

## THE ROMANCE OF A JESUIT.

From the French of De Beugny d'Hagerne.

## CHAPTER XV.

"If I have to die, I can affront death as bravely as you can and stand in no need of learning anything from you."

"I do not doubt that, but do you think that everything is finished after death?"

"I neither know nor want to know."

"Have a care, sir! God perhaps grants you these few hours that you may prepare to appear before him. I myself have nothing to accuse you of, and my heart is filled with love for you, but when you appear at the tribunal of that God, whose commandments you have neglected, will He find nothing wherewith to accuse you?"

The old banker sneeringly replied: "Say straight out what you mean, you want me to go to confession! I! a confirmed freethinker! and you want me to kneel down before you like a little girl and say: 'Father, I have told a story, I have disobeyed my mother!' Really, if we were not in so very grave a position as we are here, I would remark that you are carrying the joke a little too far. As it is, I hardly feel inclined to laugh."

"Have a care, sir! Divine justice does not laugh either!"

"Let me alone! you know I do not believe in your cant and hypocrisy. You might, at any rate, respect my grey hairs and my misfortunes. There is nothing you can do or say that can change my determination to die as I have lived."

"I do not believe in the existence of a God and I do not repent of anything that I have ever done. I hate, with an implacable hatred, all priests and religious, and the Jesuits most of all. As for you, Charles Durand, I hate you more than all the Jesuits together."

Father Durand thought it but prudent to desist from further endeavours to win the old man, but asked his Jesuit and clerical brethren to pray for the unfortunate sinner.

The priest could not help the conversation that he had had with Lerouttier from recurring to his mind all through the day, and felt convinced that it was not for nothing that God had so ordained events so that he and the old banker, whose roads in life had been so different, should now find themselves side by side and alike in danger of a terrible death. He rejoiced at the thought that perhaps his own death, which appeared inevitable, might perhaps be the price of the conversion of this erring sinner.

That very evening the prisoners were locked up in their cells earlier than usual. There was a great deal of going backwards and forwards heard in the passages, as well as the noise of the butt-ends of muskets striking on the paved floor, the voices of guards calling the names of prisoners, the dismal grinding of keys in the locks of doors. Soon six hostages were selected and surrounded by a small body of soldiers. The hostages were Monseigneur Darbois, Monsieur Boujean, Abbe Deguerrey, Abbe Allart and two Jesuits, Fathers Clerc and Ducoudray. The order of departure was given, footsteps were heard along the galleries, mournful creaking accompanied the opening of a grated door, the sound of footsteps died away in the distance; then there was silence, a funeral, death-like silence. A few minutes afterwards platoon and single firing was heard. And then all was over. The first victims of the atrocity known as the "Massacre of the Hostages," had fallen and this first execution struck terror into the hearts of all who were confined in the Roquette prison. Every one looked forward to his own turn coming speedily when he would have to suffer the same death as the victims who had already been led forth.

Father Durand, kneeling on his prison floor, prayed for those who had just fallen, for those whose turn would come next, and then for the poor banker, for whose repentent soul he offered his own life.

As for the banker, he in vain sought repose on his miserable bed. He realized that he too must soon be led to execution and the Jesuit's words haunted him incessantly. The next day the Father again attempted to soften the old man's heart and though, for a time, Lerouttier listened to him, it was evident that the moment of grace had not yet arrived

and with a heavy heart Father Durand had again to desist from his pious efforts to gain a soul to God.

The third day after the assassination of the Archbishop and his companions, about ten o'clock in the morning, a wretched creature named Gois arrived at the prison accompanied by a detachment of soldiery, and followed by Francois, the Director of the prison.

Gois demanded that sixteen hostages should be delivered up to him, remarking that the selection made was a matter of indifference since all the prisoners must be put to death sooner or later.

Francois, therefore, commenced calling out the names of the victims, selecting Jesuits and priests by preference, but finally, as the sixteenth hostage, he called out "Lerouttier." The banker turned pale, but instantly a priest advanced before him and a firm voice pronounced the word, Present!

"It is not you who are called," shrieked out the old man.

But the priest turning to him said:

"Do not prevent me from saving you: they do not know you personally and you are not ready to appear before God. I willingly lay down my life for the salvation of two souls, your's and my father's."

Your father's! you, Durand's son, would die for me!—do you not know what a miserable wretch I am!"

"I want to know nothing now; I have pardoned you everything and I pray God to pardon you likewise."

The executioners became impatient and cried out: "Why does not the man answering to the name of Lerouttier come forward?"

"I am here," said the Jesuit advancing.

Seizing his arm the banker exclaimed: "I cannot let you go thus, do you forget how I robbed you?"

"Of what use could this world's goods be to me now?"

"That is not all; I was alone with your father at his dying moments, I abused his confidence, and still worse—"

The Jesuit disengaging himself from the hold Lerouttier had of him, calmly replied:

"I will listen to nothing more, the guiltier you are the more do you stand in need of mercy." And with a firm step he joined the group of condemned victims.

Lerouttier, falling on his knees and hiding his face in his hands, uttered a piercing shriek and it seemed as if his anguish had driven him mad.

The Communists ranged the condemned men two by two and marched them to Belleville strictly guarded. The priests who brought up the rear of the procession of hostages mutually consoled and encouraged one another. Father Durand was beside one of his fellow-Jesuits who asked him how he came to be there, his name not having been called.

"It was God called me," he replied. "I have passed myself off for another, in order to save that other from dying in a terrible state of mortal sin? Will God pardon me the deceit?"

"Father, why need you fear? I could find in my heart to envy you. Will not God, who is love itself, pour out the treasures of His mercy on one who dies as a martyr of charity? We will both pray for this poor sinner."

On the way to Belleville, the martyrs had met with many expressions of pity and sympathy from the populace whom they met on their road, but all this changed when approaching their destination, for the Communists had taken care to spread the report that all of them, priests as well as soldiers, had been taken at the barricades fighting for the Versailles army.

Belleville was a stronghold of the Communists and a very den of the lowest and most infamous of the people. No sooner had the hostages passed the town-hall and turned their steps towards the fortifications, where their massacre was to take place, than they were assailed by every form of insult and outrage.

At length they arrived at the "rue Haxo," so celebrated for the many deeds of infamy recorded in history as being there consummated.

Nothing was prepared; no orders had been given, no firing-party even had been told off. The place was filled with drunken men; with soldiers in their shirt-sleeves, their faces black with powder and their hands covered with blood; with women in red petticoats and wearing red cockades in their