

point of good sense, we may now say the first are last and the last first. As to ourselves, my friends, let us all do our duty as Christians—that is best."

The others listened. The curé Christopher and his brother set off home, very thoughtful.

And now I stop for some time. Terrible things are taking place—fighting in the streets, emigration, the king a prisoner, the war, Brunswick in Champagne, the levée en masse, the republic; Danton, Robespierre, Marat; all Europe against us; famine, civil war, the reign of terror, and so many frightful and imposing sights. What shall I say to you? Before I begin again I must rest awhile. I will call to mind past memories, and then by God's will we meet once more.

THE END OF THE FIRST PART.

PART THE SECOND.

THE COUNTRY IN DANGER.

1792.

I have told you already about the distress of the people before 1789; the weight of taxation we had to bear; the compte-rendu of Necker, by which we discovered the existence of a large yearly deficit; about the declaration of the Parliament of Paris, that the States-General alone had the power of voting taxes; the tricks of Calonne and Brienne to raise money; the two meetings of the notables, who refused to tax their own landed estates, and at last, when they had the choice of paying or of being bankrupt, the convocation of the States-General at Versailles after an interval of one hundred and seventy-five years.

I have told you our deputies had written orders to do away with custom-houses in the interior, which hampered trade so much; the freedoms of companies and the wardenships, which were impediments to industry; tithes and feudal rights, which interfered with agriculture; venality in public offices and employments which were contrary to justice; torture and other barbarities, which were contrary to humanity; and monkish vows, which were contrary to the peace of families, good morals, and good sense.

This is what all the memoirs of the Third Estate required.

But the object of the king in summoning the States-General was only to induce them to sanction the expenditure of the court, the seigneurs, and the bishops, to make arrangements for the payment of the deficit, and to saddle the citizens, workpeople, and peasants with everything. That is why the nobles and the clergy—seeing that their aim was the abolition of all privileges—refused to join them, and heaped such insults upon them that they at last resented it, swore never to separate until they had obtained a constitution, and proclaimed themselves a National Assembly.

This was the tenor of Chauvel's letter to us, which you have seen.

When this news reached us, the famine was still so great that the poor lived on herbs which they found in the fields, boiled with a little salt; fortunately there was no want of wood; the storm was still increasing, and the t-resters of the cardinal-bishop remained quietly at home, that they might not fall in with delinquents. Yes! it was dreadful—dreadful for every one, but the more so for the revenue-officers, officers of justice, and all who took the king's pay; people of consequence, prévôts, counselors, syndics, notaries, from father to son, found themselves as it were lodged in one of those old houses at Saverne, all rotten and out of repair, very little better than nests for rats, which have lasted for ages, and would fall to pieces at the first blows of the pickaxe; they knew, they felt, that ruin was impending; they looked at you stealthily, with restless eyes; they forgot to powder their wigs, and came no more to dance their minuets at Tivoli.

The news from Versailles had spread to the remotest villages. We still expected something but no one could say what; there was a report that our deputies were surrounded by soldiers; that the authorities wished to terrify or perhaps to slaughter them. Those who passed the Three Pigeons talked of nothing else.

Maitre Jean cried out—

"What can you be thinking of? Is it possible our good king could do such a thing? Did he not himself convoke his people's deputies that he might become acquainted with our necessities, and make us all happy? Get such ideas out of your head at once!"

The others who came from Harberg or Dagsberg struck their fists on the table and made no answer, but walked off, thinking, and Maitre Jean would say—

"God grant the queen and the Count d'Artois may not strike some violent blow against those who have nothing to lose and everything to win; if fighting once begins we shall none of us see the end of it."

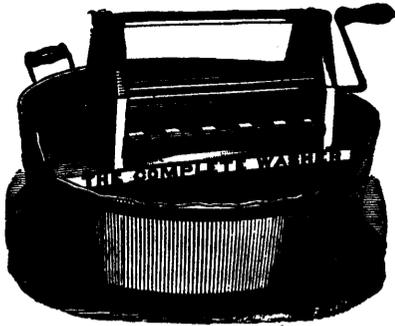
He was indeed right—not one of those then living, nobles, citizens, or peasants, ever saw the end of the revolution; it is still in progress, and will only come to an end when the spirit of gentleness, justice, and good sense possesses us.

Affairs dragged on thus for several weeks; the season for the small crops was come, famine was diminishing in our villages, and we began to grow calm, when on the 29th of July we learned the news that Paris was in rebellion; that they had tried to surround the National Assembly, and dissolve it; that the municipality had risen against the king, and that it had put arms in the hands of the citizens; that the people were fighting in the streets against the foreign regiments, and that the Gardes Françaises sided with the city.

We recollected the letter we had from Nicolas, and things explained themselves.

(To be continued.)

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