

Sunday in November after the mid-day dinner. The distance is great from the rue St. Jacques to the Cross of Les Sablons, and the almanack does not lie when it tells us that the days are short in November. When I arrived at La Roule night had fallen, and a dark fog covered the deserted road. I meditated sadly in the gloom.

"Alas!" I said to myself, "it will soon be a year since for the first time I took the same road in the snow in the company of my good master, who rests now on a vine-covered hill in a village of Burgundy. He fell asleep in the hope of eternal life. And that is a hope it befits us to share with so learned and wise a man. God keep me from ever doubting the immortality of the soul. But one must own to one's self that all that belongs to a future existence and to another world appertains to those imperceptible truths which one believes without being affected by them, and which have neither taste nor savour, in such wise that one swallows them without being aware of them. For my part, I am not consoled by the thought of one day meeting Monsieur l'Abbé Coignard once more in Paradise. Surely he would not be recognisable, and his speeches would not have the charm they borrowed from circumstances."

While making these reflections I saw before me a great light spreading over half the sky; the fog was reddened with it right over my head, and the light palpitated at its source. A heavy smoke mingled with the vapours of the air. I feared at once that it was the *chateau* d'Astarac on fire. I hastened my steps, and I soon saw that my fears were but too well-founded. I perceived the Calvary of Les Sablons opaquely black against a torrent of flame, and I saw, nearly at the same time, the *chateau*