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T H E  
H I S T O R Y  
O F T H E  
M I S F O R T U N E S  
O F  
J O H N C A L A S,  
A V I C T I M T O F A N A T I C I S M.

T O W H I C H I S A D D E D,

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A L E T T E R f r o m M . C A L A S  
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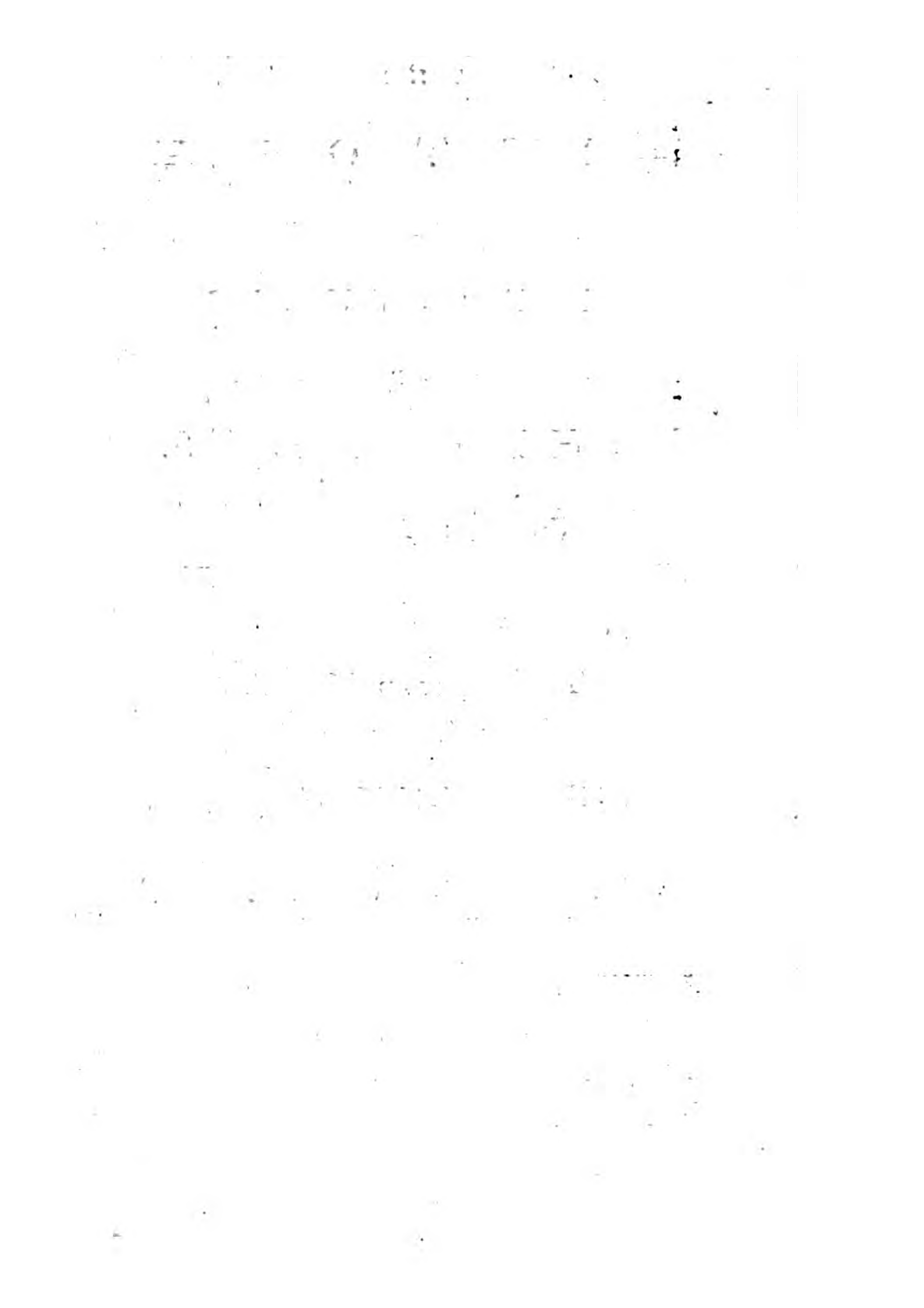


W r i t t e n b y M . D E V O L T A I R E .

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L O N D O N,  
P r i n t e d b y T . S H E R L O C K , n e a r S o u t h a m p t o n - S t r e e t , S t r a n d .

M D C C L X X I I .





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Rockingham

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Pembroke	Strathmore
Northampton	March and Raglin
Chesterfield	Cork and Orrery
Sandwich	Bute
Holderneffe	Barrymore
Scarborough	Besborough
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Robert Spencer	George Germaine
Stavordale	North

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liam Hamilton	Sir William Meredith
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Mr. Grosvenor	Mr. Bossanquet
Gen. Howard	Mr. Townstall
Gen. Smith	Admiral Forbes

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# MISFORTUNES

OF THE

FAMILY OF CALAS.

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**J**OHN CALAS was a reputable merchant at Toulouze, where he had been settled for the space of forty years. His honest principles in dealing, the sweetness of his temper, and the regularity of his morals, had acquired him the esteem of the greatest and best part of his countrymen. He had married a lady allied to the best nobility of the province of Languedoc; but who was less distinguished by her high birth, than for her exemplary

B virtue,



virtue, and the qualifications of her heart. The only objection that could be made to their character was their being both Protestants; and it was a crime, and a capital one, to follow the principles of their fathers.

But if Calas, in the opinion of the Roman-Catholics, was criminal in following a religion different from theirs, they knew very well, that, far from being an enemy to their profession, he had in his house a servant-maid, a Roman-Catholic of extraordinary piety, who had served in the family no less than thirty years; that she received the holy communion every week; and that she had been a nurse and governess to the children, who were all Protestants.

The number of Calas's children was six; viz. four sons, Marc-Antony, John-Peter, Lewis, and Lewis-Donat; with two daughters, Anna-Rose, and Anna.

Marc-Antony, the eldest of the sons, was the only one who did not profit by an excellent education, which this  
 virtuous

virtuous and best of fathers had endeavoured to bestow on all his children.

He possessed a great degree of understanding; but his fondness for dissipation prevented his making that use of it for which Providence designs so invaluable a blessing. His being under the tuition of a father grew every day more irksome to him; he sighed for independency, but his want of fortune prevented his attaining it. The billiard-table, fencing, tennis-court, and other fashionable amusements, engrossed his whole attention. Thus without fortune, destitute of resource, obliged to curb his inclinations, so humiliating was his situation, that life grew burdensome to him. Restraint at length became so intolerable, and danger so indifferent, that, about a month before his death, he said to a friend, whose name was Châlié, that he was resolved to go to Geneva, in order to be under a minister, and would return to preach among the Protestants in France.

“ My dear Sir, said his friend, that

“ trade is very bad which brings us  
 “ to the gallows \*.” “ Well then, re-  
 “ plied he, I have thought on another  
 “ scheme, that I will put in execution.”

From this time he became thought-  
 ful, melancholy, seldom read any  
 other authors than Seneca, Montagne,  
 Shakespear, &c. and would often, in  
 a very expressive manner, repeat those  
 words, “ To die ; to die, to sleep ;”  
 and then return to be the prey of  
 gloomy thoughts, and appear as if op-  
 pressed with the heaviest misfortunes.

On the thirteenth of October, 1761,  
 he executed his dreadful design ; on  
 the very same day he had invited to  
 supper one of his intimate friends,  
 whose name was Lavayse. As this  
 young gentleman is involved in the  
 present affair, it is indispensably ne-  
 cessary to make him known.

He is son to one of the most cele-  
 brated lawyers of Toulouze, who de-

\* In France, a Protestant minister is hanged,  
 when convicted of having preached to a congrega-  
 tion.

ferredly

ervedly bears an excellent character. Nature has been pleased to bestow on this youth the best qualifications; and has added to a good disposition the most noble appearance, though he is but nineteen years old.

In order to explain, in few words, by what fatality he became entangled in the misfortunes of Calas, the reader must be informed, that his father, who had settled him with one of the most reputable merchants of Bourdeaux, had just sent for him home; and that, on his arrival at Toulouze, he heard his father was at his country-house at Caraman. In his way, he paid a visit to Marc-Antony, who invited him to stay to supper; and John Calas, the father, did every thing in his power to induce him to do so. It was but five o'clock; the young Lavayse promised to return; and then went to hire a horse, in order to proceed on his journey to his father's the next morning. About seven o'clock he came again, and was introduced into Madame Calas's

Calas's apartment. She was there, with her husband and her son Marc-Antony. This unhappy son saw his friend enter, without even rising from the elbow-chair in which he sat, or speaking a word; having his hand upon his forehead, looking very wild, and seeming absorbed in thought. But as for some time he had been very melancholy, his relations did not take notice of his present dullness; and in a few minutes they all went into another room, where supper was served up.

Calas the father, his lady, the two brothers, Marc-Antony and Peter, with the young Lavayse, composed the company; Lavayse being the only stranger among them. Marc-Antony eat very little, rose from the table before any other person, and left the room. He went into the kitchen: "Are you cold, Mr. Calas, said the cook to him?" "On the contrary, said he, I am on fire;" and directly went away.

The supper over, Mr. and Mrs. Calas, their son Peter, with the young Lavayse, went



went again into Mrs. Calas's apartment, without taking any notice of Marc-Antony's absence; supposing he was, according to custom, gone to some billiard-table. Without apprehending any danger, they began a conversation, which lasted till young Lavayse desired leave to retire; when Peter Calas attended him down stairs, with a light. But going through the passage which led to the street-door, they observed the shop-door to be open; and going in to see the cause, what consternation! what a dreadful sight! they saw the body of Marc-Antony hanging up, between the two openings of the door which communicated from the shop to the warehouse.

Seized with horror, their piercing cries frighten the father Calas, who hastily comes to them. What does he behold? It is out of human power to describe the situation in which he finds himself! He cannot but lament with them, and join their mournful concert.

concert. His wife, who hears him, comes down; wants to follow him; Lavayse flies to prevent her, and intreats her to return up stairs; hoping to conceal from her so terrible a scene. While he is busied to hinder her entrance, the father, and the brother Peter, take down the corpse, and lay it on the floor. Hope inspires Lavayse to seek a surgeon, and Peter to do the same. They bring him. In the meanwhile, the mother being free, trembling seeks the cause of such distress. What a source of sorrow to a mother! She sees her son breathless upon the floor! Her swelling grief must surely burst her heart, without relief from tears! She throws herself upon her son, and with these friendly tears she bathes his lifeless body. She takes him up, and endeavours to renew his life, but in vain. In vain would she doubt of her misfortune; the surgeon with great care examines the corpse; finds it cold, and judges that Marc-Antony has been dead two hours.

The

The cries of this distressed family soon reached beyond their walls; and the populace, hearing Marc-Antony had died suddenly, gathered round the house, but without knowing the fatal cause of his catastrophe.

When the relations of this unhappy youth recovered the powers of recollection, and reflected on this event, they resolved, that, in order to preserve this unfortunate suicide from an ignominious sentence\*; they should not publish the manner of his death, but keep it a profound secret; and therefore, when the father Calas requested young Lavayse to wait on the justices for leave to bury the body of his son, “ I beg, said he to that young  
 “ man, you will take particular care,  
 “ for the honour of our unhappy fa-  
 “ mily, not to let any person know  
 “ my son destroyed himself.”

\* In France, the corpse of a person who destroys himself is condemned to be drawn on a sledge; which punishment reflects as much on the family, as on the memory of the dead.



The capitouls \*, David and Brieve, came to the place, and were eye-witnesses of the inexpressible grief of the whole family ; but while they expected the arrival of some reputable persons of the faculty, in order to give an account of the cause of this melancholy event, which had given such an alarm to every-body, the mob, who besieged the door ; the mob, enemies to the Protestants ; the mob, who are fond of unlucky and extraordinary events, began upon this to make such conjectures as their malice dictated ; and one of them began to say loudly, that Marc-Antony Calas was a martyr ; and that his father had killed him because he would have turned a Roman-Catholic.

This report coming to the ears of Mr. David, the capitoul, he took it for granted ; and the execution of his office, as a justice and a judge, having made him familiar with the wickedness of men, he found nothing extraordinary

\* A capitoul is the chief magistrate in Toulouse.

In this crime; the atrocious crime, however improbable, imputed to that innocent, worthy, and unhappy family seemed to him very possible, and, as I said before, he took it for granted.

From that moment he became inexorable; he said nothing but vindicating offended Heaven, and avowed his hopes of overturning and extirpating very soon all the Protestant families in the country.

He ordered into custody the family of Calas, with young Lavayse, and even the servant. It was in vain that his colleague, wiser than himself, desired him to consider well upon an affair of such consequence: In vain he represented to him the distress and grief of the family; their laudable endeavours to bring again that unhappy son to life; the disposition, place, hour, and other circumstances of the supposed crime; since it was in the evening; in one of the most frequented streets, that Mark-Antony was found dead. But above all he represented, that the

sacred connection of father, mother, and son, rejected such a cruel suspicion; and, among those who had spread such an abominable apparent lye, not one was bold enough to avow himself the author of it; and concluded with saying, that the commitment of those innocent and unhappy persons would give credit and consistence to this vague and improbable story: “ Well, it does not signify, replied David, violently; I will take upon me the consequence of it; they shall all be put in irons, and sent to gaol.”

Every thing that the colleague of the capitoul had foretold proved to be true: The sight of the prisoners gave to the lower sort of people an idea of their guilt; and afterwards a common report ran in Toulouze, that David certainly had made some important and interesting discoveries in this affair, otherwise he would not have proceeded to such extremity against people of their reputation; who, by the character they bore, were above all suspicion;

picion ; and that very probably they had been discovered even in the action of strangling their son Marc-Antony themselves.

As for the poor unhappy, innocent prisoners, overwhelmed with grief, they were following the corpse of their unhappy son under a strong guard, little supposing what would be the consequence of their commitment. They imagined they were carried away only to justify the cause of the event, according to the proofs which they were able to give, and which were strong enough to prove the suicide of their son.

When they were asked how Marc-Antony died, they gave such an answer as they had before agreed on ; parental affection only being capable of dictating to them a falsehood : They said, that “ they had found Marc-Antony dead upon the floor ;” far from even fearing that such a false report of the suicide would bring upon them a suspicion of murder. Upon this declaration, they were decreed and ordered to

to be all put into confinement, and separately. It was at this time they were informed, that they were suspected of having murdered their son. What a dreadful addition was this to miseries, already great beyond expression! This new, this more than ignominious misfortune, entirely overwhelmed them! At the charge, they became motionless, penetrated with extreme grief, for this cruel imputation, together with the loss of a beloved son.

It was only at the town-hall that Mr. David, the capitoul, stated the fact in writing, and put a date from the house where the supposed trespass had been committed; wherefore the prisoners protested against it: But the capitoul was so inveterate, that he not only prevented this protest from being serviceable to them, but even the attorney whom they employed was interdicted for three months.

Nevertheless, the supposed parricide was the subject of conversation to the whole city; every one agreed, that

Calas



Calas the father had, with his wife, made their son Marc-Antony a victim to their hatred for the Roman-Catholic religion: And though there was the highest improbability and even incredibility in this story, yet a mistaken fondness for the religion of the country, together with bigotry and fanaticism, gave a sanction to it. Whether from simplicity, compassion, excess of piety, or of malice, every Roman-Catholic used all his endeavours to add something to the calumny: "It was tomorrow, said one, that Marc-Antony was to have renounced the errors of Protestantism." "The rite of the Protestants, said another, orders fathers in such a case to kill their children." "You speak so true, said a third, that in their last meeting they appointed an executioner of the sect."

As for those who had heard the cries of the father Calas at the sight of the corpse of his son, they did not fail to assert that they were the cries of the martyr,

martyr, when he was struggling against the homicide. Thus the most sensible persons were drawn into error by the torrent of popular clamour, and the whole city was soon poisoned by fanaticism.

At Toulouze there is a celebration of the anniversary of the massacre of the Protestants; and that day of cruel memory being near at hand, the people, who were ready to dress the scaffold, and set fire to the wood-pile which was to reduce the guilty to ashes, asked loudly to have the victims reserved for that day, in order to make solemnly a burnt-offering of the blood of a whole family.

The capitoul was highly pleased to see this temper in the people, which seemed to justify what he had done, and encouraged his proceeding in this cruel business: Nor did he fail to compliment himself for having been the firebrand in this cause, or to feel the heart-felt pleasure of self-applause, for this instance of horrid malice.

According

According to the dictates of the law in such cases, the inexorable David took his colleague to the house of Calas, to qualify themselves to make a report of the place, and to examine the papers of the deceased. And altho' he found nothing, either in that youth's papers, or his books, which could give the slightest intimation, much less proof, of his pretended abjuration, yet he, the same day, issued an order for the inhumation of the corpse among the Roman Catholics.

What a triumph was it for the populace, who ever rejoice in parade, to behold such funeral pomp, passing from the town-hall to the cathedral church. Fifty clergymen, with one hundred of the White Penitents \*, formed the procession, which was followed by twenty thousand enthusiasts. Who would credit it? It was to a Protestant that this high honour; this honour which is denied to all, was

\* A congregation for religious and charitable purposes.



granted. In vain the rector of the parish, a very worthy man, refused to lend the use of the church for such a strange ceremony; in vain did he remonstrate, that Marc-Antony Calas had left nothing which could prove his having made an abjuration of the Protestant faith; David was deaf to every argument; for arguments must prove, that he had acted contrary to reason, as well as to humanity.

As the capitouls had ordered, that the corpse should be buried according to the Roman rite, every proof of the suicide was buried with it; since it was only by the strictest examination of the corpse, that that fact could be ascertained. Nor was this incident singular in effecting the ruin of this unfortunate family; to promote which, the malice of the capitouls was carried to such prodigious extent, that they even refused to receive the evidence of several witnesses: Some of whom could have proved, that, but a short time before Marc-Antony's death, they had  
seen

seen him at the baptism of a Protestant, to whom he stood godfather. Others were ready to affirm, that he was, not many weeks then past, attending the meetings of the Huguenots; and that he spoke, with the greatest energy, before the congregation, in defence of the excellent principles of the Protestant religion. Mr. Le Beau jun. could have declared, that when he was received into the society of the students at law, he asked Marc-Antony if he would not do the same? and was answered by him, that it was an impossibility, as, having been born in the city, he was known to be a Protestant, and was determined not to abjure his faith.

These are justifying facts, which the family could have proved; but it was resolved to impose silence upon all persons who would have spoken in their behalf.

How many different impressions did this funeral pomp, to which all the religious orders sent their deputies,

make on the public credulity! There was nothing to be seen but the greatest extravagancies. The multitude did not pray for the dead, but invoked him as a saint. Some prostrated themselves upon the coffin of this mob-elected martyr; some sought the humbler honour of only touching it; while others with enthusiastic zeal cut the fringes from the pall. Nor were reports of miracles forgot to be circulated, to irritate more the deluded Romanists, and confirm them in their prejudices against this wretched family. The day after the funeral, the White Penitents celebrated a pompous service for him; in the middle whereof was elevated a magnificent and noble catafalque, upon which was an human skeleton, representing Marc-Antony, holding in one hand a pen, the emblem of his abjuration; in the other a palm, the symbol of his martyrdom. Animated by the most indecent zeal, the Grey Friars made another monumentum, no less

less scandalous; while each religious order aspired to the pious honour of being the executioner of the prisoners.

What hope of justice could these unfortunate victims entertain, from such partial, such prejudiced judges; who, against the law, by their own private authority, had ordered this funeral pomp? Was it not an omen of their perdition? But what an hardened cruelty must those men possess, who could not be insensible to their own prejudices, and yet, contrary to the laws of God and man, kept their seats as judges?

On the eighteenth of November following, the court of the capitouls met, in order to give their opinions, and pronounce sentence upon the prisoners. David, that enraged persecutor, who certainly was liable to exception, took his seat among his colleagues; and it has been asserted, that, before their meeting, he took the common hangman with him to the house of Calas, and then propagated a report through  
the

the city, that, after an impartial examination of the place, the executioner had delivered his opinion, that it was impossible suicide should have been there committed.

Contrary to the established custom of judging criminals in the morning, when the senses are supposed to be most cool, the capitouls pronounced sentence at five o'clock in the afternoon. Calas the father, his wife, and Peter their son, were condemned first to the ordinary and extraordinary rack; Lavayse and the servant-maid to be presented to it only.

The prisoners immediately made an appeal from this sentence to the parliament; and altho' in such cases appellants are thereby removed from the jurisdiction of the capitouls, yet these cruel and enthusiastic judges insisted on their being loaded with the heaviest irons, like the most notorious convicts.

On the ninth of March, thirteen judges of the parliament met at the chambers of Tournelle; where having agreed,



agreed, *nem. con.* to judge the father first; the unfortunate old man was taken from his dungeon, and brought before them.

But, as if Providence thought the measure of the misery of this poor family was not yet full, as Calas was crossing the palace-yard, in order to be examined by his judges for the last time, there happened at the instant to be a wood-pile in flames. The executioner, with guards and attendants, was burning a writing against Popery \*. The sight of the hangman, the archers, and the vast number of spectators, together with the flames, worked so forcibly on the imagination of Calas, that his reason was affected, and he supposed this to be the apparatus of his death.---His senses were so much disturbed by this incident, and his agitation at the idea of his unmerited execution so great, that, when brought be-

\* It was a Letter from a Protestant minister, in defence of that unhappy family.

fore the judges, he could not give proper answers to their interrogatories, nor say any thing in his defence, though he had so much to oppose to his enemies; but only, with a dying voice, the venerable good old man protested, that he had not killed his son, but dearly loved him: And this embarrassment the judges, ignorant of its real source, imputed to the consciousness of guilt.

As the very particular and interesting nature of this affair has caused the curtain to be drawn which commonly secretes the proceedings of the courts of justice in France, it has appeared, that only seven judges of the thirteen approved the condemnation of Calas; which majority of one not being sufficient, according to the rules of the court, to convict him, means were found to prevail on one of the dissentients (a person so well convinced of Calas's innocence, that he had spoken two hours in his behalf) to join the other party; on which unhappy junction, the old gentleman received the following

following sentence: To be put to the ordinary and extraordinary rack, to be broke alive, to expire upon a wheel, after having been upon it two hours, and to be reduced to ashes in a wood-pile.

This unhappy parent first underwent the rack, which he bore with that heroic spirit peculiar to the injured innocent. Being pressed, by the most extraordinary tortures, to declare his accomplices; he exclaimed, "Where there is no guilt, how can there be accomplices?"---He declared himself ready, in atonement for the faults he had in his life-time committed, to offer the sacrifice of his reputation and his life; but still averred his innocence of the horrid crime for which he stood condemned. The majestic firmness of the old man, when arrived at the place of execution, began at length to convince the spectators of his innocence, and to raise in their hearts confused sensations of commiseration and repentance.



Before the executioner began his business, Father Bourges, a priest of the Dominican order, drew near, took the victim in his arms, and with great tenderness embraced him: "My dear brother," said this respectable consolator to him, "you are going to leave this world: By the God whom you love, in whom are your only hopes, and who has died for you, I conjure you to tell the truth." "I have said nothing but the truth," answered he, lifting his hands and eyes towards Heaven. Then looking on the religious man with astonishment and tenderness, he said to him, "Would you believe too, my dear friend, that a father would have killed his son?"

The executioner now began to make use of the redoubtable iron bar, and broke both the legs and arms of that unfortunate and venerable old gentleman. Every stroke was felt by the spectators, and drew tears from their eyes; but it was too late.

On

On the first stroke the sufferer cried moderately, and received the others without complaining. Being put afterwards upon the wheel, he implored the mercy of Heaven; and had the Christian fortitude to avoid reproaching his judges, or any other persons, as the authors of his death. While every one present was lamenting his fate, and crying for his sufferings, he addressed these moving words to Father Bourges, his consolator: “ I die inno-  
 “ cent. Jesus Christ, who was inno-  
 “ cency itself, has been willing to  
 “ suffer a more cruel death. God  
 “ punishes in me, my wife, and chil-  
 “ dren, the sin of that unhappy son  
 “ who has destroyed himself. He is  
 “ just, and I adore his decrees. As  
 “ for that young stranger whom I in-  
 “ vited home, the son of Mr. Lavayse,  
 “ the Almighty best knows why he  
 “ was involved in my misfortune.”  
 He was speaking thus when David the capitoul, jealous of the commiseration and tears of the spectators, came near

the scaffold, and, in order to crown his proceedings with dignity, he said to him, "Wretch, dost thou see the wood-pile which is to reduce thy body to ashes? Speak the truth, and confess thy guilt." Calas, as a mark of contempt for his cruel persecutor, turned his head, and looked on the executioner, who gave him the last dying stroke, and the innocent expired.

His heroism and firmness touched his judges, who began to dread they had been wrong; but nevertheless, according to their adjournment, proceeded on the trial of the other prisoners. They were not a little embarrassed, having nothing to bring any of them to conviction. Those unfortunate persons all insisted on their being as innocent as the victim who had just been sacrificed to fanaticism; that they had not left him one minute alone; and that, if there had been any proofs of his being guilty of the crime for which he had suffered, the same would serve for their conviction, or else they were all innocent. On this second trial,

trial, the judges acquitted the unfortunate and virtuous widow Mrs. Calas, the young stranger Mr. Lavayse, and the servant-maid, there being not the least shadow of proofs of any kind against them. As for Peter Calas their son, they banished him from the country, on account of an irreligious conversation that was imputed to him.

Such is the deplorable account of one of the most tragical events on record. Who would think that such an horrible scene was transacted in one of the most civilized province of France. Our sensations will commiserate, our tears will flow, but they can never restore the honest Calas to his inconsolable widow and proscribed children.

M. De Voltaire, on hearing of this event, collected all the information he could upon the proceedings, both of the capitouls and the parliament: He saw with horror the force of fanaticism, and the impossibility of the crime imputed to that innocent old man; and  
resolved



resolved to do every thing in his power to have those proceedings revised by the king's privy-council. With his advice, his credit, and money, which he did not spare, Mrs. Calas and her children came to Versailles: They threw themselves at the feet of his majesty, to whom they were presented by one of the lords in waiting. He received their humble petition, promised, with his usual goodness, to do them justice, and immediately ordered a privy-council to be held, at which himself presided. The lord-high-chancellor, all the great officers of state, both civil and military, were present, to the number of one hundred and ten privy-councillors, who unanimously received the petition.

The king first, with the advice of his council, invalidated the sentence of the capitouls, together with the judgment given by the parliament of Toulouze; and ordered all the proceedings to be laid before the sovereign judges of his hôtel, in order to try again such an important affair. He accordingly

ingly

ingly nominated commissioners to make proper enquiries. The petitioners then surrendered themselves to imprisonment, in order to be tried by the peers of the realm.

The most celebrated counsellors offered themselves, and undertook to defend the oppressed relicts of that once-reputable and now-distressed family. Mess. Elie de Baumont and Loiseau de Moleon, the two most eminent counsel in France, were their defensors, and Mr. Dupleix de Bacquin-court\* was the judge appointed to report the cause. The trial lasted three sittings, and there were five and forty judges present. The prisoners, who were Mrs. Calas, her two daughters and three sons, the young Mr. Lavayse, and the servant-maid, were brought before that august assem-

*but*  
\* Altho' this nobleman is famed for the rigor of his proceedings in criminal cases, and was therefore, by the influence of the principal judges of the parliament, at this time appointed, the innocence of the prisoners prevailed over all other considerations, and he gave his opinion in their behalf.

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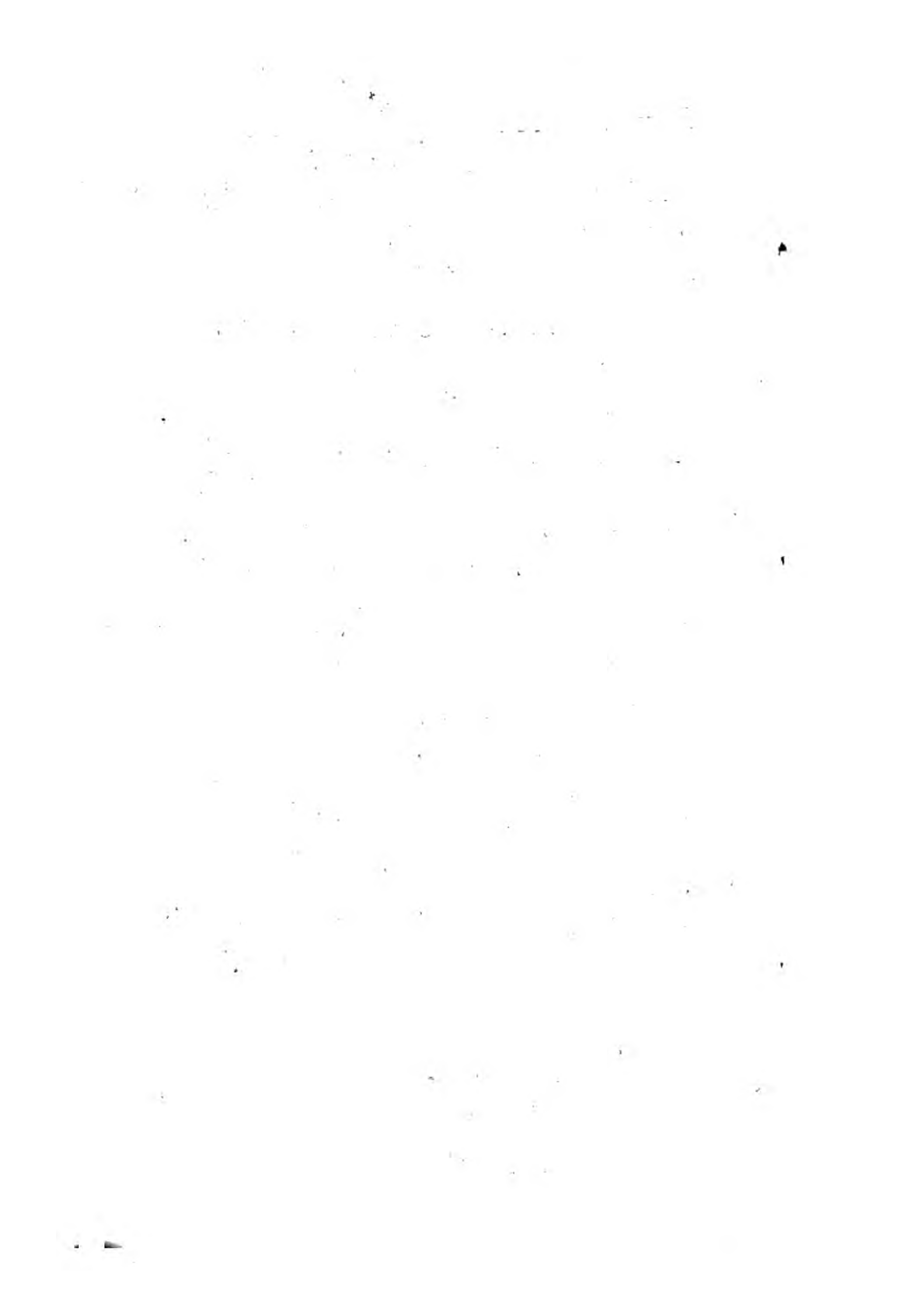
bly, and a great number of spectators of the first distinction, who crowded the hall.

After an hearing of three days, and when the report was made upon the whole, the judges without division, not one dissentient; found, That John Calas and the rest of the family were innocent, and that he had suffered unjustly; they annulled all the proceedings of the capitouls, together with the judgment of the parliament of Toulouse; ordered, 1st. That the prisoners should be released from their confinement, their names erased from the several books of the gaols where they had been detained, and be most honourably acquitted: 2d. That the unhappy John Calas should be deemed innocent of the crimes which had been imputed to him; his commitment and his name should likewise be erased from the book of the jail where he had been detained; at the margin of which the present sovereign judgment should be written, and kept in record, for the honour

honour of his memory ; that the clerk of the court, the keepers, or their deputy, should be compelled to do it at the suit of his majesty's attorney-general, on the pain of imprisonment of their persons: 3d. As to the demand of the petitioners for the recovery of damages, they ordered, that they should bring actions against the capitouls and the judges of the parliament of Toulouze who voted for the condemnation, as they should think fit ; and lastly, That, at the suit and expence of his majesty's attorney-general, the present judgment should be published and posted up in all ordinary places, and where it should be found necessary.

There were in the palace-yard no less than four or five thousand persons, waiting for the event of such an important trial, which was received with the greatest proofs of approbation, every where but at Toulouze.





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# L E T T R E

DE

J E A N C A L A S,

A

Sa FEMME et à ses ENFANS.

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O Chere & tendre épouse, ô moitié de moy-même;  
Reponds moy: sens tu bien cette force suprême  
Qui nous fait, sans fremir, envisager la mort?  
Si tu la sens, écoute, & vois quel est mon sort.

Ce sénat éclairé \*, dont l'équité sévère  
Resista si long temps aux erreurs du vulgaire,  
Que du glaive des loix le Ciel voulut armer  
Pour venger l'innocent & non pour l'opprimer:  
Ce senat, dont cent fois j'admiraï la justice,  
Vient de me condamner—& je marche au suplice.

Eh quoi! ces magistrats, faits pour vaincre l'erreur;  
Ont ils pû, d'un vil peuple, adopter la fureur?  
Ont ils cru qu'un vieillard, appésenti par l'âge,  
Pcur un crime inoui rahimant son courage  
Brâvant ce que jamais l'homme eut de plus sacré,  
Ait porté sur son fils un bras dénaturé?  
Mais, supposant qu'en moy la nature bizarre  
Ait placé, pour ce crime, un cœur assés barbare

A

Ont

\* Le Parlement de Toulouze.

Ont ils cru qu'une mere avec tranquillité  
 Ait vû versé le sang que ses flancs ont porté ;  
 Et qu'en nous unissant l'Hymen triste et sauvage  
 De deux monstres sanglants ait formé l'assemblage ?  
 Helas ils ont cru tout—& mon supplice est prêt.

Il est donc prononcé ce redoutable arrêt  
 Quoi? pendant soixante ans ma gloire fut entiere,  
 Et l'oprobre m'attend au bout de ma carrière !  
 Quoi! la vie et l'honneur vont donc m'être ravis :  
 N'était ce pas assés d'avoir perdu mon fils ?  
 Déplorables humains, malheureux que nous sommes,  
 Notre honneur depend donc du caprice des hommes.

Chere epouse, dis moi ! quand propice à nos feux,  
 L'Hymen nous enchaîna par le flux doux des nœuds :  
 Quand le Ciel bénissant, cette union si chere,  
 Augmentait les enfans dont il me rendit pere :  
 Quand je louais ce Dieu dont les soins bienfaisants  
 Et sur eux et sur nous repandaient ses presents,  
 Quand pour eux j'implorais la puissance celeste,  
 Aurais tu cru qu'un deux nous devint si funeste,  
 Et qu'un jour au supplice injustement livrés,  
 Par la main d'un bourreau nous fussions séparés ?

Mais dans le même sort, toi-même envelopée,  
 Chere epouse avec moi te verrais tu frappée ?  
 Si je suis criminel, il faut que tu le sois ;  
 On doit ou nous absoudre, ou nous perdre à la fois.  
 Ah! cruels, si vos traits font expirer le pere,  
 Du moins à des enfans conservés une mère,  
 D'une epouse si tendre épargnés les douleurs :  
 N'augmentés point ses maux, et respectés ses pleurs ;  
 Si la mort est pour vous une si douce image  
 Frapés et que mon sang suffise à vôtre rage.

O toi, le premier né de mes tristes enfans,  
 Toi sur qui je fondais l'espoir de mes vieux ans,

Toi

Toi que j'ay tant aimé, toi dont la mort sanglante  
 A mes sens défolés semble toujours presente,  
 O mon fils, mon cher fils, dans quel abime affreux  
 As tu précipité tes parens malheureux ?  
 Va, mon cœur te pardonne : ah ! s'il étoit possible  
 Qu'à mes tristes destins ton ombre fut sensible,  
 Bientôt sortant pour moi du gouffre des enfers,  
 Tu me rendrais l'honneur et tu romprais mes fers :  
 Mais hélas ! insensible à mes plaintes funebres,  
 Tu dors proffondément dans le sein des tenebres,  
 Et dans ce doux repos, tu ne t'imforme pas  
 Si ta mort aujourd'hui va causer mon trepas.

Ah ! s'ils nous avoient vûs dans ce moment terrible,  
 Ou la mort se montrant sous un aspect horrible,  
 Vint offrir à nos yeux efraïés et surpris  
 Le corps pâle et glacé de ce malheureux fils ;  
 Ou le cœur déchiré des plus vives allarmes,  
 J'eclatais en sanglots et je fondais en l'armes ;  
 Ou, l'appelant cent fois, tu ferrais dans tes bras  
 Ce fils, ce triste fils qui ne repondoit pas,  
 Nous auraient-ils jamais soupçonnés d'imposture ?  
 Se feraient ils mépris au cri de la nature ?  
 Ce desordre touchant pour nous aurait parlé ;  
 Leurs cœurs auraient fremi ; leurs pleurs auraient coulé.  
 Hélas ! nôtre douleur ne fut que trop sincere !  
 Parmi ces sénateurs, ah ! s'il étoit un père,  
 Dans l'horreur d'un cachot je ne gémirais pas,  
 Et ces indignes fers tomberaient de mes bras.  
 Mais que m'importe à moy, que m'importe une vie,  
 Qui bientôt par les ans pourrait m'être ravie ?  
 C'est à vous seuls à craindre, ô, juges, tremblés tous  
 Le sang que vous verrez, peut rejaillir sur vous ;  
 Du fonds de mon tombeau ma cendre peut renaître ;  
 Qui vous verrez un jour, qui n'est pas loin peut-être,

La verité terrible eclater à vós yeux ;  
 Le temps déchirera le voile injurieux  
 Qui cachoit dans la nuit ma timide innocence :  
 Alors vous frémiréz d'une injuste sentence :  
 Par des larmes de sang vous pleurerés ma mort ;  
 Vous serés déchirés par les traits du remord.  
 Dieu, qui vois leur erreur, pardonne à leur foiblesse ;  
 Et détourne loin d'eux ta fureur vengeresse.

Lâches persecuteurs, c'est vous seuls, oui c'est vous  
 Qui trompés le sénat, et conduifés ses coups ;  
 Cruels, vous triomphés ; nous sommes vos victimes,  
 Et pour mieux me noircir vous me pretés vos crimes.

De ma triste maison cet ardent oppresseur\*,  
 Qui de la loi des Cieux se croit le deffenseur,  
 Luy, qui sur mon fils mort a vu couler nos larmes,  
 A perdre un innocent trouve donc bien des charmes !  
 La mort est mon suplice, et la vie est le sien ;  
 Dans mes injustes maux, Dieu sera mon soutien :  
 Mais, lui, de ses enfans la plus tendre carésse  
 A son cœur déchiré reprochera sans cesse  
 Ses cruelles fureurs, mes tourments et ma mort.  
 Dieu, ne le livrez point aux horreurs du remord !  
 Si, contraire à sa loi, la loi qui nous enchaîne  
 Dans son ame inflexible a fait naitre la haine,  
 Que du moins sur moi seul il cherche à se venger :  
 Mais comment se peut-il que ce jeune étranger,  
 Dont le cœur est si noble & le front si modeste ?  
 Se trouve envelopé dans mon malheur funeste.

Ah ! j'ay prévu le coup dont je me sens frappé,  
 Quand sur de faux rapports tout un peuple trompé  
 Imputait à mon bras cette mort si cruelle ;  
 Quand sa crédulité qu'enflammait un faux zèle,  
 Plaçait au rang des saints cet enfant malheureux,  
 Que peut-être autrement Dieu jugait dans les Cieux.

\* M. David le Capitoul.



Ce qui fut le danger m'éclaira d'avantage,  
 Ce fut l'instant funeste ou ranimant sa rage,  
 Toulouse avec transport célébrait le retour  
 De ce massacre affreux, de cet horrible jour  
 Qui dut être des pleurs une source éternelle ;  
 Quand de mes ennemis la foule criminelle  
 Des feux du fanatisme embrasait les esprits ;  
 Quand ce peuple cruel demandait à grand cris  
 Que pour ce jour sanglant on gardât la victime ;  
 Alors je vis sous moy s'approfondir l'âbime ;  
 Alors m'abandonant aux horreurs de mon sort,  
 J'offris ma vie au Ciel & j'attendis la mort.

Cependant (des humains tu connais la faiblesse)  
 Jusqu'au dernier moment je me flattais sans cesse :  
 Oui, quoi que tout un peuple, avec acharnement,  
 D'un pere infortuné poursuivait le tourment,  
 Je croyais qu'éftraïé des apprêts du suplice,  
 Il ouvrirait les yeux & me rendrait justice :  
 Mais le Ciel sans pitié se rit de mon erreur.  
 Un songe cette nuit, pour mieux tromper mon cœur  
 Me faisait concevoir le plus heureux augure.  
 Un spectre, à la lueur d'une lumière obscure,  
 S'offre à moi : de frayeur tous mes sens sont saisis,  
 " Rassure toi, dit-il ; que crains tu de ton fils ?  
 " Mon pere de tes maux c'est moi qui suis la cause ;  
 " J'en gémiss ; mais sur Dieu que ton cœur se repose :  
 " Il ne souffrira point qu'un injuste soupçon  
 " Flétrisse pour jamais ta gloire & nôtre nom ;  
 " Par luy, par son secours l'innocence vengée  
 " Voit, d'un piège trompeur, sa marche degagée.  
 " Sans doute un jour viendra"—que veux tu m'annoncer,  
 M'écras-je, ô mon fils ? je cours pour l'embrasser :  
 Mais je ne trouve plus qu'une vapeur horrible :  
 Alors mon cachot s'ouvre avec un bruit terrible ;

Je m'éveille ; je crois qu'on va changer mon fort :  
 Mais que vois-je—un bourreau vient m'annoncer la mort,  
 Noir tombeau des vivans, triste et lugubre enceinte,  
 Ou près du crime assis l'innocent vit sans crainte,  
 Ou le coupable aux fers, de remords combattu,  
 Ose espérer le prix qu'on doit à la vertu,  
 Parmi ses malheureux que ton ombre renferme,  
 En verras tu jamais qui, d'un œil aussi ferme  
 Porte au supplice affreux, ou je suis condamné  
 Un cœur plus innocent & plus infortuné ?

Ou sont ils ces amis dont la flateuse adresse  
 Avaient trompé mon cœur et surpris ma tendresse  
 Qui me cherissaient tant dans mes prospérités ?  
 Le malheur loin de moi les a tous écartés ;  
 Cette amitié si vive, en projets consumée,  
 Au milieu des sermens s'évapore en fumée.  
 Qu'ils viennent ces temoins de mon intégrité  
 A mes juges seduits montrer la vérité !  
 Quoi ! lorsque de mon cœur connoissant la droiture,  
 Ils peuvent d'un seul mot démentir l'imposture,  
 Ils gardent lâchement un silence profond !  
 Dans ces momens affreux tant d'horreur me confond !  
 Tout fuit, quand j'ay besoin d'une utile defense.  
 N'est il donc plus de cœur sensible à l'innocence,

O Ciel ! tout contre moi parait se réunir ,  
 Mon culte est tout mon crime, & l'on veut m'en punir.

Helas ! serions nous donc dans ces tems déplorables,  
 Où l'erreur fit verser le sang de nos semblables ?  
 Quoi ! lorsqu'éclairant tout de son flambeau divin,  
 La raison veut ensemble unir Rome et Calvin,  
 Que, sans approfondir tant de sectes contraires,  
 Elle veut des humains faire un peuple de freres,  
 C'est le fer à la main qu'on veut nous convertir !  
 Barbares, de l'erreur il est temps de sortir ;

Repon-

Repondés : est ce ainsi que ces premiers apôtres,  
 Ces heureux fondateurs de vos loix & des nôtres,  
 A leur culte enchainaient la foule des mortels ?  
 Ont ils du sang humain arrosé les autels ?  
 La paix et la douceur étaient leur seules armes ;  
 D'une famille en deuil ils effuaient les larmes ;  
 Ils pardonaient à ceux qui les ont accablés ;  
 Est-ce en nous massacrant que vous leur ressemblez ?  
 Jesus dont nous suivons la morale divine,  
 A-t'-il fait par le glaive adopter sa doctrine ?  
 A-t'-il du fanatisme enseigné les chemins ?  
 Vous a-t'-il ordonné d'égorger les humains ?  
 Dans ses livres sacrés l'humanité respire,  
 Ce n'est que sur la paix qu'est fondé son empire ;  
 Et de la foudre enfin il ne s'arma jamais  
 Que pour venger le juste et punir vos forfaits.

O toi dont l'univers adore la puissance,  
 Toi qui lis dans mon cœur, qui vois mon innocence  
 Dieu que j'implore, entens ma voix du haut des Cieux ;  
 Ce jour est le dernier qui va luire à mes yeux ;  
 Daigne éclaircir le doute ou cet instant me plonge :  
 Si je suis égaré dans la nuit du mensonge,  
 Si jamais loin de toi mon cœur s'est écarté ;  
 Et que j'aie coulé mes jours dans l'obscurité.  
 J'embrasse des Romains le culte et les mystères :  
 Mais si suivant en paix la trace de mes pères,  
 Je marche au vrai chemin qui conduit jusqu'à toi,  
 Dans ces heureux sentiers, mon Dieu, raffermis moi,  
 Tu vois comme en ce jour l'erreur me persécute ;  
 Tu fais si j'ay commis le forfait qu'on m'impute ;  
 Helas ! je voudrais bien, dans ces momens d'éfroi,  
 N'avoir point d'autre crime à porter devant toi,  
 En permettant l'erreur que le senat écoute,  
 Du crime de mon fils tu me punis sans doute ;

Calas, qui de ta main reçoit ces chatimens,  
 Se livre sans murmure, aux plus cruels tourmens;  
 Mon Dieu, de tes élus souffrir est le partage ;  
 Je t'offre mes douleurs ; que cet affreux trepas,  
 Trouve grace à tes yeux & defarme ton bras :  
 Et que mon ame enfin de mes fautes lavées,  
 Jouisse de la gloire à tes saints réservée.

De ma triste innocence infortunées temoins  
 Vous dont les premiers ans mont couté tant de soins,  
 Dont les charmes naissans font aimer la sagesse,  
 Mes filles, autres fois je flattais ma tendresse  
 De vous laisser un jour dans les bras d'un époux :  
 Quel mortel courageux, hélas voudrait pour vous  
 Brâver ce préjugé, peut-être trop sévère,  
 Qui flettrit les enfans du crime de leur père ?  
 Et toi, dont le bonheur me fut si précieux,  
 Chere epouse, reçois mes plus tendres adieux.  
 Vivés, mes chers enfans, consoléz vôte mère ;  
 Et, si de nôtre nom la gloire vous est chère,  
 Alléz, couréz, voléz, tombéz aux pieds du roi :  
 Demandéz luy l'honneur que vous perdéz en moi :  
 Vous verrez qu'en ces lieux qu'on peint inaccessible,  
 Tous les cœurs mes enfans ne font point insensibles  
 Ce prince bienfaisant, touché de vos malheurs,  
 De son bandeau sacré peut effuier vos pleurs ;  
 De vos vils ennemis démêlant l'artifice,  
 Il confondra leur brigue et vous rendra justice.  
 Mais rentrés dans vos droits, devenéz généreux ;  
 Et ne vous en vengés qu'en les rendant heureux.  
 Ce n'est qu'en pardonnant qu'un grand cœur se signale.  
 A Dieu, j'entens déjà sonner l'heure fatale,  
 Hélas ! fut-il jamais un plus funeste sort ;  
 Ou ouvre—c'en est fait—ah ! vôte père est mort.