

are wiser than their calumniators assumed, and the people in mass have much more sense than many of those who deem themselves great men. In a people we can no more count the great men than we can count the giant trees in the vast forest. It was believed that the people wanted the Agrarian Law, and this may throw suspicion on the measures adopted by the Department De L'Hevault. It will be said of them: "They taxed the rich"; but, citizens, to tax the rich is to serve them. It is rather a veritable advantage for them than any considerable sacrifice; and the greater the sacrifice, the greater the usufruct, for the greater is the guarantee to the foundation of property against the invasion of its enemies. It is an appeal to every man, according to his means, to save the Republic. The appeal is just. What the Department De L'Hevault has done, Paris and all France will do. See what resources France will procure. Paris has a luxury and wealth which is considerable. Well, by decree, this sponge will be squeezed! And with singular satisfaction it will be found that the people will conduct their revolution at the expense of their internal enemies. These enemies themselves will learn the price of liberty and will desire to possess it, when they will recognize that it has preserved for them their possessions.

Paris in making an appeal to capitalists will furnish her contingent, which will afford means to suppress the troubles in La Vendée; for, at any sacrifice, these troubles must be suppressed. On this alone depends your external tranquillity. Already, the departments of the north have informed the combined despots that your territory cannot be divided; and soon you will probably learn of the dissolution of this formidable league of kings. For in unit-

ing against you, they have not forgotten their ancient hatreds and respective pretensions; and if the Executive Council had had a little more latitude, the league might be already completely dissolved.

Paris, then, must be directed against La Vendée. All the men needed in this city to form a reserve camp should be sent at once to La Vendée. These measures once taken, the rebels will disperse, and, like the Austrians, will commence to kill each other. If the flames of this civil discord be extinguished, they will ask of us peace!

ON THE ASSASSINATION OF LEPELETIER DE SAINT-FARGEAU

DELIVERED JANUARY 21, 1793

AT this most terrible moment I notice with satisfaction that the people, whose excesses seem to be feared, has respected the liberty of its representatives who have been most eager in betraying its interests. Where should we be, if one of those who did not wish to vote for the death of the tyrant had perished by the knife of an insane patriot? Surely, calumny, prepared for so long, would make great ravages against us. But, citizens, let us be generous; the life of Lepeletier was beautiful; his death will yet serve the republic. Generous citizen, I envy you your death; it will prove to France that there was no danger among us except for those who burned with the holy love of liberty.

A place in the Pantheon has been asked for him; surely he has already gathered the immortal palm of the martyr of liberty. Yes, I vote too for the Pantheon; yes, I vote for it also. On his tomb we shall swear to serve liberty, not to

leave our post until we have given a constitution to the people, or to die by the dagger of assassins.

It will be sweet for me to prove to you, by explaining in this assembly that I am a stranger to all passions, that I know how to unite to impetuosity of character the stolidity which belongs to a man chosen by the people to make its laws. I have the honor of forming a part of those citizens [pointing to the Mountain] who have been continually presented as enemies of every kind of government. But I implore them not to become exasperated for not having been recognized as the true friends of liberty. Pétion, in my opinion, was wrong; Pétion was weak; I have always believed him so; he can explain himself on my account as he thinks proper. But I confess I am painfully affected to see that all France will no longer know in whom to place any confidence.

I reproach Pétion for not having explained himself clearly enough in regard to those who had served the commonwealth more energetically perhaps than he. Perhaps Pétion could have told you more clearly that those deplorable scenes, those horrible massacres which have been indulged in to such an extent to incense the departments against Paris,—perhaps he ought to have told you clearly that no human power could have stopped the effect of that revolutionary thirst, of that rage which took entire possession of a great people; perhaps some of the members of the extraordinary commission acquainted with these deplorable events could have reminded you also that these terrible acts about which we all groan were the effect of a revolution; and if some individuals can be reproached for having practised acts of vengeance, it was never the immediate action of a few persons, but rather a people who had never had justice for the greatest criminals.

If we had explained ourselves frankly about these frightful events, we should have doubtless have been spared respectively many calumnies, and the republic perhaps many evils.

So I call on you, citizens, you who have seen me in the ministry, to tell me if I have not brought union everywhere. I entreat you, you Pétion, you Brissot, I entreat you all, for I wish to make myself known; I entreat you all because in short I wish to be known. I have had the courage to keep silent for three months, but since I wish to speak about other individuals I must make myself thoroughly known. Well! I submit myself to your judgment. Have I not shown deference to the old man who is now minister of the interior? Have I not told you, do you not agree with me concerning the unfortunate bitterness of his character, at a time when, in the bosom of the republic, it was desirable, it was indispensable, that he who performed in a way the function of consul should be of a character to conciliate minds, should be of a character to try to dispel hatreds at a moment when it was inevitable that so great a commotion would involve great contests? You agreed with me. Well! I reproach you for not having explained this. Roland, whose intentions I do not calumniate, but whose character I am trying to make known: Roland considers as rascals and enemies of the country all who do not caress his thoughts and his opinions. I entreat you, you, my dear fellow citizens, you Lanthenas, whose relations with Roland ought to cause an investigation into this testimony, notice this sentence! Citizens, it is not with calumny that I ask to have this post vacated; it is in accordance with his commensals.

For the welfare of the republic, I ask that Roland shall no longer be minister. Weigh my impartiality well. I

‘Roland.

appeal to you, citizens, concerning it. I have replied to no calumny. I see that Roland was abused on my account. I desire the safety of the republic, and I know not vengeance, because I have no need of it. I say then that you cannot suspect my declaration when I call upon those even who cherish Roland the most.

Having been exposed to proceedings, fearing that a warrant would be served against him, from that moment Roland saw Paris only in the darkness: he confounded everything then, because he believed he had everything to fear; he thought in his mistake that the great tree of liberty, whose roots hold all the soil of the republic, could be overturned. Then burst forth his resentment against the city of Paris, and it will exist as well as the republic: because Paris is the city of all the departments; Paris is the city of all their lights; all the departments being then there; and this is Roland's great error, the great mistake he made, this is his great fault: it is having conspired, through his hatred, to arouse the departments against Paris. I will remind him of what he accused me. When he spoke to me about the departmental guard, I said to him: "This measure is contrary to all principles, but it will pass; because it is a decided row. Well! This guard will no sooner have taken up its abode in Paris than it will have the mind of the people: because the people have no other passion but for liberty."

Well! citizens, have you the proof now that the federates of the departments have other sentiments than the citizens of Paris; not one of you doubts it now; yes, you do not doubt it yourselves. How many citizens agree that they have been led in error! This error, I say it with regret, comes from Roland's acrimony; you can obtain the proof of it through one of your committees. Roland has circulated writings,

founded at first on the error into which his mind had fallen, that is to say that Paris wished to rule. After that, I will not give my conclusion; but in fixing your attention on all that I have just said, I believe that you will have reached the source of the evil, and, this source being exhausted, you will be able to occupy yourselves efficiently with the welfare of the country.

You have had special measures pointed out to you, that is domiciliary visits. I am wholly opposed to this measure; that is to say, I do not believe, at a time when the French nation is opposed to the application of a bill aimed against the French citizens by the Parliament of England, she ought herself to set the example of a measure against which she rises and which she condemns. I say that there is a way to reach the same end, and this is my idea about it: You should have a committee of supervision, of general safety, worthy of your absolute confidence; it should be fortunate enough to have nothing to fear from its operations. Well! renew it, if you deem it necessary, in order that you may give it a wide latitude, and that, when two thirds of its members believe they hold the thread of a plot, they may have the right to open the doors of any house where they may think a conspirator is concealed. This is the only way to carry out your object without destroying principles.

I will pass on to matters of a superior order. It is not enough to have caused the tyrant's head to fall; there is not a citizen on whom our eyes have rested who does not call all our energy, all our agitation towards war. Let us make war with Europe, and not with ourselves. Grasp my thought: war should be carried on by a people like the French nation in a manner worthy of her. In order to economize the blood of men their sweat is needed. Prodigality is needed. Such

a war carried on parsimoniously would have terminated a great quarrel if waged lavishly.

You will have a report from your commissioners sent to Belgium, from it you will gather the conviction that your armies have done wonders, although in a state of deplorable destitution. Fear nothing in the world: we have seen the French soldiers; there is not one of them who does not believe he is worth more than two hundred slaves. Such is the energy, such is the republicanism of the army that if it should be said to three hundred, You must perish or march against Vienna; they would say, We go to death or Vienna.

With such a people nothing is needed but wise legislators who know how to hold the reins of this sublime nation. Reflect that it is greater than you; reflect that there is no longer a man of genius in a great people; that the true genius is in its entirety in this same people. Well! see to it that you raise the people to the height they ought to attain. Reorganize your armies, for consider that before making a constitution you must have the means of beating your enemy; for people already constitute a nation when they are already conquerors such as we have been in our last campaign.

I will remind you of another subject—that there is another ministry occupied by another good citizen,—it is the ministry of war. But this ministry exceeds human strength, and, if I should explain myself openly, I should say that this citizen, to whom I render justice, has not the push, the quick-sightedness necessary to a man charged with so great operations and so great responsibility. I do not ask to have him robbed of his functions, but I call your attention to the fact that they ought to be divided, in order not to crush the one in charge of them. When you are familiar with the report that we are going to make for you, you will feel that you need the

same movement in the army; that just as only one general is needed to move that great body, so perhaps only one man is needed to conduct the administration which is to furnish means of subsistence to that great mass.

Citizens, prepare your thoughts on these great subjects; they will come up before you incessantly; pay strict attention, above all, to what I have said to you about the minister of the interior; remember and do not lose sight of what I have represented to you, that if my duty did not compel me to report what I have seen, what the citizens I have quoted have seen, I should be silent, for I am not made to be suspected of resentment. I shall never have but one passion; that is to die for my country. May heaven grant me the fate of the citizen whose loss we deplore!

[Specially translated by Helen B. Dole.]

ON THE ABOLITION OF SLAVERY

16 PLUVIOSE, YEAR II—FEBRUARY 4, 1794

REPRESENTATIVES of the French people, heretofore we have decreed liberty only as egotists and for ourselves. But to-day we proclaim it in the face of the universe, and future generations will find their glory in this decree. We proclaimed universal liberty yesterday, when the President gave the fraternal kiss to the colored deputies. I saw the moment when the Convention ought to decree liberty to our brothers. The meeting was not large enough. The Convention has just done its duty. But after having granted the benefit of liberty, we must be, so to speak, the moderators of it. Let us send to the Committee of Public

Safety and the Colonies, to combine the means of rendering this decree useful to humanity, without any danger to it.

We dishonored our glory by mutilating our works. The great principles developed by the virtuous Las Casas were misunderstood. We are working for future generations; let us send forth liberty into the colonies; to-day the English are dead. By casting liberty into the New World it will bring forth abundant fruit there; it will grow deep roots. Pitt and his accomplices will try in vain by political considerations to prevent the enjoyment of this benefit; they will be brought to nought. France will again assume the rank and influence which her energy, her soil, and her population assure her. We shall take pleasure in our generosity, but we shall not extend it beyond the limits of wisdom. We shall cut down tyrants as we have crushed faithless men who wished to keep back the Revolution. Let us not lose our energy let us launch our frigates, let us be sure of the benedictions of the universe and of posterity, and let us decree the sending back of measures for the examination of the committee.

[Specially translated by Helen B. Dole.]

DESMOULINS



UCIE SIMPLICE CAMILLE BENOIST DESMOULINS, French revolutionist, journalist, and pamphleteer, was born at Guise, Aisne, France, March 2, 1760, and was guillotined at Paris, April 5, 1794. After an education at the College of Louis le Grande, he studied law, but being seized with the revolutionary fever of the time, and partly because of a stutter in his speech, he never practiced his profession. Prior to 1789, he was wont somewhat guardedly to advocate the establishment of a republic for France after the ancient and classical type. Subsequently, on the dismissal of Necker from the office of Director-General of the Finances, Desmoulin urged the organization of the militia of Paris, and by his fiery harangues was instrumental in inciting the militia and mob of the capital to destroy the Bastille (July 14, 1789). Being at first in sympathy with the Girondists rather than with the Jacobins, his early idol was Mirabeau, but when that ruling spirit of the era died (April, 1791), Desmoulin attached himself to Danton and became with the latter and Marat a leading member of the Cordeliers Club, a secession from the Jacobin organization. Later on, he became a member of the National Convention, which was constituted in May, 1792, and there voted for the death of Louis XVI. Associated for a time with Robespierre, he however kept aloof from the excesses of the Reign of Terror let loose upon Paris by that malignant despot and his immediate associates, and attacked them scathingly and those of the relentless Committee of Public Safety. For this he was arrested at the end of March, 1794, and with Danton was guillotined a few days afterward (April 5), his young wife following him to the block a fortnight later. In his journal, "Le Vieux Cordelier," his clement spirit incited him to denounce with much ability and vigor the bloodthirstiness and wild tumult of the era. He also edited the "Revolutions de France et de Brabant." Appended is an example of his oratory.

LIVE FREE OR DIE

FEBRUARY, 1788

ONE difference between the monarchy and the republic, which alone should suffice to make the people reject with horror all monarchical rule and make them prefer the republic regardless of the cost of its establishment, is that in a democracy, though the people may