

white couch, his hands transparent and already cold, stretched on the coverlet, his back supported by three pillows, his head drooping on his shoulder, his eyes heavy. When they presented him the Sacred Host, your son opened his eyes wide. . . You are listening to me, are you not ? ” asked Abbé Menage interrupting himself, for Romain Gailloux, crushed with despair, had lowered his head and was standing motionless, his eyes on the ground.

With a sign, he showed that he heard. Slowly and in a stifled voice, trembling with emotion, but full of solemnity, the Abbé went on :

“ When they presented to him the Sacred Host, your son opened his eyes wide, fastened them on the Body of Our Lord with the gravity of a man and, of his own accord, God alone inspiring him,—for they dared not speak to him of you—he pronounced these words : ‘ My good Jesus, I offer my life for the conversion of papa.’ ”

Again, the Abbé was silent. For some seconds, the condemned stood mute and motionless. Then suddenly, urged by that instinct of grief which stretches out for some support, Romain Gailloux, prevented by his bonds from moving his arms, sank sobbing at the feet of the priest.

The Abbé took the criminal’s hands in his own, tenderly pressed to his heart the breast in which beat the heart of an assassin, and lovingly kissed the forehead, sullied by vice, in which murder had been conceived. Then raising the wretched man with the gentleness of a mother, he exclaimed with sovereign authority, while holding up the Crucifix : “ Stand up, stand up, my son, and doubt not of the infinite mercy of Jesus ! ”

Two days later, the murderer, after having received Holy Communion, walked with a firm step to the guillotine. In his glance was not seen the bravado of the assassin who disdains to tremble at sight of the scaffold. No, the serenity of the penitent sinner who hopes in God and accepts his expiation shone on his countenance. Romain Gailloux was going, not to death, but to God and to rejoin his little Pierre. FRANÇOIS VEUILLOT.