged to a respectable but reduced family, Madame de Nagu confided his education to the Abbé Dumesnil, and they both lived to enjoy the fruits of their labours, and to witness the honourable and brilliant fortune of their gifted *protégé*. In all the change of an eventful

* This castle stood in the parish of Guerbaville, on the left bank of the Seine, a little above Caudebec. Its recent demolition, and the destruction of its majestic forests, leaves a sad gap in the fine panorama of this river.

career, as diplomatist, statesman, and minister, Baron Bignon ever continued the intimate friend of the venerable priest who had trained him in his youth.

While scrupulously respecting the ideas and style of the Abbé Dumesnil, we have thought it our duty to expunge from the narrative all general remarks on the causes and progress of the Revolution. It had brought him nothing but anguish and persecution ; his position did not allow him to judge of it impartially, nor even to be accurately informed on the connexion and details of the events that marked its course. We have, therefore, only preserved the autobiographical part of these memoirs, in which he speaks with all the authority of an eye-witness, and with a veracity that is above suspicion.

Among the special characteristics of the Abbé Dumesnil's narrative, are two which seem to recur on every page. We do not find

in it those exceptional examples of heroism in which every idea of human weakness seems effaced, those aspirations "after martyrdom and persecution which make light of the most painful privations, and even of death itself. Every one is not capable of such a sublime effort of virtue in difficult circumstances. But, according to the words of the Gospel, "In heaven there are many mansions;" and they who have not received the gift of stoical resignation, have, too, some merit in acting, while trembling, as if they trembled not. Thus, the Abbé Dumesnil acknowledges, with a frankness that does him honour, that he was not able to pass through the trials of the Reign of Terror, and the 18th Fructidor, without grave internal disquietude. He avows, with much simplicity and honesty, that he shuddered in presence of the scaffold, and was rendered sleepless by the dread of transportation; and yet the emotions which agitated him so pain-

fully, never caused him to palter with his conscience. Such is the first subject of edification offered by this work. The second is his constant recourse to the great evangelical precept of charity; a precept the exercise of which is so frequent and meritorious in times of Revolution. The excellent curé of Guerbaville is not merely satisfied with forgiving the persons who had outraged and denounced him, who had wished for his death or banishment. He makes a just allowance for the passions and influences of the times, and, on every occasion, takes advantage of his popularity with the better classes of his parishioners to recommend and insist on peace and forgiveness. This wise and truly Christian conduct, from which he never swerved, may be usefully dwelt upon, even in the present day, as an example for us in all circumstances and in all times.

BARON ERNOUF.

As several French writers have called in question the authenticity of the Recollections of the Reign of Terror, Baron Ernouf requests me to state that he is in possession of the autograph manuscript of the Abbé Dumesnil.

J. C. B.

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RECOLLECTIONS
OF
THE REIGN OF TERROR.

PART I.

CHAPTER I.

I WAS summoned, like all my brethren, in 1789, to vote for the representatives we were about to send from my bailiwick to the States-General. Accordingly, I attended a meeting of the three orders in the College church of Rouen. It was painful to see what an utter absence of harmony there was in this assembly. Envy and hatred seemed to influence most of its deliberations. The spirit of religion, which would have purified and exalted all hearts, was banished from amongst us. We

were divided into three chambers. The secular and regular clergy elected three deputies: our venerable archbishop, M. de la Rochefoucauld; the Abbé de Saint-Himère, and the curé of Lyons-la-Forêt. They joined the other representatives of France at Versailles, in May, 1789.

After annihilating the distinction between the different orders of the State—after making a variety of other changes, more or less equitable—they attacked the property of the Church, and even went the length of reforming its laws, by imposing a new constitution on the clergy. We were compelled to swear obedience to this constitution, or else renounce our functions and abandon our churches. The representatives of the clergy had proposed various modifications of the oath, but these were pitilessly rejected by the majority of the Assembly. All the episcopal deputies nobly renounced their functions rather than betray their duty, and the few clerical representatives who took the fatal oath were despised even by those who imposed it on them.

This oath was soon required of all ecclesias-

tics performing public functions. It was proposed to me by the municipal authorities of my parish. I refused: they insisted. I refused again. In fine, they returned so often to the charge, that I promised to do everything my conscience would permit. A fortnight before, a law had been promulgated declaring every oath taken with preamble or restriction null and void. Nevertheless, I took mine with the preamble and restriction which had been proposed by the learned and eloquent bishop of Clermont in the National Assembly. I had scarcely finished when a fearful tumult arose in the church. Some insisted that my oath was valid, others that it was null. In the midst of the clamour, the *juge de paix* said to me: "Sir, you are no longer curé." I answered in a tone of voice loud enough to be heard by all: "You will accept this oath, or you will not; it is the only one my conscience permits; I will take no other." And I added: "Officers of the municipality, you can now do your duty." They retired, and drew up an account of the transaction, in which they inserted, word for word, the oath I consented to

take, of which I had left them a copy. I expected every day to be deprived of my benefice, and I am still ignorant of the causes that led to a different mode of treatment being applied to me from that to which so many others had been subjected, who had acted in precisely the same way. I suspect that the *Procureur-syndic* of the district, and the official charged with the reception and examination of the oaths—the one an old friend of mine, and the other a relative—made some correction in the depositions of the witnesses, or perhaps simply agreed to take no steps to bring about my removal. I never asked them, and they have never said anything to me about the matter.

I believed that the charity of true Christians would put a proper interpretation on my conduct, and that they would not condemn me unheard. But I refused all communication with the intruded bishop; I never named him in my sermons; I neither read his pastorals nor answered his letters, contenting myself with having read by my clerk, at the church door, the notices sent to me by the municipality. I was, indeed, denounced for this con

duct; but I got out of the difficulty by saying that the documents I received were not authentic, neither being closed nor accompanied by official letters.

However, the priests denounced for refusing to take the oath were banished from their churches, and too often replaced by religious, or priests who had lately been suspended by their superiors, for good reasons. Some even, who would never have been admitted to holy orders, on account of their ignorance or immorality, were ordained by the new bishops, and installed in the vacant presbyteries. At this period of disorder all the crimes, the sacrilegious robberies of which St. Gregory Nazianzen so bitterly complains, were revived. These new apostles, introduced into the Church with arms in their hands, treated the true pastors with unheard of violence. In the general delirium that pervaded all minds, people forgot everything—forgot all they owed to the venerable men who had baptized, instructed, married, and, in some cases, clothed and supported most of their parishioners. Often they recognised in those who were most lavish of their

insults the objects of their most generous bounty. Some were beaten, thrown into ponds; others torn from their presbyteries, dragged ignominiously to the confines of their parishes, and threatened with hanging if they ever ventured to appear again in them. Those who disapproved of their iniquities, and refused to hold any communion with the intruders, were treated as aristocrats, pursued and insulted, when it was suspected that they were going to or returning from the Mass of a nonjuring priest. Our new depositaries of authority only laughed at the excesses of a reckless populace, whose madness they neither wished nor dared to repress, so profound was the impression already produced in our provinces by the example of Paris! Most of the country *curés*, banished from their churches, took refuge in the large towns. There they found, at least for a time, more personal security, and more freedom for the exercise of their ministry.

In those wretched times, when all the good one did or had done became a ground for proscription, I was not long without having my share of the persecutions that were inflicted on

aristocrats; and, for the first time, my life was in danger. This danger was caused by the following circumstances:—

Our province had not been spared in the terrible famine which desolated France during the year 1789. Wishing to alleviate, as much as was in my power, the sufferings of my parishioners, I applied for relief to Necker, who had again become minister, and was at the height of his popularity. I got ninety sacks of wheat, which I distributed, with all the strictness and impartiality possible, among the needy. But the enemies of good order made use of this act of benevolence to persecute an aristocrat—even “to hang him from the lantern,” as they were now beginning to say even in the country villages. They pretended that I had not distributed all the corn I received; that I applied some of it to my own use; that I had an understanding with the vampires who sucked the blood of France, &c. The *Procureur* of the Commune, a violent supporter of the revolution, deceived by some informers cleverer and even more wicked than himself, who were termed Brigands, assembled the po-

pulace, and persuaded them to make me come to the town hall and give up my accounts. He marched to the presbytery at the head of a band of madmen, amongst whom figured many who were strangers to the country, and some who still wore the clothes I had given them. They came on at full speed, cleared the gate, entered my hall, drove me into a corner of it, and insisted that I should leave the house. Several spoke already of killing me without any further trial, and one of them displayed a rope, with which he requested permission to hang me to the cross in the graveyard. He even tied the rope to it, and arranged everything for the operation. Nevertheless, I was firm: I declared that they might drag me away by force, but voluntarily I would never go, and by God's help my firmness controlled their audacity. This scene of savage violence, in which I was nearly paying with my life for an act of benevolence, excited the indignation even of the revolutionists—at least of those amongst them who still preserved some sentiment of justice and humanity. Several who had taken an active part in the crowd, com-

pletely undeceived as to my conduct, came and apologized. The *Procureur* of the Commune was suspended from his office, and would have been more severely punished if I had not interfered in his behalf with the *Procureur-syndic* of the district. But from the course things were taking in Paris, I saw clearly that our troubles were not at an end.

In 1792, the diocese of Rouen was, like others, devastated by the revolutionary whirlwind. However, M. Papillant, a venerable old man, and a member of the former chapter, remained amongst us, charged with the powers of the exiled archbishop. God, who exalts His Church by adversity, touched the hearts of several intruded priests, and that precisely at the time when the danger of such a reconciliation was greatest. Although my position was different from theirs, being canonically in charge of my parish, still, as there were some unpleasant reports flying about, I thought myself bound to see the delegate of our legitimate pastor, and enter into a full explanation of my conduct. I stated my opinions, gave him a certified copy of the oath in the form in which

I had taken it, and explained how the interference of some old friends among the Government officials had saved me from deprivation and expulsion. I reiterated, on this occasion, the solemn assurance of my unchangeable devotion to the Catholic Church and to my lawful superiors. I thus succeeded—I will not say in being restored to the bosom of the faithful, since I was free from schism, but in establishing my orthodoxy by the most irrefragable proofs. I received, at the same time, powers to exercise the sacred ministry in all the parishes of Le Roumois that were deprived of their legitimate pastors, and to absolve all constitutional priests and religious who were anxious to return to the fold.





CHAPTER II.

WHILST the towns, and even many of the rural parishes, were a prey to revolutionary excitement, my own neighbourhood, although it had early paid its tribute to the spirit of disorder, enjoyed a certain degree of tranquillity up to the middle of the year 1793. But after the 31st of May, a native of Guerbaville, named Volet, an ardent patriot, took a journey to Paris, and there drew his inspiration from the maxims and examples of the too famous club of the Jacobins. He established, on his return, in conjunction with others holding similar opinions, a popular society in the village. They held their sittings almost daily. In these assemblies religion was constantly insulted; persons of the most exalted virtue laughed at, or denounced for want of patriotism. At Guerbaville, as in every other part of France, a mere handful of infamous ruffians, who had

nothing to lose, overawed the immense and too inoffensive majority of peaceful citizens, and claimed the right to extend their tyrannical power over the conscience. "Citizens," cried one of these madmen, "do you not see that fanaticism reigns in this commune? We have a curé who prays for the Pope, the *ci-devant* king, the aristocrats of the *ancien régime*. I call on you to expel him from the pulpit." Another, rushing to the tribune (for they had one, like the Jacobins of Paris), vociferated with all his might—"Our brave volunteers, who are defending our frontiers, are in want of everything, and I behold women adorned with crosses of gold, those worthless emblems of superstition. I demand that they be deposited with the municipality as an offering to the country." "And I demand," said Volet, "that a *kind of cup*, which the curé uses, be brought hither: we can turn it to better account." From words they were not long in coming to deeds. So far, all who preserved any religious feelings had borne their lot in patience. They were frequently summoned to submit to the ministrations of the constitu-

tional clergy ; but still freedom of worship had been practically tolerated. They were soon, however, to lose this supreme consolation. The popular society decreed that a letter, on this subject, should be addressed to the Mayor, and a copy forwarded to me. In this precious production, in which grammar was treated with as little respect as religion, I was admonished "to cease speaking of the fanatic of Rome, or of the aristocrats, whose names ought to lie buried in eternal oblivion !" Yielding to an unfortunate impulse, I was imprudent enough to answer this diatribe in writing. The following are among the principal passages of a reply that was very near costing me my life :—

"CITIZENS,—I have just received a copy of the letter which you have addressed, with reference to me, to Citizen B——. You must, and I say so with regret, be as ill-informed as you are badly disposed, if you suppose that the opinions I give expression to in my ordinary discourses are of a criminal character. If the new philosophy, or the important affairs in which they are engaged, did not dispense my opponents from attending our Christian assem-

blies, they would have learned that since the deposition of the king I have frequently enumerated in what we term our 'high sermon' (*Grand prône*) the persons for whom we are bound to pray, and for whom we ordinarily do pray."

I then pointed out, very much at length, who the persons were, according to the ritual, the very expressions of which I reproduced. I remarked specially, that if the Pope was mentioned amongst them, it was not as temporal prince, but as visible head of the Church. I finally concluded thus:—

"You see, Citizens, that in all this there is no reference to the king, or to any noble individual. In the letter which you have ordered to be sent to me, I have read, with sorrow, expressions that deserve the greatest censure—expressions that denote as much ignorance of the common forms of politeness as of the ordinary rules of the French language. I feel considerable relief, however, in the conviction that this document can never have been submitted to your perusal. You are too wise, too virtuous, to assume the responsibility of a thing

so odious and ridiculous. You know too well that it is not by calumnies and insults a republican proves his patriotism, but by love for the laws, and zeal in obeying them. I distrust men whose pretended patriotism consists in attacks on peaceful citizens, and who seek, by bringing charges against others, to distract public attention from their own crimes. I am sorry, Citizens, that, at your sittings, you do not direct your attention to matters of a serious and truly useful character. Your discussions would have an interest of quite a different nature, if, avoiding chicanery and wretched personalities, you applied yourselves to the consideration of those great objects which constitute the happiness of nations. I hope these reflections will not displease you. They are based on sincerity, loyalty, and love of country."

The rash frankness of this letter excited a terrible storm in our little Jacobin club. They cried out that I was the most formidable of all aristocrats, and that a decree for my arrest must be obtained at all hazards. With this object, copies of the unfortunate letter were forwarded to the popular societies of Caudebec,

Yvetot, Montvilliers, Rouen, &c. Its reading was everywhere followed by fearful imprecations on its author. The Jacobins of Rouen communicated it to their representative, Guimbertot, who, in his turn, transmitted it to the Committee of Public Safety at Paris. I was lost if Providence had not watched over my preservation.

To appease the tempest, I went to Yvetot, where I had some friends who would, I hoped, assist me in becoming acquainted with the intentions of the Directory of the district, as well as those of the national agent. They were successful in obtaining me an interview with this official and with a member of the local administration, both enthusiastic Jacobins. I was compelled to undergo the republican formula of "thee" and "thou," and to listen to a language that sounded disagreeably novel in my ears. The agent began by telling me that I was an "arrogant Romanist," and that my religion was only "tomfoolery." In reply to this compliment, I said that I had been studying this "tomfoolery" for the last forty years, and the more I had studied it, the more beau-

tiful I found it ; that I was not only a Christian because my father had the happiness of being one, but also by conviction. On this, the administrator told me roughly that for all that I must consent to be *unfrocked*.

I understood well what he meant, and I answered—"I will do no such thing, and I will die curé. Thou canst shut my church, but do not expect that I will be vile enough to extinguish the torch which God has confided to my care." "Thou shalt gain nothing by that: all the churches shall be closed within a month." "It will grieve me to see mine shut up," I replied ; "but thou dost not, undoubtedly, imagine that I am so base as to close it of my own accord. If the laws forbid me to exercise my functions publicly, I shall obey ; but thou wouldst despise me thyself, if I were mean enough to anticipate the law. The Convention may prohibit our worship ; but rest assured I will always be a Christian." At last, after several dialogues of the same purport, they concluded by informing me that, in consideration of the persons with whom I was stopping, they would not arrest me.

I was but slightly reassured, and I was not wrong. About a fortnight after, the very same national agent came to *democratize*, as it was then termed, the parish of Guerbaville. He *purified* the committee of surveillance, replacing all the honest men in it by the greatest scoundrels in the country. He took possession of the chapel attached to the castle of Mailleraye, and "cleared away all emblems of superstition, such as crucifixes, images, &c.," to make room for the popular assembly. I was expecting to be dragged before a sitting of this Jacobin court. My fears redoubled when I learned that the National Guard had been called together by order of this terrible functionary. He spared me, however, for a time, no doubt out of respect for the persons he saw me with at Yvetot. He was satisfied with arresting Madame de Nagu, Madame de Mortemart, and her daughter—a mere child—with almost all the servants in the castle. The removal of these charitable ladies excited a feeling of utter consternation among the virtuous poor of the parish. I saw a crowd of women, who wept and tore their hair, begging

these men to give them back their mother, and asking permission to be imprisoned along with her, or else to die in her stead. In those days, when selfishness and fear were productive of such ingratitude, it was consoling to find here and there a few brave hearts.

However, the agent had not entirely forgotten me. On departing from the commune, he left orders to have the church closed in the shortest time possible. As to myself, I must consent to be *unpriested*, as it was expressed in the new phraseology.

I was accordingly summoned, at the end of eight days, before the municipality. There I was told I must give up the key of my church, and my letter of priesthood; I was to renounce my religion; and, as henceforth I was free, it was my duty to think of taking a wife! Good God! it was my own parishioners who gave me these counsels! The assembly was numerous; some of the spectators appeared triumphant, whilst others could hardly dissemble their sorrow and shame. Then, from the depths of a heart transfixed with grief, I said—"I believe I can, without offending God, satisfy

some of your demands. The key of the church is at my house ; it does not belong to me. As you have force and authority, you will doubtless take it ; but I will not deliver it to you. As to my letter, I am perfectly willing to surrender it for peace' sake. But do not deceive yourselves : that letter is only a certificate of the sacred character with which I had the honour of being invested when I received the sacrament of Holy Orders. There is a vast difference between the character of a priest and that of a judge. A man becomes a judge by virtue of a written commission ; he becomes a priest by the imposition of hands, and ordination marks us with a sign that can no more be effaced than that of the baptism which you and I have had the happiness of receiving. You have, you say, orders to conduct me to Yvetot, if I do not give up that letter : well, here it is ; but do not think that I am thereby *unpriested* ; do not imagine that I thereby renounce my state or my faith ! No : had you fifty guillotines, and I fifty heads, you might cut them all off before I abandoned the religion in which, by God's grace, I had the good

fortune to be born, and which I have preached for the last twenty years. I shall no longer offer the Holy Sacrifice, since you are about overturning the altar : I shall no longer administer the sacraments, since you tear from me my sacred vessels and vestments ; but the word of God is not dead ; and if I can no longer serve you in my priestly capacity, I will assist those who may wish to hear me. If I cannot exercise the duties of my religion in public, I will in private. As I cannot, however, say Mass without sacred vessels and vestments, I have one last request to make of you—it is to leave me a chalice and chasuble. I will deposit with you a sum equal to the weight of the chalice which I have always used, and I will pay for the chasuble whatever sum you like.” This consolation was denied me, and they continued to pester me with solicitations to get married. In answer to their impertinence, I told them that the day the sun set on the mountain of Le Trait, which is to the east of Guerbaville, would be the eve of my marriage.

A few days after, I was again summoned before the municipal officers ; they created a

new scene, for the purpose of obliging me to renounce my state. With the object of bringing me to a final decision, some of the idiots who were my judges, and who knew not how to sign their names correctly, began to rail against religion, and to indulge in the stale calumnies which were current in the journals of the day.

They told me also "that several priests had confessed they were only imposing on the people," and in proof of the assertion they quoted a few examples of apostacy that were making some noise in the country. "I know only too well," I replied, "how infamous has been the conduct of certain unworthy priests in the present crisis. But just only consider who are the men who scandalize you and destroy your faith. They have indeed appeared in the garb of monks or priests, but at bottom they have never been either. They coveted the benefices attached to our profession: the duties it imposes never gave them a thought, and to-day, like cowards, they abandon it in the hour of privation and danger. They are the drones who eat the honey of the hive, and

constantly plot its destruction. Are you not acquainted with X——? Has he not said a hundred times to any one that asked him that, if he had not expected to be made curé of ——, he would never have become a priest? Ah! my friends, it is not the true priests who scandalize you, by teaching what they do not believe. Have I ever deceived you while preaching the Gospel? And, since I must speak of myself, has not my conduct been always consistent with the doctrine I taught?"

I continued thus for a few minutes, and I saw that my words produced some effect: even the great philosophers of the body seemed embarrassed, and could not find anything to say in reply.

But, while arguing with me, they were acting against my poor church. The Mayor was no sooner in possession of the key than he began a general pillage of the same character as occurred in the chapel of the Castle. In a few minutes they destroyed the altar with axes, and trampled on the ruins. The pictures, bas-reliefs, statues, and even a group of real value as a work of art, by the sculptor Gadouille,

shared the same fate. The linens, sacred vessels, and ornaments, were sent to Yvetot. The waggon in which they were placed was covered with a large painting of striking beauty, representing the Adoration of the Magi. Over this revolutionary trophy the banner of the Confraternity was raised; and the Mayor followed, adorned with my finest chasuble, and joining, in his cracked voice, in an abominable chorus, directed against religion and morals. This citizen was an old servant of my predecessor. He had for a long time supported himself and his family at his expense, and had been left a considerable legacy at his death.





CHAPTER III.

IT was soon time to think of flight. My unpatriotic resistance to the orders of the municipality had been immediately brought under the notice of the popular assembly, which, in its turn, denounced me to the committee of surveillance. It was evident that I would no longer be treated with the same forbearance as formerly. My name was constantly heard at all meetings of the Jacobins. They repeatedly asserted that amongst the people who were guillotined there were few more culpable than myself. As a proof of my aristocratic tendencies, they quoted a certificate of residence I had signed for M. de Mauny, who afterwards perished on the scaffold; and the Mayor maintained that he had surprised me in a farm house in Le Roumois, receiving money from an aristocratic lady for the emigrants—a crime which the revolutionary laws

punished by death. This *aristocrat* was an old tenant of mine. She had been reduced to great poverty by the late changes, and was unable to pay me any rent after we became free. The Mayor did, indeed, discover me in her dwelling, surrounded by sheets of blank paper, and engaged in settling an account; but he certainly saw no money, for two very good reasons—first, because it was forbidden to pay otherwise than in assignats; and, secondly, because my poor debtor had not a sou.

Being warned privately that my arrest was decided on, and might happen at any moment, I determined to fly, and stole secretly out of my presbytery at the beginning of the spring of 1794. But where was I to go? I had no passport, and I dreaded, beyond everything, the idea of compromising those who would have the courage to receive me. I resolved, then, to lead a wandering life in the woods of Mauny, Cantelu, and St. Lean.

My life during this period was one of unceasing toil and danger. I used to go at nightfall to some isolated farm house and demand hospitality. I was often sheltered by the good

curé of Yville, an old man of nearly a hundred years, who never fell under the suspicion of the republicans. I set out again early the next morning with a bit of bread in my pocket. During my wanderings, I never went far from the banks of the Seine, but kept crossing and recrossing the river at different points. I thus hoped to baffle my pursuers, if my capture was attempted. One day I was so imprudent as to enter Rouen, hoping to remain unnoticed among the crowd of wayfarers ; but I was for some hours in terrible perplexity. Several of my old friends were in the city, but none of them would venture to receive me. I did not dare to risk myself in an inn, for my papers would certainly be demanded. Hopeless and houseless, I ran here and there like a mad dog. Sinking from fatigue, I would willingly have sat down on the curbstones, but I was afraid of attracting attention by doing so. At night-fall I climbed the hill of Bon-Secours ; there, when utterly exhausted, I found, at last, an asylum with an old schoolfellow. I started on my journey early in the morning, with my daily repast—a bit of bread and some fruit—

in my pocket. I used to meet often in the woods, or in the open country, when I risked going there in the evening, honest people, as I could plainly see they were by their looks, who knew well what I was. After listening cautiously, and looking round them, they would at last accost me in a low tone of voice, in some such words as the following :—“ Well, Sir ! what news ? Ah ! what times ! ” Then they would beg me to go home with them and take some repose, or they would ask the assistance of my ministry, either in baptizing infants or attending on the sick.

After wandering thus a whole month about the environs of Rouen, I grew fearful of at last compromising, by going backward and forward so constantly, in such a limited space, the good people who received me, and I resolved to strike out for Caux, near which I was born. In my present situation—without a passport, and with a rather strongly-marked clerical appearance—such a journey was not without its perils. I had to shun the highways with the greatest care ; to take often a circuitous route, for the purpose of keeping near woods and bye-

paths. I cannot now recall the incidents of this wandering life in their exact order. Frequently, on approaching a dwelling in which I was going to ask an asylum for the night, I was near being torn in pieces by watch dogs less hospitable than their masters. Often, to escape the teeth of these too faithful guardians, and the looks of men still more dangerous, I found my knowledge of the country a great help in changing my position. I climbed over railings, leaped hedges, and at last succeeded in attracting attention by tapping with my stick at the shutters, through which a light was shining. Then I could distinguish a confused noise of steps, and words rapidly exchanged in a low voice. In these unhappy times, a visit at such an hour was at first a subject of great alarm. But when my friends recognised me—when they were quite certain that, for the present, there was no danger of domiciliary inspection or arrest—their joy was extreme. Preparations were made as if for a festival: the children came out of their hiding places and threw their arms about my neck. “What! is it you, cousin?” “Yes, it is indeed.

What a fright I must have given you!" "And where do you come from?" "Alas! I would find it very hard to tell. I travel unceasingly, and arrive nowhere!"

Occasionally, also, amongst those who gave me hospitality, I found a few persons, honest but timid, who disapproved of what they termed my obstinacy, and counselled me to accommodate my conduct to the language and ideas of the day, and to commit myself to God, who sees the intentions. I took considerable pains to make them understand that there are some things to which a Christian, and, above all, a priest, cannot consent without outraging his conscience; and that I must always have present to my mind this celebrated maxim of a Pagan author—"Believe that the greatest of crimes is to prefer one's existence to virtue, and to sacrifice for life everything that should make life precious to a man of honour."

"Summum, crede, nefas animam præferre pudori,
Et propter vitam vivendi perdere causas."

LUCRETIVS.

I often had to wander entire days in the

woods without meeting anybody. Lost in my reflections, I compared the calm which surrounded me with the terror that reigned in our cities and plains. Now and then, the voice of the cannon, celebrating at Rouen or Havre victories for which it was forbidden to thank God, echoed in my solitudes. I experienced then a mixed emotion of grief and secret joy ; for, guilty as my fellow-countrymen were, I never wished that God should make use of the stranger to punish them. At other times I ventured to ascend the steep and woody slopes that, from Caudebec to Villequier, lie along the left bank of the Seine, and from which the eye embraces an immense prospect. Viewed from this elevation, all the country was tranquil ; nothing seemed changed. The dwellings which dotted this vast perspective appeared themselves to participate in the immutable serenity of nature. Indifferent to human passion and human anguish, the sun lit up this glowing picture with tints as brilliant as in the happy days of my youth. From the towns and villages, spread out beneath me, the spires of churches rose up to heaven just

as in other times. But I missed the tolling of the *Angelus* bell ; all was silence and mourning in these desolate sanctuaries. This deceptive tranquillity formed a heartrending contrast to the moral deluge of which I was a victim. Going back in thought a few years, I asked myself, could any one have imagined that, in a few years, we should be reduced to such extremities ? and I could almost believe myself the sport of some horrible dream. But I recalled to mind, also, the sad state of religion in France during the years immediately preceding the Revolution—the progress of incredulity and indifference, the frequency of scandals, even in the ranks of those who owed to others at least a good example ; and I recognised in this trial the just judgment of God. I invoked the clemency of Him “ who tempers the wind to the shorn lamb ;” and I recovered my courage by considering that the triumph of the wicked does not last long.

Occasionally I met, in the most out of the way places, persons who were called, in the sad language of the time, “ game for the guillotine.” These admirable men, for having been

more courageous than others—for having ventured to censure boldly the violence of the revolutionists—were, like me, forced to fly and wander at random. We guessed at once, by the troubled and sad expression of each other's countenance, that we were brothers in misfortune. "Ah! Sir," they would say to me, "what a time!—what misfortunes have fallen on us all!" I tried to console them by preaching, as well as I could, resignation and hope.

I encountered a serious danger within a short distance of Havre. My wanderings having gradually brought me in this direction, I took it into my head to enter the city and visit some of my friends. I was peculiarly anxious to meet there a young man who was, and is still, very dear to me—Edouard Bignon, my old pupil and parishioner. After finishing a brilliant course at the University of Paris, and obtaining successes which he generously attributed to the care I had taken of his education in youth, Bignon had, like many others, paid his tribute of generous illusions to the Revolution. But he was not slow in condemning its excesses. Denounced and prosecuted

after the 31st of May, he found refuge under the humble disguise of a bargeman on the Seine. I had a presentiment that this young man would be, in more happy times, an honour to his country and to his instructors. And I was not mistaken : for, whilst I am writing these pages, Edouard Bignon, having, like myself, escaped from the perils of the Revolution, is pursuing with distinction the career of a diplomatist, which he embraced when better days shone over France.*

I directed my steps, then, towards Havre. I was about striking into a cross-path which shortened the journey, when two old women, who were coming from an opposite direction, addressed me in a very excited way—"Sir, where are you going? It is easy to see what you are ; you will certainly be arrested, if you go down yonder." They pointed to a house

* Proscribed after the fall of the Girondins, along with Girey-Dupré, with whom he was intimately connected, M. Bignon remained concealed at Havre during the whole Reign of Terror. At the time the Abbé Dumesnil was writing his *Memoires* (1800-1), M. Bignon was Chargé d'Affaires at Berlin.

just at the opening of the path I was going to take. They informed me that an advanced guard had just been stationed in it, for the purpose of arresting all passers-by, and examining their papers. They further told me that Siblot, a violent Jacobin, had arrived in Havre the evening before, and ordered the imprisonment of all nonjuring priests. My meeting with these women was a providential interposition in my favour; for all the priests and religious in Havre and its neighbourhood were arrested, and imprisoned in the castle of Bec.





CHAPTER IV.

AFTER wandering about in this way for several months, I was seized with an irresistible desire of seeing my dear parish, as well as my poor mother, of whom I had not heard all this time. My health, too, was beginning to give way, in consequence of the continual fatigue to which I was subjected. I had to endure violent showers in the woods during the last weeks. The trees afforded me but a poor shelter against the downpour of rain and hail, and I often reached my refuge for the night in a very pitiable state. I was once even so seriously indisposed that I was forced, contrary to my custom, to pass not only the night, but two days and two nights after, at a farmer's house in Fontenay, and to remain carefully concealed during the whole time. My kind entertainer was mayor of his commune, and compromised himself gravely by

giving me an asylum. I shuddered at the idea that I might, at any moment, fall ill from fatigue or cold, and cause the imprisonment or death of my hosts. Finally, as I had never done or wished evil to any one, I hoped that the unjust hatred of my persecutors had time to cool during my long absence.

I took the road, then, to Guerbaville. Absorbed by the dread of falling sick on the way, I walked as fast and as long as I could. The weather was cold, and the ground was so deeply soaked with wet as to render my return singularly painful. I was seldom able to sit down; and if, from over-exertion, my limbs sank under me, it was only for some instants. I always observed the same precautions as formerly, shunning public observation with the same care, and this added sensibly to the length of the journey. With this object, I avoided following the direct road, which would have brought me to Caudebec, where my unfortunate letter had been read and commented on by the popular society, and where I knew my name to be "marked in red letters." I turned to the left, and entered the woods of Sainte-

Gertrude, through which I travelled an entire day. Towards the close of the evening I reached Rétival, where I crossed the Seine. As soon as I was on the other bank, I plunged into the woods of Maur. It was already night-fall when I approached the gloomy forest of Brotonne, and I could hear several times the howling of the wolves close by me ; but the wolves were less terrible to me than the Jacobins. At last I reached Bourg-Labbé without meeting any obstacle, and about ten in the evening I arrived home without being seen by any one.

It may be imagined with what ineffable delight I embraced my mother, who bore up much better than I had expected, and with what satisfaction I saw again my old servants, who, on their side, wept with joy. I found everything unchanged—my room, my books, my corner of the fire. Above all, I felt soothed by that delightful feeling of being *at home*, the charm of which I keenly appreciated, after the strange life I had just led. But this contentment quickly vanished when I learned what had occurred during my absence. The sack

of my poor church had not been enough for the patriotic zeal of our Jacobins. Docile to the instructions of the "mother society," as the one in Paris was then termed (good God! what a mother! and what children!), they had planted, with all the ridiculous ceremonies possible, a fir tree, as a tree of liberty, on the site of the ruined altar. The name of God, engraved in large letters, which I had placed in the centre of a "glory," had been rubbed out, and replaced by the words, "Temple of Reason." Then they had inaugurated this temple by God knows what songs and dances, and by discourses of which I could hardly complain with a good grace, for Jesus Christ and His Blessed Mother were treated with as little respect in them as myself. I must say, however, that most of these discourses were pronounced by deputies from other societies, jealous of airing their oratorical talents on this occasion. The groundwork of these harangues was always the same. The orators merely interlarded them with some special accusations and insults, according to the localities in which they were delivered, against the "aristocrats"

of the country. This spectacle, abominable and ridiculous as it was, had not the less a pernicious effect, and the desolation of souls was as lamentable as that of the sanctuary. People, whom I had seen in tears when news of the execution of Louis XVI. reached them, had, nevertheless, participated in the inauguration of the new worship. Labourers worked without scruple on the Lord's Day. On the greatest festivals, and even on Easter Sunday, women affected to do their washing publicly, and to spin before their doors. A large number of prayer books and works of devotion had been given up to the popular society; and they were burned, with great ceremony, in the new temple of reason. Finally, I learned that, during my absence, my arrest had been several times demanded. Individuals of a very suspicious appearance had come to inquire after me, with singular zeal, and investigations had been instituted in some localities of the neighbourhood, where it was supposed I had taken refuge.

When I learned all these details, it became pretty evident that, by leaving Caux, I had of

two evils chosen the worse ; but I was not allowed time to repair my imprudence, for I was arrested the next day. It was not yet noon, when I saw the Mayor coming towards the house, escorted by two members of the Committee of Surveillance, the most determined Jacobins in the country. I had been perceived, at an early hour in the morning, through the garden hedge; and the revolutionary authorities, informed of my return, were not long without taking a decisive step.

I must say, to the honour of my three citizens, that the object of their visit seemed to annoy them somewhat. They approached me uncovered, with evident hesitation, and it was in low and almost trembling tones that they addressed me in the end.

“ We come, Sir, to ask your permission to put on the seals of the municipality.”

“ On what are you going to put the seals ?” I asked in a loud voice. “ Is it on my apartments, my furniture ?”

“ Yes, Sir.”

“ It is well—you have not lost time ! However, I am not surprised. I know well that you have long had this design.”

“Oh! Sir, it is not we who are the cause of this; we only come because we are sent.”

“It matters little,” I returned; “come, and do what you have to do.”

I introduced them into my room; and these honest people, who seemed so pained by their mission, did not on that account perform their work the less thoroughly, leaving me nothing free, except my bed. Conformably to a law of the time, I demanded a delay of eight days, to arrange my affairs, before being conducted to Yvetot, the chief town of the district. The text of the law was formal, and the Jacobins found themselves compelled to yield to my application; but they placed six guards in my house, whom I had to pay and support. They were ordered to relieve each other constantly, and thus on no account was I allowed to be alone a single moment, day or night. I had asked for this delay only because I was anxious to remain some time with my mother, and keep up her courage, by affecting a tranquillity that I was very far from feeling. At bottom, I had but little hopes of ever seeing her again, knowing, as I did, that the Mayor him-

self had accused me of a capital crime—namely, sending money to the emigrants. Even on the improbable supposition that my judges would hear me before sending me to the scaffold, could my defence outweigh for a moment the simple assertion of so pure a patriot ?

My mother was inconsolable ; her agitation was still farther increased by the lamentations of the servants, and of some friends who were not afraid to visit me. No longer able to endure this agonizing spectacle, I resolved on tearing myself suddenly away from my home, which was becoming a place of torture to me. At the end of a few hours, I told my guards that I was ready to set out at once, notwithstanding the legal respite I had obtained. I felt my firmness giving way under the efforts I was making to console the being that was dearest to me in this world, and considered that it was better for both of us to shorten our leave-taking. I marched, then, resolutely before my destiny. We designedly went through the most deserted lanes in leaving the country. We were obliged, however, to pass through a portion of the village, and I must say that, on

this occasion, no insult was offered to me. When I appeared, escorted by my two fusiliers, the street was emptied in the twinkling of an eye, and all the houses were closed until we left. Even the most determined Jacobins had not the courage to insult me. At the ferry boat of Mailleraye I found a horse which my excellent friend, Jean Durand, a farmer, had the goodness to lend me for the journey. Arrived at the opposite bank, I bestrided my nag, and set out, followed by my two guards. Although these men were zealous revolutionists, they constantly treated me with kindness, and even with respect. During the entire way they kept at some distance behind me, and I could have easily escaped, if I had been capable of abusing their confidence. But their consideration for me had no result; no one misunderstood my situation, and on several occasions, notably at Caudebec, I could hear people say: "Ah! there is another of these poor priests whom they are leading to prison."

We arrived at Yvetot rather late in the evening, and we found at the town hall pre-

cisely the same national agent and the same administrator with whom I had a conference formerly. During the interval that elapsed since that time, the revolution had marched with awful strides. I could easily observe this from the more violent language and more arrogant demeanour of those citizens who represented in our district the purest ideal of Jacobinism. I think I still behold our famous national agent, with his dwarfish figure, his flat and snuff-daubed nose, his lank black hair falling over his grey eyes ; his yellow jaws, adorned with a pair of half-starved whiskers ; and his fox-skin cap. He remained standing, majestically bent backwards, to display his elegant person to the best advantage, when my guards presented him the order concerning me. We had some trouble in penetrating to where he was, owing to the crowd that filled the hall, and the confused murmurs that arose from it on our arrival. The national agent cast a furious glance at me, and apostrophised me thus :—

“ So, thou art here, thou bl—y fanatic !
thou art here at last, scoundrel.”

“ If such is my name,” I replied, “ yes, I am here.”

“ We have been long running after thee.”

“ Well, I am now in your hands ; your wishes are accomplished.”

“ You must go to prison.”

“ I am in your power—you can dispose of me as you like.”

Next, the administrator began to abuse me.

“ Thou bl—y fanatic ! we have guillotined people who did not deserve it half as much as thou ; what didst thou want to do, with thy chalice and chasuble, thou bl—y beggar ?”

“ I wanted,” I returned “ to use them in serving God.”

“ In saying Mass ?”

“ Yes, in saying Mass.”

“ You hear him, citizens,” he shouted with all his might, “ you hear him ; there is no necessity for witnesses.”

“ Well, doubtless, I wished to say Mass. Where is, then, the crime ? Am I not allowed to do as I like in my own room ? Do you not, yourself, address your homage to your Reason, standing, seated, or in any way you please ?

Have I not, then, the same liberty? Am I, therefore, guilty, because I pray to God?"

"Thou art a rascally priest—thou wishest to clear off the Masses for which thou hast received money."

"If I was a rascal, as you say, I would give myself very little trouble in clearing off the Masses for which I had received money; but I am glad to be able to say here that, although I was not rich, I never in my life received any money for saying Mass."

"Scoundrel," interrupted the other, "if we did not arrest thee, thou wouldst cut our throats, with a poniard in one hand and a crucifix in the other."

"Such frightful sentiments have never dwelt in my heart, and the God whom I serve teaches me to pardon those who persecute me."

"Begone, beggar!" retorted the national agent, menacing me with his fist; "we desired to save thee, but thou wouldst not hear us; we are now going to ——." And he shouted at the top of his voice: "Attend there! a dozen fusiliers!" An officer appeared, with drawn sword, followed by a dozen soldiers

with fixed bayonets. I thought for a moment I was going to be massacred at once ; but the administrator, addressing the officer, said—“ Cast this rascal into prison immediately : conduct him to Combles.”

The officer led me through the file of soldiers, and placed himself on my left. In this order we marched through Yvetot. It was a market day ; the streets and the squares were full of people. Consternation and terror were painted on every face. Not a hiss was raised as we went through the town. On the contrary, I could distinguish the subdued lamentations of the women, as they said to each other—“ There is another priest dragged to prison. Good God! what a time !” During the whole journey, my conductors treated me with great kindness ; they walked slowly, and spoke to me in a very civil tone. Their courtesy consoled me somewhat for the insults to which I had been subjected at the town hall.



CHAPTER V.

HOMBLES, the place in which I was imprisoned, is a vast country seat, surrounded at that time by magnificent avenues, and situated in the parish of Sainte-Marle, half a league from Yvetot. This mansion, like many others belonging to emigrants, had been confiscated, and turned into a prison. The commandant of the detachment handed me over to the gaoler, who inscribed my name, age, and profession, on the gaol registry, as well as the supposed cause of my arrest. I say supposed; for I demanded in vain to see the informations on which it was grounded, although I had a legal right to do so. The officer was not the bearer of any official document; he had merely a verbal order to lead me to prison: such was the justice of the times. In my new abode I met many persons of my acquaintance, and, amongst them, ten of my brethren. Eight

days before, Mauger, the ex-curé of Saint-Baindville, was dragged out of this place, and sent to Paris. Just after my arrival, we learned that he had been executed. In spite of this ominous intelligence, I managed to send a letter to my mother, through two men from Guerbaville, who had accompanied me thus far. I tried once more to reanimate her courage ; but, as far as I was concerned myself, the insulting language, the threatening silence of the members of the district administration, and the death of Abb Mauger, inspired me with the most fatal presentiments.

I was treated with the most affectionate sympathy by my companions in misfortune. Their sole crime was that of having spoken too freely against the violence of the revolutionists, or even of being suspected of reproving them. I found myself, therefore, in very good company. Moreover, our detention was not extremely rigorous. We could walk the whole day in the yard, or in a large and beautiful garden, shut in by walls, and stretching from the other side of the house. We were fearfully alarmed a few days after my arrival. The revolutionists

of Yvetot and its neighbourhood were talking of marching to Combles, and repeating there the September massacres of 1792 ; but our gaolers and guards reassured us, swearing to die in our defence, if need be. This ferocious project had no results, perhaps it was after all only a false rumour ; but I had, within my own breast, a grave and permanent subject of uneasiness. The fate of Abbé Mauger was always present to my mind. He had been condemned although no charge of complicity with the emigrants was brought against him. For this reason, I saw clearly that, if I was tried before the same tribunal, I must renounce every hope.

All the rooms being more than full at the time of my arrival, I was installed in a little closet, looking out on the front yard. I often remained there entire hours, with my eyes fastened on the road, watching for the appearance of the soldiers ordered to conduct me to Paris. I also paid much attention to a certain ladder, which the gardener used for pruning his fruit trees. With this ladder, I would say to myself, I could easily reach the top of the

wall, and then the wheat crop is so tall at this season ! This feeble chance of escape had the effect of reviving my courage ; so true it is that, however resigned we may be to die for a good cause, there is in the nature of man a doubt and dread of his last end.

In this prison, the nation absolutely furnished nothing to the prisoners. Those who had any resources were obliged to provide for the support of the others. We were all compelled to do our own cooking, and to assist, in our turn, at housekeeping. I took my meals with my brethren, and it was not without considerable difficulty I could get a supply of provisions, particularly wine, from home. Some of the leading Jacobins of my parish, believing for certain that I would never return, had, it appeared, cast a longing eye on my cellar. Whenever anything was brought to me, it had to undergo a minute examination by the members of the committee of surveillance ; and when they perceived even a bottle leaving the house, they would say, with a sigh, "So much the less for us !" These honest fellows, who at first refused to allow the most in-

dispensable toilet necessities to be taken out of the presbytery, on the pretext that the seals could not be violated, violated these same seals themselves without scruple. They proceeded to make a search in my cabinet, during my absence, and turned my correspondence and papers topsy-turvy. It was proved afterwards, when I returned to the parish, that, with the hope of finding new charges against me, they had rummaged a bundle of papers more than ten years old. At the time of the Revolution, according to the strict letter of the law, such a visit could not be made without my presence, or that of some one commissioned by me. They had, therefore, committed a flagrant breach of the law, which would have cost them dear, some months later, if I had been capable of returning evil for evil.

Our days glided away at Combles in dull monotony. Some of our brethren, fearing to aggravate their lot and ours, no longer ventured to recite the Breviary. I proved to them that this fear was vain, and we assisted together at prayer. "We have need of God's help," I

said ; “ in danger we should particularly invoke Him.”

I found, too, I could employ my leisure in a very useful and even agreeable manner, with a remarkably original old fellow, who united much original talent with a kind of courage rare enough at the time. His name was Dranguet, and he had been a weaver at Bolbec. After the expulsion of the lawful curé, Dranguet nailed to the railing of his garden, which looked out on the street, a scroll, on which might be read these words in big letters : “ Here prayers are still offered up to God.” He received at his house, on Sundays and festivals, the faithful who refused to hold communion with the intruded curé, and assumed amongst them the office of deacon, reciting the prayers and hours in a loud voice, reading the Gospels and explaining them as well as he was able. This conduct procured him at first the *soubriquet* of the “ curé of the gardens ;” afterwards he was arrested and incarcerated as a fanatic. This poor man possessed very extensive information ; but his greatest sorrow, even under

bolts and bars, was his ignorance of Latin, "the language of the Church!" He entreated me to teach him at least the rudiments of it. As we had plenty of time on our hands, I asked nothing better. I taxed my memory, and formed, as well as I could, a Latin-French elementary grammar. My pupil was anything but young, but he was by no means poorly gifted. It was during our hours of recreation that we *Latinized*; a stranger would think we were a pair of peripatetic philosophers. At the end of some days my scholar was ambling pretty quickly through the declensions, and we were already at the translations and exercises when I left prison. This rudimentary teaching procured for me a real relaxation, and I then felt all the truth of the ancient maxim: "Letters, which are the most agreeable relaxation of man in prosperity, are also his sweetest consolation in adversity."

I was still a prisoner at the period when the district administrations, then under the complete control of Jacobinism, reared in the bosom of churches, or on the public squares, those "mountains," on which were grouped in

theatrical pose, women of easy virtue, who personified Liberty, Reason, Country, &c. These ridiculous and sacrilegious exhibitions took place on the occasion of the new festival of the Supreme Being, decreed by the Convention under the all-powerful influence of Robespierre. The national agent of Yvetot was careful not to be behindhand at such a display. He erected before his door a mountain, thirty feet high; and, for a moment, he had a notion of placing on it, not only goddesses and nymphs, but the priests imprisoned at Combles. By forcing us to appear at this ceremony, he wished, it was said, to prove to the people that even the priests themselves were abandoning their old juggling tricks. This news, spread through the prison by the guards, threw us into consternation at first; but, quickly recovering our courage, we declared firmly that, if we were dragged to the mountain, we would endure every outrage, and even death, if need be, rather than take part in what was passing. Learning our resolution, the national agent doubtless feared to defeat his purpose, and so they dispensed with our assistance in celebrating the festival.

A few days after, a rumour spread that the imprisoned priests were about to be set at liberty, with the exception of myself and some others. The guards added that "certain priests had written letters which were likely to cost them dear." These words seemed to allude to the unfortunate reply I had sent, formerly, to the popular society of Guerbaville. I felt so sure then that I might give myself up for lost, that I conveyed my last wishes to my mother and relatives. At the same time, I was again haunted with the notion of seeking my safety in flight. The approaches to the prison were hardly watched, and I could have passed twenty times over the garden wall without being perceived. But other reflections restrained me; I said to myself that my escape would give scandal; would compromise, perhaps, my companions in misfortune, and, if I happened to be retaken, would form a new ground of accusation against me. After much perplexity, I renounced all projects of flight, committing myself to the will of Him who presides over our destiny. I was rewarded for this resolution by a feeling of internal tranquillity, to which I had long been a stranger.

At last, one morning, as we were walking as usual, one of us, after looking through the rails, cried out, "Ah! here is news." I looked in my turn, and I perceived a gendarme. At this sight, in spite of all my resignation, I acknowledge that my heart beat violently. This man handed to the gaoler an order to conduct all the priests to the town hall, on that very day, at five in the evening. The agitation which this intelligence caused in the prison may be easily comprehended; the order appeared to confirm the news of the release of the priests; my brethren saw themselves already free, whilst the other prisoners were envying their happiness. One only, M. d' Amer-tal, an old knight of Saint Louis, singularly impressed me by an air of fixed resignation that contrasted strongly with the lamentations of the others. As to myself, I did not feel so certain of a favourable result as the others. Of course, I was to be brought to the town hall with the rest, but I had no security that they had not specially determined to send me to Paris.

The national agent was absent when we

arrived. We had to wait for him a full hour, which naturally seemed very long. During this time we conversed with his principal clerk—a courteous and sensible man, named Legrand, who exercised a kind of influence over his patron, and often prevented him from doing much harm. Legrand told us that, probably, we were going to be released—at least, all those who had been arrested by order of the district authorities. This restriction left me still in grave doubt; for, not having seen the informations on which my arrest was grounded, I did not know for what and by whom I was incarcerated. At last our grave magistrate appeared, very much flushed; instead of the Jacobin cap of liberty, which would have been somewhat too warm for the season, he wore a broad-brimmed straw hat. To judge by his bloated and purple face, he had dined copiously, and was not pleased at leaving a well-covered board for us. “Well! rascals, so you are here then! you are all bl—y fanatics—you are very fortunate in having Robespierre for a protector. However, I have my responsibilities; you will be released only on condition

of not returning into your parishes, for you are all scoundrels; you would make fanatics of all your parishioners." After this patriotic address, he took the list, and read out the names, comparing them with those on the gaol registry, in order to know the date, circumstances, and motives of our arrest. After verifying all these particulars, he found that only three had been arrested by order of the district authorities. Two curés had been apprehended on the requisition of a person named Briquet. He had been sent some months before to Havre, as commissioner from the Jacobins of Paris, and during the journey had sacked, by his private authority, several presbyteries. As for myself, I had been directly put under arrest by the committee of surveillance of the commune. We were, however, released, as well as the others, but only provisionally. The national agent took leave of all my companions successively, addressing to each of them, turn about, some revolutionary amenities, such as rascal, beggar, fanatic, woman-wheedler, brawler, &c. I was the last on the list, and I expected to be at least as well

treated as the others. But, whether he had exhausted his vocabulary, or from some other motive, he behaved almost with politeness. He drew me aside and said, as if for the purpose of advising me : “ I beg of thee not to return to thy parish ; thy people have acted badly towards thee ; if thou returnest, they will do so again.” “ I thank you for this advice,” I answered, “ but I have decided on going home immediately. If they arrest me anew, I hope that God will rescue me out of their hands a second time.” He did not add another word, and I withdrew.





CHAPTER VI.

NOTWITHSTANDING the threats of the national agent, and a fearful down-pour of rain, most of my brethren took the road to their parishes, on the spot. As to myself, having a longer journey to go, and the Seine to cross, I was obliged to put off my departure till the next day. Not wishing to compromise my friends in Yvetot, I returned to Combles, and passed the night there. In those unhappy times we only changed one misfortune for another. As soon as I was restored to liberty, I began to think bitterly of my precarious situation, and of the numberless difficulties that awaited me in my wretched parish. To scarcely venture henceforward to appear a Christian—to be compelled to live as if in an enemy's country—ever on my guard against the snares of people I had a little while ago been instructing and marrying! Such was to

be my lamentable destiny ! Docile to the teachings of the Revolution, they would doubtless persecute me without mercy—persecute, on my account, all who still remained good Christians ! This prospect was frightful ; and, during the last night I passed at Combles, I asked myself more than once, whether the lot of the priests who had found a refuge outside of France was not better than mine. But I succeeded in overcoming this feeling of discouragement. Guerbaville was for me a post of honour, which I could not desert without shame. I must remain there to encourage the faithful, as well as to bring back others, who were rather led astray than corrupted.

I left the next day early, after distributing to my companions in misfortune all the provisions that remained to me, and receiving their last farewell. In the afternoon of the same day I was in the arms of my poor mother, whom, during my two months of captivity, I had often despaired of ever seeing again. Although, in going home, I had carefully avoided the most frequented paths, my return was known almost before I had crossed the threshold of my door.

On the very first evening I received a crowd of visitors—many of these good friends wept with joy. I had also the satisfaction of seeing at my house several persons whom I hardly knew, and who were supposed to be favourable to the new ideas, but who were not, on that account, the less disgusted with the manner in which I had been treated by the revolutionary authorities.

Meanwhile, the news of my return had thrown our out-spoken Jacobins into great confusion. It reached them just as they were sitting down to a splendid banquet in a house I had built a few years before, intending it for a school and hospital, but which the nation had taken possession of. Every other topic of conversation was banished. “Well! so, the curé has returned?”—“It cannot be,” said one. “But it is, though,” returned another.—“How can that be? his list is not made out,” exclaimed the former.—“Well!” another stormy revolutionist would cry, “even if he is returned, he shall go back to prison very soon; but I’ll wager two bottles of wine he is still under lock and key; his list is not made out.” They bet—

slap money on the table; they cannot believe me to be at liberty, as my list is not made out. Indeed, it was necessary, according to the strict letter of the law, to have a list made out, and posted on the door of the town hall, where it remained eight days. This list contained the names of those arrested in the commune, and at the bottom of it a person might write anything he liked, either for or against the prisoner. As my interests, however, could hardly be benefited by such a formality, I took good care not to demand it. I knew that the honest seldom dared to speak, much less to write, while the wicked were all-powerful, and capable of any enormity. I knew also that lists, annotated in this style, were sent to Paris, and became tables of proscription, not only for the accused, but for those who had the courage to write in their favour. I was, then, particularly cautious not to mention this list during the time of my incarceration. To do so would be simply to sign my death warrant. I forbade my friends to speak of it, or even to solicit my release. I wished to be forgotten, and, fortunately for myself, I was.

Nevertheless, to the great astonishment of my persecutors, I appeared the next day in public. I went before the Committee of Surveillance, and demanded the removal of the seals from my furniture. They had been placed on eight different places in my house, so that the only article I could call my own was my bed.

My library, escritoire, cupboards, &c., were all covered with pieces of linen, on which were the seals of the Committee of Surveillance and the Municipality. More precautions and formalities could not be taken against the most formidable State criminal. My enemies, or rather the enemies of religion, in their anxiety to ruin me, had adopted every imaginable means to prove my guilt.

I presented myself before the Committee of Surveillance:

“Citizen,” said the President to me, “where is the order for your release?”

“I am not aware,” I answered, “that there was any order drawn up on the occasion. I do not know why you have arrested me, why I have been imprisoned; I am also ignorant

of the reasons that led the Government to order the release of the priests ; but I know that such an order exists ; and here is the proof."

And I handed them a certified copy of a letter of Siblot, a representative of the people, on a mission in the department, enjoining the national agent to release the priests. My persecutors, who were enraged at my return, answered :

"That is not sufficient ; we will not remove the seals until you produce, in a satisfactory form, the decree for your release ; and if you do not hand it in in three days, we will send you back to prison."

"What you ask is useless," I returned ; "if I was not released, I would not be here ; you do not believe, I suppose, that I scaled the walls ?"

"No matter," replied the President, "the seals must not be removed."

I listened calmly to this sophistry, and withdrew, blessing Providence, that, to try me, permitted me to be maltreated by men who, in other times, had often had recourse to my assistance.

This very day, however, happened to be the famous 9th Thermidor.* Some time afterwards, we learned from the newspapers the details of the ever-memorable event that occurred on that day. Every one felt that even if the fall of the Jacobin leader did not utterly ruin the terrible society, it must considerably weaken its influence. People began to breathe, to look each other in the face; our Jacobins no longer showed their usual arrogance.

In the mean time, I had still serious cause for trouble during some days. I had an interview at Yvetot with the national agent; but, although receiving me politely enough, he absolutely refused to convert my provisional release into full freedom.

On learning the check I had just received at Yvetot, my enemies in the Committee of Surveillance recovered their boldness; and when I went to demand again the removal of the seals, they treated me still more insolently than the

* 27th of July, 1794. On this memorable day the Reign of Terror was brought to a close by the outlawry of Robespierre and his accomplices. They were tried before the Convention, and executed on the following day.

first time. Their president (an old stable-boy, who used to bend his head to the very ground in saluting me formerly) informed me, taking care at the same time to "thou" and "thee" me, that he did not even understand how it was I was released "after the charges preferred against me in the warrant for my arrest;" that he could not comprehend my audacity in appearing in the presence of patriots; and that, far from having my seals removed, I might expect to be imprisoned anew, &c. I retired in very bad humour, and extremely anxious to know what the mysterious charges were that figured in the warrant of arrest.

But in a few days after the scene completely changed. I learned that, by a new decree of the Convention, the Committees of Surveillance and the municipal authorities were ordered to declare to the prisoners, within three days, the causes of their arrest. Armed with this document, I returned to the committee. This time I demanded not only the removal of the seals, but a copy of the warrant for my arrest. And, as I was formally refused both, I exhibited the decree and said: "Citizens, I am either arrested, or I

am not ; according to you I am, since you will not acknowledge my release, and you refuse during an entire month to remove your seals from my property. Well ! as I am still, according to you, a prisoner, you must observe the law that applies to me as such. I summon you to open the register on the spot, and inform me of the cause of my arrest." These honest fellows were acquainted with the new law ; it had already reached them. They looked at each other with hesitation and said : " But "——" No buts," I retorted firmly. " If you refuse to fulfil the requirements of the law, I will retire at once, and set about arranging my affairs."

The resolution expressed in my countenance, and the summons which these men, just now so arrogant, were far from expecting, struck them like a thunderbolt.

" Well, *Sir*, we shall inform you of the cause of your arrest."

They took up the register, sought out the page, and were going to read.

" No ! no !" said I, " I will read it myself."

They looked at each other again, evidently

much troubled. I insisted on my right to read it myself, and seizing, the register, I read the following *proces-verbal*, which, with the exception of the abominably bad grammar and spelling, was as follows:—

“We, the members composing the Committee of Surveillance of the commune of Guerbaville, district of Yvetot, department of the Seine-Inférieure, after having taken informations with regard to the conduct of Louis Dumesnil, *ci-devant* curé of this commune, have decreed that a warrant of arrest be issued against the said Louis Dumesnil, *ci-devant* curé of this commune, because that, in violation of a law passed on the fifth of February, seventeen hundred and ninety-one, old style, by which priests were forbidden to preach in churches of the Catholic worship, unless they took an oath to the constitution, in presence of the municipality of the commune, he, the said Louis Dumesnil, did preach in the Catholic church of the commune. The members of the said Committee having entered the said church, and called on the said *ci-devant* curé to obey the law, and cease preaching, the said

curé notwithstanding continued his sermon, thereby creating a disturbance in the said church; upon which the said committee retired to draw up a *proces-verbal* against the said curé for violating the law.

“On the thirtieth of Frimaire the said curé declared that he knew nothing of the law for the regulations of the festivals of the decade; that he was only acquainted with the Sundays and festivals mentioned in his Breviary, and that persons should not work on them.

“He has deposited his letter of priesthood with the municipality, after it had been several times demanded; but has, at the same time, declared that he did not thereby abdicate his functions; and he has even demanded a chalice and a chasuble, declaring his intention of saying Mass at his own house, which, in our eyes, renders him suspect according to the proclamation of the representative Siblot.

“We must also observe, that the said Louis Dumesnil has written a letter to the popular society of this commune, full of fanaticism and superstition, of which letter a copy has been sent to each of the neighbouring popular so-

cieties, to give them a knowledge of the conduct and incivism of the said Dumesnil."

When I had read this decree, and saw that there was no reference to the subject that had caused me most disquietude—namely, the accusation of corresponding with the emigrants—I said to those grave magistrates :

"Such, then, Gentlemen, are the fine reasons that induced you to arrest me, to tear me from the bosom of my family, to throw all my affairs in confusion, and to subject me during these two months of imprisonment to so much care and expense? Where, then, are those crimes for which, according to you, I ought to be sent back to prison again? Where have you seen, wretches that you are! where have you seen that a citizen is to be incarcerated on such grounds as are mentioned in your *proce-verbal*? Why, you are not even acquainted with the law of the 13th Vendémiaire, although it is your *vade-mecum*! If you were capable of comprehending it, you would have seen that no citizen ever became a suspect on account of the things of which you accuse me. You have, therefore, persecuted me for so long, not

only wrongfully, but in express violation of the law. You have unjustly imprisoned me, you have unjustly put your seals on my furniture ; and, above all, you acted like true tyrants, when you had the audacity to enter my house in my absence, remove the seals, and rummage my cupboards, and even my strong box ! Your decree is too curious for me not to preserve a copy of it ; I summon you then, in the name of the law, to deliver me a copy at once, in order that I may make whatever use of it I think proper."

The embarrassment and consternation of these men gradually rose to a great height. They looked at each other for encouragement, and finding none, said very humbly :

" Sir, we beg you to grant us a delay of twenty-four hours to make out this copy. The registrar is absent, but to-morrow morning it shall be in your possession. We are very sorry for the annoyance you have met with. We have been compelled to act as we did—we could not do otherwise."

" I will wait till to-morrow," I returned, " but not a moment later."

I went immediately to the registrar, who gave me my copy, to which I had the seal of the committee attached. I waited another week for the removal of the seals ; this delay was due, not to the ill will, but to the terror of my old persecutors. When they resolved at last on going to my house, and fulfilling this formality, all who had taken part in the illegal domiciliary visit, made during my absence, took good care to remain at home. Then I addressed the others, who had a very downcast appearance :

“Citizens, I have always loved peace ; and since Providence first placed me amongst you, I have given many proofs of my disposition in this respect. I spoke to you the other day of the illegal acts which some of your colleagues have engaged in to my prejudice, and which you have tolerated. I did so, not because I have the least desire for reprisals, but to make you feel all the unworthiness and rashness of your conduct. But reassure yourselves : I pardon you all the evil you have done me ; I will not take any legal proceedings against you. Your colleagues had the courage to read more than

two hundred letters I received over ten years ago ; their object was, doubtless, to extract from them matter for new accusations against me, they wished to make sure of my destruction. May God forgive them their crime, and may he grant them the grace to conduct themselves with more wisdom and virtue in future.”

They interrupted me with a variety of excuses, attributing everything to the circumstances and misfortunes of the times.

“ I know,” I said, “ how stormy and maddening have been the times ; I feel that the excitement of events has made you commit crimes for which you blush to-day. Such is always the case when we abandon God, to follow a blind reason, that inevitably leads us to the edge of the precipice.” I profited by the occasion to preach them a little sermon, which they heard with much recollection ; and I took my leave, repeatedly assuring them that all idea of revenge was far from my heart.

After this I found myself quite free, and comparatively tranquil ; but I had still during the remainder of the year 1794, and the

greater part of the following years, many reasons for feeling afflicted. The popular society always held its sittings in the chapel of the castle, where the busts of Marat and Lepelletier were permanently exposed. These ridiculous exhibitions produced a peculiarly hateful and pernicious effect in the country districts, because, notwithstanding their absurdity, they offered many resemblances, in their details, to the forms of the old worship. Thus, on the eve of the festival, it was customary to march in procession to Mailleraye, and return with the miserable bust stationed there. This they placed in our church, under the tree of liberty, which had taken the place of the altar. A lamp was kept burning the whole night before the effigy of the new Saint. On the next day he received the homage of the members of the municipality, dressed in their official robes ; then he was carried with great ceremony back to his chapel, on a litter, adorned with flowers and ribbons, supported on the shoulders of four members of the Committee of Surveillance. The most zealous Jacobins followed in splendid dresses ; and, that nothing might be wanting to

this sacrilegious parody on the processions of *Corpus Christi*, an altar was erected in the middle of one of the streets of the village, on which the Saint was stationed for some time. During this "station" there was singing, dancing, and above all, numerous libations. The mayor, of whom I spoke before, performed the functions of high priest, and forced the passers by to uncover and genuflect before the image of the friend of the people. The general delirium reached such a point, that persons from whom one might at least have expected a little common sense, in default of religion, were in the habit of repeating, while beating their breasts; "Oh! Marat, my God, thou hast died for us!"

Even the schoolmaster, a man by no means deficient in understanding, who had been long my clerk, but whose head was turned by the Revolution, made his pupils make the sign of the cross, saying, "Marat, Lepelletier, *amen*."

I did not like remaining in my house; for, although the shutters were closed, the chant of the litanies of Marat, which were resounding through the profaned church, reached even me. I sought a refuge under the lovely shades of

the park, and I had the consolation of meeting the majority of my parishioners in the same quarter, flying, like myself, from the odious spectacle. When the ceremony was over at the church, I returned home ; I shut myself up in my oratory, and, falling on my knees, I implored, not the chastisement, but the conversion of the profaners. Shortly after the events of the 1st of Prairial,* I again experienced, but for the last time, the persecution of the Jacobin municipality : it transmitted me a decree, by which I was expelled from the presbytery, on the ground that I was no longer performing functions. I demanded a delay ; and I also proved that, according to the terms of the existing legislation, a decree of this nature could not be executed except it was confirmed by the authorities of the department. I thus succeeded in gaining time.

At last, after the revolution of Prairial,

* 20th of May, 1795. The Jacobins burst into the Convention, and compelled the members to pass various resolutions of a reactionary character. The latter, being rescued by an armed force, under Legendre, the same night, declared these resolutions null and void.

better days dawned for us. A decree of the representative Sautereau restored to liberty Mesdames de Nagu and de Mortemart, the two benefactresses of my parish. They had been longer in prison, and had looked at death more nearly than I. A bundle of documents, which directly compromised them, had been sent to the bar of the ferocious Fouquier Tinville ; but, it is said, a friendly hand spared the Revolution another crime, by keeping the fatal papers out of the reach of the cruel prosecutor. These pious and charitable ladies received a perfect ovation on the occasion of their return.

Soon after, the Committee of Surveillance was dissolved, and the Municipality reformed ; it was now the turn of the Jacobins to tremble and fly. The last of them who ventured to assemble in the chapel of Mailleraye were expelled, and driven back to Guerbaville, with showers of stones, by the women and children. At the noise of this riot—in which there was a good deal more shouting than danger—I ran out, and rescued two of my old enemies, whose necks some of the women were wringing. Believing their last hour come, they invoked

the Virgin and saints with loud cries, and never dreamt of calling on the god Marat: I used all my efforts, too, under every circumstance, to put down a reaction, whose excesses and possible dangers I foresaw.

When, at last, freedom of worship was established—when, after beginning by celebrating Divine service in my hall, and afterwards in the chapel of the castle, I had the ineffable happiness of restoring my poor church to the worship of the true God—as I feared that this ceremony might give birth to manifestations of a counter-revolutionary character, I took for text of my first sermon the sublime law of forgiveness of injuries. “Let us not despair,” I said, “even of those who have committed the most scandalous excesses. Is not God able to show them His mercy? Let us also, then, learn to forgive. We would risk irritating Heaven, and drawing on ourselves new misfortunes, if we rendered evil for evil, injury for injury. Let us learn to avenge ourselves only by kind actions; let us bury every unhappy recollection in eternal oblivion. I implore you, then, to banish from among you such terms as Jacobin,

aristocrat, fanatic, and renegade. Let us be a people of brothers; and, following the august precept of our religion, let us love one another!"





PART II.



18 FRUCTIDOR.

AS soon as the popular society was annihilated, the church purified by a new benediction, and the old worship restored, peace dwelt again in this poor parish, that had been so long afflicted by domiciliary visits and arbitrary imprisonment. There would have been some consolation in this change for those who had experienced every variety of misfortune, had not war, which raged still with a fury unexampled in history, carried away and reaped the harvest of almost all our youth; thus were trouble and sorrow introduced into the bosom of every family. Meanwhile, I devoted myself to the restoration of my church and its altars, which latter had been overturned

and destroyed. I had purchased, at an auction of church furniture that took place during the Reign of Terror, two altars, dedicated to St. Mathurin and the Holy Ghost. I had not removed them; however, I thought it sufficient to carry off the pictures, which I feared might be torn or dishonoured by impiety; these I now restored to their proper places in the church. At this very period the abbey of Jumièges was being destroyed; I asked the two altars in it, and was made a present of them. I placed them in the chapels of the Blessed Virgin and the Holy Saviour, in room of others that were in a state of utter ruin. The baptismal fonts, which were thrown down, were restored to their places. I procured ornaments, chasubles, copes, crosses, censers, &c. In fine, all our misfortunes seemed to have vanished; the divine office began to be performed just the same as formerly; the sacraments were frequented; the people were attentive and constant at their devotions; we were comparatively at peace, when the famous 18th Fructidor (1797) arrived.

Up to that fatal moment, ever since the fall of the Jacobins, we had the strongest hopes of

seeing the terrible Revolution reach the end of its career ; we thought we were nearing the termination of the evils that had so long desolated our unhappy France. The exiled priests had returned in crowds ; we were congratulating each other on the return of these victims of the Revolution, when that fatal day prostrated our hopes in the dust, and plunged France into new agonies. We again fell under a second Reign of Terror !

The legislative body, composed principally of persons who were animated by the very best intentions, was overturned ; most of its members were dismissed, more than sixty banished or obliged to conceal themselves. Every department of the State was thrown into frightful confusion. The principal Jacobins, who had only been restrained for a time, now raised their heads with more boldness than ever ; disorder was universal, and penetrated into the midst of even the smallest communes. The district municipalities were reformed, all the elections annulled ; the members elected, banished shamefully from the offices which they held by the free suffrages of their fellow-citi-

zens. The Jacobins, restored for a time to all their former power, ruled in every direction. In order to render practically worthless the prerogatives which the Constitution of the year 3 granted to citizens of choosing their own administrators and representatives, the Legislative Body, and, afterwards, the Directory itself, which at first was composed entirely of enthusiastic republicans, authorized *schisms** in the primary and communal assemblies, and gave thus to three or four Jacobins the right of alone naming agents of communes, judges, administrators of departments, and representatives. By this means, the well-disposed found themselves without a voice in the assemblies; the Jacobins were masters of the situation, and elected their candidates everywhere. The Jacobins filling every position, no one ventured to speak; and these wretches found means, under an appearance of judicial forms, of im-

* On the ground of an infraction of the law, or of violence used towards them, a minority in an electoral assembly could secede, and make their own returns. Where the Jacobins were in a minority, the candidates elected by them in this way were declared returned by the councils.

prisoning and transporting all who offended them.

The law against the ringing of church bells was revived ; a large number of priests were incarcerated, or obliged to conceal themselves. The monster of impiety, which had for a moment disappeared, again showed himself under a form less hideous, indeed, but more threatening than during the tyranny of Robespierre. The victims of the latter tyrant were guillotined, *noyaded*, fusilladed, or hacked in pieces ; they had not long to suffer ! After the 18th Fructidor, men, without even the formality of a trial, were transported to the islands of Oleron, Ré, or Saint-Michel ; and, when these prisons were full, they were crowded into ships and sent beyond the Equator to Sinnamari, where they perished, as much in consequence of bad treatment, as of the heat of the climate, and the pestilential atmosphere. Of the four or five hundred prisoners who were transported there at the time, there did not remain more than twenty at the end of six months.

At this fatal period, religion, which had arisen with so much glory, was proscribed anew,

less openly than during the Reign of Terror, but in a manner more hypocritical and dangerous. Under the Committee of Public Safety it was frankly declared that no form of worship was needed, and that priests were no longer required. But the irreconcilable enemies of the Christian religion, becoming convinced by experience of the inutility and even danger of preaching atheism openly, made use of another stratagem to attain their ends. They invented a kind of religion termed Theophilanthropy, or the love of God and man, which they tried to erect on the ruins of Christianity. The most zealous promoter of the new movement was La Réveillère-Lepaux, one of the members of the Directory. The disciples of this new Mahomet formed a sect, and had their ministers. They soon took possession of the principal churches of France, and even extended into the provinces. They established a chapel of ease at Mont-aux-Malades, a suburb of Rouen. A renegade priest was its mufti ; he appeared in the ceremonial of the sect, clothed with something resembling a fine linen alb. The mode of worship, very nearly the same as under Robes-

pierre, consisted in reading the civil laws, and the actions of brave men ; the Theophilanthropists further added a species of prayer to Nature, or the Supreme Being, whom they confounded with Nature. From a wish to entrap the people by a similarity of names, they invented a book of Gospels, entitled: "*Epistles and Gospels of the Republic for all the decades of the year, intended for the use of young Sans-culottes ;* presented to the National Convention by Henriquez, citizen of the section of the French Pantheon Français." I give a Gospel, extracted word for word from this book : "At that time, man, enlightened by the torch of reason, shall advance with giant strides on the road of liberty ; he shall rise to his true height ; he shall become universally free, or *God*, which is the same thing."

It appears that their doctrine tended to persuade the simple that, being free, they were gods ; that their divinity terminated with the present life—that is to say, there was no God, whose judgments they might fear after death. Thus, whilst speaking of the immortality of the soul, at bottom they scarcely believed in it.

To bring about the establishment of the new Gospel, a cessation from work was prescribed on the days of the decade, under pain of three days' hard labour, and a fine and longer imprisonment in case of a second offence. It was permitted, however, in the country, to engage in farm labour on these festivals, provided the person doing so worked also on the Sunday; for the aim of the innovators was to make the people gradually lose all recollection of the days consecrated to God, and to accustom them insensibly to despise and forget the religion of their fathers.

The celebration of the decades was ordered in the churches belonging to the chief towns of each district. No one attended of his own accord; but, to force at least a part of the people to be present, a numerous escort of national guards was ordered to accompany the magistrates of the people—namely, the municipal officers. It seems it was the design of La Réveil-lère-Lepaux to make the latter the pontiffs of the growing sect. The procession from the town hall was very imposing; the tricolour flag preceded the municipal body; a child car-

ried the book of the law. In the church, they arranged themselves before the altar of the country ; for a decree of the Directory ordered all the signs of the Christian religion to disappear, and prescribed the erection of an altar, called that of the country, on which was placed the book of the law, after the manner of our Missal. Then the president and his assistants, turning their backs on this venerable altar, took up their several positions. The laws were next read; then, to consummate the absurdity of their proceedings, the marriage ceremony was performed. The future couple notified their intention, and the president declared them united in the name of the law. At the conclusion songs were sung, and every one returned whence he came. By these demonstrations they hoped to annihilate the Christian religion, and make the French people lose the very recollection of a God. But they could not succeed in this without destroying the priests. All their labours tended to bring about this result, and it was on this occasion I was imprisoned for the second time.

Notwithstanding all these trials, I had entered

on the duties of my state, and would probably have continued in the performance of them—have fed with the word of God the people whom Providence had confided to me in the order of religion—if the fatal 18th Fructidor had not, in my parish, as well as elsewhere, reinstated the Jacobins in the offices from which they had been so justly expelled by Sautereau, after the death of Robespierre. They became once more our masters, and began to exercise over us a new tyranny, less apparent indeed, but more crafty and dangerous than the first. They wished to get rid of priests: pretexts were necessary, and they were not slow in finding them. The law of the 7th Vendémiaire, for the regulation of public worship, was the instrument they used for the attainment of their object. This law restricted the exercise of public worship to the churches. Rigorous penalties, fine and imprisonment, were inflicted on any one appearing on the public way with any religious emblem, or in the costume of a priest.

Much time did not elapse until our Jacobin functionaries caught me in a breach of the law.

After public worship was forbidden, I was in the habit of wearing a surplice under my cloak, when engaged in the duties of the sacred ministry, or bringing to my parishioners the consolations of religion. The surplice could not possibly be seen, and my costume was absolutely that of a traveller. One day, the municipal assistant, a violent Jacobin, happened to be in a house in which I was ministering to a sick man. In this house I was habited in my stole and surplice, just as if I was in the church. This was permitted by the law in the interior of houses, provided there were no more than ten persons present, excluding the family. He gave me notice that, for the future, I must not appear in this costume inside the houses of my parishioners. I observed that the law not only took no exception to my action in the matter, but expressly permitted it. All my reasons, although founded on justice, failed to make any impression on his mind. He said, on leaving, that he would denounce me if I appeared again in such a costume. I was not surprised at his malevolence; the same man had banished me from my church three years

before, and I knew very well of what he was capable.

Although the mayor was a Jacobin, and had, under Robespierre, taken a prominent part in the popular society which held its sittings in the chapel of the castle, I believed he had repented of his errors, especially as he now frequented our offices. I supposed then I might have confidence in him, and accordingly addressed him a letter in the following terms :—

“CITIZEN,—I went this morning to Citizen Levillant’s, to administer the sacraments to a sick person; there I met your assistant, Citizen B——, who gave me notice that I must not in future appear in the costume I had on, and which I am obliged to wear when visiting the sick. This costume, as you are aware, is an ordinary travelling cloak; it is true that, under the mantle, I wear a surplice, and the other little ornaments necessary for the due discharge of my functions; these latter, however, are concealed from public observation. It seems this surplice, although it cannot be seen, offends the patriotism of Citizen B——, and inspires him with dread both of

it and of the wearer ; but let Citizen B—— feel reassured ; I no more appear in a surplice on the roads along which I travel to assist the sick, or pay the last rites to the dead, than I appear, if you will allow me to say so, in a shirt. You can only consider a person dressed in the garments he wears externally. Now, certainly, whenever I have gone to houses for the purpose of exercising some function of my ministry, my cloak was the sole article of dress that could be seen. ‘But,’ Citizen B—— will say, ‘you appear in a surplice in the houses you go to.’ That is quite true, and the legislature has foreseen that ministers of religion would sometimes be obliged to exercise their functions in private houses. To meet this necessity, clause sixteen was introduced into the law of the seventh Vendémiaire on the regulation of public worship. This clause states that religious ceremonies are interdicted outside the enclosure of the building selected for their exercise, and adds : ‘This prohibition does not apply to ceremonies within the enclosure of private houses.’ Clause nine says : ‘No person is allowed to appear in public with the dress,

ornaments, or costumes used in religious ceremonies or forms of worship.' But the dress under which I appear, when obliged to go and administer the sacraments, is not destined for worship—it is a travelling dress. I could never have had any intention of conducting myself so as to break the law. On the contrary, I have always shown my anxiety to conform to it. As I do not wish to defend even a good cause by erroneous arguments, if my reasons do not appear sound, have the goodness to inform me of the fact; for my earnest desire is good order, obedience to the laws, tranquillity and peace."

Such were the contents of the letter I addressed to the mayor, and I had reason soon after to repent of my indiscretion. The recollection of the letter I had written to the Jacobins should have rendered me more cautious. The mayor did not make any reply, and from one point of view my letter did not require one. Some days after I met him on the road; he accosted me in a friendly and familiar tone, and said :

" Ah ! Sir, I have not answered your letter.

But then, where was the necessity? Every one knows that you do not compromise yourself. I can testify to it myself; I see you every day pass under our windows; I have never seen your surplice; and even though I did see it, your having a cloak over it is a clear proof of your respect for the law. You are too wise," he continued, in a very complimentary tone, "too well informed, to compromise yourself and us also. You may be tranquil."

"That is all very good," I returned; "but will you answer for your assistant?"

"Oh! you have nothing to fear on his part; I have communicated your letter to him. He no longer recollects what he said to you; you may be tranquil; he will not do you any harm, depend on it; pursue the same line of conduct you have always pursued."

In spite of these fine words, I did not feel entire confidence in the good will of the agent; I knew how much I was hated by the Jacobins, and the violent efforts they had made, not only to bring about my imprisonment, but my death. I redoubled my precautions then. I was more particular than ever in always wearing my

cloak when going to administer the sacraments to my parishioners ; but I gave up the use of the surplice. Some time passed away quietly ; but it happened that a man, named Ferrand, was afflicted with a throat disease, which tormented him for more than a year. After causing him terrible pain, and eating away his throat and the root of his tongue, it brought about his death. This man was one of the most prominent Jacobins in the country ; it was he who had broken to pieces and trampled on the altar of the Holy Saviour. This unhappy man, as soon as his recovery became hopeless, repented, and sent for me. He was in full possession of all his senses ; and now, seeing that he was about to appear before the majesty of that God, whose name he had so often blasphemed, whose altars he had overturned, he made a sort of reparation, in the presence of the by-standers, asked pardon for his faults of God and man, and declared that, in the midst of his wanderings, he had never, through God's grace, entirely lost the faith, but had been corrupted by the example and bad counsels of the Jacobins. I addressed some

words of consolation to him, to encourage him in his repentance, and showed him how good Divine Providence was to him, as it is to all sinners who return to God. This public conversion made great noise. The Jacobins were furious, and said that I had extorted from this poor wretch the reparation which confounded them. It would, besides, be impossible for them not to have remarked that misfortunes were successively overtaking all who had particularly signalized themselves during the opening scenes of the Revolution, by their blasphemies and evil deeds. Although it was manifest that the anger of Heaven weighed heavy on them, the revolutionists became more furious than ever after this conversion, and entered into a new plot for my destruction. I assisted at the funeral of this man, not forgetting to put on my cloak; I had, indeed, a surplice under the cloak, but no one could see it. The municipal assistant, furious, as well as the other Jacobins, took horse, and galloped to the church, at the very moment the interment was taking place. He arrived, however, a little too late. I re-entered the church as soon as he

appeared; but he saw the members of the Confraternity of Charity presenting the cross to the relatives of the deceased, according to their old and pious custom. On leaving the church, I perceived him standing immediately outside of the cemetery. Although he affected an air of tranquillity and indifference, I felt certain that his coming to this place meant mischief.

Some days after, a report spread that he had drawn up a *procès-verbal* against me, although he could not have seen me perform any function, and against the brethren, who unfortunately had on their hoods, although I strictly forbade it.

This rumour was only too well-founded; at the end of a fortnight, I received a summons, as well as the brethren, to appear before the *juge de paix*. I went before him, and declared that no one had seen a surplice on me. The brethren acknowledged that they had on their hoods, but that they were under the impression they could wear them in the performance of a charitable duty; first, because they were within ten paces of the church; and, secondly, because they were in the cemetery,

which bordered on the church. The *juge de paix* was an honest and well-meaning man; but as he was detested by the Jacobins, and trembled before them, he did not venture to take on himself the responsibility of acquitting us; he issued a warrant of arrest against us then. We were at once led to prison. After passing some hours in this wretched place, while the gaoler was putting our names, age, residence, cause of arrest, &c., on the gaol registry, we were conducted, guarded like criminals, before the director of juries. This director was a vain man, a renegade aristocrat, and, consequently, he affected an extreme Jacobinism, to banish the recollection of his birth from the minds of the factious. My enemies could not have found a more obedient auxiliary. I was the first to appear before this new proconsul. He questioned me, and, with a view of entrapping me into making admissions, he put a number of captious and treacherous interrogatives, for the purpose of proving me guilty. He treated me as if I was a criminal, who should be convicted in the interests of society. He next examined the brethren. After this first

trial, we were led back to prison by guards, armed with guns and drawn swords. We remained under lock and key until some charitable persons went through the formalities of giving bail for our appearance. We had to pay a rather large sum before getting out, both for registering the securities and getting our names removed from the gaoler's book. Delivered from prison, we returned home to await the issue of this persecution. We were not long until we received an order to appear on the 26th of August to hear the verdict. We attended on the same day, at the suit of the municipal assistant, and by command of the commissaries of the Executive Directory. Five or six of the most famous Jacobins were summoned as witnesses, and were present. Having nothing positive to prove relative to the burial, which was the cause, or rather the pretext of the denunciation, each of them adopted a plan of his own. One said that two years before, he saw something white sticking out of the pocket of my cloak, and that it was a surplice; another saw me fifteen months ago in a surplice and stole. I stopped him, and asked, what

colour was the stole ; he could not answer. " Write," I said to the registrar, " that the citizen, who saw my stole, did not see its colour." A third witness declared that he saw me eight months before, habited in a surplice and stole ; but on my energetically insisting that he was not telling the truth, and was giving false evidence, he was struck dumb, although a man of much information and great malevolence. Another Jacobin, who was listening to the objections I made to all these liars, said he had seen me twenty-eight months before bare-headed, in a surplice and stole of a white colour, and having over them a cloak which was open. Such were the depositions of the Jacobins. A number of honest people were examined afterwards, but none of them mentioned anything that could be prejudicial to me in the slightest degree. When all the witnesses had been examined, I summed up the depositions of the Jacobins, and took exception to them, inasmuch as they had no bearing on the affair for which I was cited before the tribunal. I dwelt on the inconsistencies in these so-called depositions. " Citizens," I said,

“ can you regard as real evidence depositions that require to be proved themselves? A testimony is a deposition, made according to law, with regard to a fact of which a citizen is accused. In order that a sentence should be passed according to law, at least two persons worthy of credit must prove that the accused is the author of the offence with which he is charged; that they, on such a day, at such an hour, have detected him in the commission of the crime or offence with which he is charged; but here you have no such thing; you have not a single witness who asserts that he saw me dressed in a surplice at the interment of Ferrand. Several individuals, well known for their anti-religious opinions, have appeared against me: one says he saw me in public, two years ago, dressed in a religious costume forbidden by the laws—another, twenty-eight months ago; but these assertions are all false, designedly invented for the purpose of ruining me. I am, undoubtedly, as well worthy of belief as those individuals, who are well known to be my enemies, or rather the enemies of religion. If a citizen can be condemned on

such depositions as these, for acts of which he is not even accused, where is your liberty? Why, with such a system as this, any scoundrel can bring to the guillotine, as often as he likes, all who have not the gift of pleasing the wicked! We are going to plunge again into a new Reign of Terror. You, Citizens, you yourselves will become the victims of a doctrine as much opposed to the repose and happiness of the republic, as it is to the tranquillity of private individuals."

All my reasons were useless—I was judged without being heard; I was condemned to imprisonment, because there would be a priest the less in the country.

This sentence, shamefully unjust as it was, affected me much less than the outrageously unfair manner in which the judge behaved towards me during my defence. He had much more the air of a personal enemy than of a judge. During the hearing of the witnesses who gave evidence in my favour, he could no longer contain himself. At one moment he called them idiots, then turned them into ridicule, cutting them short with stale jests. He

also addressed me in the most contemptuous style, and treated me constantly as a fanatic and a fool ; he said that I was perverting my parishioners. At last, unable to endure any longer these outrages, I advanced firmly to the foot of the tribunal, and spoke to him with all the energy of which I was capable: "God forbid that I should be what you say ! I am a Christian—I have the honour to be a priest and minister of Jesus Christ ; I teach his Gospel, and would to God that all those whom Divine Providence has confided to my care were faithful to that holy doctrine, which is not my doctrine, but that of my Judge and yours. I do not make fanatics of those who are good enough to hear me, but I preach to them the religion of our fathers—a religion that made them happy, and which still constitutes the consolation of the good, of all those who put their trust in God. It is this holy religion that sustains their courage and mine, amid the persecutions with which incredulity overwhelms us in these unhappy times."

This unjust judge was amazed at my boldness—a boldness for which he was certainly

little prepared ; he turned pale as death, and seemed for a moment a little softened ; but he quickly returned to the charge, and said, angrily : “ We shall see !——” Immediately he recalled a witness who declared that, at the time of the interment, he saw something white about me ; he made him repeat his testimony, and asked me what I had to say. To the second charge I replied : “ The witness did not see me dressed in a surplice. What he says is, that he saw something white about me. Now, I had a perfectly white pocket handkerchief in my hand at the moment ; many other persons too have proved that the handkerchief was unfolded ; is there anything surprising, then, in the witness seeing something white about my person ?”

“ But, in a word,” retorted the judge, passionately, “ can you not tell me whether you had the surplice on, or not ?”

“ Why,” I replied, “ do you ask me ? Ask those who are about me.”

“ No,” he added ; “ I will know the truth from your own mouth—answer me : had you on your surplice ?”

“ Citizen, if I was accused of a crime, you would, perhaps, be justified in using every means to convict a criminal. But I am only accused of an offence of opinion, and I can see too well that you are anxious to punish me for a real or supposed act, which merits and receives nothing but praise among all civilized nations ; for if, according to you, I am guilty, my guilt consists in having done all in my power to honour the grave of a fellow-citizen. You try to prove me guilty, but I am not ; I would be, however, if I told a lie. You wish to know, then, if I had a surplice on at the interment of Ferrand ? Yes, Citizen, I had, but it was concealed by the cloak in which I was enveloped. I had a surplice, and I admit it, for the truth is in my mouth as well as in my heart, but no one saw it ; and when the witness declared he saw me dressed in a surplice, he did not tell the truth. I had a surplice, but then it was without sleeves, and could not possibly be observed. I may be condemned on account of this admission, which, nevertheless, I have the less hesitation in making,

inasmuch as justice does not judge what she does not see.”

I had an advocate, who next addressed the judge in the following terms :

“ Considering that Citizen Dumesnil cannot be said to have been dressed in the robes of a priest, or in the costume used in any particular worship, but merely in a cloak ; that to put a man in the tomb cannot be looked on as an exercise of any worship, inasmuch as there was no singing, and public order was not disturbed ; and considering, too, that Citizen Dumesnil did not perform any ceremony, but only assisted at the interment of Ferrand as a friend, I do not think you can find him guilty. Moreover, the interment of Ferrand took place in a cemetery enclosed by walls. And again, it is not likely that Citizen Dumesnil, who always conducted himself in an irreproachable manner—who has passed through the Revolution courageously without taking part in any of the excesses of which it has sometimes been the pretext—can have had any intention of disobeying the laws.

“ Besides, most of the depositions of the wit-

nesses are foreign to the interment of Ferrand, which forms the sole ground of accusation.

“Some witnesses have, indeed, said that Citizen Dumesnil was dressed in a surplice. Seeing, however, the scandalous manner in which they gave their evidence, contradicting each other both as to dates and facts, you cannot attach much value to their testimony.

“Thus, for instance, Bruno first stated that he saw Citizen Dumesnil in a surplice eight months ago ; and after he was informed that he was not telling the truth, he admitted he was not certain of the date, and grew so confused that he was not able to articulate a syllable.

“We must then come to the conclusion, from the depositions of the witnesses, that he never had on any ecclesiastical costume that could be seen outside his church, and also that the information of Bruno is false. The latter has shown that it was physically impossible for him to have seen Citizen Dumesnil leaving the church, as he only arrived when the funeral was over. I demand, therefore, that Citizen Dumesnil be discharged, and permitted to exact from Citizen B—— a legal satisfaction for

the calumnious assertions he has made regarding him.”

This impartial judge paid so little attention to the arguments and conclusions of my defender, that he wrote the sentence during the discourse. He pronounced judgment without even condescending to consult the assessors, who were there merely for form's sake, and had not the slightest influence on his decision. The sentence was then pronounced; I was condemned to eight months' imprisonment, and a fine of three hundred francs, as well as the cost of placarding the judgment in two hundred and fifty communes. The brethren of the confraternity were condemned to a fine of a hundred francs, and a month's imprisonment. And thus was I rewarded for giving my parishioner the last rites of Christian burial! And such was the measure meted out to those courageous and charitable men, who, for the love of God and man, were willing to endanger their lives, by taking on their shoulders and consigning to the tomb the bodies of the dead, even when in a state of putrefaction!

But the perversity and impiety of this un-

happy time was so great, that those who ventured to do honour to the burial of a Christian by the slightest religious ceremony were regarded and punished as criminals, although amongst all people and at all times the burial of a human being has been a religious act. Indeed, Protestants and Jews had still the power of interring their dead according to the rites and ceremonies of their various sects. Moreover, the law of the 21st of September, 1792, expressly declared that it was not the intention of the National Assembly to prevent citizens from consecrating their births, marriages, and deaths by the ceremonies of the worship to which they belonged, and by the intervention of the ministers of that worship. But at this period Catholics were actually deprived of the prerogatives freely granted to strangers; they seemed to be placed outside of the pale of the common law. They were a class of men who were fit for nothing except to be proscribed, whenever they showed any respect for the religion of their fathers.

André Chénier had a presentiment of this iniquitous tendency of the Revolution, when

he said, in one of those courageous writings that led him to the scaffold : "Take care it is not said that in France every religion is tolerated, *except one.*"

The unjust sentence was no sooner pronounced than the tipstaffs of the court took us into custody. We were guarded by a dozen men, armed with guns and drawn swords. I was made to head the procession; two tipstaffs walked on each side of me. A person would have imagined we were dangerous state criminals, or robbers, just after being caught in the very act. We were led, with all this parade, to prison. My companions in misfortune shed tears plentifully. They thought they were lost, and spoke unceasingly of their wives and children. As to myself, I put on a cheerful countenance, and joyfully bore my new chains. "Why are you grieved, my friends?" I said to them. "Is it not for doing good you are here? The Apostles of Jesus Christ were persecuted before you, and rejoiced that they were found worthy to suffer for Him. Let us believe, then, that if we have the same faith, courage, and constancy, we shall have the same reward."

My words softened a little the bitterness of their lot.

On leaving the court house, the tipstuffs and guards led me away as if in triumph. Some Jacobins, who kept close to us on the march, expressed their delight, and said aloud that the worship of our fathers would soon give way to theophilanthropy. But a large number of people, devoted still to our holy religion, followed us with heavy sighs and lamentations. While we were going through the streets of Yvetot, I could hear persons saying to one another : "They will not leave us one ; they intend in this way to shut up the churches. The renegades ! they will find pretexts for taking them one after another !"

We arrived at the doors of the prison. I entered this dark and filthy hole with my companions. But I may say that the Lord entered with me ; for never, under any of the misfortunes by which my life has been crossed, have I received so many consolations. I was never so much visited and *feted* as in this prison. Indeed, persons came ten leagues to see me. People whom I hardly knew were

anxious to meet me, and expressed their indignation at the injustice with which I was treated.

At first I was lodged in a sort of dungeon by the gaoler. Meanwhile, the judge, who had treated me with such gross indignity during the trial, happened to be dining with some gentlemen who were so kind as to interest themselves in my favour. They reproached him vehemently with his conduct. "What!" they said to him, "you have treated the curé of Guerbaville in this shameful manner! Why have you used like a felon a man whom everybody esteems, and who has, on all occasions, conducted himself in the most exemplary manner—a man who, in all the relations of life, has been free from the shadow of reproach?" They spoke so warmly, that he had not a word to say during the whole of the dinner, although extremely verbose, and having a very high opinion of his own merit. "May God pardon him," I said to the persons who related this scene, "as I pardon him his unjust judgment, and all the trials he has made me bear; I make a sacrifice of them to God."

In the afternoon I received a visit from the members of the administration of Yvetot, which was composed of very honest men. The commissary of the Executive Directory, the president, and several of the municipal officers came privately, and assured me of the great interest they took in my situation. They were anxious to get me out of the dungeon in which I had been placed at first. They gave me a choice of rooms ; I selected a large one, in which I remained during the whole time of my imprisonment. I suffered much from cold, for the winter was very long and severe ; but the pleasure I felt in being alone compensated for this inconvenience.

Several of my good parishioners, who had come to Yvetot—some as sureties, for my release, others, for the purpose of knowing earlier the issue of the *proces verbal*, which affected others as well as me—quickly carried to Mailleraye the news of my unjust condemnation. Persons from Caudebec, who were interesting themselves in my fate, met them on the road from Yvetot, and saw several of them in tears. These poor people were inconsolable; believing

me lost, they kept repeating on the way : "The Jacobins have got our poor pastor condemned ; they have told so many lies !"

Madame de Nagu had also sent forward one of her servants to bring her intelligence. My misfortune plunged this admirable family, which had already suffered so much, into fresh affliction. I can never forget the interest that Madame de Nagu and Madame de Mortemart took in my fate at this time. The letters I received every week from the former, and her kindness in supplying me with everything I wanted, afforded me great consolation ; for nothing lightens our troubles so much as the sympathy of noble hearts.

Amid the annoyances that one must necessarily experience when cooped up in a prison, my companions in captivity enjoyed one advantage which I could not share with them. They were able to drink cider, the ordinary drink of the inhabitants of this province ; but, as I was in the habit of drinking only water, I had to suffer fearfully in the beginning : the water of Yvetot, and particularly that in the well of the prison, being extremely unhealthy and dis-

agreeable in taste, I should have found it hard to endure this deprivation, were it not for the succour of a generous friend, who, during the eight months I was in prison, had the kindness to send me two bottles of water from an excellent pump every day. I can never forget this favour, nor the pleasure I derived from the almost daily visits of this excellent man. M. Danville, as my noble friend was called, did a great deal to mitigate the vexation incidental to my captivity.

The judgment that condemned me to eight months' imprisonment and a fine of three hundred francs, was a mere trifle in the eyes of our virtuous Jacobins. They had hoped to get rid of me entirely, and thus prevent the exercise of our holy religion. They had failed in their object. They felt that after my eight months' incarceration I would resume the performance of my functions, and religion would exercise the same influence as before. To achieve the full accomplishment of their wishes, they formed the design of getting me transported. The enterprise appeared easy enough of execution; for a law of the 19th Fructidor conferred on

the government the despotic power of banishing all turbulent priests. In the eyes of the Jacobins all priests were turbulent, and deserved to be sent at once beyond the seas. They were quite certain that, provided I was once banished, they would never be troubled by me again ; for transportation was but little less murderous than the guillotine. They felt so sure of succeeding in this wicked project, that they regarded me already as a ruined man, and they anticipated events by spreading a report of my death. As evil easily meets with more credit than good, every one in Guerbaville and its neighbourhood believed the news ; the sole point on which they were not agreed was as to the manner in which the thing took place. Some said I had succumbed from the effects of a stroke of apoplexy ; others, from bile ; and others again, that I had been poisoned ; while a few attributed my death to grief. Fortunately these tale-bearers had the discretion not to say anything about the matter to my mother ; but the rumour, nevertheless, reached my servants. As they had not heard previously anything about the matter, they did not place much

reliance on the intelligence. However, the bearer of the news appeared to be so certain of its truth, that one of the servants took horse, and rode towards Yvetot. He found me very tranquil, and in excellent health, in my prison. My principal task consisted in consoling my companions in misfortune, who did not endure very patiently this reward for performing a good action solely with a view of pleasing God, by assisting at the funeral service of a man who had been their enemy, but whose repentance merited every indulgence, and pardon. My servant informed me of all the stories that were spread regarding me. I only laughed, and advised him to find out what had given rise to these rumours. By tracing them to their source, it was discovered that the fire at bottom of the smoke was lit by my old clerk, the schoolmaster, an ardent Jacobin, and the same person who had given false evidence against me on the trial. Knowing that a perfidious plot was hatching to get me transported, and having no doubt of its success, this man already looked on me as absolutely ruined, and in the excess of his joy, he said to his pupils one day : “ M. le curé is

dead." The children, taking this for gospel, repeated everywhere : "M. le curé is dead—so our master told us." This charitable and grateful citizen had eaten for twenty years at my table, without ever being subjected to the slightest humiliation. Even after becoming my enemy, and the enemy of religion, I never ceased treating his children, who lived next door to me, affectionately, and making them the little presents we give to children of whom we are fond.

Meanwhile, my enemies moved heaven and earth to attain their ends. They obtained a new *proces verbal* against me from the registrar of the local tribunal ; armed with this document, they went to the public accuser. They painted me under the blackest colours. According to these worthy folk, I was the worst and most dangerous of all the aristocrats, the most turbulent priest within the Republic. There could be no repose, the republic could never be at rest, until I was safely disposed of at Ré or Oleron, or, better still, at Sinnamari. I was a man of whom it was absolutely necessary to get rid : the public safety demanded this. The revolutionary accuser, a man easily prejudiced,

gave free rein to these falsehoods. He wrote at once to the director of juries at Yvetot a pressing letter, in which he informed him that I was a creature of Louis XVIII., a member of the Clichyan Society, overturned on the 18th Fructidor, and that he could not too soon free the Republic from so dangerous an enemy.

It was at this period that I experienced in its full force the blessing of having faithful friends. The reproaches they had continued to address my judge, since the trial, had undoubtedly made great impression on him ; perhaps, too, he felt ashamed of not only condemning, but insulting a prisoner whom he knew to be innocent, and this solely for the purpose of conciliating the violent men who had gained the upper hand after the 18th Fructidor. Be this as it may, he made every effort to repair his fault. Instead of making a new inquiry into my conduct relative to all the accusations of the Jacobins, he declared, in his reply to the public accuser, that he had investigated more than forty depositions against me, and not a single witness said anything resembling the new charges brought forward now ; they were

mere calumnies, invented by the enemies of good order ; he had but too clear a perception of the malice of certain minds, and, but for the disorders of the times, he would have acquitted me at once. That is to say, through dread of compromising himself, he was afraid to take what he admitted to be the only equitable course, and, indeed, such was the justice of the period. To appease his remorse of conscience, to satisfy his friends, and efface from my mind the recollection of his injustice and rudeness, he sent two of my friends successively to repeat to me the contents of the letter, which he had communicated to them, and added : “ Tell the curé of Guerbaville that he may be tranquil, and spend the term of his imprisonment in peace, for no further calamity shall happen to him. He pretended even that, by treating me as he did, he had rendered me a great service ; and this reminded me of the old adage, who loveth well chastiseth well. Thus, then, were the projects of the Jacobins of Guerbaville baffled. In spite of their extreme desire to get me out of the country, I remained, at least for some time, quietly in prison.

Nevertheless, after looking forward for a moment to better days, it was a rude trial to see a new persecution begun against God and His ministers—to find myself shut up in a dark, unhealthy prison, confounded with criminals undergoing the punishment of their crimes, or with unhappy suspects, perhaps innocent, who languished a prey to vermin and all the horrors of want. In fine, among these prisoners were priests condemned for performing the duties of their state, and men whose sole offence consisted in having Mass said in their houses, or assisting at it elsewhere.

Among my fellow-prisoners were M. Raulin, a priest, condemned to a year's imprisonment for saying Mass in private houses ; M. Langlois, curé of Sorquainville, near Fécamp, incarcerated for a similar cause ; M. Vienne, accused of giving extreme unction to a person in the last agony, and holding a first communion before the 18th Fructidor ; M. Avenel, curé of the church of Saint Nicholas, in Fécamp ; and M. Lemonnier, a religious of the Benedictine order. The three last only remained a couple of days. Being considered more guilty than

the others, and having no one to defend them, they were transferred to Rouen, and from thence, a short time after, to the island of Ré. They had the good luck not to be included in the list of convicts sent to Cayenne, and returned to their parishes after the 18th Brumaire. I had, therefore, the society of several excellent people. It was a consolation which I keenly appreciated during this time of trial, and for which I have blessed Divine Providence a thousand times.

Meanwhile, the Jacobins of my parish, not having succeeded in the design they had formed of procuring my transportation, were only half satisfied ; moreover, they had against them the majority of the inhabitants. The faithful murmured at seeing themselves deprived of the consolations of religion, the Divine service, and the use of the sacraments. For this the revolutionists were reproached with such bitterness, that they dare not show their face. Their conduct was even censured by some who held very extreme opinions—not, indeed, on account of any interest they took in me, so much as because my absence was indirectly

doing great harm to the trade of the country. As there was no longer Mass at Guerbaville, no one went to town on Sundays or festivals ; and so, by a strange reaction, my misfortune wrought the misfortune and despair of my enemies. Some of these revolutionists, too, either grieved, as I am quite willing to believe, at my situation, or carried away by the example of honest men, came frequently to visit me in my prison. Without caring to sound their motives, I was from that time forward exceedingly grateful to them, and I will never forget their kindness on the occasion. But what gave a sort of charm to my captivity was the interest that the virtuous took in my misfortunes. I can never forget the kind friends who, in their anxiety to be near me, did not fear to breathe the poisonous air of a prison, whose inhabitants were, generally, by no means remarkable for their cleanliness. A single day did not pass without a visit from some generous souls. Madame de Nagu and Madame de Mortemart were eager to gain the reward due to works of mercy, by frequently visiting their pastor in his chains, chains

that weighed heavier on them than on him, so profoundly were their hearts afflicted by my ills. It was not to me only that the presence of these admirable and benevolent ladies brought joy and comfort ; it was a public festival for all the poor prisoners, whose sad lot they alleviated by alms, preferring, in the distribution of their bounties, not the least guilty, but the most unhappy. “ What charitable ladies ! ” the prisoners would say—“ What grace there is in their very manner of doing good ! How happy must they be who are living near them ! ”

At last the time arrived for the Brethren of Charity to depart. But a great obstacle stood in the way of their release. It was necessary to pay six hundred and seventy-seven francs for their beds, and costs of the trial, including the fines. The poor fellows had not a single sou. Some benevolent persons collected about half the sum required, and the inexhaustible charity of Madame de Nagu provided the remainder. The Brothers had only been a month in prison. If this money had not been paid for them, they would have continued prisoners a

month longer, and all their goods would have been sold to discharge the sum due, both for the expenses of the trial and for the fines; and such was the mildness and mercy which our fine Revolution, made, as was said, for the happiness of the people, displayed in its dealings with the unoffending poor of the country districts. My humble friends gave strong proofs of their affection for myself on leaving. They shed tears when bidding me farewell :

“ If we could deliver you by passing another six weeks in prison,” they said, “ how willingly would we do so !”

“ No, my friends,” I returned; “ we must all discharge our debts. I shall spend the seven months I still owe to the justice of men, contentedly enough. I shall consider myself but too fortunate if this moment of trial can abridge the years of penitence I still owe to God.”

At Guerbaville they were received with great respect by all honest men. The Jacobins were confused; the triumph of the Brethren, the reception every one gave them, overwhelmed these children of Robespierre, who happily are

no longer very numerous amongst us, with shame and disgrace.

As for myself, I remained quietly in my forced retirement, devoting a portion of my time to reading, and cultivating the friendship of the priests, who were, like myself, persecuted for the name of Jesus Christ.

In addition to the consolations I experienced from the visits of the charitable, I had another very precious resource against the weariness of confinement—a vast library was to some extent entirely at my disposal. Books belonging to a number of abbeys, communities, and persons lately transported, were gathered together in a hall bordering on my room. I could enter this library whenever I pleased, and I had permission to take away any book I took a fancy to. This privilege was for me a real enjoyment; and from one point of view, the time I spent in this prison was the happiest of my whole life. For, after conversing with wise and well-informed men, I think there is nothing in the world so delightful as reading a good book. It is an impartial friend, who often reminds us of our faults, points out the

path of virtue, and leads man to true happiness.

I had, moreover, another occupation, namely, that of rendering several wretched prisoners all the little services I could.

Among the latter, indeed, there were some guilty of more serious offences than praying to God. A few of these were well worthy of compassion; they were incarcerated for only asking alms, or for mere trifles, that would have attracted no attention in more settled times. At this period great severity was exercised on a variety of occasions, although, under other relations, extreme license prevailed. All the horrors connected with the Revolution were lawful; a person could do anything, could dare anything without risk, provided he was a Jacobin. But those who were or appeared to be favourable to ancient manners, those who did not affect the devilish morality of the day, were pitilessly punished for the least thing and on the slightest pretext; and so liberty, or, I should rather say license, existed only for the wicked.

I devoted myself then to making soup for

the prisoners ; I cooked their meat and vegetables, gave them the use of my fire ; in fine, used every effort to lighten their misery, and rendered them all the services that charitable persons were rendering myself.

After I had passed some months in this house in perfect tranquillity, varying the monotony of my existence by innocent conversation, reading, and the pleasure of being useful to the needy, I met with an adventure that was nearly being attended with fatal consequences. There were several individuals in the prison, strangers to the country, who had been arrested because they had not a passport. One of these, a man of about forty, told me secretly that he was a gentleman. He appeared rich, and had some *louis d'or* about him, although he slept on straw like the other poor prisoners, to dissemble what he was. He told me he had made war in La Vendée, had been in England, had been mixed up with the affair of Quiberon ; in fine, he was a daring rover. He was very clever, and succeeded, though how I cannot imagine, in procuring a tool. He made a hole in the wall, under the head of his bed, and

succeeded in escaping with three other prisoners. On this occasion, the gaoler himself was confined in a dungeon ; each of the authorities drew up a report, so important was the matter considered. I was perfectly quiet in the midst of the excitement, when a lady from Yvetot put a letter into my hand. Fortunately she was not perceived by the new gaoler, who had the right at all times of opening and reading the letters of the prisoners. I thought, at first, I recognised in the address the writing of one of my friends ; but what was my astonishment to discover that it was from the fugitive gentleman ! He related all the details of his escape, adding that he had found near Barentin, a band of young men, at the head of which he placed himself, and was about starting from Pont de l'Arche for La Vendée. This letter, which I had the less reason to expect, as I had not formed any particular intimacy with its author, threw me into great consternation, the more especially as he made mention of a second one, which he promised to forward me as soon as he reached his destination. "What !" I said to myself, "at a

time when I enjoy tranquillity, when I am treated with a certain amount of consideration in this house, must a giddy fellow of this sort gratuitously aggravate the troubles of my position, and perhaps make me lose my life as well as my liberty!" Indeed, if this correspondence were discovered, it would have supplied a fine ground for imagining that I had favoured the escape, and even meditated a flight myself to La Vendée. Why, the Jacobins were shooting without mercy all who were, I shall not say convicted, but merely suspected of any offence connected with the insurrection in that province. I will frankly acknowledge that, tormented by a thousand different thoughts, I was for more than eight days without closing an eye. I feared, like death, this second letter that was to be sent to me; there were ten chances to one that it would be stopped at the post before reaching the lady to whom my madcap had addressed the first. I understood but too well the sinister results an affair of this nature must have. For a moment, I was tempted to inform the Commissary of the Executive Directory;

but the *role* of an informer was repugnant to me : besides such an act might have been interpreted to my disadvantage. I preferred then, from every point of view, to remain quiet, and run the chance of his forgetting to write the second letter. In this conflict of contradictory and embarrassing thoughts, I addressed myself to God ; I placed all my trust in His Providence. I prayed that He would banish from this man's heart the thought of writing to me again. After this I felt more tranquil, so true it is that we always find more consolation in the Divinity than in all human means. I never afterwards, indeed, heard of this second letter, whose advent I had so much reason to dread.

A week, a fortnight, a month, two months, glided on without any accident. The gaoler extricated himself from his embarrassments with great success. I drew up a memorial in his justification, which he addressed to the public accuser, and he was acquitted. I recovered all my former tranquillity, but unhappily not for long.

In spite of their numerous mishaps, the more

violent Jacobins did not entirely lose the hope of succeeding in their criminal objects. They said publicly that there were two houses in Guerbaville which must be demolished—the castle and the presbytery. The guiding principle of these gentlemen has ever been, not to suffer any one to be richer or more influential than themselves.

It is in accordance with this Machiavellian doctrine that they have shed so much blood, and slaughtered so many victims. Crime never enters into the calculations of this faction, provided it rules and tramples under foot, without pity or remorse, every obstacle that stands in the way of its tyranny. Consequently, I was a man whom it was necessary to sacrifice; and so they soon directed new engines of destruction against me.

The Directory being invested with the power of transporting all turbulent priests, they tried a manœuvre, which must infallibly, as they thought, end in my trial and condemnation as one of the latter class. They accused me of having, in direct violation of the law, continued to make records of births, marriages, and

deaths. Three of them presented themselves before the departmental authorities, and said that I had never ceased to keep a civil register. These gentlemen did not, however, meet with the success they expected, as fortunately the members of the administration in the department were nearly all honest men. "It is not enough," they said to them, "to accuse a citizen—we require proofs. We shall not receive your declaration, except it be subscribed to by eight persons worthy of credit." My enemies then retired, apparently not at all satisfied with this reply. After their departure they made several investigations, and took a variety of steps to suborn witnesses, and notably some young girls, whom they tried to persuade to say they had seen me, during some baptisms, draw up records, first demanding the names and surnames of the parties. All these attempts were vain—no one would listen to their suggestions.

This attempt, although fruitless, caused me considerable uneasiness. The Jacobins could not keep their odious projects secret. They reported everywhere that I was not to remain

long at Yvetot; that I was too near my parish; and other rumours were spread about, which, under present circumstances, were of anything but a reassuring character. These people, I said to myself, have some evil design; they are engaged in some new plot to injure me; these reports are not without some reality. Shortly afterwards I fathomed all the mystery, and learned the despair with which the reply of the members of the administration had overwhelmed them. I recovered courage, then, for some time longer.

During this interval of repose I engaged in the composition of a little work, which I intended as a return for certain little pleasures that the nuns of Caudebec had procured for me. These good and holy women had the goodness to send occasionally to my place of captivity chairs, curtains, pins, nails, needles, pencils, paper, and, shall I say it?—something which such kind-hearted women rarely forget among their little attentions—sugar. As a mark of my gratitude, I took it into my head to present them with a bouquet, composed, not of blooming flowers, but of certain moral

thoughts that in my leisure I had gathered from the perusal of some Greek authors, and, among others, from the works of Saint Gregory Nazianzen and Saint Basil. I tried to put them in verse; but, as I am not much of a writer, and still less of a poet, I abandoned the task, and wrote out, quite simply, in prose, the passages which seemed to me most striking, translating them from the Greek as well as I was able. The extracts I made are remarkable for their elegance and beauty in the original. They necessarily lost much of their charm in a French translation, and especially in the hands of so poor a translator. I endeavoured, nevertheless, to preserve something of the grandeur and sublimity by which these great men were animated.

Whilst I was occupied with this translation, the Jacobins were again plotting my destruction. One of their leaders suggested a new expedient, which they believed would prove infallible. Our registers had been lodged in the recorder's office belonging to the district of Caudebec. Those which I had kept as curé, during twenty years, were of course there also.

Before the Revolution a duplicate of these registries was deposited in the record office of the bailiwick, and the other duplicate remained in the custody of the curé. Following the example of my predecessors, I was in the habit of making, on several blank pages, remarks on passing events which seemed to me of an interesting nature, such as diseases and the best modes of treatment, drought, cold, heat, rain, dearth, plenty, the works and changes I was effecting in my church and presbytery, &c. These registers were not to leave my house; and the notes were written for the benefit of my successors. When the Revolution came, I set down the first events in the order in which they occurred; and after giving a long account of all that took place from 1789 to 1791, I added: "Finally, our colonies are on fire; the kingdom itself is in a flame; our riches consist of paper, and France is no longer anything but a republic surmounted by a crown."

When, in conformity with the laws of the time, I was obliged to lodge all our registers, both new and old, with the recorder, it would

have been easy for me to suppress these remarks; I did not do so, because the greater part of them were innocent, and might be useful. As to my reflections on the affairs of the period, they sprung from an acquaintance with facts so well known and acknowledged, that I never for a moment imagined they could form the groundwork of an accusation against me. But the Jacobins saw evil everywhere, even in the most praiseworthy and useful actions. My notes unfortunately fell under the eyes of one of them, and he communicated the intelligence to his brethren. It was a great god-send to them—they believed they had now at last a tangible proof of my hatred to the Revolution. These words, written in 1791: “France is no longer anything but a republic,” said they, “plainly show how great his detestation of the Republic must be, since he contemplated its existence with horror, even before it became a reality. He turns into ridicule,” they added, “the wise means of which the Constituent Assembly made use to bring about our happy Revolution,” &c., &c. My very good friends, the Jacobins, delighted at exhuming a charge

against me, which was amply sufficient, they thought, to procure my transportation, drew up a report on the subject, and forwarded it to the Directory; fortunately, as usual, they could not keep the secret either of the lucky discovery, or the use they intended to make of it. They said everywhere that I had written things which were more than enough to send me to Sinnamari.

These rumours reached at last even the recesses of my prison. I reflected; I tried to recollect how I could have given rise to this new storm. I remembered my notes, and had no doubt but that they formed the basis of the conspiracy.

Considerably disturbed, I begged one of my friends to make further inquiries, and procure fuller information. From him I learned that certain furious revolutionists of Caudebec had assembled on Shrove Tuesday, and being joined by some other heroes of the party, had, *inter pocula*, decreed my transportation, or rather death; that a list of accusations had been lodged against me with the authorities of the department, and my destruction was such a

foregone conclusion, that it was publicly reported everywhere I would never return to Guerbaville. My friend, in a state of great alarm, and believing that now at length I was ruined, advised me to set about calming this tempest as quickly as possible. Certain that it was on my notes that the Jacobins grounded their brilliant hopes, I felt reassured. I considered that the administration, composed, as it was, in general, of wise and moderate men, would not think me so very culpable; it would not impute to me as a crime a few indifferent notes, written eight years before, and never destined to see the light. I drew up a memorial in exculpation; I frankly avowed myself to be the author of these notes, and that I had written them in imitation of some of my predecessors, solely with the view of being useful; I observed that I had described facts well known by everybody, and already referred to in all works published on the Revolution; and although I might have erred under the circumstances, still it was an error of eight years' standing, only within the knowledge of those who had denounced it, and for which I could

not be prosecuted, since, according to the laws, an offence not prosecuted within three years of its commission cannot be punished ; in conclusion, I expressed a conviction that the magistrates of the department were too wise and just either to condemn me, or take any proceedings against me, without first hearing me in person.

My memorial produced the effect I expected. The magistrates of the department were well aware how much personal hatred—a hatred, too, without any justification—entered into the republican zeal of my adversaries. They appreciated all the injustice of proceeding against me, and punishing me for inoffensive reflections, expressive rather of sorrow and uneasiness than of hostility, and, moreover, written in a register never intended to meet the public eye.

Meanwhile, our Jacobins, who had been in such hopes of never seeing me again in Guerbaville, perceived with much vexation that the time of my deliverance was approaching. This moment, so much desired by some, and so much dreaded by others, having at last arrived, I

After paying some visits at Yvetot to those who had rendered me any services, especially to my excellent friend Danville, and expressed to all the grateful sense I entertained of their benevolence towards me, I directed my steps to the castle of Mailleraye. I was in a great hurry to thank my noble benefactresses, Madame de Nagu and Madame de Mortemart. Words cannot paint the delight of these admirable ladies at my return. I was deeply moved by the kind expressions which the occasion suggested to these good and true hearts. I will never forget them; and all the services, all the succours of every sort, for which I was indebted to their generosity, shall never fade away from my memory.

At last I reach home; I had the happiness of embracing my mother, who bore up well in spite of her eighty-six years, completed since I quitted her! During my imprisonment she too had suffered cruel trials. The menaces, the detestable discourses of my enemies, had often resounded in her ears, carrying sadness and terror into the depths of her soul. I embraced her; she shed tears of joy. "My God!"

she said, "how long you have been away ! and how often have I dreaded I would never see you more ! But God is good ; in spite of all that the wicked could do, I have the happiness to behold you once more, and the hope that you will be henceforward the prop of my old age."

"Let us have no doubt on the subject," I said : "the Lord is good ; He tries us sometimes by tribulations and troubles ; but He never abandons us when we put entire and perfect trust in His mercy, and submit to His holy will. Some persons, whom I have never injured, wish to banish me from your side, and force me to part with my life ! let us pray to God for them ! Heaven will pardon them, perhaps will enlighten them, and restore us their affection. As to ourselves, let us only retaliate by kindness ; let us, as the Apostle says, know how to overcome evil by well-doing ; let us beware of saying anything which might offend against the charity which the Saviour recommends to us in every page of His Gospel."

During the next and following days, I was

visited by almost all my parishioners, even by some of the most violent revolutionists. They were all very kind and courteous towards me, and gave expression to the annoyance my imprisonment had given them, and the pleasure they experienced in seeing me back again, in spite of the attacks that had been directed against religion, and myself personally. These honest people believed I was going to resume the performance of my functions at once. I was invited to do so in the most pressing manner by the great majority of the inhabitants. I did not yield to their wishes. "The danger is too great," I said; "you see that every means is tried to destroy our holy religion; perhaps my enemies are only waiting for some such act on my part to make new complaints and invent fresh calumnies. Have patience; serve God in the interior of your houses; the time will yet come when we shall be able to render Him our homage in His own temple."

Seeing me inflexible, they had recourse to a stratagem, which was, indeed, well calculated to make a lively impression on my heart, and incline me to the greatest sacrifices. They

sent their children to me, one after another. These children threw their arms about my neck, and said : “ Will you then instruct us no longer ?”

“ Oh ! yes, my dear children,” I returned, “ I certainly will. Let us hope that it will not be long until you return to the church to repeat to me your lessons and catechism ; but the time has not yet come. You would not wish to see me go back to prison, would you ?”

“ Oh ! no, Sir,” exclaimed the poor children.

“ Well, then, have patience. In the meantime, pray to God with your whole heart ; love your fathers and mothers ; study hard, and be very good !”

I promised to go as often as possible, and instruct them at the houses of their parents, as long as circumstances did not permit me to gather them together as formerly.

At a time when it was the avowed tactics of the government to remove priests on the slightest pretexts, to “ strike the shepherds, that the sheep might be dispersed,” I felt that an attempt to resume the public exercise of religion might be injurious to its interests, by

furnishing fresh grounds for imprisoning me anew, and probably, this time, forcing me away for ever from my parishioners. I believed thenthat it would be for their advantage, as well as for that of the cause to which God had given me the grace of remaining faithful, to avoid, as best I could, giving new pretexts to malevolence by openly celebrating the holy mysteries. As it was only I whom the wicked pursued, I imitated the example of Saint Cyprian, on a like occasion ; I withdrew from public observation, confining myself to consoling and visiting secretly my parishioners, thus preserving myself for them and in the midst of them, so that I should not be away from them, or unable to resume my functions, openly and at once, whenever our tormentors would cease plotting against us.

We had not long to wait for the fulfilment of our ardent prayers. The time at last arrived when Bonaparte, despite the vicissitudes of war and the dangers of the deep, was brought back to the French soil, by that Providence which guides everything to its own ends. Shortly after the return of this remarkable

man came the 18th Brumaire, that memorable day on which the Jacobins were overturned, the theophilanthropists crushed, but all true Frenchmen consoled—that day which revived in all hearts the sweet hope of a happier destiny.

This last revolution changed the entire face of the country ; Bonaparte showed himself at once favourable to religion ; impiety was confounded, the festivals of the decade abolished ; the Christians conceived new hopes.

Finally appeared the constitution of the year 8 ; it was proposed for the acceptance of all Frenchmen, and Bonaparte was declared First Consul. The government, wishing to be assured of the patriotism of the ecclesiastics, required of them, at first, a declaration of fidelity to the constitution. Like all faithful priests, I refused to take this declaration except under certain restrictions. But Bonaparte, desirous of calming public apprehension, was satisfied with a promise of passive fidelity.

Then I determined to resume my functions. Having given the mayor notice of my intention, he came to my house, accompanied by

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his assistant, ostensibly for the purpose of receiving my declaration; but this mayor and this assistant—the same individuals who had got me twice imprisoned—unchangeable in their wickedness! wanted to compel me to take the old oath, which had made so much noise, and caused so much dissension and woe. I declared that I would perform in the strictest manner all that the government required, but beyond that I would not advance a step. They withdrew, apparently anything but satisfied. Meanwhile, animated with the desire of procuring for my parishioners the public succours of religion, I addressed the following letter to the Prefect :—

“CITIZEN,—Your presence in this department inspiring a just confidence, the inhabitants of my parish, feeling, like all sensible men, the need of paying their homage to the Divinity, by public worship, have invited me to resume the functions of my ministry. Entering into their pious views, having no object myself but peace and good order—condemning, as I do, everything that can be opposed to public good or to justice—I have the honour to address you,

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Citizen Prefect, and to beg you to have the goodness to receive my declaration. I promise, then, to be faithful to the Constitution; that is to say, I promise to do all in my power to spread good feeling among my fellow-citizens, and to maintain tranquillity, good order, and peace. These are the sentiments of my heart, and as such I now make them known to you."

"I receive," replied the Prefect, "the promise you make to be faithful to the Constitution; and invite you, in consequence, to resume, publicly, the exercise of the functions of your ministry of consolation and peace. While performing the functions of your ministry, you will not cease to be a citizen, and you shall be entitled to the protection of the government, as well as to the esteem and gratitude of all honest men."

I communicated the answer to the mayor and municipal assistant. These citizens were anything but pleased with the Prefect for presuming to receive a declaration couched in such terms. The mayor, particularly, expressed his profound indignation at the license of the

Prefect. Upon this, I said, jesting : “ I would advise you to go and find Bonaparte, and discuss the affair with him ; you can explain to him that he is a fool, who knows nothing of the science of government, and encroaches on your rights. Waiting until you and he agree together, I will to-morrow resume my functions, and I invite you to assist at the Holy Sacrifice which shall be offered to God as a thanksgiving on the joyful occasion.”

I re-entered my church, then, two years precisely, day for day, since the beginning of my second imprisonment. Except some of the more furious of the old Jacobins, all my parishioners joined me—the church was so thronged that no person was able to stir. All were penetrated with feelings of the most lively joy, and many shed tears of emotion and gratitude. I was deeply affected myself when I ascended the pulpit to preach to them, just as in other times ! I delivered the following address :—

“ What joy, what a consolation it is, my brethren, to see you again assembled in this holy place, after so long and painful a separation ! Let us believe that God permits these

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tribulations and crosses only to try us; and that by trying our constancy in His service and our love for Him, He at once exercises towards us His justice and His mercy. His justice, and how? It is, my brethren, because by permitting us to be deprived of the Divine service, the use of the Sacraments, and the other succours of religion, He punishes those amongst us, who, though saying, and perhaps believing that they are Catholics, exhibit their indifference towards God by a total disregard of the practice of His holy law; He punishes them by withdrawing from them the graces they have abused.

“ His mercy—because they who love Him, and are truly His, do not continue the less firm in their attachment to religion because they happen to be deprived of its external aids. They are not the less fervent in practising its duties; resigning themselves to its holy will; suffering persecution patiently; blessing God in the midst of their troubles; rendering themselves pleasing in His eyes by their submission, and drawing on themselves more abundant benedictions; and thus in them are verified

those words of Saint Paul : ' Everything turns to good for those who love God.' Let us believe, my brethren, that many of us have brought down those misfortunes on us by their indifference towards religion, and their want of zeal in fulfilling its obligations. Finally, we must say, that many Christians have made to themselves a religion which is no longer that of Jesus Christ, but only as much of it as suits their particular ideas. The true spirit of piety is misunderstood—it is made to consist entirely in the external practice of worship; and the religion of the heart, which is the soul of Christianity, is entirely neglected. Indeed, how many are there amongst us who wish to pass for Catholics, and who nevertheless almost never pray to God ; and when they pray, do so slothfully, and as a mere matter of custom ! How many are there who only come to the church when there is nothing to detain them at home, and who dispense with the Divine office on the slightest pretext ! How many are there who will tell you that children ought to be instructed in religion, ought to fulfil its duties, but who believe, or wish to believe, that all this

only concerns children, as if fathers and mothers were not bound to be models for their children; as if children alone should love and serve God; as if fathers and mothers should no longer instruct their children by their good example and conversation! How many are there who are devoured by such a ferocious hatred of their neighbour as to wish, and, what is often worse still, to do all the evil they can to those who have not the gift of pleasing them! How many are there who have shaken off all decency, all modesty, all shame—who use the most obscene language, and who deliver themselves, without scruple, to the most revolting actions!

“ It is this disorder, believe me, my brethren, it is this almost universal disorder which is the cause why God abandons us. He withdraws His graces from us, because nearly all abandon Him. Holy and just God! for what times have you reserved us! How long will your anger be excited against us! Lord, remember your people! Renew this parish, this vine, which your hands have planted, and which, before our calamities, added to your glory by

its fervour. And, oh ! my brethren, shall we be unworthy of beholding again that happy time? The arm of God, however, is not shortened. Jesus Christ is to-day what He was yesterday, and what He will be always. He summons, says the Scripture, what is not as well as what is ; He rules in death, He creates from nothing, and He can reproduce amongst us the wonders of which Ezekiel speaks. He can reanimate the dry bones, He can warm our benumbed and frozen hearts, He can rekindle in us the faith that is nearly extinguished, and renew the face of the earth. Let us not, therefore, harden our hearts to His voice ; let us not extinguish the light by which He still vouchsafes to illumine our minds ; let us not banish far from us the emotions by which He desires to touch our hearts ; but let us yield to the sweet influences of His grace ; let us swear to Him in presence of this sun, which is now shedding its rays on us, that henceforward we will be faithful to Him ; let us take, before these altars, a sincere resolution to lead a new life, and to put in practice this maxim, to which all the precepts of the law may be

reduced : ' You shall love the Lord your God with your whole heart, and with your whole strength, and your neighbour as yourselves.' Such, my brethren, is what I have recommended to you at all times, such is what I recommend to you to-day, and such is what you must do, if you wish to appease the wrath of Heaven, if you wish to draw on yourselves these precious graces, without which you can only live to your own ruin and condemnation.

"I say then, my brethren, you ought to love God with all your heart—that is to say, you ought, on every occasion, to take the side of God ; you ought to rise for the defence of God, do battle with the enemies of His glory, and maintain the purity of His worship. This is a duty peculiar to all conditions, an indispensable duty ; but, alas ! it is so much neglected amongst us, that hardly any faithful servants can be found, who dare to stand up for the God whom they adore, and make open profession of their faith in Him.

" You shall love the Lord your God—that is to say, you shall pray to Him every day, morning

and evening, before and after your meals and your labours ; you shall make an offering of your actions to Him, you shall give Him thanks, you shall sanctify the days that are consecrated to Him.

“ You shall love the Lord your God—that is to say, you shall instruct your children, watch over your servants, be careful that no impropriety, no disorder, exist in your houses, but that they resound with the praises and adoration of God. Every father of a family, my brethren, should be the first to put in practice what He commands, should be in everything a model of well regulated and Christian conduct. In truth, my dear friends, what is the use of recommending your children to pray to God morning and evening, to come on Sundays and Festivals to the Divine office, and render their homage to the Divinity ; what avails it to tell them not to swear ; that they ought not to be libertines, but retiring and modest ; that they ought to be chaste in their words and actions, regular in all their conduct—if you yourselves have no restraint, if you use filthy and scandalous language in their presence—if, finally, you

give the lie by your conduct to what you inculcate in your discourses ?

“ You shall love the Lord your God; but you shall also love your neighbour as yourselves ; that is to say, my brethren, you shall love not only those who love you, who are united to you by the ties of relationship, or by the same interests and inclinations ; but you shall even love those who are opposed to you, who do not like you, who appear to hold opinions different from yours, who have even shown themselves your enemies.

“ For you, said Jesus Christ to His disciples (and I tell you to-day, my brethren, the very same thing in His name), for you who wish to learn of me the ways of salvation, I will no longer flatter you, and I will announce to you the truth, however harsh it may appear to you — behold, then, what I say to you : ‘ Love your enemies, do good to those that hate you, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who calumniate you, that you may be the children of your Father who is in heaven, who makes His sun to rise on the good and bad, and who rains on the just and unjust.’ Believe me, it is

only by becoming imitators of His goodness that you can hope to be one day the inheritors of His glory.

“ Such, my friends, is what the law of God dictates to you ; and they who teach a doctrine contrary to this are seducing you, are destroying you. If we set up a conscience prejudicial to this doctrine, it is a criminal conscience ; and if we unite to it, as has but too often happened in these revolutionary times, the presumption of a vain knowledge, flattering ourselves that we are well-informed, and know how far the limits of charity extend, it is a knowledge re-proved by God, a knowledge which we condemn in others, when they apply it to us, whilst we justify it in ourselves, and have no hesitation in applying it to others.

“ Love one another, said our Divine Master continually to His disciples, I now say the same to you ; and I will add, with the Apostle Saint Peter: get rid of the malice, the animosity, the hatreds that infest your hearts. Discard for ever those deceptions and stratagems which you have employed for the purpose of taking advantage of one another. Banish false ap-

pearances, and no longer have recourse to that dissimulation, which, under a calm and serene countenance, hides the most lively resentment, and the most violent passions. Stifle the secret envy, the jealousy that makes the success of your brethren a torment to you. Never listen to those calumnies which extinguish all grace and charity in your souls, and often turn society into a hell. If any circumstance has brought division amongst you, forget it and unite once more in the bonds of charity ; but, following the advice of Saint Paul, watch on every side ; be like children in this, and remember that the simplicity of a child is generally of more use to a Christian than all the wisdom of the world. Remember that it is impossible to belong to Jesus Christ if we have not the Spirit of Jesus Christ, and that the Spirit of Jesus Christ is a Spirit of peace and charity.

“ Come, Divine Spirit, come into our hearts, and revive in them this precious virtue : if you recall it amongst us, if you banish everything that could weaken it, then, indeed, by a kind of creation, you will have renewed the face of

the earth. Work this miracle, Lord—work it for the whole Church, for France, but particularly for this parish that is now listening to me, in order that all who compose it, united henceforward by the bonds of sincere charity, may be eternally united in the enjoyment of the same felicity.”

Meanwhile the mayor and municipal assistant, stimulated doubtless by some incorrigible Jacobins, made me the object of a final vexation. They refused to leave the key of the church with me, so that I could enter it only whenever it suited them. The door was opened at six in the morning ; and as soon as I left, after Mass, a boy, who waited outside for me, closed the church, and brought the key to the assistant. It happened that, almost immediately after resuming my functions, I was obliged during the night time to go and administer the sacraments to some sick persons. I had, therefore, to start for the assistant's, knock him up, and get him to give me the keys of the church, for the purpose of enabling me to procure certain things required for the discharge of my duty. I thought that by patience I

might conquer his malice or pride : I remained then some time without complaining ; but, seeing that my patience only contributed to his triumph, I addressed a letter, couched in the following terms, to the Prefect :—

“CITIZEN,—In consequence of the letter with which you honoured me, I have resumed the functions of my sacred ministry. I cannot express how much the numerous inhabitants of my parish bless you for this consolation—a consolation they owe entirely to you—or how profoundly grateful I am myself. I have, Citizen Prefect, another favour to ask of you—it is to place in my possession the keys of my church, and all the effects it contains, which belong to me ; for I have bought or constructed the altars, sacred vessels, ornaments, &c., &c. Nevertheless, I have the disposal of nothing, and I have the humiliation to see a boy open the door and close it on me, as if I were a stranger. It has several times happened that I have been compelled, during the night, to go to the citizen assistant's for the purpose of being able to procure from the church the things necessary for administering the consolations of

religion to the sick. Sometimes, too, the Divine office has been put off to a late hour, to allow judicial investigations to be held in the church, as if in a profane place.

“I have uttered several protests against this in the most courteous manner possible, but they have been attended with no results ; I await a remedy for this disorder, Citizen Prefect, from your justice.”

This missive had the effect I intended.

“I have given orders, Citizen,” replied the Prefect, “that the key of the temple should be handed to you. It is but proper, since you have possession of the latter, that you should have the means of entering it at all times. On your side, Citizen, I have no doubt but that you will respond to the deference with which I shall insist on your being treated. You are a man of peace ; preach it, therefore ; make the free exercise of public worship contribute to the happiness of your fellow-citizens, by strengthening in them the respect they ought to have for the laws, and the love they owe to the government that protects them.”

A few days afterwards I received the following letter from the Sub-Prefect :—

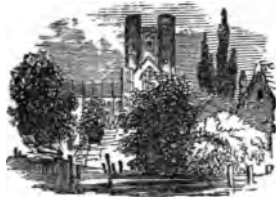
“ The Prefect informs me, Citizen, that the mayor of your commune has placed certain obstacles in the way of the free exercise of your ministry, and that he refuses even to give you the key of your church.

“ I am sorry you have not addressed your complaints directly to me with respect to this matter. I have now to inform you that I wrote on yesterday to Citizen B——, your mayor, with the view of recalling him to a line of conduct more in keeping with the principles consecrated by the laws, and the system of government on the liberty of public worship.

“ If my letter does not produce all the effect I ought to expect, I beg you inform me of the fact, that I may adopt the measures prescribed in such cases by the laws of which I have the honour to be the organ.”

In spite of all these letters and superior orders, another month passed before I had the key of my church at my disposal. Seeing that everything was useless; that these men despised authority, and turned my patience into

ridicule, I wrote to the Sub-Prefect, who ordered the key of the church to be given to me at once. It was brought to me immediately; and since that time I have experienced no further difficulty in the exercise of my ministry.





APPENDIX.



I.

[SHORTLY after the 9th Thermidor, the Abbé Dumesnil resumed the public exercise of his ministry. On that occasion he delivered an address to his flock, which, together with his remarks on the condition of affairs in his parish, we subjoin]:—

MEANWHILE, as religion is the food of the soul, and as misfortune often leads men back to God, the country people in every part of France demanded the restoration of their ancient worship; still the churches continued closed. I began at first to celebrate the holy mysteries in my hall; next in the chapel of the castle, when the ringleaders of the popular

society had been expelled out of it. Faithful imitators of all the excesses committed at Paris, the Jacobins were not satisfied with insulting and imprisoning the proprietors of the castle, from whom many of them, at a period not very distant, had solicited and obtained favours; they were not satisfied with sharing among themselves the demesne, meadows, &c., their sacrilegious fury went even the length of profaning the graves of the dead! I had just *reconciled* and consecrated the chapel anew, when I was again expelled from it, on the 12th Germinal, in consequence of a little Jacobin reaction excited by false intelligence from Paris.

At last the churches were reopened, after eighteen months of profanation and scandal. I re-entered that of Guerbaville, blessed it, dedicated it anew, and resumed the celebration of the Divine office. The people flocked to it in crowds; men, women, and children shed tears of joy. "Let us rejoice," I said to them; "let us thank God from the bottom of our hearts for the favour he has done us in restoring the public exercise of our religion. God, my

friends, chastises people in His mercy, when they forsake Him; the greatest misfortunes are often the expiation of the greatest crimes. There is nothing we should dread more than to provoke, by any new relapse, a new catastrophe. If we are so unhappy as to do so, the kingdom of God may be taken away from us for ever, and transferred to a more faithful people.

“What disorders and innovations have taken place during the last six years! The doctrine of men changes necessarily: your law, oh, my God! remains immutable. Heaven and earth shall pass away; ages and manners shall change; the monuments of pride shall be annihilated; revolution shall blot out every vestige of purely human works; but no revolution, however terrible it be, shall ever blot out a single precept of the Divine law.

“The great characteristic of truth is to be always the same, and the very instability of human affairs and human works only demonstrates this the more vividly. It is this, particularly, that leaves those children of rebellion and stubbornness without excuse, who abandon

the only stable doctrine, and yield to the perfidious suggestions which impiety breathes into their ear.

“ Nevertheless, we must not despair even of those who have permitted themselves to indulge in scandalous excesses. Cannot God show them His mercy? cannot He forget their offences? Let us, therefore, also pardon their lapse into error; let us forget their offences, as we hope that God will forget our offences, and pardon them. We should render ourselves guilty before God and man; we should provoke anew the anger of heaven, and draw on ourselves fresh calamities, if we rendered evil for evil, injury for injury. If we have any desire of vengeance, we must satisfy it solely by kind actions, and bury our indignation at all the evil that has been committed in eternal oblivion. Let me beg of you, then, to banish from your conversation all such words as Jacobin or Aristocrat, Fanatic or Renegade. Be all united; be a people of brothers. Let there be no murmurs; let us hear no more reproaches. **LET US LOVE ONE ANOTHER.** Our religion, which is a religion of mildness, charity,

and love, renders this a necessity. There is nothing in the Gospel so strongly recommended by Jesus Christ as this : ‘ Love one another as I have loved you !’ By our mildness, our moderation, our charity, let us force, if it be possible, those who refuse to love us to recognise at least the sanctity of our religion, and, perhaps, finally, be reconciled to us, so that being all, in Jesus Christ, united in heart and spirit, we may all form one heart and one soul.”

Thus, I tried to console those who wept, to excite to repentance those who had gone astray, and to repress the indignant feelings of those who were exasperated. Many of the latter were so enraged, that, in spite of my public exhortation to concord and forgiveness, they would have indulged in some excesses if I had not showed them individually that they would thereby lose the merit of their sufferings, and would even gravely compromise themselves in this world, for I saw clearly the Revolution was not finished. As one of the principal causes of the exasperation of these good people against the Jacobins was the treatment I had

received myself, I felt no hesitation in taking advantage of their affection for me, in the interest of peace. I made them feel that my enemies would not fail to accuse me of being, more or less, the instigator of any reprisals exercised on those who had persecuted me. "What! my friends," I said to them, "I have hardly escaped from shipwreck, and you wish to raise new tempests. The thunderbolt is suspended over your heads, the thunder is still rumbling in the distance, and you wish to provoke new storms. Believe me, if you commit any violence on those people, who, after all, have only obeyed, through fear, the orders of men more wicked and powerful than themselves, it will be said that I have stimulated you, and that you are acting by my advice. The consequence to me will be another imprisonment, and, perhaps, worse still."

By God's grace these observations touched their hearts. "Rest assured, sir," they said to me, "that we shall be tranquil for your sake; we would rather perish than cause you the least annoyance."

I was so fortunate, then, as to prevent a re-

currence of the violent scenes that took place during the first moments of the reaction that followed the 9th Thermidor; I even insisted that the Jacobins should not be subjected to any reproaches, and no language should be used of a nature calculated to prevent the perfect union of all parties. Thus, I proscribed certain songs, of a more or less lively character, which some of my parishioners were in the habit of singing under the windows of the hottest patriots, since the dissolution of their society. "If you insult your enemies," I said, "you become like them. You reproach them with blaspheming God and His holy religion, and you go and offend God yourselves, violate His holy law, since God orders you to love your brethren, and His religion commands you to revenge yourselves on your enemies by kindness towards them."

I had the happiness of seeing my counsels followed. Not a single Jacobin was insulted after the reopening of my church. Encouraged by our conciliatory attitude, many of these unhappy men returned to the fold. Gradually everything assumed an orderly aspect;

peace reigned once more amongst us—at least in appearance—and although the Jacobin reaction of Fructidor afflicted me with new calamities, I had at least the consolation of reflecting that I had spared many misfortunes to the best part of my parishioners, by exhorting them to moderation.

II.

[We give here some moral reflections, written by the Abbé Dumesnil, during his second imprisonment, for his own private edification and that of some pious women who assisted him. They are, for the most part, extracts from the Fathers of the Church, bearing on the misfortunes of the times and his own situation.]

1.

Teach me, O Divine Wisdom, what is the cause of the numerous evils I endure ! How comes it that the good suffer so many afflictions in this world, from which the wicked are exempt ? Is it to punish or rather to purify us ? or is it not that, when our enemy summons us to the war-

fare, as he formerly summoned Job, you make use of our misfortunes, O my God, as an oil to prepare us for the struggle, and strip us naked for the battle, in order to grant us the prize if we issue from it victors? You know all these things, O Lord: you govern the whole universe by wise and holy reasons, of which a pale reflection, an imperfect glimmer, only reaches us, because of the thick cloud which the things of this world interpose between us and your counsels!

2.

I speak to you, O my God, with too much freedom, unworthy sinner that I am! when I dare to ask the cause of these unutterable afflictions. I should confine myself to asking you for grace to bear them patiently until my last sigh.

3.

Alas! what is my crime? Am I then the only one of your ministers who do not treat your mysteries with sufficient holiness? Is it your design, O Lord, to purify me in the fire of affliction, or to restrain, by my example, the

pomp and pride of others? I have only a breath of life remaining; I have exhausted all my tears, and sorrow is my portion for ever. Support, O Lord, one who has the honour to be your priest, unworthy and imperfect as he may be, lest the sight of the evils he endures be to others a subject of scandal.

4.

True Christians feel more joy in suffering for the faith, though these sufferings be hid from the eyes of men, than others in acquiring glory and all the goods this world can give.

5.

How is it that we are the terror of those about us? Whence arises that fatal influence which renders us the authors of our own miseries? What is the origin of that pleasure we experience in wearying ourselves eternally, or rather, in finding, like madmen, a factitious excitement in the fever that consumes us, and in rejoicing at our own destruction? How is it that neither friend, nor neighbour, nor doctor, can cure this disease, and that all heavenly aid seems to fly far from us!

Why, O Lord, do you withdraw so far away from us? Why do you hide yourselves from us? Must we travel still farther and longer on this desolate journey? How will all this end? For myself, I fear that the signs I see around me are the harbingers of Antichrist. It is for this that the prophet Jeremiah mourns and sheds fountains of tears; for this he exclaims: "Consider ye, and call for the mourning women, and let them come: and send to them that are wise women, and let them make haste. Let them hasten and take up a lamentation for us: let our eyes shed tears, and our eyelids run down with water."

6.

There is nothing more worthy of a Christian than to procure peace. Let the only conflict we engage in be with the powers of darkness. Let us treat as brothers those who hate us; let us yield some little things to obtain greater ones—namely, peace and concord. Let us yield to them in order to overcome them.

THE END.

