

SAINT-JUST



ANTOINE LOUIS LEON DE SAINT-JUST, French revolutionist, henchman of Robespierre, and one of the leading promoters of the Reign of Terror, was born at Décize near Nièvre, France, Aug. 25, 1767, and was guillotined at Paris, July 28, 1794. Beginning his education at a school in Soissons, he was expelled from the institution on account of a plot with which he was charged to burn the school buildings. Proceeding to Paris, he flung himself, under the influence of Rousseau's ideas, into the political turmoil of the time, becoming an officer of the National Guard and a member of the Electoral Assembly of his district, though yet under age. Entering into correspondence with Robespierre, he was returned deputy of Aisne to the National Committee, making his first speech Nov. 19, 1792. He supported the most extreme measures, was a member of the Committee of Public Safety, and, next to Robespierre, was for months the most conspicuous leader in the Reign of Terror. In February, 1794, he became president of the Convention, and, speaking for Robespierre, he accused Danton of treason. On the ninth Thermidor he sought to defend Robespierre, but the sitting of the Convention closed with the order for Robespierre's arrest. On the following day, Saint-Just and his master were guillotined with twenty others, thus unexpectedly closing the hideous era of the Reign of Terror. "Saint-Just," observes Lamartine, seemed "to personify in himself the cold intelligence and pitiless march of the Revolution. He had neither eyes, ears, nor heart for anything which appeared to oppose the establishment of the universal republic." He possessed considerable personal attractions, and was popular as an enthusiast and revolutionist, his admirers styling him the "Saint John of the Messiah of the People."

ARRAIGNMENT OF DANTON

DANTON, you shall answer to inevitable, inflexible justice. Let us look at your past conduct, and let us show that from the first day, the accomplice of all crimes, you were always opposed to the party of liberty, and that you were in league with Mirabeau, with Dumouriez, with Hébert, with Hérault-Sechelles.

Danton, you have served tyranny; it is true you were opposed to Lafayette; but Mirabeau, d'Orléans, Dumouriez, were opposed to him also. Will you dare deny having been

(240)

sold to those three men—the most violent of conspirators against liberty? Through Mirabeau's protection you were named administrator of the department of Paris at the time when the Electoral Assembly was decidedly royalist. All Mirabeau's friends boasted loudly that they had closed your mouth. While this frightful character was living you remained almost dumb. At that time you reproached a rigid patriot at a public dinner with compromising the good cause by turning aside from the path followed by Barnave and Lameth, who abandoned the popular party.

In the first outburst of the Revolution, you showed a threatening front to the court; you spoke against it with vehemence. Mirabeau, who meditated a change of dynasty, felt the price of your audacity; he seized you. From that time you strayed away from severe principles and nothing more was heard of you until the massacre of the Champ-de-Mars. Then you applied the motion of Laclos to the Jacobins, which was a disastrous pretext and paid by the enemies of the people in order to display the red flag and attempt tyranny. The patriots, who were not initiated into this plot, had fought in vain against your sanguinary opinion. You were appointed to draw up with Brissot the petition of the Champ-de-Mars, and you escaped the fury of Lafayette, who caused the massacre of two thousand patriots. Brissot strayed afterward peaceably into Paris; and you spent happy days at Arcis-sur-Aube, if indeed he who conspired against his country could be happy. Could the calmness of your retreat at Arcis-sur-Aube be pictured to the imagination? You, one of the authors of the petition, while those that had signed it had been, some loaded with fetters, others massacred; were Brissot and you then objects of gratitude for tyranny since you were not objects of terror to it?

What shall I say of your cowardly and constant abandonment of the public cause in the midst of crises, when you always took the part of retreat?

After Mirabeau's death you conspired with the Lameths and you sustained them. You remained neutral during the Legislative Assembly, and you were silent in the painful struggle of the Jacobins with Brissot and the faction of La Gironde. At first you influenced them in favor of war; then, urged by the reproaches of the best citizens, you declared that you would serve both parties and you shut yourself up in silence. Leagued with Brissot to the Champ-de-Mars, you then shared his tranquillity and his liberty-destroying opinions; then, given over entirely to this conquering party, you said of those that refused it, since they remained alone in their opinions on the war and since they wished to be destroyed, you and your friends would abandon them to their fate. But when you saw the storm of the 10th of August gathering you retired again to Arcis-sur-Aube. A deserter from the perils that threatened liberty, the patriots hoped never to see you again. However, impelled by shame, by reproaches, when you knew that the downfall of tyranny was well prepared and inevitable, you came back to Paris the 9th of August. You went to bed that terrible night. Your section, which had named you its president, waited for you a long time; they tore you away from a shameful repose; you presided one hour; you left the arm-chair at midnight when the tocsin sounded; at the same moment the satellites of the tyrant entered and placed the bayonet on the hearth of the one who had taken your place: you,— you were asleep!

At that moment, what was Fabre, your accomplice and your friend, doing? You yourself said that he was parleying with the court in order to deceive it. But could the court rely on

Fabre without a sure guarantee of his venality and without very evident proof of his hatred for the popular party. Whoever is a friend to a man who has negotiated with the court is guilty of cowardice. The intellect is subject to errors; the errors of conscience are crimes.

But what have you done since to prove to us that Fabre, your accomplice, and you have desired to deceive the court? Your behavior since then has been that of conspirators. When you were minister there was question of sending an ambassador to London to bring about an alliance between the two nations: Noël, a counter-revolutionary journalist, was offered by the minister, Lebrun; you did not oppose it; you were blamed for it: you replied, "I know that Noël is of no consequence, but I am sending one of my relatives with him."

What was the result of this criminal embassy? Concerted war and treasons. You were the one who caused Fabre and d'Orléans nominated for the Electoral Assembly, where you proclaimed the one to be a very skilful man, and where you declared that the other, being a prince of the blood, would by his presence among the representatives of the people give them greater importance in the eyes of Europe. Chabot voted in favor of Fabre and d'Orléans. You made Fabre rich during your ministry. Fabre then loudly professed federalism and said that France would be divided into four parts. Roland, the partisan of royalty, desired to cross the Loire to find La Vendée; you wished to remain in Paris where d'Orléans was and where you were favoring Dumouriez. You gave orders to save Duport: he escaped in the midst of a riot got up at Mélun by your emissaries to search through an armed carriage. Malouet and the Bishop of Autun were often at your house; you favored them. Brissot's party accused Marat;

you declared yourself his enemy; you stood aside from the Mountain in the dangers which it ran. You publicly made it a merit never to have denounced Gensonné, Guadet, and Brissot; you kept holding out to them the olive-branch, guarantee of your alliance with them against the people and the strict republicans. La Gironde delivered against you a fictitious war. In order to compel you to show yourself in your true colors, it demanded of you your accounts; it accused you of ambition. Your foreseeing hypocrisy was all conciliating and was able to maintain you in the midst of parties, always ready to dissimulate with the strongest without insulting the feeblest. When the debates grew stormy there was indignation at your absence and at your silence; you talked about the country, the delights of solitude and of idleness, but you managed to emerge from your torpor to defend Dumouriez, Westermann, his boasted creature, and the generals his accomplices. You sent Fabre on a mission to Dumouriez under the pretext, you asserted, of reconciling him to Kellermann. The traitors were only too well united for our misfortune: in all their letters to the Convention, in their orations at the Convention, in their discourses at the bar, they acted as friends and you were theirs. The result of Fabre's mission was the safety of the Prussian army, in accordance with secret conditions which your conduct afterward explained. Dumouriez praised Fabre-Fond, Fabre-d'Eglantine's brother: can there be any doubt of your criminal concert in overturning the republic? You were skilful enough to mollify the anger of the patriots: you caused our misfortunes to be regarded as the result of the weakness of our armies, and you turned attention from the perfidy of the generals to occupy yourself with new levies of men. You associated with your criminal acts Lacroix, a conspirator long since discredited and with a soul

impure — a man with whom one could not be united except by a tie leaguering conspirators. Lacroix was at all times more than suspected: hypocritical and perfidious, he never in this Assembly spoke from an honest heart; he had the audacity to praise Miranda; then had the audacity to propose the renewal of the Convention; he behaved toward Dumouriez just as you did; your agitation was the same to hide the same wrong deeds. Lacroix often displayed his hatred for the Jacobins. Whence came the luxury that surrounds him? But why recall so many horrors when your manifest complicity with d'Orléans and Dumouriez in Belgium is sufficient excuse for justice to smite you?

Danton! after the 10th of August you had a conference with Dumouriez, in which you both vowed a devoted friendship and united your two fortunes. You have since justified this frightful agreement, and you are still his friend even while I am speaking. Returning from Belgium, you dared to speak of the crimes of Dumouriez with the same admiration as one would speak of the virtues of Cato. You have made an effort to corrupt the public morals by making yourself on many occasions the apologist of corrupted men, your accomplices. You were the first in a circle of patriots whom you wished to surprise, were the first to propose the banishment of Capet; a proposition which on your return you no longer dared to uphold because it was out of favor and would have ruined you.

Dumouriez, who, about this same time, had come to Paris with the design of influencing the tyrant's judgment, did not himself dare resist the cry of public justice which condemned the tyrant to death. What conduct did you display in the Committee of General Defence? You received the compliments of Guadet and of Brissot, and you paid them back; you said

to Brissot: "You have intellect, but you have pretensions." Such was your indignation against the enemies of your country! You consented that there should be no notice taken, at the Convention, of Dumouriez's independence and treason; you found yourself at secret meetings with Wimpffen and d'Orléans. At the same time you spoke in favor of moderate principles, and your robust ways seemed to disguise the weakness of your counsels. You said that severe maxims would make too many enemies in the Republic. A banal conciliator, all your speeches at the tribune began like thunder and at the end you succeeded in confounding truth and falsehood. What vigorous proposition have you ever directed against Brissot and his party in the National Assembly where I am accusing you? On your return from Belgium you stirred up the levy of the patriots of Paris to march to the frontiers. If that had taken place then, who would have resisted the aristocracy which had tried again and again to rise? Brissot desired nothing else, and the patriots sent into the field would have been sacrificed, would they not? Thus the desire of all the tyrants of the world for the destruction of Paris and of liberty would have been fulfilled.

You stirred up an insurrection in Paris; it was concerted with Dumouriez; you even announced that if money was lacking to bring it about you had your hand in the treasury of Belgium. Dumouriez desired a revolt in Paris to have a pretext for marching against this city of liberty under a title less derogatory than that of rebel and royalist. You who were resting at Arcis-sur-Aube before the 9th of August, opposing your idleness to the necessary insurrection, had found your warmth again in the month of March to serve Dumouriez and to furnish him an honorable pretext for marching against Paris. Desfieux, a recognized royalist and member of the

foreign party, gave the signal for the false insurrection. On the 10th of March a body of armed men set out for the Cordeliers, from there to the Commune, which was asked to take its place at their head. It refused to do so. Fabre was then showing great activity: "The movement," said he to a deputy, "has gone as far as it ought." Dumouriez's aim was attained; he made his movement the basis of his seditious manifesto and of the insolent letters which he wrote to the Convention. Desfieux, while declaiming against Brissot, received from Lebrun, Brissot's accomplice, a sum of money to send to the south vehement addresses where La Gironde was out of favor; but which tended to justify the projected revolt of the Federalists. Desfieux had his own couriers arrested at Bordeaux; and this caused Gensonné to denounce the Mountain and Guadet to declaim against Paris. Desfieux afterward spoke in favor of Brissot at the Revolutionary Tribunal. But, Danton, what a contradiction between this extreme and dangerous measure which you proposed, and the moderation which made you demand amnesty for all the guilty; which made you excuse Dumouriez, and made you in the Committee of General Safety support the proposition offered by Guadet to send Gensonné against the traitorous general. Could you have been so blind to the public interest? Could we reproach you for lacking discernment?

You accommodated yourself to everything: Brissot and his accomplices, when they left you, were always perfectly contented. At the tribune, when your silence was commented upon unfavorably, you gave them salutary advice to dissimulate more: you threatened them without indignation, but with a paternal kindness, and you gave them rather counsels to corrupt liberty to save themselves, to deceive us better, than you gave the Republican party to destroy them. "Hate,"

you said, "is unendurable to my heart," and you said to us, "I do not love Marat." But are you not criminal and responsible for not having hated the enemies of the country? Does a public man determine his indifference or his hatred by his private prejudices or by the love for his country, a love which you have never felt? You acted as a conciliator just as Sixte-Quinte acted the fool so as to reach the goal at which he was aiming. Will you now flash forth before the justice of the people, you who never flash forth when the country is attacked? We had believed you in good faith when we attacked Brissot's party; but since then floods of light have been thrown over your politics. You are Fabre's friend; you are not a man to compromise yourself. You could therefore defend yourself only by defending your accomplice. You abandoned the Republican party at the beginning of our session; and since then have you done anything else than cloud the deliberations with hypocrisy?

Fabre and you were d'Orléans' apologists, and you tried to make him pass for a simple and very unfortunate man: you often repeated that phrase. On the Mountain you were the point of contact and repersuasion of the conspiracy of Dumouriez, Brissot, and d'Orléans. Lacroix on all these occasions perfectly seconded you.

You looked on with horror at the revolution of the 2d of May. Hérault, Lacroix, and you asked for the head of Hanriot, who had served the cause of liberty, and you charged against him as a crime the movement which he had taken part in to escape an act of oppression on your part. Here, Danton, you used your hypocrisy: not having been able to carry out your project you dissimulated your fury; you looked at Hanriot, and, laughing, said, "Fear not, keep on in your course," wishing to make him understand that while you had been

apparently blaming him out of propriety, at heart you were really of his opinion. A moment later you approached him in the refreshment-room and offered him a glass with a caressing air, saying: "No grudge." Nevertheless the next day you libelled him in the most atrocious manner and charged him with having desired to assassinate you. Hérault and Lacroix supported you. But did you not send afterward an ambassador to Pétion and Wimpffen in Le Calvados? Did you not oppose the punishment of the deputies of La Gironde? Did you not defend Stengel, who had caused the outposts of the army at Aix-la-Chapelle to be assassinated? Thus, defender of all criminals, you have never done so much for a patriot! You accused Roland, but rather as an acrimonious imbecile than as a traitor; you discovered in his wife only pretensions to cleverness, you threw your mantle over all attempts to veil them or disguise them.

The ambassador of Spain says in the same letter written last June: "What troubles us is the reorganization of the Committee of Public Safety." You were in it, Lacroix; you were in it, Danton.

Wicked citizen, you have conspired; false friend, two days ago you spoke ill of Desmoulins, a tool whom you corrupted, and you ascribed to him shameful vices. Wicked man, you compared public opinion to a woman of evil life; you said that honor was ridiculous, that glory and posterity were folly; these maxims were meant to conciliate the aristocracy: they were those of Catiline. If Fabre is innocent, if d'Orléans, if Dumouriez were innocent, then doubtless you are. I have said too much; you shall reply to justice!

[Specially translated by Nathan Haskell Dole.]