Parties in the Convention.

In the precarious condition in which France then found herself, everything depended upon the composition of the new governing body. It was made up of nearly eight hundred members, all republicans; but republicans of various degrees of thoroughness. The Gironde, known to us from the previous Assembly, had considerable strength, but its control of the Convention was contested by the Mountain,[1] a much more radical party, made up chiefly of men like Danton, Marat, and Robespierre, who had overthrown the monarchy and governed France during the last few weeks. The Gironde was composed of speculative philosophers, who saw no reason for further illegality and violence now that the king was deposed and that hope of mankind, the republic, assured. The men of the Mountain were of a more fierce and practical turn, and concentrated their attention in the present crisis upon the one pressing business of defending France. Between these two groups, and permanently attached to neither, was the great bulk of the deputies, called the Plain. Whichever, Gironde or Mountain, could sway the Plain, would possess a majority and rule France.

Trial and death of the king.

That the chasm between the Gironde and Mountain was absolutely unbridgeable was shown when the Convention took up the important business of the trial of the king. Ever since August 10th Louis and his family had been closely confined in prison. In December the deposed monarch was summoned before the Convention. The Girondists, amiable dreamers for the most part, would have spared his life, but the Mountainists, backed by the threats of the mob, carried the Plain with them. By a very small majority the citizen Louis Capet, once Louis XVI., was condemned to death, and on January 21, 1793, was beheaded by the newly

[1] So called from the fact that the members took their seats upon the highest tiers of benches.

invented machine, called the guillotine. On that eventful day no hand was raised to save the monarch, who, however he may have failed in intelligence and energy, had given abundant proof of his devotion to the interests of his people as he understood them.

The first European coalition against France.

The execution of the king raised a storm of indignation over Europe, and a great coalition, which every state of importance joined, sprang to life for the purpose of punishing the regicides of the Convention. The deputies, nothing loath, accepted and even anticipated the challenge. Thus the war with Austria and Prussia promised to assume immense proportions in the coming year. The members of the great coalition planned to attack France from every side, and humble her pride in one rapid campaign. The English were to sweep down upon her coasts, the Spaniards to cross the Pyrenees and attack France from the south, the Piedmontese to pour over the Alps, and the Austrians and Prussians to operate in the eastern provinces, in Belgium, and along the Rhine. Under these circumstances the question of the defence of the French soil became again, as it had been in the summer of 1792, the supreme question of the hour. It was plain that in order to meet her enemies, who were advancing from every point of the compass, France would have to be united and display an almost superhuman energy.

Overthrow of the Gironde.

The new crisis quickly developed the animosities between Gironde and Mountain into implacable hatred. There can be no doubt that both sides were equally patriotic; but the immediate issue was not patriotism so much as the most practical means for meeting the threatening invasions. The philosophers of the Gironde insisted on presenting moral scruples about the September massacres and other irregularities, but because the case would not wait upon such niceties, the fanatics of the Mountain resolved to strike their rivals

down. Mobs were regularly organized by Marat to invade the Convention and howl at its bar for the heads of the Girondist leaders. Finally, on June 2, 1793, thirty-one of them, among whom were the brilliant orators Vergniaud, Isnard, Brissot, and Gensonné, were excluded from the Assembly and put under arrest.

The Mountain supreme.

The fall of the Girondists meant the removal of the last check upon the ferocity of the Mountain. The power now lay in its hands to use as it would, and the most immediate end of power, the Mountain had always maintained, was the salvation of France from her enemies. To accomplish that great purpose the Mountain now deliberately returned to the successful system of the summer of 1792—the system of terror. This phase of the Revolution, which is famous as the Reign of Terror—it could appropriately be called the Long Reign of Terror, in order to distinguish it from the Short Reign of Terror of August and September, 1792, which it closely resembles—begins on June 2d, with the expulsion from the Convention of the moderate element, represented by the Gironde.

The Reign of Terror (June 2, 1793, to July 27, 1794).

A strong executive: the Committee of Public Safety.

The Short Reign of Terror of the summer of 1792 was marked by two conspicuous features: first, an energetic defence of French soil, and, secondly, a bloody repression of the monarchical opposition. The Long Reign of Terror reproduces these elements developed into a system. What is more likely to secure an energetic defence than a strong executive? The Mountain, therefore, created a committee, finally, of twelve members, called the Committee of Public Safety, which it endowed with almost unlimited powers. The Committee of Public Safety was established before the Girondists fell, but the fact that it did not acquire its sovereign influence until the summer of 1793 proves how intimately it was associated with the Mountain scheme of government.

Robespierre and Carnot.

Of the famous Committee of Public Safety the most conspicuous figure was Robespierre, for which reason the whole period of the Terror is sometimes identified with his name. But Robespierre, if most in view, was by no means the most active of the members of the committee. He was indeed the hero of the populace and the Jacobins, and swayed the Assembly by his oratory, but the men who provided for the defence of France were Carnot, Prieur, and Lindet. During the prolonged internal convulsions they kept as far as possible aloof from politics, and quietly and unostentatiously attended to business. They organized the general levy, equipped the armies, appointed the generals, and mapped out the campaigns. If France was able to confront the forces of the coalition by armies which soon exceeded the enemy in numbers and are sometimes set, though with evident exaggeration, at 1,000,000 men, this great achievement, on which hung the salvation of the country, may be written down primarily to Carnot and his two helpers.

The machinery of the Terror.

The executive having been thus efficiently provided for, it remained to systematize the repression of the anti-revolutionary elements. The machinery of the Terror, as this systematization may be called, presented, on its completion, the following features: First, there was the Law of the Suspects. By this unique measure the authorities were authorized to imprison anyone soever who was denounced to them as "suspect," a term that could be stretched to mean almost anything. It was afterward said by a wit that all France went about in those days conjugating, I am suspect, thou art suspect, he is suspect, etc. In consequence, the prisons were crowded from garret to cellar with thousands of victims. To empty them was the function of the second

element of the terrorist machinery, called the Revolutionary Tribunal. This was a special court of justice, created for the purpose of trying the suspects with security and despatch. At first the Revolutionary Tribunal adhered to certain legal forms, but gradually it sacrificed every consideration to the demand for speed. The time came when prisoners were haled before the dread judges in companies, and condemned to death with no more ceremony than the reading of their names. There then remained for the luckless victims the third and last step in the process of the Terror: they were carted to an open square, called the Square of the Revolution, and amid staring and hooting mobs, who congregated to the spectacle every day as to a feast, their heads fell under the stroke of the guillotine.

Marat and Charlotte Corday.

Before the Terror had well begun, one of its prime instigators, Marat, was overtaken by a merited fate. Marat was the mouth-piece of the utterly ragged and lawless element of Paris. He had lately developed a thirst for blood that can only be accounted for on the ground of disease. Yet this degenerate proudly styled himself "the friend of the people." The blow which finally put an end to his wild declamations was delivered from an unexpected quarter. Many of the Girondists, who owed their overthrow primarily to Marat, had succeeded in making their escape to the provinces. At Caen, in Normandy, the fugitives aroused the sympathies of a beautiful and noble-minded girl, Charlotte Corday. Passionately afflicted by the divisions of her country, which she laid at Marat's door, she resolved by a bold stroke to free France from the oppressor. On July 13, 1793, she succeeded in forcing an entrance into his house, and stabbed him in his bath. She knew that the act meant her own death, but her exaltation did not desert her for a moment, and she passed to the guillotine a few days after the deed with the sustained calm of a martyr.

Death of Marie Antoinette, October, 1793.

The dramatic incidents associated with so many illustrious victims of the Terror can receive only scant justice here. In October Marie Antoinette was summoned before the Revolutionary Tribunal. She met with noble dignity the flimsy and untenable charges trumped up against her, and on receiving her death-verdict mounted the scaffold with the courage befitting a daughter of the Cæsars.[1] A few days after the death of Marie Antoinette, the imprisoned Girondists, to the number of twenty-one, travelled the same road. They were followed by the duke of Orleans and Madame Roland, each hostile to the other, but charged alike with complicity in the Girondist plots. The duke of Orleans, head of the secondary branch of the House of Bourbon, richly merited his sentence. He had crowned a life of debauchery and intrigue by siding against Louis XVI., and identifying himself with the Jacobin party, going even to the point of dropping his titles and adopting the family name of Equality (Egalité). When in 1792 he was elected to the Convention, he unblushingly committed his final act of infamy by voting for the death of the king. His very antipodes was Madame Roland.[2] Her honest but bookish enthusiasm for a regenerated public life naturally drew her to the Girondist party. For a time her house had been their meeting-place, and she herself, with the emotional extravagance characteristic of the period, had been worshipped as the muse, the Egeria, of the republican philosophers. In spite of her political immaturity, her mind had the imprint of

Mr. Equality

Madame Roland.

[1] Marie Antoinette left two children, a princess of fifteen years and the dauphin, Louis, aged eight. The princess was released in 1795, but before that mercy could be extended to the boy, he had died under the inhuman treatment of his jailers. The systematic torturing to death of the poor dauphin is one of the darkest blots upon the Revolution. The dauphin is reckoned by legitimists as Louis XVII.

[2] Madame Roland owed her influence in part to her husband, who was a prominent member of the Gironde and a minister during the last months of the reign of Louis XVI. and again in the fall of 1792. Roland made his escape when the Gironde was proscribed, but committed suicide on hearing of the death of his wife.

nobility and sustained her in her hour of trial. On mounting the steps of the guillotine, she paused to contemplate a statue of Liberty which had been erected near by. Her last words were addressed to the impassive goddess. "Liberty," she said, "what crimes are committed in thy name."

Revolt at Lyons, Toulon, and in the Vendée.

But it would be a mistake to suppose that the Terror was limited to Paris, or was directed merely against prominent individuals. By means of revolutionary committees and other agencies it was carried into the provinces on the ground that all France would have to be inspired with the same sentiments if the foreign invaders were to be checked. The departments, inhabited for the most part by law-abiding citizens, had from the first shown signs of restlessness under the violences of the Terror; and when the Gironde, a provincial party, fell victim to the Mountain, identified with Paris, the situation straightway became strained and led to the raising here and there of the standard of revolt. The great city of Lyons refused to recognize further the authority of the Convention, and the important naval station, Toulon, went a step farther and surrendered to the English. Here was matter for thought, but it was as nothing compared with the great rising in the west. The peasants of the region called La Vendée gathered in armed bands under the leadership of the priests and nobles, and inflamed by the desecration of the churches and the execution of the king, refused to bow their necks to the men of the Revolution.

The Convention crushes the revolts.

This difficult situation the Convention, or rather the Mountain and the Committee of Public Safety, met with unflinching resolution. It sent an army against Lyons, and in October, 1793, after a brave resistance, the city was taken. Then the Convention resolved to inflict an unheard-of punishment; it ordered the destruction of a part of the city and the erection on the ruins of a pillar with the inscription, "Lyons waged war with liberty; Lyons is no more." In

December, 1793, the French army regained Toulon, chiefly through the skill of a young artillery officer, Napoleon Bonaparte; and, in the same month, another army scattered the insurgents of the Vendée. But discontent continuing to smoulder in the west, the Convention was roused to send one Carrier, armed with full powers, to stamp out the embers. The vengeance wreaked by this madman upon the hostile priests and peasants make the infamies of the Revolutionary Tribunal at Paris look like nursery pastimes. Dissatisfied with the slow process of the guillotine, Carrier invented new methods of wholesale execution. The most ingenious, the *noyade* (drowning), consisted in loading an old vessel with one hundred, two hundred, and even eight hundred victims —men, women, and children—floating it down the Loire, and then scuttling it in the middle of the river. Thus the Terror penetrated to every corner of the land, and held all France in subjection.

Carrier at Nantes.

But its rule was, by its very nature, exceptional. Sooner or later there was bound to occur a division among its supporters, and when division came the revolutionists were sure to rage against each other, as they had once raged in common against the aristocrats. The supreme statesman of the period, Mirabeau, had foreseen that development. In a moment of prophetic insight he had declared that the Revolution, like Saturn, would end by devouring its own offspring.

Disruption of Terror inevitable.

The first signs of the disintegration of the party of the Terror began to appear in the autumn of 1793. The most radical wing, which owed its strength to its hold on the government of the city of Paris, and which followed the lead of one Hébert, had turned its particular animosity against the Catholic faith. To replace this ancient cult, despised as aristocratic, the Hébertists invented, in the spirit of reckless atheism, the so-called religion of Reason, and presently

End of the Hébertists, March, 1794.

forced its acceptance upon the city of Paris by means of a decree which closed all places of Catholic worship. Although this extravagant measure was soon withdrawn and religious toleration reasserted in principle, Robespierre took the earliest opportunity to denounce Hébert and his ilk before the Jacobins. Finally, in March, 1794, he resolved to have done with the religious farce, and abruptly ordered the leading atheists to the guillotine.

The fall of Danton, April, 1794.

The overthrow of Hébert was followed by that of Danton, a man of a better and nobler stamp, who, falling, carried his friends and satellites down with him. A titanic nature, with a claim to real statesmanship, he had exercised a decisive influence in more than one great crisis; France had primarily him to thank for her rescue from the Prussians in the summer of 1792, and, again, the establishment of the Committee of Public Safety was largely his work. But now he was growing weary. The uninterrupted flow of blood disgusted him, and he raised his voice in behalf of mercy. Mercy, to Robespierre and his young follower, the arch-fanatic Saint Just, was nothing less than treason, and in sudden alarm at Danton's "moderation" they hurried him and his friends to the guillotine (April 5, 1794). Thus Robespierre was rid of his last rival. No wonder that it was now whispered abroad that he was planning to make himself dictator.

Supremacy of Robespierre.

And between Robespierre and a dictatorship there stood, in the spring of 1794, only one thing—his own political incapacity. That he had the Jacobins, the municipality of Paris, the Convention, and the Committee of Public Safety in his hands was proved by their servile obedience to his slightest nod. On May 7th he had the satisfaction of wresting from the Convention a decree after his own heart, for that body made solemn affirmation to the effect that the French people recognized a Supreme Being and the immor-

tality of the soul. It sufficiently characterizes the solemn pedantry of Robespierre that he never in his life took anything so seriously as this ludicrous declaration, nor had an inkling of the absurdity of the festival of June 8, 1794, at which he presided as high-priest and proclaimed the gospel of the Supreme Being to the heathen. Two days after the ceremony he showed in what spirit he interpreted his religious leadership. In order to facilitate the condemnations, the Revolutionary Tribunal (law of June 10th) was multiplied, and its procedure stripped of the last vestiges of legal form. Then only did the executions in Paris begin in a really wholesale manner. During the six weeks before the adoption of the new religion, the numbers of those guillotined in Paris amounted to 577; during the first six weeks after its adoption, the victims reached the frightful figure of 1,356. No government office, no service rendered on the battle-field secured immunity from arrest and death. At last, the Terror invaded the Convention itself. Paralyzed by fear that body submitted, for a time, to the desperate situation. But when the uncertainty connected with living perpetually under a threat of death had become intolerable, the opponents of Robespierre banded together in order to crush him. It is only fair to say that he took no direct part in the slaughter of these last weeks. He had a certain fastidiousness distinguishing him favorably from many of his associates in the governing clique, such as Billaud, Collot, and Fouché, who covered themselves with every infamy. With his immense following among the people he could doubtless have anticipated his enemies, but instead of action he wrapped himself in a mysterious silence. On the 9th of Thermidor (July 27th)[1] he and his adherents

Proclaims the religion of the Supreme Being.

Fall of Robespierre, 9th Thermidor.

[1] The Convention, guided by its hatred of the royalist past, had introduced a new system of time reckoning. Since the birth of the republic was regarded as more important than the birth of Christ, September 21, 1792, the day when monarchy was formally abolished, was voted the be-

were condemned by the Convention and executed the next day.

The Rule of the Thermidorians (July 27, 1794, to October 26, 1795).

The reaction in the Convention.

The fall of Robespierre put an end to the Terror, not because Robespierre was the Terror, but because the system had, after a year of wild extravagance, become so thoroughly discredited, even among its own supporters, that the Convention saw itself obliged to discontinue the methods of tyranny. The Thermidorians, many of whom had been the vilest instruments of the Terror and had dipped their hands into every kind of crime, bowed, therefore, to the force of circumstances. They studiously heaped all the blame for the past year on the dead Robespierre, and hypocritically assumed the character of life-long lovers of rule and order. Slowly the frightened bourgeoisie recovered its courage and rallied to the support of the Thermidorian party, and finally a succession of concerted blows swept the fragments of the Terror from the face of France. The municipality of Paris, the citadel of the rioters, was dissolved; the Revolutionary Tribunal dispersed; the functions of the Committee of Public Safety restricted; and, to make victory sure, the Jacobin Club, the old hearth of disorder, was closed. During the next year—the last of its long lease of power—the Convention ruled France in full accord with the moderate opinion of the majority of the citizens.

ginning of a new era. The whole Christian calendar was at the same time declared to be tainted with aristocracy, and a new calendar devised. Its chief feature was the invention of new names for the months, such as: Nivose, Snow month; Pluviose, Rain month; Ventose, Wind month, for the winter months; Germinal, Budding month; Floréal, Flower month; Prairial, Meadow month, for the spring months, etc.

It is worthy of notice that the Convention, a body of men unhampered by tradition, discussed many laudable reforms and carried some of them into effect. One change has invited imitation. It supplanted the old and complicated system of weights and measures by the metrical system.

The Terror successfully defends France.

But if the Terror fell, its overthrow was due not only to the horror it inspired, but also to the fact that it had accomplished its end. Its cause, as well as its excuse, was the danger of France, and whatever else be said, it had really succeeded in defending the country against the forces of a tremendous coalition. On this defence the reader must now bestow a rapid glance. In the campaign of 1793 the French had just about held their own, but in 1794 Carnot's splendid power of organization, and his gift for picking out young talents, enabled the revolutionary army to carry the war into the territory of the enemy. Thus the tables were turned and old Europe, instead of invading young France, found itself invaded. In the course of 1794 Jourdan's army conquered Belgium, and shortly after Pichegru seized Holland. Belgium, which ever since the Treaty of Utrecht had been a dominion of Austria, was annexed to France, but Holland was left independent, though reconstituted as a republic and subjected to French influence. At the same time the recrudescence of the old animosities between Prussia and Austria, this time over the question of Poland, paralyzed the military action of the German allies, and enabled the French to occupy the whole left bank of the Rhine. Incurable jealousies, coupled with the demoralizing effect of the revolutionary victories, undermined the coalition; and as the Thermidorians had no special reasons for continuing the war, they entered into negotiations with Prussia and Spain, and in the spring of 1795 concluded peace with them at Basel. By these treaties the position of France was made more secure, for England and Austria alone of the great powers were now left in the field against her.

The first revolutionary successes.

Peace with Prussia and Spain, 1795.

The Convention completes a constitution.

Meanwhile, the Convention had taken up the long-neglected task for which it had been summoned, and in the course of the year 1795 completed a new constitution for republican France. This constitution was ready to be

promulgated when, in October, the Convention had to meet one more assault upon its authority. Animated by various motives, many factions, among them also the royalists, combined and swept down upon the Convention to cow it by violence, as they had cowed it so often. But the Convention had been for some time filled with a more valiant spirit. It resolved to defend itself, and intrusted one of its members, Barras, with the task; but Barras, who was no soldier, conferred the command of the troops upon a young officer and acquaintance of his, Napoleon Bonaparte. Bonaparte had already creditably distinguished himself at Toulon, and wanted nothing better than this opportunity. When the rioters marched against the Convention on October 5th he received them with such a volley of grape-shot that they fled precipitately, leaving hundreds of their comrades dead upon the pavement. It was a new way of treating Parisian lawlessness, and it had its effect. Henceforth, in the face of such drastic measures the people lost taste for the dictation which for six years they had exercised by means of spontaneous insurrections. Bonaparte and his volley of grape-shot meant the return of *authority*, and proclaimed with brazen tongue that the chapter of revolutionary violences had come to an end.

Bonaparte defends the Convention.

The Convention could now perform its remaining business without hindrance. On October 26, 1795, its stormy, cowardly, and yet, in some respects, highly creditable career, came to an end, and the new constitution went immediately into effect. It is called the Constitution of the Year III., from the year of the republican calendar in which it was completed. Its main provisions mark a return from the loose, liberal notions of the constitution of 1791 to a more compact executive. Nevertheless, the tyranny of the *ancien régime* was still too near for the objections against a too-powerful executive to have vanished utterly. Therefore, a

The Constitution of the Year III.

compromise was found in a multiple executive of five members, called the Directory. The legislative functions were intrusted to two houses—a further departure from the constitution of 1791, the single legislative house of which had proved a failure—called respectively, the Council of Five Hundred and the Council of the Ancients.

The Directory (1795–99).

The Directory wished to signalize its accession to power by terminating the war with a brilliant victory over the remaining enemies of France, England and Austria. But an attack upon England was, because of the insufficiency of French naval power, out of the question. Austria was more vulnerable, and Austria the Directory now resolved to strike with the combined armies of France. In accordance with this purpose, "the organizer of victory," Carnot, who was one of the Directors, worked out a plan by which the Austrians were to be attacked simultaneously in Germany and Italy. Two splendid armies under Jourdan and Moreau were assigned to the German task, which was regarded as by far the more important, while the Italian campaign, undertaken as a mere diversion, was intrusted to a shabbily equipped army of 30,000 men, which, through the influence of the Director Barras and in reward for services rendered, was put under the command of the defender of the Convention, General Bonaparte. But by the mere force of his genius, Bonaparte upset completely the calculations of the Directory, and gave his end of the campaign such importance that he, and not Jourdan or Moreau, decided the war.

The Directory plans a concentrated attack upon Austria.

Bonaparte's task was to beat, with his army, an army of Piedmontese and Austrians twice as large. Because of the superiority of the combined forces of the enemy, he naturally resolved to meet the Piedmontese and Austrians sep-

Bonaparte in Italy, 1796.