

of liberty. A single word will speak the whole: *Lyons made war against Liberty—Lyons is no more.* In order to realize this frightful denunciation, the committee sent Collot d'Herbois, Fouché, and Couthon into this devoted town, who demolished its buildings and butchered the inhabitants with cannon. The insurgents of Toulon experienced from their representatives, Barras and Fréron, almost a similar fate. At Caen, Marseilles, and Bourdeaux the executions were less general and less violent; for they were proportioned to the importance of the insurrection, which was interior and not connected with foreign enemies.

In the centre, the dictatorial government aimed a blow at the highest and most distinguished in all the parties with which they were engaged. The condemnation of the queen, Maria Antoinette, was directed against Europe; that of the *twenty-two*, against the Gironde; that of the enlightened Bailly, against the old constitutionalists; lastly, that of the duke of Orleans, against certain members of the Mountain who were supposed to have entered into a combination to effect his elevation. The unfortunate widow of Louis XVI. was the first who was sent to the scaffold by the sanguinary tribunal of the revolution. Those who were proscribed on the 2d of June very soon followed: she perished on the 16th of October, and the Girondist deputies on the 31st. There were among the *twenty-two*, Brissot, Vergniaud, Gensonné, Fonfrède, Ducos, Valazé, Lasource, Sillery, Gardien, Carra, Duprat, Beauvais, Duchâtel, Mainvielle, Lacaze, Boileau, Lehardy, Antiboul, and Vigée. Seventy-three of their colleagues, who had protested against their arrest, were also imprisoned; but they durst not inflict upon them the same punishment. During the debates, these illustrious accused displayed the most calm and sustained courage. The eloquent voice of Vergniaud was heard for an instant, but in vain. Valazé, on hearing his sentence, despatched himself with a poniard; and Lasource exclaimed to the judges—"I die at a moment when the people have lost their reason; you will die the day they shall recover it." The prisoners went to their punishment with all the stoicism of that time.

Almost all the chiefs of the Girondist party experienced an unhappy fate. Salles, Guadet, and Barbaroux were discovered in the caves of Saint Emilion near Bourdeaux, and they perished upon the popular scaffold. Pétion and Buzot, after having wandered about for some time, put an end to their own existence: they were found dead in the field, half devoured by wolves. Rabaud St. Etienne was betrayed by an old friend. Madame Roland was also condemned, and displayed the courage of a Roman matron. Her husband, on hearing of her death, quitted his place of concealment, and killed himself upon the highway. Condorcet, who was outlawed, some time after the 2d of June, was discovered as he was flying from the executioner, and he only escaped the scaffold by the aid of poison. Louvet, Kervelegan, Lanjuinais, Henri La Rivière, Le Sage, Le Revilliere Lepeaux, were the only persons who awaited in secure retreat the end of this furious tempest.

## LETTER XXV.

*Dreadful State of France after the Fall of the Girondists—Complete Reign of Terror—Change of the Calendar.—Impious Proceedings of the Convention, in the Abolition of Public Worship—Projects of Robespierre, who is at length opposed, defeated, and put to Death. A. D. 1794.*

ON the fall of the party of the Gironde, the revolutionary government was formed. Before the 31st of May, the supreme power was neither in the ministry, in the commune, nor in the convention. The committee of public safety, which had been some time created in order to provide for the defence of the revolution by urgent and extraordinary measures, was an institution already in existence. Having received its appointment during the struggles between the two powerful parties, the Gironde and the Mountain, it had been

composed of neutral conventionalists until the 31st of May; but at this time it became composed of ultra-members of the Mountain. Barrère remained, but Robespierre was chosen a member, and his party governed it by St. Just, Couthon, Collot d'Herbois, and Billaud Varennes. The tyrant now took upon himself that department which related to public opinion and the police. His associates distributed the remaining departments among themselves. St. Just took that of the *surveillance*, and denunciation of parties. Couthon that of violent propositions which required being mitigated in form:—the other two directed the proconsulships in the departments. Carnot filled the office of minister at war, while Cambon had the charge of the finances. Barrère was the daily orator and perpetual eulogist of the dictatorial committee. Below was placed, as an auxiliary in the details of the revolutionary administration, and in measures of minor importance, the committee of general safety, composed in the same spirit as the great committee, having also twelve members re-eligible every three months, and perpetual in their functions. In the hands of these men, the whole revolutionary force was placed. Thus was created that terrible power which first destroyed the enemies of the Mountain, afterward the Mountain and the commune, and which only ended in destroying itself.

One of the first measures of this new order of things was to establish an entirely new era; to change the divisions of the year, the names of the months, and of the days. In place of the Christian calendar, they substituted that of the republican, for the week, the decade, making every tenth day instead of Sunday, the day of rest. The new era was dated from the 22d of September, 1792, the epoch of the foundation of the republic. They had twelve equal months, consisting of thirty days each, which commenced on the 22d of September, in the following order: Vendemaire, Brumaire, Frimaire, for the autumn; Nivose, Pluviose, Ventose, for the winter; Germinal, Floréal, Prairial, for the spring; Messidor, Thermidor, Fructidor, for the summer. The five supernumerary days were thrown to the end of the year, to complete the whole, and they were called the *sans-culotteides*. The constitution of 1793 led to the republican calendar, and the republican calendar to the abolition of public worship, of which we shall presently speak. It will, however, be previously necessary to give you some account of a new contest which arose between the authors themselves of the catastrophe of the 31st of May.

The commune and the Mountain had effected the existing revolution in despite of the Girondists, and the committee alone had profited by it. During the five months of which we have been speaking, from June to November, the committee, having taken every measure of defence, had naturally become the first power in the republic. The contest having in some degree terminated, the commune aspired to rule the committee, and the Mountain determined not to be ruled by it.

The three distinguished champions who assumed the front in the jacobin ranks, were Marat, Danton, and Robespierre. The first was poniarded by Charlotte Corday, an enthusiastic young person, who had nourished, in a feeling between lunacy and heroism, the ambition of ridding the world of a tyrant. Danton and Robespierre, reduced to a duumvirate, might have divided the power between them. But Danton, far the more able and powerful-minded man, could not resist temptations to plunder and to revel; and Robespierre, who took care to preserve proof of his rival's peculations, a crime of a peculiarly unpopular character, and from which he seemed to keep his own hands pure, possessed thereby the power of ruining him whenever he should find it convenient. Danton married a beautiful woman, became a candidate for domestic happiness, withdrew himself for some time from state affairs, and quitted the stern and menacing attitude which he had presented to the public during the earlier stages of the revolution. Still his ascendancy, especially in the club of Cordeliers, was formidable enough to command Robespierre's constant attention, and keep awake his envy, which was like the worm that dieth not, though it did not draw down any indication of

Robespierre became much alarmed for the issue of the trial. The convention showed reviving signs of spirit; and when a revolutionary deputation demanded at the bar, that death should be the order of the day, and reminded them, that, had they granted the moderate demand of three hundred thousand heads, when requested by the philanthropic and now canonized Marat, they would have saved the republic the wars of La Vendée, they were received with discouraging murmurs. Tallien, the president, informed them, that not death, but justice, was the order of the day; and the petitioners, notwithstanding the patriotic turn of their modest request, were driven from the bar with execrations.

This looked ill; but the power of Robespierre was still predominant with the revolutionary tribunal, and after a gallant and unusually long defence (of which no notice was permitted to appear in the *Moniteur*), Danton and his associates were condemned, and carried to instant execution. They maintained their firmness, or rather hardenedness of character to the last; and when Danton observed Fabre d'Eglantine beginning to look gloomy, he cheered him with a play on words: "Courage, my friend," he said, in his deep, sullen tone of voice; "we are all about to take up your trade—*Nous allons faire des vers*." The sufferers on this occasion were men whose accomplishments and talents attracted a higher degree of sympathy than that which had been given to the equally eloquent but less successful Girondists. Even honest men looked on the fate of Danton with some regret, as when a furious bull is slain with a slight blow by a crafty Tauridor; and many men of good feelings had hoped, that the cause of order and security might at least have been benefited in some degree by his obtaining the victory in a struggle with Robespierre. Those, on the other hand, who followed the fortunes of the latter, conceived his power had been rendered permanent, by the overthrow of his last and most formidable rival, and exalted in proportion. Both were deceived in their calculations. The predominance of such a man as Danton might possibly have protracted the reign of jacobinism, even by rendering it somewhat more enduring; but the permanent, at least the ultimate, success of Robespierre, was becoming more impossible, from the repeated decimations to which his jealousy subjected his party. He was like the wild chief, Lope d'Aguirre, whose story is so well told by Southey, who, descending the great river Orellana with a party of buccaneers, cut off one part of his followers after another, in doubt of their fidelity, until the remainder saw no chance of escaping a similar fate, unless by being beforehand with their leader in murder.

Alluding to Robespierre's having been the instrument of his destruction, Danton had himself exclaimed, "The cowardly poltroon! I am the only person who could have commanded influence enough to save him." And the event showed that he spoke with the spirit of prophecy which the approach of fate has been sometimes thought to confer.

Meanwhile, the despot, whose looks made even the democrats of the Mountain tremble, when directed upon them, shrunk himself before the apprehended presence of a young female. Cecile Regnaud, a girl, and, as it would seem, unarmed, came to his house, and demanded to see Robespierre. Her manner exciting some suspicion, she was seized upon by the body-guard of jacobins, who day and night watched the den of the tyrant, amid riot and blasphemy, while he endeavoured to sleep under the security of their neighbourhood. When the young woman was brought before the revolutionary tribunal, she would return no answer to the questions respecting her purpose, excepting that she wished to see what a tyrant was like. She was condemned to the guillotine of course; and about sixty persons were executed as associates of a conspiracy, which was never proved, by deed or word, to have existed at all. The victims were drawn at hazard out of the prisons, where most of them had been confined for months previous to the arrest of Cecile Regnaud, on whose account they were represented as suffering. Many have thought the crime entirely imaginary, and only invented by Robespierre, to represent his person as endangered by the plots of the aris-

toocracy, and attach to himself a part at least of the consequence which Marat had acquired by the act of Charlotte Corday.

A few weeks brought on a sterner encounter than that of the supposed female assassin. The Terrorists were divided among themselves. The chosen and ancient bands of the 10th of August, 2d of September, and 31st of May, and other remarkable periods of the revolution, continued attached to the jacobins, and the majority of the jacobin club adhered to Robespierre; it was there his strength consisted. On the other hand, Tallien, Barras, Legendre, Fouché, and others of the Mountain party, remembered Danton, and feared for a similar fate. The convention at large were sure to embrace any course which promised to free them from their present thralldom.

The people themselves were beginning to be less passive. They no longer saw the train of victims pass daily to the guillotine, in the Place de la Revolution, with stupid wonder or overwhelming fear, but, on the contrary, with the sullenness of manifest resentment, that waited but an opportunity to display itself. The citizens in the Rue St. Honoré shut up their shops at the hours when the fatal tumbrils passed to the scene of death, and that whole quarter of the city was covered with gloom.

These ominous feelings were observed, and the fatal engine was removed to a more obscure situation, at the Barrier de la Trone, near the Fauxbourg St. Antoine, to the inhabitants of which it was thought a daily spectacle of this nature must be an interesting relief from labour. But even the people of that turbulent suburb had lost some of their republican zeal—the men's feelings were altered. They saw, indeed, blood stream in such quantities, that it was necessary to make an artificial conduit to carry it off; but they did not feel that they, or those belonging to them, received any advantages from the number of victims, daily immolated, as they were assured, in their behalf. The constant effusion of blood, without plunder or license to give it zest, disgusted them, as it would have disgusted all but literal cannibals, to whose sustenance, indeed, the revolutionary tribunal would have contributed plentifully.

Robespierre saw all this increasing unpopularity with much anxiety. He plainly perceived that strong as its impulse was, the stimulus of terror began to lose its effect on the popular mind; and he resolved to give it novelty, not by changing the character of his system, but by varying the mode of its application. Hitherto, men had only been executed for political crimes, although the circle had been so vaguely drawn, and capable of such extension when desired, that the law regarding suspected persons was alone capable of desolating a whole country. But if the penalty of death were to be inflicted for religious and moral delinquencies, as well as for crimes directed against the state, it would at once throw the lives of thousands at his disposal, upon whom he could have no ready hold on political motives, and meant to support, at the same time, his newly assumed character as a reformer of manners. He would also thus escape the disagreeable and embarrassing necessity of drawing lines of distinction between his own conduct and that of the old friends whom he found it convenient to sacrifice. He could not say he was less a murderer than the rest of his associates, but he might safely plead more external decency of morals. His own manners had always been reserved and austere: and what a triumph would it have been had the laws permitted him the benefit of slaying Danton, not under that political character which could hardly be distinguished from his own, but on account of the gross peculation and debauchery which none could impute to the austere and incorruptible Robespierre.

His subordinate agents began already to point to a reformation of manners. Payan, who succeeded Hébert in the important station of procureur to the commune of the metropolis, had already adopted a very different line from his predecessor, whose style derived energy by printing at full length the foulest oaths and most beastly expressions used by the refuse of the people. Payan, on the contrary, in direct opposition to Père Duchesne, is found gravely advising with the commune of Paris, on a plan of preventing

the exposing of licentious prints and works to sale, to the evident danger of corrupting the rising generation.

There exists also a curious address from the convention, which tends to evince a similar purpose in the framer, Robespierre. The guilt of profane swearing, and of introducing the sacred name into ordinary speech, as an unmeaning and blasphemous expletive, is severely censured. The using indecent and vicious expressions in common discourse is also touched upon; but as this unbounded energy of speech had been so very lately one of the most accredited marks of a true sans-culotte, the legislators were compelled to qualify their censure by admitting, that, at the commencement of the revolution, the vulgar mode of speaking had been generally adopted by patriots, in order to destroy the jargon employed by the privileged classes, and to popularize, as it was expressed, the general language of society. But these ends being effected, the speech of republicans ought, it is said, to be simple, manly, and concise, but at the same time free from coarseness and violence.

From these indications, and the tenor of a decree to be hereafter quoted, it seems plain that Robespierre was about to affect a new character, not perhaps without the hope of finding a puritanic party in France, as favourable to his ambitious views as that of the independents was to Cromwell. He might then have added the word *virtue* to liberty and equality, which formed the national programme, and doubtless would have made it the pretext of committing additional crimes. The decree which we allude to was brought forward by the philanthropic Couthon, who, with his kindness of manner, rendered more impressive by a silver-toned voice, and an affectation of extreme gentleness, tendered a law, extending the powers of the revolutionary tribunal, and the penalty of death not only to all sorts of persons who should in any manner or way neglect their duty to the republic, or assist her enemies, but to the following additional classes: All who should have deceived the people or their representatives—all who should have sought to inspire discouragement into good citizens, or to favour the undertakings of tyrants—all who should spread false news—all who should seek to lead astray the public opinion, and to prevent the instruction of the people, or to debauch manners and corrupt the public conscience; or who should diminish the purity of revolutionary principles by counter-revolutionary works, &c. &c. &c.

It is evident, that compared with a law couched in terms so vague and general, so obscure and indefinite, the description of crimes concerning suspected persons was broad sunshine; that there was no Frenchman living who might not be brought within the danger of the decree, under one or other of those sweeping clauses; that a loose or careless expression, or the repetition of an inaccurate article of news, might be founded on as corrupting the public conscience, or misleading the public opinion; in short, that the slightest indulgence in the most ordinary functions of speech might be brought under this comprehensive edict, and so cost the speaker his life.

The decree sounded like a death-knell in the ears of the convention. All were made sensible that another decimation of the legislative body approached; and beheld with terror, that no provision was made in the proposed law for respecting the personal inviolability of the deputies, but that the obnoxious members of the convention, without costing Robespierre even the formality of asking a decree from their complaisant brethren, might be transferred, like any ordinary individuals, to the butchery of the revolutionary tribunal, not only by the medium of either of the committees, but at the instance of the public prosecutor, or even of any of their own brethren of the representative body, who were acting under a commission. Ruamps, one of the deputies, exclaimed, in accents of despair, that if this decree were resolved upon, the friends of liberty had no other course left than to blow their own brains out.

The law passed for the night, in spite of all opposition; but the terrified deputies returned to the attack the next day. The measure was again brought into debate, and the question of privileges was evasively provided for. At a third sitting the theme was renewed; and, after much violence, the

fatal decree was carried, without any of the clogs which had offended Robespierre, and he attained possession of the fatal weapon, such as he had originally forged it.

From this moment there was mortal though secret war between Robespierre and the most distinguished members of the assembly, particularly those who had sat with him on the celebrated Mountain, and shared all the atrocities of jacobinism. Collot d'Herbois, the demolisher of Lyons, and regenerator of Ville Affranchie, threw his weight into the scale against his master; and several other members of both committees, which were Robespierre's own organs, began secretly to think on means of screening themselves from a power, which, like the huge Anaconda, enveloped in its coils, and then crushed and swallowed, whatever came in contact with it. The private progress of this schism cannot be traced; but it is said that the dictator found himself in a minority in the committee of public safety, when he demanded the head of Fouché, whom he had accused as a Dantonist in the convention and the jacobin club. It is certain he had not attended the meeting of the committee for two or three weeks before his fall, leaving his interest there to be managed by Couthon and Saint Just.

Feeling himself thus placed in the lists against his ancient friends the Terrorists, the unfeeling tyrant endeavoured to acquire allies among the remains of the Girondists, who had been spared in contempt more than clemency, and permitted to hide themselves among the neutral party who occupied the Plain; and who gave generally their votes on the prudential system of adhering to the stronger side.

Finding little countenance from this timid and long-neglected part of the legislative body, Robespierre returned to his more steady supporters in the jacobin club. Here he retained his supremacy, and was heard with enthusiastic applause; while he intimated to them the defection of certain members of the legislature from the true revolutionary course; complained of the inactivity and lukewarmness of the committees of public safety and public security, and described himself as a persecuted patriot, almost the solitary supporter of the cause of his country, and exposed for that reason to the blows of a thousand assassins.

"All patriots," exclaimed Couthon, "are brothers and friends! For my part, I invoke on myself the poniards destined against Robespierre." "So do we all!" exclaimed the meeting, unanimously. Thus encouraged, Robespierre urged a purification of the society, directing his accusations against Fouché and other members of the Mountain; and he received the encouragement he desired.

He next ascertained his strength among the judges of the revolutionary tribunal, and his willing agents among the reformed commune of Paris, which, after the fall of Hébert and Chaumette, he had taken care to occupy with his most devoted friends. But still he knew that, in the storm which was about to arise, these out-of-door demagogues were but a sort of tritons of the minnows, compared to Tallien, Fouché, Barras, Collot d'Herbois, Billaud Varennes, and other deputies of distinguished powers, accustomed to make their voices heard and obeyed amid all the roar of revolutionary tempest. He measured and re-measured his force with theirs: and for more than six weeks avoided the combat, yet without making any overtures for reconciliation, in which, indeed, neither party would probably have trusted the other.

Meantime, the dictator's enemies had also their own ground on which they could engage advantageously in these skirmishes, which were to serve as preludes to the main and fatal conflict. Vadier, on the part of the committee of public safety, laid before the convention, in a tone of bitter satirical ridicule, the history of the mystical meetings and formation of a religious sect under Catharine Theot, whose pretensions have been already hinted at. No mention was indeed made of Robespierre, or of the countenance he was supposed to have given to these fanatical intriguers. But the fact of his having done so was well known; and the shafts of Vadier were aimed with such malignant dexterity, that while they seemed only directed against the mystics

his immediate and active vengeance. A power, kindred also in crime, but more within his reach for the moment, was first to be demolished, ere Robespierre was to measure strength with his great rival.

This third party consisted of those who had possessed themselves of official situations in the commune of Paris, whose civic authority, and the implement which they commanded, in the revolutionary army, commanded by Roussin, gave them the power of marching, at a moment's warning, upon the convention, or even against the jacobin club. It is true, these men, of whom Hébert, Chaumette, and others, were leaders, had never shown the least diffidence of Robespierre, but, on the contrary, had used all means to propitiate his favour. But the man whom a tyrant fears, becomes, with little farther provocation, the object of his mortal enmity. Robespierre watched, therefore, with vigilance, the occasion of overreaching and destroying this party, whose power he dreaded; and, singular to tell, he sought the means of accomplishing their ruin in the very extravagance of their revolutionary zeal, which shortly before he might have envied, as pushed farther than his own. But Robespierre did not want sense; and he saw with pleasure Hébert, Chaumette, and their followers run into such inordinate extravagances, as he thought might render his own interference desirable, even to those who most disliked his principles, most abhorred the paths by which he had climbed to power, and most feared the use which he made of it.

It was through the subject of religion that this means of ruining his opponents, as he hoped, arose. A subject which one would have thought so indifferent to either, came to be on both sides the occasion of quarrel between the commune of Paris and the jacobin leader. But there is a fanaticism of atheism, as well as of superstitious belief; and a philosopher can harbour and express as much malice against those who persevere in believing what he is pleased to denounce as unworthy of credence, as an ignorant and bigoted priest can bear against a man who cannot yield faith to dogmata which he thinks insufficiently proved. Accordingly, the throne being totally annihilated, it appeared to the philosophers of the school of Hébert, that in totally destroying such vestiges of religion and public worship as were still retained by the people of France, there was room for a splendid triumph of liberal opinions. It was not enough, they said, for a regenerate nation to have dethroned earthly kings, unless she stretched out the arm of defiance towards those powers which superstition had represented as reigning over boundless space.

An unhappy man, named Gobet, constitutional bishop of Paris, was brought forward to play the principal part in the most impudent and scandalous farce ever acted in the face of a national representation.

It is said that the leaders of the scene had some difficulty in inducing the bishop to comply with the task assigned him, which, after all, he executed, not without present tears and subsequent remorse. But he did play the part prescribed. He was brought forward in full procession, to declare to the convention, that the religion which he had taught so many years was, in every respect, a piece of priestcraft, which had no foundation either in history or sacred truth. He disowned, in solemn and explicit terms, the existence of the Deity to whose worship he had been consecrated, and devoted himself in future to the homage of liberty, equality, virtue, and morality. He then laid on the table his episcopal decorations, and received a fraternal embrace from the president of the convention. Several apostate priests followed the example of this prelate.

The gold and silver plate of the churches was seized upon and desecrated; processions entered the convention, travestied in priestly garments, and singing the most profane hymns; while many of the chalices and sacred vessels were applied by Chaumette and Hébert, to the celebration of their own impious orgies. The world, for the first time, heard an assembly of men, born and educated in civilization, and assuming the right to govern one of the finest of the European nations, uplift their united voice to deny the most solemn truth which man's soul receives, and renounce unanimously the

belief and worship of a Deity. For a short time the same mad profanity continued to be acted upon.

One of the ceremonies of this insane time stands unrivalled for absurdity, combined with impiety. The doors of the convention were thrown open to a band of musicians; preceded by whom, the members of the municipal body entered in solemn procession, singing a hymn in praise of liberty, and escorting, as the object of their future worship, a veiled female, whom they termed the goddess of Reason. Being brought within the bar, she was unveiled with great form, and placed on the right hand of the president; when she was generally recognised as a dancing girl of the opera, with whose charms most of the persons present were acquainted, from her appearance on the stage, while the experience of individuals was farther extended. To this person, as the fittest representative of that reason whom they worshipped, the national convention of France rendered public homage.

This impious and ridiculous mummery had a certain fashion; and the installation of the goddess of Reason was renewed and imitated throughout the nation, in such places where the inhabitants desired to show themselves equal to all the heights of the revolution. The churches were, in most districts of France, closed against priests and worshippers—the bells were broken and cast into cannon—the whole ecclesiastical establishment destroyed—and the republican inscription over the cemeteries, declaring death to be perpetual sleep, announced to those who lived under that dominion, that they were to hope no redress even in the next world.

Intimately connected with these laws affecting religion, was that which reduced the union of marriage, the most sacred engagement which human beings can form, and the permanence of which leads most strongly to the consolidation of society, to the state of a mere civil contract of a transitory character, which any two persons might engage in, and cast loose at pleasure, when their taste was changed, or their appetite gratified. If fiends had set themselves to work to discover a mode of most effectually destroying whatever is venerable, graceful, or permanent in domestic life, and of obtaining at the same time an assurance that the mischief which it was their object to create, should be perpetuated from one generation to another, they could not have invented a more effectual plan than the degradation of marriage into a state of mere occasional cohabitation, or licensed concubinage. Sophie Arnould, an actress famous for the witty things she said, described the republican marriage as the sacrament of adultery.

These anti-religious and anti-social regulations did not answer the purpose of the frantic and inconsiderate zealots by whom they had been urged forward. Hébert and Chaumette had outrun the spirit of the time, evil as that was, and had contrived to get beyond the sympathy even of those who, at heart as vicious and criminal as they, had still the sagacity to fear, or the taste to be disgusted with, this overstrained tone of outrageous impiety. Perhaps they might have other motives for condemning so gross a display of irreligion. The most guilty of men are not desirous, generally speaking, totally to disbelieve and abandon all doctrines of religious faith. They cannot, if they would, prevent themselves from apprehending a future state of retribution; and little effect as such feeble glimmering of belief may have on their lives, they will not in general willingly throw away the slight chance, that it may be possible, on some occasion, to reconcile themselves to the church or to the Deity. This hope, even to those on whom it has no salutary influence, resembles the confidence given to a sailor, during a gale of wind, by his knowing that there is a port under his lee. His purpose may be never to run for the haven, or he may judge there is great improbability that by doing so he should reach it in safety; yet still, such being the case, he would esteem himself but little indebted to any one who should blot the harbour of refuge out of the chart. To all those who, in various degrees, received and believed the great truths of religion, on which those of morality are dependent, the professors of those wild absurdities became objects of contempt, dislike, hatred, and punishment.

The spirit of reaction increased, and was strengthened by Robespierre's influence, now thrown into the scale against the commune. The principal leaders in the commune, many of whom seem to have been foreigners, and among the rest the celebrated Anacharsis Clootz, were arrested, the 22d of March, 1794.

The case of these men was singular, and would have been worthy of pity had it applied to any but such worthless wretches. They were accused of almost every species of crime, which seemed such in the eyes of a sans-culotte. Much there was that could be only understood metaphysically, much there was of literal falsehood, but little or nothing like a distinct or well-grounded accusation of a specific criminal fact. The charge bore, that they were associates of Pitt and Cobourg, and had combined against the sovereignty of the people—loaded them with the intention of thereby starving Paris—with that of ridiculing the convention, by a set of puppets dressed up to imitate that scarce less passive assembly—and much more to the same purpose, consisting of allegations that were totally unimportant, or totally unproved. But nothing was said of the rivalry to Robespierre, which was the true cause of their trial, and as little of their revolutionary murders, being the ground on which they really deserved their fate. Something was talked of pillage, at which Roussin, the commandant of the revolutionary army, lost all patience. "Do they talk to me of pilfering?" he says. "Dare they accuse such a man as I am, of a theft of bed and bodily linen? Do they bring against me a charge of petty larceny—against *me*, who have had all their throats at my disposal?"

The accused persons were convicted and executed, to the number of nineteen. From that time the city of Paris lost the means of being so pre-eminent in the affairs of France, as her commune had formerly rendered her. The power of the magistracy was much broken by the reduction of the revolutionary army, which the convention dissolved as levied upon false principles, and as being rather a metropolitan than a national force, and one which was easily applied to serve the purposes of a party.

The Hébertists being removed, Robespierre had yet to combat and defeat a more formidable adversary. The late conspirators had held associations with the club of Cordeliers, with which Danton was supposed to have particular relations, but they had not experienced his support, which in policy he ought to have extended to them. He had begun to separate his party and his views too distinctly from his old friends and old proceedings. He imagined, falsely as it proved, that his bark could sail as triumphantly upon waves composed only of water, as on those of blood. He and others seem to have been seized with a loathing against the continued acts of cruelty, as if they had been gorged and nauseated by the constant repetition. Danton spoke of mercy and pardon; and his partisan, Camille Desmoulins, in a very ingenious parody upon Tacitus, drew a comparison between the tyrants and informers of the French jacobin government, and those of the Roman imperial court. The parallels were most ably drawn, and Robespierre and his agents might read their own characters in those of the most odious wretches of that odious time. From these aggressions, Danton seemed to meditate the part which Tallien afterward adopted, of destroying Robespierre and his power, and substituting a mode of government which should show some regard at least to life and to property. But he was too late in making his movement; Robespierre was beforehand with him; and, on the morning of the 31st of March, the Parisians and the members of the convention hardly dared whisper to each other, that Danton, whose name had been as formidable as the sound of the tocsin, had been arrested like any poor ex-noble, and was in the hands of the fatal lictors.

There was no end of exclamation and wonder; for Danton was the great apostle, the very Mahomet of jacobinism. His gigantic stature, his huge and ferocious physiognomy, his voice which struck terror in its notes of distant thunder, and the energies of talent and vehemence mingled, which supplied that voice with language worthy of its deep tones, were such as became

the prophet of that horrible and fearful sect. Marat was a madman, raised into consequence only by circumstances,—Robespierre a cold, creeping, calculating hypocrite, whose malignity resembled that of a paltry and second-rate fiend;—but Danton was a character for Shakspeare or Schiller to have drawn in all its broad lights and shades; or Bruce could have sketched from him a yet grander Ras Michael than he of Tigre. His passions were a hurricane, which, furious, regardless, and desolating in its course, had yet its intervals of sunshine and repose. Neither good by nature, nor just by principle or political calculation, men were often surprised at finding he still possessed some feelings of generosity, and some tendency even towards magnanimity. Early habits of profligate indulgence, the most complete stifler of human virtue, and his implication at the beginning of his career with the wretched faction of Orleans, made him, if not a worse, certainly a meaner, villain than nature had designed him; for his pride must have saved him from much which he yielded to from the temptations of gross indulgence, and from the sense of narrow circumstances. Still, when Danton fell under Robespierre, it seemed as if the mousing-owl had hawked at and struck an eagle, or at least a high-soaring vulture. His avowed associates lamented him of course; nay, Legendre and others, by undertaking his defence in the convention, and arrogating for him the merit of those violent measures which had paved the way to the triumph of jacobinism, showed more consistency in their friendship than these ferocious demagogues manifested on any other occasion.

Danton, before his fall, seemed to have lost much of his sagacity as well as energy. He had full warning of his danger from La Croix, Westermann, and others; yet took no steps either for escape or defence, though either seemed in his power. Still his courage was in no degree abated, or his haughty spirit tamed; although he seemed to submit passively to his fate, with the disheartening conviction, which often unmans great criminals, that his hour was come.

Danton's process was, of course, a short one. He and his comrades, Camille Desmoulins, Westermann, and La Croix, were dragged before the revolutionary tribunal, a singular accomplishment of the prophecy of the Girondist Boyer Fonfrède. This man had exclaimed to Danton, under whose auspices that engine of arbitrary power was established, "You insist, then, upon erecting this arbitrary judgment-seat? Be it so; and, like the tormenting engine devised by Phalaris, may it not fail to consume its inventors!" As judges, witnesses, accusers, and guards, Danton was now surrounded by those who had been too humble to aspire to be companions of his atrocities, and held themselves sufficiently honoured in becoming his agents. They looked on his unstooping pride and unshaken courage, as timid spectators of a lion in a cage, while they still doubt the security of the bars, and have little confidence in their own personal safety. He answered, to the formal interrogatories concerning his name and dwelling, "My dwelling will be soon with annihilation—my name will live in the pantheon of history." Camille Desmoulins, Héroult les Sèches, Fabre d'Eglantine, men of considerable literary talent, and among the few jacobins who had any real pretension to such accomplishments, shared his fate. Westermann was also numbered with them, the same officer who directed the attack on the palace of the Tuileries on the 10th of August, and who afterward was distinguished by so many victories and defeats in La Vendée, that he was called, from his activity, the scourge of that district.

Their accusation was, as in all such cases at the period, an olla podrida, if we can be allowed the expression, in which every criminal ingredient was mixed up; but so incoherently mingled and assembled together, so inconsistent with each other, and so obscurely detailed in the charge and in the proof, that it was plain that malignant falsehood had made the gruel thick and slab. Had Danton been condemned for his real crimes, the doom ought, in justice, to have involved judges, jurors, witnesses, and most of the spectators in the court.