THE INNKEEPER'S

No student of history need to be told how manfully and faithfully Vendeans struggled for their God and their King; how bands of untrained peasants, led by "Alas" cried the other, "have pity their chatelains, kept at bay for many on me. My husband is dying in great months the formidable armies of the pain. His sufferings are fearful; he, months the formidable armies of the French revolution, and how women and children, left to guard their homes, proved themselves worthy of the heroic husbands and fathers who had rushed into the very face of death at the call of

The sufferings endured by their ancestors have brought down a flow of inherited the firm faith that strengthened their forefathers through times of Citowar bitter trial and the innate respect for bitter trial and the innate respect for "Oh, but you do not understand," she authority that is, also! fast dying away cried. "Pierre is dying, dying. Toin France. As a rule, they are a quiet, contented, God-fearing race, warmly attached to the lords of the soil, and pastrached to the lords of the soil and pastrached to the lords of th sionately devoted to their native villages and firesides. The beautiful churches built in almost every village are crowded even at early Mass on week days; and God and His priests. the voice of the cure is as much respected as it was a hundred years ago, when alone;" it was no rare occurrence for the villag-picious. ers to shelter their pastors at the risk of their lives.

At the time of which we write, in 1793, terror and desolation reigned throughout Vendee. The churches were citier burned to the ground or stripped of their ornaments and left lonely and joined the Royalist army under Cath-lineau, "the saint of Anjon" As for the priests, all who declined to take the whispered Mere Jo impious oath demanded by the revolutionary government, were in exile or con-

In the village of St. Firmin the cure, (Albe Guayder, steadily refused to abandon his flock. In spite of the stringent laws issued against the clergy he remained at his post. The church was closed, it is true, but he continued to say Mass, sometimes in a lonely manor, or again in the mysterious depths of the woods that loom up throughout I can hardly keep my foot." the province. At night he might be seen gliding beneath the shadow of the thick hedges or creeping wearily through the fields of gorse, hastening from one farmstead to another to bless, counsel sought her hed vacuaty at vicus and frequently changed his place of residence. But from his own children the good storm-swent above. priest had nought to fear; not one among them could have been bought Citoyenne Brassac to the Layoir farm.

feelings of grave distrust—that of Brassac, the inn-keeper, who lived on the village place the village place, a stone's throw with their old father in the farmstead, from the now desolated and descerational their brothers long since having left to ed church. Neither Brassac nor his wife belonged to the country. They had come from the south of France some brought the watcher to the door years before the outbreak of the revolution, and had settled at St. Firmin, where they were tooked upon with mingled the reply feelings of dis rust, dislike and tear, quickly. Path professed republican or inions. They had horrified their neighbors by expressing delight at the King's execution, and they were accused by the villa-gers in general of having secretly be-trayed into the hands of the republican story, and to all appearances we should by the vent ance of God. amborities of St. George-sur-Laire severthey had somehow discovered.

The aspect of Pierre Brasshe, dark, surjy looking; and of his wife, a woman much, it must be said, to centirm these evil reports.

The dark winter days passed by, and although it happened several times that | matter." the patrols from St. George-sar-Loire had been sent in search of the cure, he had found it easy to clude his enemies, for the loyal hearted peasant, kept their

priest's secret bravely.
About Christmas time "Citoyenne" Brassae began to show unusual interest in the priest's whereabouts. She often spoke of him with apparent friendliness to Mere Jeanneton, her nearest neighbor, a simple-minded sout, who was inclined to look upon these conversations as a sign of her neighbor's approaching conversion. When she communicated her impression to other villagers, however, they shook their heads and invariably bade the old woman to beware of gossipping with the citoyenne.

"You may be very certain that she intends no good," they added; but Mere Jeanneton only coldly acquiesced, being already half won over by the wily southerner's natural eloquence and apparent sincerity.

The night of Dec. 20 was dark and stormy; the wind mouned around the lonely farmsteads, among the leafless branches and across the barren lands or commons so numerous in Vendee. Along the paths leading from St. George-sur-Loire to St. Firmin, a small party of ten soldiers crept stealthily under the cover of darkness. When they had reached a field adjoining the inn one of their number advanced a few steps and struck three times against the window.

"All's well !" said a voice within. The door opened and Brassac cautionsly admitted the little party. A large fire was burning on the hearth; wine and spirits stood ready on the table.

"There is no time to lose." said the sergeant, a handsome young fellow, whose accent showed him to be a native of Alsace. "If there is work to be done, It us do it quickly. Where is the priest we are to take back with us?"

"Gently, gently, citizens," said Brassac; 'he will be here presently. Mean-while, let us sit down and drink to the presperity of the glorious republic and to the extermination of kings, pricets,

"less, aristocrats of every description." The men assented willingly with the ex option of the young sergeant, who

evinced a certain weariness, as if the job behind him was not to his liking. Meanwhile Jeanne Brassac slipped on her wooden shoes wrapped herselfin a long clonk and taking a lantern in her hand sallied lord gaily after axchanging a rewaylispered words with her husband a

She went straight to Mere Jeanneton's cottage and knocked loudly. No answer came; the old woman lived alone, and was notoriously a timid soul. Citoyenne Brassac knocked again, and, hearing a

slight sound within, she cried out:

"For pity sake, help me. Have merey on the most miserable woman upon earth." Mere Jeanneton recognized her neigh-

bor's voice and opened the door. the enemy of the priests, is crying out for a cure. He must see him and see him directly."

Mere Jeanneton's first impulse was to rejoice at her impious neighbor's conversion, then an afterthought made her a little more cautious.

'Surely you can wait till morning," graces and blessing upon the Vendeaus she said, suspiciously. "After doing of to-day. Those who live among them without the cure for so many years a will readily acknowledge that they have few hours more or less cannot much

Citoyenne Brassac wrung her hands.

he not? I am going there." And she made a move in the direction that within the last few years have been of a farm inhabited by a family who were well known for their devotion to

"And your dying hasband is left alone?" asked Mere Jeanneton, still sus-

"No, indeed," returned the other. 'Marie Louise Pinot has offered to watch him. It was she who advised the

to go to Lamorosiere." At these words Mere blam.cton's just suspicions vanished. If Marie Louise, a good, pious woman, who often watched desolate; and the farms were well-nigh by the sick, was at the inn, and if she described for all the able-bodied men had had sent the citoyenne on her errand. by the sick, was at the inn, and if she

> "The cure is not at Lamorosu renow." whispered Mere Jeanneton, considentially; "but much nearer-Le Lavoire, where old Jean Marie is dangerously ill. You will find him there."

But as the citoyenne, with protestations of gratitude, hastened away, Mere Jeanneton's suspicions returned.

"I shall go and help Marie Louise to mind your husband," she cried out through the darkness.

"If you like," answered the other; "but I advise you not to go out to eight.

and comfort the sick and suffering. In the night's work and yet not having who was supposed to be in the agonies or ler to escape detection more surely he sufficient courage to test the truth of her of death.

A few minutes' brisk walking brought either for love or money to betray his where a light was still barning. Old One family alone in the whole village fully, his oldest daughter Anne was sayof St. Firmin inspired the abbe with inerthorosacy by his side was and the say younger girls were resting in an adjoining room. The three girls were alone join the Royalist army under Cathli-The citoyetme's knock soot neau.

> "Who is there?" she asked. "A neighbor in great trouble," was the reply. " For the love of time space

Anne cautionsly unbarred the does and opened it sufficiently to racognize a contactey namely red feet and was in her visitor. A smalle of terror and visit the incompar was dear, strack bersele with a grow; for Anne Per vie proce raiding, he turned to the sciolets; all rises and nobles whose hiding places | was less simple introductions of the Jeanneton, and she remained unit of d At last, how yer, she somewhat a lay expressed her surerise at the core better with a glib tongue and cruel eyes, did supposed to be at the farm and prepares.

to close the door. cross the door.
"Tam sorry for you," she added: "For. believe me. I cannot help you in tals

" But the cure is here," persisted the other. "I know he is, and you know it. too. Because my husband has been a friend of the 'Bleus' you would let him die without help or pardon: tist is the charity of the Christians!" she shricked in apparent anguish.

Her loud voice and violent words awakened the sick man, who have anxiously listening. The two younger girls also crept from their beds and stood clinging to their sister. Anne Florente remained numoved, "Go home now," she said at last

to-morrow I will see if I can help you. "To-morrow will be too late." broke out Jeanne Brassac. "I tell you, girl. that my husband is dying now-at this very minute. Because we are 'Bleus' we are fit only to be repulsed and east aside in our distress. This, then, is the pity your priests teach you!"

Meantime a door had opened softly a man in the dress of a peasant, but with a singularly pure and gentle countenance, had, unobserved by the woman joined the little group. He now spoke

"No, indeed, my daughter, it shall never be said that a human being. whether friend or foe, has died unshrived through any fault of mine." With these words Abbe Guayder, for it was he, came forward. "Lead me to your husband,"

he said simply; "I am ready."

Anne Florente groaned aloud in accents of despair; the sick man, who overheard the dialogue, clasped his hands with

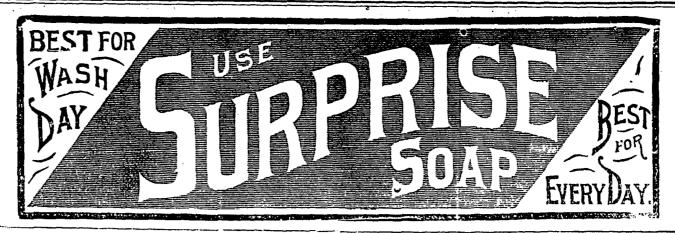
grief and apprehension. "Father, I beseech you to wait till tomorrow, it may be a trap. For pity's sake, wait!" whispered the elder girl. with white face and terror-stricken eyes. "Oh, father, do wait! I cannot help fear-

ing it will not be well for you."

"Peace, my daughter," said the priest.
"Better far that I should risk my poor life than endanger the salvation of an immortal soul."

And with these words he stepped out into the darkness. Falling on their knees, the three sisters began to say the

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rosary with great fervor, while the abbe and his guide pursued their way in silence through the night.

Meanwhile at the inn Pierre Brassac and his guests made merry over their wine; many a rude jest and blasphemous 'Now," he said, "the comedy is to

begin." And going towards the bed that occu-

pied the middle of the room he lay down, drew the bedelothes over him, and counterfeited the means and grouns of a man in violent pain. Roars of laughter greeted this performance.

Should the cure turn coward and refuse to come to-night," said one of the

party, "what then?"

"Trust the city, unc's glib tongue to bring him sure enough," said he, "She is a slarp one, and able to unearth our game. Take another glass to keep your spirits natif my ghostly father appears on the scene."

Just then a knock was heard. One of the soldiers quickly opened the door, and Jeanne Brassne and her companion appeared. The light, the warmth, the odor of brandy, the sight of the soldiers seemed hardly to strike the priest; absorbed by the thought of his sacred duty, he walked straight up to the bed where the innkeeper now lay silent.

'So Pierre carried the farce in due form," laughed the woman, "He might have saved himself the trouble."

The soldiers echoed her laugh, thinking, too, that Brassac was determined to keep up his role as a sick man, and expecting some new blasphemous joke to issue from his best.

All was slicht, however. Even the Just at that moment a violent gust of soldiers had ceased their coarse jests and wind extinguished. Mere Jeanneton's rough conversation, and the brandy glasses had ceased to clink.

Ad eyes were riveted on the priest, who had approached the bed of the man There Brassac lay still as death. He

acts his part to perfection, thought each

of the assembly present. Does the patient sleep?" asked the on, the poor man is probably tird

with waiting for you," replied the wife, "Y a ought not to have kept us waiting is some meantime bent over the may touched his hands, then turning to

· Brassne: "It is too Inc-he is "Dead!" she cried: "dead! You are And drawing back the curtains detale - sine called for a sizh.

The soldiers drew near in slience. Their sergeant put a mirror to Brassac's its told bis put a and his bort, raised la o ad, moistened his tongue, strave to Le ley namels and feet and westing

the hedship and prayed in silence. Than your prisoner," he said, "and

en wholy to relical you."

No one hashered, dening Brassac, er softing on the door, seemed turned to a the solaious stood dumbrounded and terrified, and the young sorgeant, a canderave, was the list to speak. of cycair way. M. o Care," he said. You are a tree man." And under his great, be added, "Tray for us."

Years passed by; the revolutionary enth st subsided at last, and Abbe Guy oler had the joy of restoring the little Church of St. Firmin to God's worship and honor. He continued to live among his parishioners, steadily declining far more important posts in order to remain faithful to those who had befriended him at the risk of their lives in times of peril and sorrow. His charity seemed to spend itself more especially upon a friendless old woman, who at nightfall might be seen wandering, like an ununiet spirit, in the neighborhood of the attle church. Shunned by her neighbors, pointed at by the children as a traitress, she spoke to no one, and lived on in fierce isolation, bearing on her worn countenance the stamp of mortal terror. Since the fatal night of her husband's death Jeanne Brissac's face had horne an expression of fear and horror that time seemed rather to increase.

The gentle cure alone never passed her without an encouraging word, a kindly gesture, and often he stood between her and his parishioners' coldness and contempt. In his long prayers he pleaded with God for that guilty soul, offering his penance, his deeds of charity. his daily work, for its salvation. The answer came at last, and before going to his reward the good priest had the joy of witnessing the deep contrition and penitent death of the woman who had betrayed him. "I can now sing my Nunc Dimittis!" he exclaimed, after the remains of the penitent sinner had been laid to rest. And a few weeks later God's call was heard, and the faithful priest went to receive his crown.—The Repub-

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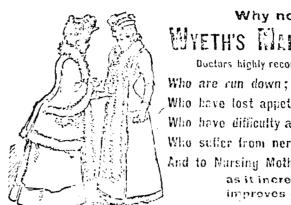
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pleasantry passed among them; the young sergeant alone seemed annoyed and absent-minded. At length, looking at the clock, Brassac rose.

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