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## A MASS DURING THE REIGN OF TERROR.

(Translated from the French for the True Witness.)

The Revolution of 1789 was so fertile in events; it especially called forth so many acts of heroism, so many sublime virtues, amid the hideous crimes to which it gave birth, that it seems to have become an inexhaustible mine, whence the moral historian may always draw precious materials, to serve as lessons for future generations.

For us, whose sole object is to provide the young with a series of examples calculated to inspire them with noble sentiments and salutary reflections, we also venture to explore that rich mine, in order to interest our young readers by the truthfulness of our narrative. We do not here present them with a work of fiction; it is merely a leaf from the history of that fatal period whose every page contains a grave lesson.

In 1793, when victims were daily multiplied all over France, two young fugitives, the one named Dussaux, and the other Olivier, were making their way together through the hills of Brittany, without money, without provisions, knowing nothing of the country, and with the sad certainty of being shot, if they fell into the hands of the hostile party. Yet even this certainty could not entirely subdue the stout hearts of the travellers. They had formerly been musketeers, were strong in their own courage and united by the closest ties of friendship, so they resolved to sell their lives as dearly as they could, and, at all events, if they were forced to give way to numbers, they were sure of dying together. That thought sustained them through dangers, privations and fatigues; it alone gave them courage to knock now and then at the door of some lonely cabin, to ask for food and shelter.

Their request was often refused, for fear and distrust had then absorbed all other feelings in the minds of the country people. They had, besides, to guard against the numerous spies who, under various disguises, prowled about the country. This danger was not the least formidable which they had to encounter; it might bring them at any moment into some snare; but at twenty (and this was about the age of both our young friends) hope easily prevails over fear.

They had, besides, an object in view; the castle of Keroulaz had been appointed as a general rendezvous; there they hoped to find rest and shelter, all the necessaries they might require and a certain number of their comrades. Such, then, being their destination, they made their way towards it with tolerable cheerfulness, notwithstanding the numerous dangers they had to encounter.

But, after a little, the patrols were so thickly set that our friends were forced to avoid the public roads; they no longer dared either to seek information, or ask for food; and for twenty-four hours they suffered so much in various ways, that their courage was well nigh overcome.

Worn out with hunger and fatigue, a prey to intolerable sufferings, and gloomy forebodings, which they dared not communicate one to the other, they walked silently on, side by side, sometimes pressing each other's hand with inexpressible anguish, when all at once, in passing through a deep hollow where chance had led them, they fancied they heard steps behind them. Turning quickly round, they saw a peasant something about their own age, well clad, and with a countenance expressive of timidity and reserve. Making a shew of profound recollection, he was telling the beads of a rosary, and seemed wholly engrossed with that pious exercise. Less than this would have encouraged our fugitives. In the extremity to which they were reduced, the suspicion of a base hypocrisy, hidden under this sanctimonious exterior, never entered their minds. Moreover, they had no choice; it was absolutely necessary to make some inquiries, so that, without the least hesitation, they asked the young man which was the nearest way to Keroulaz. He replied, with a furtive glance, that he belonged to that neighborhood, and would willingly show them the way; but that it was too much for them to think of reaching it that day.

On hearing this, the friends exchanged a look of consternation; neither of them felt able to journey farther without some refreshment and a few hours' rest. Doubtless, perceiving their distress, the stranger re-assured them by mentioning a place where they could spend the night, and offering them, at the same time, part of a large loaf which he drew from his wallet.

This relief, coming at such a moment, was received as a real God-send; so, having thanked the Breton, they walked on by his side with renewed confidence. One of them even felt so elated that, as they journeyed on, he told the young man some of the rea-

sons which made them anxious to reach the castle of Keroulaz.

This confidence, imprudent as it was, appeared to make no particular impression on the stranger, who with all the coolness so characteristic of his countrymen, testified no sort of interest in what he heard.

After accompanying the fugitives for some time, he pointed out the house where they were to find lodging, and left them with the announcement that he was going to lodge hard by, so as to set out with them again in the morning.

It was dark night when the two friends reached the house pointed out to them. The state of the country and the unseasonableness of the hour made them fear that a shot might be their welcome; but, as we have said, their deplorable situation left them no alternative. They knocked boldly at the door which was immediately opened.

"Come in!" said the man who presented himself, when he had heard their humble supplication.

COME IN! the words made their hearts leap with joy; that hospitable cabin is to them a magnificent palace; already they see, in imagination, a good supper and a good bed, whereon their wearied limbs may enjoy the sweets of repose. In their extacy, they hardly remarked the singular appearance of the Breton, who, leisurely taking down a lamp, held it by turns to their faces. Uncivil as this examination was they bore it bravely; both were blessed with good, frank, honest features, so that they had little to fear on that head, and when it was over, one of them even ventured to repeat the statement of their pressing necessities.

The master of the house was an aged man, tall and lank in figure, with long grey hair and fierce-looking features, not wholly without a mixture of good-nature. He replied, in a harsh, abrupt tone, that his family being all gone to bed, he had little or nothing to offer them. At the same time, in order to make good his assertion, he produced a handful of beans, a jug of execrable water and a morsel of coarse black bread to which our famished travellers added what remained of that given them by the young stranger.

Whilst they devoured this dainty repast, served up with the usual cleanliness of Brittany, their host, seated in front of them, continued to examine them attentively, pressing them with questions, intermingled with complaints of the unhappy state of the times, doubtless for the purpose of excusing his parsimonious hospitality.

He then took up his lamp, (which he afterwards left with them), and conducted them to the door of a stable at the end of the house, where on one side were some animals of various kinds, and on the other the vestige of a miserable pallet.

Other travellers would have shrunk from availing themselves of such a bed, but our poor friends had passed several nights in the open air; so far from complaining, they thought themselves so fortunate in obtaining any sort of a shelter for the night, that their only care was to make themselves as comfortable as the circumstances would permit, thanking God for having so far favored them.

Anxious to stretch their weary limbs, they pulled out the holsters which they carried under their cloaks, placed them near the bed, then Dussaux, first, knelt down and commenced the evening prayers. Brave even to rashness on the battle-field, this young man had a lively and well-grounded faith, and, when he prayed, his voice was so sweet, so penetrating, that his friend never heard him without emotion. The latter hastened, then, to kneel beside him, and their hearts, so closely united, arose together to the celestial throne.

Whilst they were engaged in this act of devotion, which they had long been accustomed to perform together, they were alarmed by a slight noise. By means of that vague perception whereby we feel rather than see, without turning the head, an object appearing on either side, it seemed to them that the face of a man was protruded through a sort of aperture in the wall near which they knelt. One of them turned quickly round, but there was nothing to be seen. This appearance, having struck both at the same moment, could not possibly be an illusion, and it was quite sufficient to put them on their guard, but as they neither saw nor heard any thing more, they at length disposed themselves for sleep, and it was broad day-light when they awoke.

It was not without a sort of hesitation that they appeared before their host; his chilling reception of the previous evening, together with the circumstance which had excited their uneasiness, naturally made them conclude that this man regarded them with suspicion; great, then, was their surprise, when they met him with his callous hand outstretched to grasp theirs, and his rough features lit up with a cheering smile of welcome.

"I'll engage you have had a good night of it!"

said he with a waggish glance at their haggard faces. Re-assured by the unmistakable cordiality of his manner, they laughingly told him of the fright they had had.

"And you had good reason to be afraid," he replied, in a serious tone; "you may say that no prayer was ever more graciously heard by the good God; my son and I were there, with our finger on the trigger." . . . and he glanced at two muskets suspended over the fire-place.

"Sure enough," continued he, "we would have shot you as we would two mad dogs; but when I saw you on your knees, praying as Christians, I said to my boy: 'These are good men—let us leave them alone.'"

"What! you would have killed us," exclaimed one of the young men, "you would have killed defenceless men?"

"And we?" cried the Breton quickly. "What mercy is there shown to us? Is not the country infested with these spies who seek only our destruction? Had you been of their kidney, it was all over with us. They would have smoked us out like foxes this morning, burning our house to the ground; either that, or they'd have hung us before our own door.— Besides, these vagabonds have a password, which you do not know, seeing that you did not give it to me. And then I had seen your pistols. . . ."

Here the young men exchanged glances, one of them saying—"It seems we were near having good use for them."

"So you were," replied the peasant, in a softened voice, "but let that pass. Thanks be to God, you shall fare better this morning than you did last night."

Placing, then, on the table some fresh bread, pork, fruit, and a pitcher of wine, he sat down with his two guests, and heard with the liveliest interest the recital of all the dangers they had incurred since they entered Bretagne.

"Just look," said he, not knowing how to express his regret—"Just look at the wretched times we live in. It makes me sweat all over only to think of it. Here I would have killed two of our gentlemen, two real, good Christians, without any warning, without giving them time to give themselves up to God."

"Alas!" sighed Dussaux, "the death with which we have been menaced here may reach us elsewhere, at any moment, and find us no better prepared; yet if we fall, I hope Heaven will take into account the impossibility of our fulfilling our religious duties; it is six weeks since we heard mass."

"You shall hear it, then," cried the Breton, in a cheerful tone; "yes, I give you my word you shall hear it to-morrow. I owe you that, any how!"

"Is it possible?—shall we, indeed, have a mass, in spite of spies and blues?" said M. Dussaux quickly. "And where is it to be, my dear host?"

"I say neither how nor where," replied the latter, "you shall see. The only thing I can tell you for certain is, that we have mass now every Sunday; not without running some danger, to be sure, but brave gentlemen like you are used to that."

As he finished these words, some one opened the door, and the friends recognised the young peasant who had shared his loaf with them the evening before and pointed out the asylum where they had since fared so well.

The host seemed surprised, and regarded the newcomer with a searching look.

"Fear nothing," said M. Dussaux hastily, in the fervor of his gratitude for the stranger; this worthy youth is one of ourselves. It was he who relieved our hunger, and sent us to you."

"Father Pol ought to know me, I think," observed the young man in his turn. "I live only five leagues from here, and he has often seen me; but his memory fails him, it seems."

"It is very possible," replied the host, whom the stranger had named correctly; "since it is so, sit down, and eat your breakfast."

Still prompted by that feeling of gratitude which often carries a noble heart to the extreme of confidence, M. Dussaux asked the host if he would not permit their unknown guide to hear mass with them.

"I know the piety of this good lad," he continued, "and if you think you owe us such a favor, father Pol, my friend and I surely owe it to him for the good service he has done us."

An involuntary gesture from the old man showed that these words were anything but pleasing to him, and that he would rather they were left unsaid, but it was too late. Then they expressed such a generous confidence, that he could not bring himself to refuse. Besides, the young peasant quickly interposed:

"I should be very glad to go with you, but I know the place where mass is said. I go there every Sunday."

This announcement, made with apparent simplicity, completely banished Pol's suspicions, so that his

mind was quite at ease as he kindly advised the two outlaws to lie concealed that day in his hay loft, whither he immediately conducted them for fear of any surprise.

Then returning to the guide, he drank and chatted with him for a little while, when both left the house, and all was still as death.

We need not say how tedious the time seemed to our two young friends in their hiding-place. Happily, they found in it a good supply of fresh hay which made an excellent bed, so that they enjoyed some hours of quiet and refreshing sleep.

Evening being come, all the family, consisting of several sons of old Pol, with their wives and children, assembled to sup together; but when, the door being closed, the father introduced his two guests, a cautious reserve succeeded the first burst of gaiety, and it required all the cordial kindness of the worthy old man to keep the friends from being wholly disconcerted by so chilling a reception.

The meal was a silent one, and when it was over, a flask of brandy was handed round to the company; then old Pol, having drunk his share, said to his guests:

"Well, gentlemen! are you still determined to be of our party?"

"Most assuredly, if you will permit us."

"Up and get ready, then, youngsters. Come, girls, put the little ones to bed; and you, boys, take up your tools!"

"Are we, then, to set out to-night?" inquired M. Olivier, in surprise.

"Yes, sure, this very minute, so as to get there in good time to-morrow," replied the Breton with a hearty laugh; "not that the church is small; there's room enough in it for all comers; but we have no small distance to go before we get to it, you see!"

Then taking down a double-barrelled carbine, he slung it over Olivier's arm, saying: "Here, this is your prayer-book. And you, sir," he added, handing a musket to M. Dussaux, "this is your missal."

Meanwhile, the women had disappeared with the children, at their father's bidding; they quickly returned wrapped up in their cloaks. Each of the men threw a goat-skin around his shoulders and then took up his gun.

"This affair smells of powder," observed Olivier, laughingly, to his friend, when they found themselves alone together for a moment; "armed as we are to the very teeth, we look more like brigands preparing for an ambuscade than honest Christians going to Mass."

"These precautions are characteristic of the times in which we live," replied Dussaux; "truly, there is something exciting in this fulfilling of a religious duty with arms in our hands; but what times these are!"

The family being once more assembled, a young girl, doubtless appointed to mind the house and the children, took her seat by the fire, and the little party at once set out. A young lad went before with a light; then came the host with his two guests; and after them, the women, their husbands bringing up the rear.

True to his habits of circumspection, Pol had given the strangers no information as to where he was taking them. He contented himself, as they went along, with accounting for the warlike guise in which they travelled by the great dangers they had to encounter, dangers which, he said, were considerably lessened because of the profound secrecy in which they had hitherto kept the whole business.

We will now relate what followed in the very words of M. Olivier, who himself told us the story:

"We walked on so," said he, "for about an hour, just as I had expected, but I had, of course, calculated on seeing, at the end of that time, some trace of a building, or of a human habitation. But on and on we marched over what seemed to us an endless strand, and I perceived on the horizon a whitish line having the appearance of a thick mist. At the same time, a damp, moist air blew across my face."

"It is the sea," said Dussaux; and, sure enough, I quickly recognised the low rumbling of the waves, which I had not before noticed."

"I give up guessing where they are taking us to," said I to my comrade.

"There must be some cove amongst the rocks hereabouts." He replied: "It will remind us of the first Christians, praying in the Roman catacombs."

I was just going to run after Pol for the purpose of asking him if our suspicions were correct, when he himself suddenly laid hold of my arm.

"Rash young man!" he cried, "you were near having a fall of some hundreds of feet; there is a tremendous precipice within three paces of where you stand!" I stood motionless, holding fast by Dussaux's

This is one from a series of tales by the same author, entitled, "Reminiscences of a Mother."