

THE CHURCH AND THE FRENCH REVOLUTION.

Histoire de la Constitution Civile du Clergé. Par L. Sciout. 4 vol.
Paris. 1872-1881.

IT is a pity that the men who attempted, so many ages ago, to found and perfect on the famous Babylonian plain a city and a state independent of the Almighty Lawgiver and Governor of the universe, have not left us a detailed account of their design, their proceedings, and their final failure. The Book of Genesis, written by a descendant of that Heber who was himself a witness and an actor in the memorable enterprise, only contains a brief, unsatisfactory mention of it. From the very ruins heaped up on that land, the second cradle, in some respects, of the human race, they are yearly digging up monumental records which shed no little light on the narrative of Genesis. This, however, in its very conciseness, is full of a pregnant and far-reaching meaning. It teaches the world that no people can build itself a home, or secure to itself permanent prosperity, greatness, and glory, while setting aside the known will of the Creator, and violating the laws of nature, or His laws rather who is the Author of nature and its laws.

"Come!" said these purblind descendants of Noe, "let us make a city and a tower, the top whereof may reach to heaven; and let us make our name famous before we be scattered abroad into all lands."

It was the City of Pride. The builders, mindful of the then recent Deluge, only sought to erect a citadel so strong and so high that no avenging flood could reach up to its battlements. Had the unnatural crimes in which they indulged made them forget that the Lord of Heaven and Earth can, at His will, submerge beneath the waters the broadest continents with their loftiest mountains, and raise up from the deepest ocean-beds continents broader and fairer with mountains loftier still?

"And the Lord came down to see the City and the Tower which the children of Adam were building. And He said: Behold it is one people and all have one tongue; and they have begun to do this, neither will they leave off from their designs till they accomplish them in deed. Come ye, therefore, let us go down, and there confound their tongue, that they may not understand one another's speech. And so the Lord scattered them from that place into all lands; and they ceased to build the City."

The second Parent of the human race, NOE, was still living among that God-defying generation, together with his blessed son Sem and the progeny of the latter. It is not to be believed that either the great Patriarch or the son, from whose line the Messiah was one day to spring, had any share in the impious pride, the self-worship, the idolatry, or the mad ambition which *then* inspired the designs and ruled the councils of the founders of Babel.

The city and the tower, which at that early age of the world, human policy and pride sought to erect in opposition to the designs of Providence, are typical of all political institutions and civil societies which men would fain build up and animate with a life and an immortality independent of the Spirit of God. But Noe and Sem were the founders of another city, the first parents of another society, with which God was evermore to abide, imparting to it the possession of truth with all the promises of eternity.

“One kingdom is,” says Leo XIII.,¹ “that of God on earth, namely, the true Church of Christ, to which all who would belong, from their hearts and with due regard to their salvation, must needs serve God and His Only Begotten Son with their whole mind and most earnest will; the other kingdom is that of Satan, in whose obedience and power are all those who, following the fatal examples of their leader and our first parents, refuse to submit to the eternal law of God, and who, setting God aside, undertake many things against Him. These two kingdoms, like two cities (or states) ruled by opposite laws and following opposite purposes, are those which St. Augustine clearly discussed and described, compressing into the following words the efficient cause to which each owes its origin: *Two sorts of love gave rise to two Cities, the love of self going to the contempt of God to the Earthly City; the love of God reaching to contempt of self to the Heavenly City.*”

Never, since the rise of Mohammedanism, did the permanent conspiracy of “the City of Satan” against the Kingdom of God assume a more formidable shape, or wage a more destructive war against the Church, than in France during the last quarter of the eighteenth century. And no study can better enlighten the Christian scholar on the strategy used by the conspirators to compass their end—the annihilation of the Catholic hierarchy and priesthood, the extinction of Catholic worship and Catholic education, and the blotting out of Christianity itself from the land in which it was most firmly rooted.

The conspirators seemed, less than a century ago, to have succeeded completely. Providence, and the heroic resistance of the French clergy and people, baffled the persecutor when his power

¹ Encyclical *Humanum Genus*.

was most unsparing and irresistible. Still, though the conspiracy has been obliged to pause and to yield a great part of the vantage ground then gained, it has, all through the nineteenth century, been skilfully reorganizing its forces, reoccupying every available foothold of power and influence, until, exactly a hundred years after its first mighty triumphs, it proclaims itself ready to complete the work interrupted or suspended under the Directory and the Consulate.

A careful survey and analysis of the gigantic struggle which then took place, from 1789 to 1801-1802, will enable us now, as the conspirators return to the fray more powerful, more confident, and more merciless, to weigh the chances of success on either side, and to forecast the result.

As the year 1789 dawned upon the world, France, though fallen from the military supremacy which she had held in the reign of Louis XIV., was still in undisputed possession of that moral supremacy which gave her the first rank among the nations of Christendom. The peoples who had driven her fleets off the seas, and beaten her armies on the battle-field, were the first to yield to her intellectual superiority, to acknowledge the sway of her literature, her arts, and her manners. Before another decade had passed away all Europe would have to tremble before the victorious French legions.

The Popes, who had been the bestowers of all imperial and kingly titles in the Christian society which arose on the ruins of the Roman Empire, had also given to the sovereigns and peoples of Christendom the honorific titles merited by their achievements and glorious services to religion. The sovereigns of Great Britain still cling, with a not very commendable pride, to the title of "Defender of the Faith," bestowed by Leo. X. on the eighth Henry in acknowledgment of the latter's vindication of Catholic truth against Luther.

The Emperor of Austria and King of Hungary still claims the title of "Apostolic Majesty," bestowed by the Pope on St. Stephen, the first King of Hungary, the apostle and parent of his people. From the same authority, the fountain of all true honor and nobility, came to the kings of Spain the envied title of "Most Catholic"; to those of Portugal the title of "Most Faithful"; and to the Kings of France that of "Most Christian." This supreme distinction was extended to their entire realm, which the successors of St. Peter loved to call "the Most Christian Kingdom"; and France herself from olden times was fondly designated as "the Oldest Daughter of the Church."

By a singular coincidence, the same volume of the Pontifical Acts of Leo XIII. which contains the magnificent encyclical on

Freemasonry also gives us the authentic text of another encyclical (*Nobilissima Gallorum gens*), addressed to the archbishops and bishops of France. The former encyclical describes the anti-Christian conspiracy which was directed in the last century toward the overthrow and utter destruction of the Church in France; the latter aims to encourage, sustain and direct the faithful hierarchy, priests and people, of "the Most Christian Kingdom" in their present gigantic struggle with the triumphant Masonic conspirators.

Weisshaupt and Voltaire chose the Most Christian Kingdom, while it was under the corrupting and degrading sway of Louis XV., as the field on which they could most successfully conspire to ruin the Church, to discredit and destroy the Catholic religion, and with it Christianity itself.

Certain it is that now, as we write, there is no longer a "Most Christian King" in the political order to represent the "Oldest Daughter of the Church"; and that the men who now govern France are anything and everything but jealous of claiming for themselves and the nation the once proud and glorious title of "Most Christian."

The overwhelming majority in both houses of the French Legislature are daily becoming more noisy and more pressing in their demand for repealing the Concordat of 1801-1802, and thus undoing what the first Bonaparte had done to restore the Church overthrown by the French Revolution. The Masonic lodges, represented by this parliamentary majority, are loud in declaring, through the all-powerful daily and periodical press which they own, that this repealing of the Concordat will clear away the ground for the anti-Christian social edifice which they contemplate erecting in the ancient kingdom of Saint Louis.

Nothing but the most preternatural forbearance on the part of Leo XIII., of his official representatives in Paris, and of the French archbishops and bishops themselves, could have staved off, from month to month and year to year, the final and inevitable rupture between the French Government and the Vatican.

There is no use in endeavoring to demonstrate to men who are either irrevocably pledged to a certain course, or forcibly urged forward by the mighty Masonic power behind them, that it would be a most sound and salutary policy to keep up friendly relations with the Holy See, the great moral and conservative force of the civilized world. It would require superhuman wisdom and superhuman eloquence to make men wilfully blind to open their eyes to the folly, the madness, of weakening the national unity by paralyzing or destroying the mightiest of all vital forces—religious conviction

and sentiment—at a time when the nation is isolated, doomed and perishing.

Such are some of the perils of the actual condition of things in France, among a people whose national character in their glorious Christian days, and whose achievements in the past, both in peace and in war, must win the admiration and sympathy of mankind.

Leo XIII. never uses words in vain. France, and even the infidel and Voltairian press of France, read with a thrill of pride the praise so justly bestowed by the Pontiff on the Frenchmen who had raised the name of their country to such a height of fame. "The most noble French nation," he says, "by their many illustrious achievements in peace and war, acquired in the eyes of the Catholic Church the singular glory of meritorious deeds for which she preserves an undying gratitude, and the glory of which can never wane. By the Christian training and institutions, to which, under the leadership of Clovis, she was initiated at an early period, she did indeed well deserve, as a testimony and reward of her faith and piety, the name of the '*Oldest Daughter of the Church.*' From that distant period . . . your forefathers seem to have been the helpers of Divine Providence itself in accomplishing mighty and salutary results; but in an especial manner has their courage gloriously shone in maintaining the Catholic name, in spreading among barbarous peoples the Christian faith, in freeing and protecting the holy places of Palestine, so as to justify the truth of the popular saying, '*Gesta Dei per Francos*,—the exploits of God through the Franks.'

"And on this account it came to pass that [your ancestors] by devoting themselves in a spirit of faith to the interests of Catholicity, have become in a manner intimately associated with the glories of the Church, and have founded very many institutions, public and private, in which are displayed the powerful influence of religion, of charity, and of greatness of soul."¹

It was, therefore, a masterly stroke of the Satanic policy of the eighteenth-century conspirators to destroy the Church in such a nation; to blot out Christian faith from the lives of the people; to turn the chivalric and heroic genius which had spread, protected and represented the Christian name all over the globe into the genius of Antichristian propagandism.

But how did the conspirators go about their work?

Here lies the chief interest for the serious-minded Christian or student of history. The facts themselves, as they are rapidly and tragically evolved from month to month, from year to year, bring with them such examples of sublime heroism, in men and women

¹ Encyclical *Nobilissima Gallorum Gens*, Feb. 8th, 1884.

of all classes, as have never been surpassed in any age or in any country.

If among the 60,000 members of the French clergy at the beginning of 1789 there were found a small, a very small minority of worldly, ambitious, weak, or unworthy men, the fidelity, the purity, the devotion, the invincible constancy of the remaining host of Christian priests offer a spectacle never beheld on the same scale of grandeur.

The priesthood and people of Ireland can alone furnish a parallel to the trials to which the French Catholics were subjected during the twelve years which followed 1788. In France they were indeed twelve years which tested to the utmost the supernatural virtues of the persecuted millions. In Ireland the persecution raged for centuries. All the powers of Hell seemed let loose on the then living generation of Frenchmen. In Ireland generation after generation passed unshrinking through the fiery furnace. Nor are the present sufferings of the majority of Irishmen without their deep cause in the anti-Catholic passions inherited from an unhallowed and oppressive ascendancy.

Since 1878 the Church of France has again fallen *sub hostili dominatione*. As we write these lines the measures taken against her hierarchy, and the open persecution authorized or tolerated against her clergy, secular and regular, as well as against her religious congregations of men and women, are only the shadows—shadows dark and portentous—of mighty events near at hand.

Strange to say, the first step of the Antichristian conspirators of 1788–89 was to impose on the Catholics of France an ecclesiastical establishment that resembled in more than one feature the Protestant Establishment sought to be forced on the acceptance of Irish Catholics by Henry VIII., Edward and Elizabeth.

What is known in history as the Civil Constitution of the French Church was a part and parcel of the new political Constitution forced on Louis XVI. in 1789. In the Constituent Assembly, which framed that instrument, both the higher and lower clergy were represented. But these representatives were both insufficient in numbers and without any express or adequate powers from those who sent them; to make or sanction the mighty changes in Church and State brought about by the revolutionary majority.

Moreover, the Civil Constitution of the Clergy was simply devised to create a schismatic church, wholly dependent on the State, bound hand and foot to the civil authority, destined to exist, to act, to live and move, and exercise its functions, without deriving its jurisdiction from the Vicar of Christ, or being in any wise subordinated to the centre of Catholic unity and government.

It is a fundamental doctrine of the Catholic faith that the

Church, wheresoever she exists, constitutes a society perfect in itself, with its own divinely given power to legislate, teach, administer the sacraments, to direct and govern all its members in whatever pertains to their spiritual welfare and eternal salvation.

In the national church of France, as conceived by the Constituent Assembly, as it came, modeled, moulded, trammelled, and fitted for action, from the brain and hand of its creators, there was nothing but a State machine, adapted for the performance of State functions. Its ministers were only public functionaries, made by the State, liable at will to be unmade by it, working for it alone, salaried by it like any other of its officers, receiving from it the breath of life, and looking to no other authority or power beyond the State for its *raison d'être*.

This Civil Constitution left, therefore, to the enslaved Church of France no shadow of that divine independence and inalienable freedom which the Church of Christ holds by her institution from her Divine Founder.

The first step taken toward destroying this independence was the confiscation of all church property. The needs of the public treasury were put forth as a pretext for this. But the Jansenists, Protestants, Voltairians, and Jacobins, who formed the dominant faction in the Assembly, wished to take away from the Clergy all their property, because they considered property to be, in every well ordered and stable community, the basis of independence and social freedom.

Not only was ecclesiastical property of every kind taken gradually away from its owners, but the State at length claimed the sacred vessels on the altar and the vestments used in the sanctuary.

Thus despoiled and enslaved, the French clergy would, its enemies thought, accept whatever functions or conditions the State chose to impose on them.

The Revolutionist majority in the Assembly fancied, it may be, that such of their clerical colleagues as the Bishop of Autun, Talleyrand, or the Jansenist Abbé Grégoire, could be taken as samples of priestly virtue and constancy. Such men only represented the small worldly-minded minority among the glorious priesthood of France. They were the dross among the mass of pure gold which, cast into the fierce flames of the revolutionary furnace, came out thrice chastened and most worthy of the divine acceptance.

We have before us, as we write these lines, the text of the Civil Constitution sought to be forced on the French Clergy as the everlasting code of their degradation and servitude.

By a stroke of the legislative pen all the ancient sees of France

are suppressed. The old provincial demarcations have been obliterated, and the surface of the kingdom is divided into eighty-four departments. Each of these departments is to form a diocese to be presided over by a bishop. The Holy See, to which it belongs by inherent right to found a diocese and fix its limits, to institute a bishop and to give him jurisdiction over a definite portion of the flock of Christ, was entirely left out of the question both in the creation and limitation of these new dioceses, and in the nomination, consecration, and institution of the new bishops.

The political quacks and knaves who manufactured this strange code of ecclesiastical polity, boasted aloud that they were only remodeling Christianity in France on the ideal of the primitive Christian societies. Therefore did they reduce the clergy to a state of the most dependent, and, therefore, the most degrading poverty.

Moreover, as they were inaugurating a new democratic era, they would have the appointment to every office in their new church made by popular election. The departmental electors chose the bishop and submitted the choice to the state authorities. The bishop-elect thus approved by the civil power was, upon presentation of the proper official documents, to be consecrated by the neighboring bishops. These were bound to give their brother consecration and institution in the name of the State, without in any manner waiting for the consent of the Pope. The bishop thus inducted into his see was at liberty to notify the successor of St. Peter of his appointment, such notification being deemed by the legislators to be all that was required to keep up communion with the head of Catholicity!

In like manner the rectors of parishes were chosen by the district electors, the bishop being notified of the choice, and the nominee inducted into his charge by the local civil authorities.

The creative power of the State ran through every part of this Civil Constitution of the Clergy, calling forth everything into being, giving to persons, offices and functions their existence, form, and vitality.

It was all of the earth—earthy—of heaven, of what pertained to the really spiritual, supernatural, Christian order, there was no element there.

Of course no priest but an ambitious, unscrupulous, reckless one, would aspire to the evil eminence of becoming one of these "Constitutional" bishops, or would accept such a nomination when it came unsought to him. Of course, every cleric who sought or obtained office or benefice under such a bishop, felt that he acted in opposition to his own conscience, as well to the traditions and laws of the Church Catholic.

As we have said, the Pope was not consulted in this religious revolution and transformation. On the contrary, the authors and leaders of this momentous change openly professed their contempt of the Papal authority, and spoke of the Holy See and its prerogatives in the most insulting terms.

The weak Louis XVI., after many protestations and much hesitancy, gave his signature and sanction to this Civil Constitution of the Clergy.

The members of the lawful hierarchy in France, with two or three exceptions, refused to acknowledge the new ecclesiastical order of things. The dignified and the parochial clergy stood firmly by their chiefs. The only defections were among the few of the unworthy and ambitious who sought elevation, office, and pelf for their own sake.

And then began the struggle between the new intruders and the lawful hierarchy and priesthood of France. On the side of the former was arrayed the omnipotence of the State, wielded too with the violence and ferocity which an anti-Christian revolution lent to legal proceedings and popular movements.

Be it said just here that the fearful rapidity with which events were precipitated in France during 1789 and the four following years, went far to unsettle men's minds. Pius VI., so long as the Constituent Assembly only dealt with political changes and reforms, prudently abstained from all interference.

But it was otherwise when the Assembly laid its hand on the Church and invaded the sanctuary. The Pope was deeply pained by the king's action in giving the royal sanction to the Civil Constitution of the clergy. He wrote to his Majesty condemning both the royal act and the schismatic legislation which it approved. Pius VI. also wrote to some of the most exalted dignitaries in the French Church, formally reproving all that had been done against the canons and the essential rights of the divine society established by Christ.

As the French law forbade the publication in the kingdom of all Pontifical letters without the previous permission of the Council of State, these briefs of Pius VI. had not been officially published. The civil authorities and the new State bishops sturdily affirmed that no such documents existed. They went even so far as to maintain that the Pope had given his sanction to the Civil Constitution, and spurious briefs and Pontifical letters were printed and scattered broadcast throughout the country, approving all that had been done by the King and the Assembly.

In the midst of the revolutionary whirlwind and storm which prevailed in France, without intermission and with ever-increasing

fury all through these years, it was, unhappily, easy enough to deceive, or to be deceived, on such matters as Pontifical briefs.

Certain it is that long after the Civil Constitution of the Clergy had become a dead letter, and the schismatical body, which it substituted for the Church of France, had become a foul odor and evil memory, a good many persons, lay and clerical, were found who still believed that Pius VI. had approved the *Constitutionnels*, and that the condemnatory bulls issued against these were mere forgeries.

Authentic history has furnished many peremptory proofs of the fact that the schismatic church, thus created by the French Assembly, was only intended by its authors to serve to discredit the Catholic religion, and thereby to prepare public opinion for the destruction of Christianity itself.

As all the churches in France were forcibly handed over to the schismatics, so no form of public worship would be tolerated save that performed by the Constitutional bishops and their clergy. Every argument and effort, short of the most extreme violence, were made use of to compel people to be present at the Mass celebrated by the intruders. And in Paris, as well as in all the cities and country places in France, the most extreme violence, torture, bloodshed, and death itself, were resorted to against all who ventured to assist at Mass celebrated by a good priest.

The shameful and terrible scenes which were thus enacted everywhere, either in the name of the law or by the murderous villains who pretended to uphold its authority, were knowingly intended and encouraged by the revolutionary leaders for the purpose of making public worship itself odious, the most solemn rites of religion ridiculous, and thus leading, by a natural and practical sequence, to the suppression of all religious worship.

This sequence, in its logical and chronological order, is clearly marked in the records of the French Revolution.

Women, as is their wont, were most forward in their zeal to hear Mass and seek the consolation of the Sacraments from the faithful and proscribed ministers of God. The weakness of their sex proved to be no protection against the mingled ferocity and brutality of the street mobs, intoxicated by the strong wine of Jacobinism and frenzied by the blood they daily shed with perfect impunity, if not with the connivance of the clubs.

“On the 9th of April, 1791, a band of char-women, who had become an integral part of all street riots, together with a crowd of men, some of whom were dressed in women’s clothes, broke successively into the convents of Paris, seized the nuns and other ladies who had retired to the convents, dragged them forth into the street, and there amused themselves by beating and scourg-

ing them publicly with rods. The municipal authorities were careful not to interfere with their pleasant occupation."

Such is the first act of this kind of torture related by the historian of the Civil Constitution.

These abominable scenes took place in the capital soon after the instalment of the infamous apostate Gobel as Archbishop of Paris. "The number of nuns and other women who were thus scourged," the same author says, "was enormous. Three Sisters of St. Vincent of Paul, residing in the parish of Sainte Marguerite, died in consequence of this odious treatment."

It became the rule, wherever people were seen to go to any church but the Government churches, to assemble at the door, seize the women who came out or attempted to enter, and to whip them, no matter what their age or their condition. In Brittany and elsewhere the most shocking scenes of cruel brutality were enacted, in which the wives of the Government officials were the leading actors and the victims were cloistered nuns and Catholic ladies guilty of no crime but that of fidelity to their vows and their religion.

The poor king was himself continually besieged and his life even threatened in order to compel him to send away his Catholic confessor and chaplains, and to submit to the services of "Constitutional" priests. As Eastertide came round, the revolutionary press clamored loudly for his giving a proof of obedience to the laws, by receiving communion publicly from a schismatic priest. He compromised the matter—weakly and without pleasing anybody—by assisting with the queen and the court at a High Mass, celebrated in Saint Germain l'Auxerrois, by one of Gobel's priests.

Poor king, indeed! who knew how to die heroically, but who had never known what it was to rule and govern!

As the law imposed an oath of loyalty and obedience to the new Constitution on all who held any kind of office in the transformed French Church, a new term came immediately into use, designating and dividing into two classes the clergy of France, the schismatics or "Constitutionals" being called *prêtres assermentés* ("priests who had taken the oath"), and the Catholics being called *non-assermentés, non-jureurs*, or simply *prêtres réfractaires* ("disobedient priests"). The oath itself, in so far as it demanded the formal validity and approval of a Constitution at once schismatical and heretical, could not be taken in conscience by any true child of the Church.

Presently the denomination of *réfractaires* began to attach to the faithful laity as well as to the faithful priests, and marked both of them out for the assassin, the prison, or the guillotine. At first, and while the most strenuous efforts were employed to have

the Constitutional Church, its worship and ministrations accepted by the Catholic masses, the Jansenists and Protestants (like Camus and Barnave), who were the parents of this new establishment, borrowed from the religious history of Great Britain and Ireland the terms of Conformist and Nonconformist and applied them to the schismatics and Catholics respectively.

But events in France went forward with a rapidity which baffled the forethought and calculations of statesman, legislator, and philosopher. The masses in the cities, indoctrinated with the theories of the Illuminati and Voltairians, allowed the clubs to plan and the legislative assemblies to discuss laws, and to mature grand financial schemes, while they turned into acts of wholesale plunder, massacre, and oppression the notions thinly disguised under the splendid eloquence of Mirabeau, or boldly advocated as immediately practicable by Marat or the *Père Duchesne*.

The revolutionary torrent, once let loose, is an Alpine stream in springtide, which bursts over its banks, rushes madly down the declivity, inundates and devastates the plain, carrying with it bridges and dikes, and bearing along among its numberless victims both the strong man who tried to breast the current and the weak man who had sought to save himself by swimming with the tide. Such was the thought, if not the very language, of one who had witnessed the ravages of the French Revolution—the illustrious De Bonald.

The decree of the Assembly prescribing that all loyal French priests should take forthwith the oath of obedience to the constituted authorities and the established order of things, was accompanied or closely followed by an order banishing from French territory or imprisoning the non-conformists. Hundreds of priests were assassinated by bands of Jacobins in the interior of France or as they sought to reach the frontiers. The cry had been raised and re-echoed industriously that the emigrated nobles and priests were conspiring near the borders of the kingdom with the enemies of France. Armies of invasion were already in motion, it was said, led by “the monsters which France had vomited forth.”

In Paris, in Versailles, and their neighborhood, the prisons and the monasteries confiscated by the Government were filled with men and women, with priests, nobles and magistrates, who had, as non-conformists, incurred the hatred of the Jacobins, or who, on simple suspicion, had been denounced by the clubs and arrested.

Who has not heard of the September massacres in Paris? The “History of the Civil Constitution of the Clergy”¹ affirms that the then Minister of Justice, Danton, organized these massacres, as he plainly paid the murderers out of the public purse.

¹ This work has received a premium from the French Academy.

During the last month the streets of Paris bore placards in flaming characters inviting proposals for a monumental statue to Danton to be set up next year. For is he not one of that giant brood of the Revolution who, after deluging France with blood, ended by destroying, devouring each other?

Surely, as the centennial celebration of 1789, the Revolutionary period it opened, approaches with rapid strides, we are justified in believing that it is not without a purpose that such names are called up and glorified in presence of the posterity of the men who did these deeds of blood.

Will the present rulers of France learn no wisdom *now* from the fearful lessons given *then* to their country and the world? With all our heart we do pray God to save Frenchmen from themselves and the logical consequences of the memories and the doctrines they cherish.

We have only made a passing allusion to the "September Massacres." They may be said to mark the real beginning of that Reign of Terror than which nothing more fearful has ever been recorded in history. It dates from August 10th, 1792, when the two rival factions of Girondists and Jacobins united their forces and compelled the king to abdicate. The authority of the Legislative Assembly was set aside by the insurgent clubs, and the Commune of Paris became the supreme power in France.

On the 11th of August, in a public session of this same Commune, it was boldly proclaimed that every member of the Royalist party and its abettors, who had been worsted and humiliated the day before, "were devoted to the guillotine."

It demanded—commanded, rather—that the Assembly should give over six millions of francs to pay the services of the men it had hired; and that very day the Assembly bestowed on every one of the 36,000 municipal councils of France the absolute right to take cognizance of all crimes of a nature to threaten either the internal or the external security of France.

This was giving to each city, town and hamlet the power to hunt, arrest, judge and execute every man, woman and child hateful to the Jacobins, who at that moment covered the entire kingdom with the network of their clubs and fearful espionage.

On August 17th, at the demand of the Commune, the Legislative Assembly created the Revolutionary Tribunal. Forthwith, and without a moment's delay, the now all-powerful Commune established a Committee of Surveillance, to receive and enregister all denunciations. It received on the spot the prophetic and truthful appellation of the Committee of Execution. Thus was wholesale murder organized and legalized; its machinery all ready and only waiting for a signal to begin its bloody work.

Already, on August the 11th, the Jacobin Central Club in Paris issued an order to all its members to spread everywhere the report that on the preceding day the non-conformist priests had disguised themselves as Swiss guards and had attempted to massacre the friends of the Revolution.

On the 13th it was announced in the Assembly that the town council of Rouen, friendly to the king, had purchased eight cannons, three thousand muskets, and that the city was drilling five thousand priests to the use of arms.

The next day the Assembly decreed that all the bronze monuments to be found in the churches of Paris and the provinces should at once be melted and made into cannons. Then came, in hot haste, an order from the Commune to break up and melt all the crucifixes and lecterns in the churches and chapels, to leave but two bells for each parish, and to deliver forthwith to the mint every vessel of gold and silver in the sacristies or on the altars.

"The most sacred worship of all," said the Mayor of Paris in a proclamation, "IS LAW. . . . The misery of the people calls for the suppression of these superfluous bells. They only sound to flatter the pride of the rich, the enemies of equality even after death, who will have these bells disturb the poor man's sleep."

One can imagine the agitation, the excitement, the terror, which all these decrees, these orders, these rumors, tended to create in the minds of the peaceful masses.

But, the reader will ask, was there no army in France, to stand by the king, the head of the State, to protect citizens from anarchy and riotousness?

No! Step by step the military forces of France had been disorganized, broken up, scattered, annihilated. A kind of citizen-soldiery, called the National Guard, arose in the cities at the bidding of the Jacobin clubs, with which most of the members of this force and all its officers were affiliated. These guards became everywhere the shameful abettors of illegal violence and murder.

Moreover, in every locality, the municipal government was, in fact, supreme. Its decrees and its acts were all the more sure to be applauded in Paris, that they displayed a greater zeal in punishing and exterminating "the enemies of the Revolution."

The Catholics were, in city, town, village and country-side, the "mad dogs" which all could hunt and kill and be thanked for it. Why wonder, then, at the September massacres?

On August the 31st, the eve of this never-to-be-forgotten saturnalia of blood, Tallien read in the Legislative Assembly a long address or message from the Commune in which was found this striking sentence:

"We had all the priests, disturbers of the peace, arrested; we

have had them placed in confinement in conformity with your decree, *and before many days are over the soil of Liberty shall be cleansed of their presence.*

Examining the official daily reports of the National Guard of Paris on September 3d, the third day of the massacres, we have the following entry :

“ A crowd of armed persons went last night to the prisons and did justice to the evil-disposed of August 10th. *There is nothing else. Patrols and rounds made exactly in the legions (districts).*”

This is eloquent enough and needs no commentary.

To the Legislative Assembly succeeded the National Convention, elected on the very day when the prisons and streets of Paris were running red with the blood of priests and bishops. Thus, born in blood, its baneful existence was marked by the hecatombs unceasingly immolated in the desecrated names of liberty, equality and fraternity.

On September 21st the Convention declared that royalty was abolished in France. The Republic was proclaimed the next day. Within the bosom of this sanguinary assembly the two great parties, Girondists and Jacobins, or Sans-culottes, began the bitter conflict to be ended on June 2d, 1793, by the defeat and proscription of the former.

Before then the ill-starred Louis XVI. terminated his life on the scaffold, displaying in his captivity, his trial and his death, the virtues which atoned for the weakness and mistakes of a reign which he would have made a happy and a prosperous one had his lot been cast in other times.

His heroic wife and sister perished after him, the former standing forth amid the lurid light of that epoch as the sublimest tragic figure of all time ; her sister-in-law, Elizabeth, appearing by her side as the angel of Divine consolation and gentleness.

How many other noble men and women, noble in every sense of the word, but rendered infinitely so by their sufferings and their Christian fortitude, pass in countless procession before the eye of the historian during that year of terror, 1793 ! Where can be found such a vindication of Christian culture, Christian civilization at its highest, as in the conduct, under unequalled trial, of these leading classes of French society, offering calmly the flower of their manhood and womanhood to be cut off by the pitiless guillotine, while the mob jeered and they prayed for France and her people with their latest breath ?

The leading classes in the kingdom of Saint Louis had, in the preceding hundred years, given examples and favored opinions which Providence could not allow to remain unpunished. France had been raised to a sort of primacy among the nations of Chris-

tendom. The scandals of the two long reigns of the fourteenth and fifteenth Louis had to be expiated by the martyrdom of Louis XVI. and his magnanimous queen.

We see around us in the Paris, in the France of 1888 the descendants of that old nobility devoting their whole existence to the defence of religion and the welfare of the laboring classes. They are the men on whom the world relies for the final regeneration of their people and country.

Others there are, also, who seem bent on following the giddy, pleasure-loving, self-seeking crowd around them in their blind, headlong race to perdition. They seem to have learned nothing, nothing, from the glorious examples of their kinsfolk and class in 1792 and 1793.

Does Providence, or shall we rather not say nature, whose laws and lessons these men and women so criminally violate, intend to renew for them within the next decade the teachings and trials of a hundred years ago?

But while clergy and nobles were thus leading all classes of the French people in that right-royal road of suffering and devotion, the revolutionary factions were destroying each other.

Robespierre and Saint Just immolated hecatombs of the Girondists who had been so ardent in proscribing, banishing, massacring the faithful French clergy and non-conformist laymen.

Then came the turn of the ferocious Danton and his blood-stained acolytes, sent to the guillotine by the same Robespierre. And so the terrible orgies of mingled impiety and bloodshed went on, till the demons who governed France, appalled and horrified by the monstrous cruelty of the leading terrorist, seized him, tried and sentenced himself and his peers in atrocity to the death they had meted out to so many thousands.

Then came a momentary lull in the storm. The earthquake, the whirlwind, and the flame ceased awhile to rob men of their sleep by night and their reason by day. But the persecution against the devoted, the unconquerable, priests of France continued without abatement.

Without speaking of the thousands who perished from 1789 to 1801, within the limits of French territory, falling by the hands of the Jacobin murderers, by the guillotine, the wholesale fusillades, the *noyades* or wholesale drownings at Nantes, hundreds upon hundreds met a premature death in the prisons, in the convict ships at Rochefort, in the fetid transports which conveyed them to the coasts of Spain and Italy, or bore them to the distant, fever-haunted shores of French Guyana. Here they were, of a set purpose, sent away into the most unwholesome part of a country which at its best is fatal to the European colonist. They were huddled to-

gether in long sheds built of wattles and covered only with branches, the breeding place of venomous reptiles and insects innumerable.

Through this roof the equatorial rains poured down in torrents on the wretched inmates, who were compelled to sleep as best they might on the soaked ground. And as to wholesome or sufficient food, or care for the sick and the aged, such things could not be thought of in a place of perpetual torture, well called *la guillotine sèche* (the dry guillotine), because the blood of the martyrs was not daily poured forth on the earth that witnessed such cruelty.

No; the blood of these heroic sufferers did not cry out to Heaven from the soil of our America. But the voice of their daily prayers did continually ascend to the Mercy Seat on high. For, in the authentic accounts left us of these confessors of the faith in Guyana, we are told that, with all their unspeakable sufferings and wretchedness, the daily life of these prisoners was as regular and edifying as that led at Clairvaux by St. Bernard and his first disciples. The divine office was recited at the appointed hours; the long morning meditation was made in common—a bath of life, renovating all the energies of the soul, and lifting up the infirm body itself to share the sublime energy of the spirit.

All this happened under the Directory. When, at length, an order came to bring back to France the remnants of that martyr-band, it was only to pen them up once more in the naval fortresses of the Isle of Rhé—as if the persecutor hoped that not one of his victims should survive to relate what they had been made to endure.

As to the exiled French priests, England, Ireland, the United States, and Canada have not forgotten their virtues. In our New World they seemed naturally to take up the work begun and carried on two centuries before by French Franciscans and Jesuits, by the priests of Saint Sulpice and the missionaries of the Seminary of Quebec. We can never repay the debt we owe them.

But we can, as 1889 brings to our mind the centennial memory of their sufferings, give to their brethren and successors in France, and to the noble people so honored by their Christian heroism, the hearty tribute of our sympathy and prayers.

For, unless we sadly mistake the signs of the times, both the French Catholics and their clergy are about to pass through an ordeal which shall test that same Christian heroism as fully as the persecutions of Girondist or Terrorist.

One fearful engine of persecution and torture exists in the France of to-day, which was only feebly represented a century ago by Marat's *Ami du Peuple*, and by the ferocious *Père Duchesne*; that is, the ubiquitous, all-powerful, and anti-Christian press of Paris and the Provinces.

The Jacobin Clubs of the French Revolution, covering as they did the entire kingdom, created among the masses, among the needy and turbulent working city classes especially, a murderous public opinion directed against religion, against the Church, the clergy, the religious orders, and all ecclesiastical institutions.

This public opinion, systematically fostered, kept up a Satanic hatred of the very name of priest, and of everything connected with his profession. Side by side with this monstrous hatred a contempt of religion was fostered, which was as effective as the homicidal hatred itself.

As I read the discourses pronounced in the States General of 1789, in the Constituent Legislative Assemblies, and in the National Convention, I find that the foremost orators give continual vent to both of these sentiments. They give their coloring to the legislative decrees, the official reports, the language of the clubs, the editorials in the press, the countless, clever, and inflammatory pamphlets with which the country was deluged. These same pamphlets, more perhaps than anything else, continually excited the people to contempt and hatred of religion, and then to the murder of all religious persons.

The assassins in the pay of Danton, who broke into the prisons of Paris and slaughtered indiscriminately men and women, had but two words by which they addressed their victims—*scélérat* (villain), *misérable* (wretch). Not a bishop fell, unresisting, beneath the hand of the executioner, or the stroke of the assassin, but was apostrophised in this way.

The cargoes of priests who were sent across the ocean to perish miserably on the voyage, or to suffer and die obscurely in the swamps of Guyana, were all spoken of as if they were the deepest-dyed criminals, the vilest among the vile. And this language is persistently applied to them by the men in power, by legislators and officials, down to the time of the First Consulate.

This same policy and practice is skilfully pursued in France at the present time. One needs only to be present in the French Chambers during any discussion where the interest of the laboring classes, the question of education, the maintenance of the Budget of Public Worship, or the exemption of clerics from military service are concerned, to be convinced, by the insulting and outrageous language of the radical majority that they despise religion and the priesthood with a heartiness which only equals the fierce and ferocious hatred expressed against the Church, her ministers, and institutions.

The whole civilized world is thoroughly informed about the success and completeness with which the party in power in France is carrying out the programme of the Masonic Lodges in de-Chris-

tianizing France and *laïcising* (as they term it) school and hospital, almshouse and prison, the army and the navy.

The religious orders of men and women—even those devoted to the care of the orphan, the aged, and the sick—are pitilessly proscribed, and must disappear. Few, indeed, of them are left in the institutions where they so long ministered, like angels of light and mercy, to the deepest needs of our poor stricken humanity.

But the Masonic press must needs cover these men and women, the honor of France and the glory of their kind, with infamy before they drive them forth from their homes.

Several instances of this kind of wholesale moral assassination have quite recently occurred. The most monstrous vices are imputed to the members of these devoted communities. The entire infidel press has repeated the foul assertion again and again before any refutation can reach the public. And even when this refutation, peremptory and triumphant, appears, who but Catholics will read it in the columns of the Catholic journals?

It is the purpose of the slanderers that the lie should start on its rounds far ahead of the refutation. They know that the lie will take root and flourish and bear fruit among the classes from which truth is as carefully excluded as the light of day is from the caves of Kentucky.

It would seem a hopelessly unequal battle. But French Catholics do not lose heart, or despair of their Church or their country.

It was the most splendid achievement of the anti-Christian conspirators to weaken, humiliate, dismember, and isolate France. There is no longer any Congress of Christian powers in which France may claim the first seat as the most Christian nation. They have humbled her in the dust. And now it is sought to extinguish in her bosom the last spark of that Christian faith which sent St. Louis to Palestine and Samuel de Champlain to Quebec.

They will not succeed. The insane effort to build up a new nation, or to restore a fallen one, by giving it atheism as a cornerstone or a crowning, is as futile as to think that the Eiffel Tower, when completed, will be as splendid a triumph of the builder's art as Notre Dame, or St. Peter's in Rome, or the Cathedral of Cologne.