

THE ROMANCE OF A JESUIT.

From the French of De Beugny d'Hagerne.

CHAPTER X.

The very day of his arrival in Paris, Charles Durand went to see Pere d'Aradon and had a long conversation with him. After listening to the young man's story and asking a few explanations, the Jesuit gave him some little advice and concluded by saying:

"Of course your first step must be, renouncing your mission. For this purpose I would recommend you to address yourself to the Minister personally, rather than to Meynaudier who has ends of his own to serve. I know something of the Minister, and though he has not been very scrupulous about the means he has employed for attaining what he had in view, he is at heart a just and truth-loving man. I should not be surprised if your frankness might not stand you in good stead, but until you have seen him we cannot decide on what is best to be done."

In reply to Charles' letter asking for an interview, the Minister requested him to communicate his intelligence to Meynaudier, but on Charles writing again and saying that his communications were for the Minister's ears alone, an appointment was made for the next morning. After the first formalities were over, Charles thus addressed the Minister:

"I must, in the first place inform you, sir, that in this Jesuit matter I have come to conclusions which are diametrically opposed to those which my letters may have led you to look on as probable. I was sent to St. Acheul to see what was going on, and to report on whatever discoveries I might make. In vain have I examined, investigated, scrutinized what was passing before my eyes; in vain have I played the spy and sought to solve supposed mysteries. The only result has been that I am convinced how much the Jesuit Society has been misunderstood and misrepresented. What I have discovered is that Jesuits are men whose only purpose in life is to sanctify their own souls while working for the salvation of their fellow-men."

"Young man," said the Minister dryly, "surely you are not amusing yourself at my expense, and yet there is no common sense in what you say. The Fathers must have been taking you in, and really this is by no means the result I anticipated when I confided to you so delicate a mission as that of investigating what was going on among the Jesuits."

"Had you wished for some fresh accusations against the Jesuits it was hardly necessary for you to have sent me among them for three months. I even acknowledge that, failing to discover anything, I was myself often tempted to coin some fresh charges against them."

"I am not speaking of *calumnious* accusations, for I had no need of you to furnish me with any since our libraries abound in books teeming with such inventions; but there are also some perfectly true things which might be said against the Order. The Jesuits have been guilty of great faults, of crimes even, their Institute has a detestable end in view, their constitution is a most Machiavelian code, leading to much that is fatal to the tranquility of States. We know for certain that at the present time they are conspiring against us, and we wished to discover what were these plots and the consequent dangers that were threatening us. Now, although you had been represented to us as a most intelligent young man, you have failed in finding out what we wanted to know and have allowed yourself to be out-witted."

"I only lay claim to an ordinary share of intelligence and by my success in my studies and examinations think I have justified that claim. I went to St. Acheul perfectly unburdened by any religious scruples. I believed in nothing, and as for the Jesuits, I held them to be as black as they are painted. At first I believed in the future success of my mission, but, in spite of myself, I soon found out that there was nothing to discover. Still, I hoped against hope, finding it difficult to acknowledge myself beaten, and whilst deceiving you I was at the same time deceiving myself."

"Now, I acknowledge my defeat, and have come here to tell you that, having utterly failed in my mission, I have no right to the promised reward. Perhaps I should not say that

I have failed, since I was sent to St. Acheul to report *truthfully* what I discovered, and I am telling the truth though all my hopes of advancement may fall to the ground by my doing so.

"When I entered St. Acheul my heart was filled with hatred of the Jesuits and my mind with prejudices. I have seen and studied the Order, and after beginning by admiring it I have ended by respecting and loving it."

"You should have wound up by becoming a Jesuit yourself."

"That is what I wished, but for the present I am not considered worthy of so doing. I avowed to the Superior all the plan which had been laid, but you may trust in his secrecy and discretion, more particularly as this is not the first time that such an attempt has been made, and has proved a complete failure."

"I suppose the Superior told you what to say to me?"

"He told me to tell the exact truth, and that is what I have done."

The Minister was lost in thought for a few moments and then said: "You can see for yourself that you have not performed what was expected of you. However, I give you credit for your candour, since you might easily have deceived me, as it was your interest to do. I will see later what I can do for you and in the meantime I can assure you of my respect and esteem."

"That is a reward of itself, sir."

"I will try to bestow on you some other. If you have not seen Meynaudier do not go to him, and if you are obliged to see him, say nothing of this business, nor indeed to any one. You may leave me now and to-morrow or next day you shall hear what I have decided about you."

Two days later Charles Durand was sent for by the Minister, who said:

"I have been thinking of you a good deal, and although I do not agree with you nor share your enthusiasm, I am pleased at your frankness. I can offer you a situation as my under-secretary if that will suit you. It is a slight indemnity for the disagreeable task I imposed on you, and if you think yourself indebted to me in any way you can repay me by your zeal and punctuality in performing the duties of your office. I hope these Jesuits have not turned you into a bigot?"

"I hardly know what you mean by the term, but I have made up my mind to live henceforth as a good Catholic."

"Go to Mass as much as you like, and if you perform your duties correctly I will not pretend to know that you do so. Your salary is small but I will try to augment it."

"I have received good news from Rome, and since you have been mixed up in the business I may as well tell you about it. M. Rossi informs me that Cardinal Lambruschini has persuaded the General of the Jesuits to write to the Superiors of the French houses recommending prudence. He tells them to yield to the storm and to close those houses which have been specially marked out for animadversion. As for me, I consider that the Jesuit question is at an end, and I do not regret the failure of our attempt since the opposition has a weapon the less to direct against us. Now come tomorrow at nine o'clock, and my head secretary shall show you what your work is to be."

When Charles, a few days afterwards, announced to Pere d'Aradon the good fortune that had befallen him, the Jesuit pointed out that it would be well for Charles to continue his law studies and prepare for taking his doctor's degree, since a change of ministry might at any time cause the loss of his appointment.

He then gave the address 35 Rue de Sevres as where he might be found in future.

"Are you leaving this house then, Father?"

"Yes, it will be closed for a time."

"The Minister mentioned to me something about a letter from the General."

"Just so; and we are following his advice by shutting up this house for a while. An old Father and two Brothers only will remain in it and the rest of us will go to the house which our Fathers have bought, Rue de Sevres. St. Acheul, too, is to be closed, and the novitiate transferred to Tesenheim in Alsatia. In time there will therefore be two novitiates instead of one, and we shall likewise have two houses in Paris. This will be the result of the efforts made by our enemies."