

to the men the consolations of religion. Their hands were tied behind their backs, and the same rope tied their legs together. They were so prostrated they could scarcely understand what the curé said. Two of them had fainted. At one end of the line, with his head raised and his brow apparently unruffled, stood a man of about forty years of age, the father of five motherless children, whose only support he was. He wept over his children, whom he was about to leave to poverty perhaps to starvation.

All the efforts of the curé were unable to bring peace to this crushed spirit. Finally he went out and walked slowly to the guard-house where the officer was quartered. The latter was smoking a large porcelain pipe. He continued to smoke and listened to the curé without interrupting him.

"Captain," said the curé, six hostages are in your hands who within a few hours are to be shot down. Not one of them has fired upon your troops. The guilty ones have escaped, and your intention is to give an example that will serve as a warning to the inhabitants of other localities. It makes little difference to you whether you shoot one or another. I would say, though, the better known the victim the stronger would be the warning. So I come to ask you as a favor to let me take the place of a father whose death would leave five little children in misery. He and I are both innocent, but my death will be less regretted than his."

"Just as you please," said the officer.

Four soldiers led the curé to prison; he was tied hand and foot with the other victims. The peasant whose place he took, the father of the five children, embraced his benefactor.

We will not try to paint the anguish of that night. When daybreak came the curé had revived the courage of his companions in misery.

The poor fellows, at first stupefied with fear, had now become, at the voice of the priest, glorious martyrs who were supported by Christian faith and the hope of a better life. At eleven o'clock a military escort halted at the door and the prisoners were marched out. The curé at their head recited aloud the office of the Dead. Along the road knelt the villagers waiting to get a last look at their