

de-Ville messages of the most threatening description. "As a citizen," said a member of the commune, "and as a magistrate of the people, I come to announce to you, that this night, at midnight, the tocsin shall sound, and the *générale* shall be beaten. The people are tired of remaining unavenged; dread, lest they arise to avenge themselves."—"If before three or four hours," said another, "the foreman of the jury be not named, if the jury be not in readiness to act, the most fearful consequences await Paris." To avoid these new disasters, the assembly was compelled to appoint an extraordinary criminal tribunal. This tribunal condemned a few persons; but it appeared too slow for the wishes of the commune, who had conceived the most terrible projects.

The commune had at its head Marat, Panis, Sergent, Duplain, Lenfant, Lefort, Jordeuil, Collot d'Herbois, Billaud, Varennes, Tallien, &c. But the principal head of the party was at that time Danton, who more than any other had co-operated in the events of the 10th of August. During the whole of that night he had been running from the sections to the barracks of the Marseillois and the Bretons, and from thence to the Fauxbourgs. He had directed the operations of the revolutionary commune as one of its members, and had been afterward appointed a member for the administration of justice.

Danton was a revolutionist of the most violent kind. No means appeared to him wrong, provided they were useful; and according to his creed, all that was possible was lawful. Danton, who has been styled the Mirabeau of the populace, bore some resemblance to that tribune of the higher orders: he had marked features, a strong voice, impetuous gestures, a bold style of eloquence, and a commanding manner. Their vices were the same: but those of Mirabeau were the vices of a patrician, those of Danton of a democrat: what was bold in the conceptions of Mirabeau might be traced in Danton, but bearing a different character, as belonging to a different class and period of the revolution. Overwhelmed with debts and harassed by wants, of an ardent temperament, of licentious morals, and abandoning himself by turns to his passions or his party, he was formidable in his politics when the question was how to arrive at his end, but he became indifferent to it as soon as it was attained. This powerful demagogue presented a mixture of discordant vices and qualities. Though he had sold himself to the court, he was not mercenary: for there are characters which can elevate even a mean action. He was an exterminator without ferocity; inexorable with regard to the mass, but humane and even generous towards individuals. (1) A revolution in his eyes was a game, in which the conqueror, if he desired it, gained the life of the vanquished. The welfare of his party in his eyes went before the law—even before humanity: this explains his attempts after the 10th of August, and his return to moderate measures when he believed the republic firmly established.

At this period the Prussians, advancing in the order of invasion which has been already mentioned, crossed the frontier after a march of twenty days. The army of Sedan was without a leader, and unable to cope with forces so superior and so well organized. On the 20th of August, Longwy was surrounded by the Prussians; on the 21st it was bombarded, and on the 24th it capitulated. On the 30th the enemy arrived before Verdun, surrounded it and commenced the bombardment. In case of the capture of Verdun, the road to the capital lay open. The taking of Longwy and the near approach of so much danger, threw Paris into a state of the greatest agitation and alarm. The executive council composed of the ministers, was called to the committee for the general defence, to deliberate on the best measures to be taken in so perilous a conjuncture. Some voted for waiting until the enemy should appear under the walls of the capital: others proposed to retire to Saumur. "You know," said Danton, when his turn came to speak, "that France lies in Paris: if you abandon the capital to our invaders, you give up yourselves, and you give up France to them. It is in Paris that we must maintain our position by all the means that can be devised; I cannot consent

(1) At the time when the commune was meditating the massacres of the 2d of September, he saved all who came to him: and of his own accord he discharged from prison Dupont, Barnave, and Ch. Lameth, who were in some shape his personal antagonists.

to the plan which proposes to remove you from it. The second project seems to me equally inadvisable. It is impossible to think of fighting under the walls of the capital: the 10th of August has divided France into two parties, of which the one is attached to monarchy, while the other desires a republic. The latter of which, it is useless to dissemble, the minority in the state, is the only one on which you can depend when we come to the combat. The other will refuse to march; it will agitate Paris in favour of the foreigners, while your defenders, placed between two fires, are losing their lives in repelling them. If they fail, as it seems to me certain they will, the loss of France and your ruin are decided: if, contrary to all expectation, they return victors over the coalition, their victory will be a defeat to you; for it will have cost you thousands of brave men, while the royalists, already more numerous than you, will have lost nothing of their strength or their influence. My advice is, therefore, that in order to disconcert their measures, we must frighten the royalists." The committee which understood the sense of these terrible words was in consternation. "Yes; I repeat," continued Danton, "that we must frighten them." And as the committee seemed to reject by its silence and its affright the proposition, Danton entered into arrangements with the commune; he wished to repress his enemies by means of terror; and to engage the multitude, by rendering itself his accomplice, to leave the revolution no other hope or refuge but in victory. Domiciliary visits were performed with the most melancholy and imposing accompaniments: and a great number of persons were imprisoned on the ground of their rank, their opinions, or their conduct. These unfortunate persons were mainly selected from the two dissident classes of the clergy and the nobility, who were accused of conspiracy under the legislative assembly. All the citizens who were fit to carry arms were enrolled in regiments in the Champ-de-Mars, and were sent off on the 1st September to the frontier. The *générale* was beaten, the tocsin sounded, and cannons fired: and Danton, presenting himself to the assembly to detail the measures which had been taken for the preservation of the country, said, "The cannon you hear is not the alarm gun: it announces our onset upon our enemies. To vanquish them—to lay them prostrate, what is it that we require? The first qualification is *boldness*—the second *boldness*—the third *boldness*." The news of the taking of Verdun arrived in the night between the 1st and 2d of September: the commune seized that moment when Paris in alarm fancied the enemy at the gates, to execute its terrible designs. The cannon was again fired, the tocsin sounded, the barriers were closed, and the massacres began.

The prisoners shut up at the Carmelites, at the Abbey, at La Force, the Conciergerie, &c., were butchered during three days, by a band of about three hundred murderers, under the orders and in the pay of the commune. These men, inspired by a silent fanaticism, prostituting to the ends of murder the sacred forms of justice, sometimes judges, and sometimes executioners, seemed less the ministers of vengeance than the performers of a labour to be done: they massacred without fury, but without remorse—with all the confidence of fanatics, and the obedience of hangmen. If any extraordinary circumstances sometimes touched them, and recalled them to sentiments of humanity, they relented but for a moment and soon resumed their cruel work. Thus a few victims were saved; but these were few in number. The assembly wished to put a stop to these cruel massacres, but could not. The ministry was as impotent as the assembly: the terrible commune alone was all-powerful, and directed every thing. Pétion, the mayor, had been deposed from office. The soldiers who guarded the prisoners durst not resist the murderers, and suffered them to do their work of death: the populace looked on as indifferent spectators or accomplices; and the rest of the citizens dared not even venture to discover their horror. There would be room for surprise that a crime so enormous and so long in duration should have been conceived, executed, and suffered, if we did not know all that the policy or fanaticism of parties leads its votaries to commit, and all that fear induces men to support. But the punishment of that fearful outrage was visited upon the heads of its authors. The greater number of them perished in the tempest they had raised,



and by the violent means they had employed. It is seldom that party-men do not experience the fate which they have made others undergo.

The executive council, which was directed, as to military measures, by general Kellermann, sent forward the newly-raised battalions to the frontier. They had wished to place an able commanding officer on the point chiefly threatened; but the choice was embarrassing. Among the generals who had declared themselves in favour of the late political events Kellermann did not appear fit for a higher command than a secondary one, and the council contented itself by putting him in the place of the undecided and inept Luckner. Custine was but little acquainted with the art of war; he was an excellent officer for a bold undertaking, but unfit for the command of a great army, on which the destinies of France were to depend. The same reproach, as to military incapacity, was applicable to Biron, to Labourdonnaie, and to others, who were left in their former ranks with the troops under their command. There remained only Dumouriez, against whom the Girondists still felt some rancour, and whose ambitious views, his tastes, and his character of adventurer led him to be suspected, even by those who rendered ample justice to his superior talents. However, as he was the sole general capable of so important a position, the executive council gave him the command of the army of the Moselle.

Dumouriez had hastened from the camp of Maulde to that of Sedan. He assembled a council of war, of which the general opinion was, that it would be advisable to retire towards Châlons or Rheims, and to remain covered by the Marne. Instead of following this dangerous advice, which would have discouraged the army, surrendered Lorraine to the enemy, as well as three bishopricks, with a part of Champagne, and laid open the road to Paris, Dumouriez conceived a project worthy of a man of genius. He saw that he must, by a bold march, direct his troops upon the forest of Argonne, and that there they would infallibly stop the enemy. That forest had four outlets, that of Chêne Populeux on the left, of the Croix aux Bois and Grandpré in the centre, and of the Islets on the right, which opened or closed the passage into France. The Prussians were at a distance of six leagues only, and Dumouriez had twelve to get over, as well as his plans of occupation to conceal, before he could seize upon his position. He did this in a very bold and able manner. General Dillon, who directed his corps on the Islets, occupied them with seven thousand men: Dumouriez arrived at Grandpré, and there established a camp of thirteen thousand men: the Croix aux Bois and the Chêne Populeux were in like manner taken, and guarded by several troops. On this occasion he wrote to Servan, the minister at war: "*Verdun is taken: I wait the arrival of the Prussians. The camp of Grandpré and that of the Islets are the Thermopylæ of France: but I shall be more fortunate than Leonidas.*"

In that position, Dumouriez was able to stop the enemy, and at the same time await the succours which were sent him from all parts of France. The battalions of volunteers joined the camps pitched in the interior, from which positions they were sent off to join his army after having received the first elements of organization. At the frontier of Flanders, Bournonville had received orders to advance with nine thousand men to join the right wing of the army of Dumouriez at Rhetel, on the 13th of September. Duval was to be at the Chêne Populeux on the 7th with seven thousand men, and Kellermann was on his way from Metz on his right with twenty-two thousand men to reinforce him. It was only necessary to gain time.

The duke of Brunswick, after gaining possession of Verdun, passed the Meuse in three columns. General Clairfait commenced operations on his right, and the prince of Hohenlohe on his left. Despairing of forcing Dumouriez to quit his position by attacking him in front, he endeavoured to dislodge him from it by assailing him behind. Dumouriez had been so imprudent as to place all his forces at Grandpré and the Islets, and to have left the Chêne Populeux and the Croix aux Bois feebly defended, which indeed were much less important. The Prussians seized them, and were on the point of dislodging him in his camp at Grandpré, and compelling him to sur-

render. Even after committing that capital fault, which annulled the effect of his first manœuvres, he did not despair of his situation. He quitted his camp during the night of the 14th of September, passed the Aisne, from which he might have been prevented by the enemy, made a retreat as able as his march on the Argonne had been, and succeeded in carrying his entire force into the camp of Sainte Menehould. He had already retarded the march of the Prussians on the Argonne, and the season as it advanced began to bring bad weather; he had only to maintain his position until the arrival of Kellermann and Bournonville, by whom he was to be joined, and the success of the campaign became certain. The troops had become accustomed to action, and the army amounted to seventy thousand men on the arrival of Bournonville and Kellermann, which took place on the 17th of September.

The Prussian army had followed the movements of Dumouriez. On the 20th, it attacked Kellermann at Valmy, in order to cut off from the French army the power of retreating upon Châlons. The cannonading commenced warmly on both sides. The Prussians next marched in columns up the heights of Valmy, in expectation of carrying them. Kellermann also formed his infantry in columns, and gave them orders not to fire, but to wait for the enemy, that they might charge at the point of the bayonet. He gave these orders amid cries of "*Vive la nation!*" and this cry, repeated from one end of the line to the other, surprised the Prussians still more than the steady aspect of the French troops. The duke of Brunswick directed his battalions, which were already in some disorder, to retire: the cannonading was kept up till evening; the Austrians tried a new attack, but were repulsed. The day was gained: and the almost insignificant success of Valmy produced on the French troops and throughout France the effect of the most complete victory.

From this period also may be dated the discouragement and retreat of the enemy. The Prussians had engaged in this campaign, as if it had been a review, in which light it had been represented to them by the emigrants. They were unprovided with stores or provisions; instead of an unprotected country, they found daily a more and more vigorous resistance: the continual rains had broken up the roads, the soldiers marched in mud up to their knees, and for four days together they had no other nourishment than boiled corn. The diseases produced by the muddy water, the want of stores, and the rain had occasioned the greatest ravages in the army. The duke of Brunswick recommended a retreat, against the opinion of the king of Prussia and the emigrants, who wished to risk a battle and seize upon Châlons. But as the fate of the Prussian monarchy depended upon his army, and the loss of that army would be rendered certain by its defeat, the advice of the duke of Brunswick prevailed. Negotiations were opened; and the Prussians, relaxing from their first demands, no longer demanded any other terms than the re-establishment of the king upon the constitutional throne. But the convention had just assembled, the republic had been proclaimed, and the executive council replied, that "*the French republic could not listen to any propositions until the Prussian troops had entirely quitted the French territories.*" The Prussians, therefore, effected their retreat on the evening of the 30th of September, which was feebly opposed by Kellermann, whom Dumouriez sent in pursuit of them, while he himself advanced to Paris to enjoy his victory and to concert plans for the invasion of Belgium. The French troops re-entered Verdun and Longwy; and the enemy, after having traversed the Ardennes and Luxembourg, repassed the Rhine at Coblenz towards the end of October. This campaign had been marked by general successes. In Flanders, the duke of Saxe Teschen had been compelled to raise the siege of Lille, after seven days of a bombardment, contrary, for its length and its useless cruelty, to all the usages of war. On the Rhine, Custine had seized upon Trèves, Spire, and Mentz; towards the Alps, general Montesquiou had invaded Savoy, and general Anselme the county of Nice. The French armies, victorious in all quarters, had every where assumed the offensive, and the revolution was saved.