

every pope must take, that is never to consent to the spoliation of the Papal States, and I would rather die in prison than break my oath, or burden my conscience with a crime.

"And I shall never return what I have gained by force of arms," replied the proud emperor. "You should not be ungrateful," he continued, in a tone of reproach. "The revolution had destroyed religion in France. The clergy were either expelled or murdered. The sees of the bishops were suppressed, the churches demolished; but I have restored all. The dioceses have again their bishops, the congregations their pastors. The church must thank me alone for the regeneration of France. And the Pope has no confidence in me, the savior and protector of religion. This is imprudent, ungrateful, and—I may add—dangerous also!"

The imprisoned Head of the Church fixed his mild gaze upon the face of the emperor, and his features seemed illumined. "Almighty God values the intention only, your Majesty," said he in reply. "If you have restored religion in France, out of love for truth and out of obedience to the Most High, the Lord will reward you for it; but if you were not willingly and intentionally an instrument in the hands of Divine Providence, eternity owes you nothing."

"This language of your Holiness is somewhat obscure; may I be permitted to ask for a clearer explanation?"

"My candor will offend your Majesty," answered Pius VII., "but you have the right to demand the truth from the Pope. In chains, and even in danger of death, the vicar of Christ must fulfil his sublime mission, which is the salvation of souls and the preaching of truth."

He remained silent for a few moments, evidently trying to find words in which to convey the truth, in the plainest manner, to the proud and easily irritated emperor.

Napoleon sat, full of expectation, drumming with the fingers of both hands on the arms of his chair; his sharp eyes rested like two coals of fire upon the venerable pontiff.

The page stood listening in the ante-chamber, and every word of this remarkable conversation became deeply impressed upon his memory.

"It seems to require of your Holiness great preparation, in order to tell the emperor the golden truth!" impatiently exclaimed Napoleon.

"I will speak, your Majesty, and in a few words as possible," commenced the pope. "You know the causes of the revolution which devastated France in such a horrible manner;