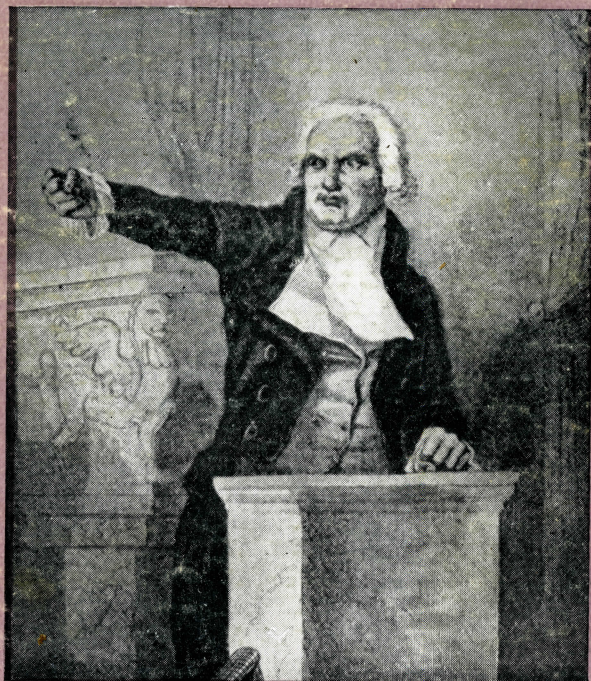


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DANTON**

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GEORGE JACQUES DANTON**

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VOICES OF REVOLT

VOLUME V



SPEECHES OF
GEORGES JACQUES
DANTON

WITH A
CRITICAL INTRODUCTION



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INTRODUCTION

GEORGE JACQUES DANTON

HE was a man of Herculean proportions, with a massive head over a muscular neck, a broad brow, prominent broad nose, a sensuous mouth, and a vigorous chin. His fleshy face, disfigured by the smallpox, is expressive of a sense of humor, a delight in life, passion and will. Such is Danton. Michelet says of him that his whole bearing was redolent of masculinity. "He had something of the lion, something of the bulldog, and much of the steer." He is immoderate in enjoyment and wasteful of his powers. He lacks pertinacity, he lacks a patient, devoted application to the attainment of a single end. He is not a theorist. He is a man of action; in the moment of action, his energies riot to the full, like a torrent breaking down a mountain chain. At such moments, he lashes men on; he is himself a man of bold decisions and great measures. He is impeded by no petty considerations, by no fear. At bottom, he is of kindly nature, but when necessity demands it, he becomes ruthless to the point of brutality.

His voice is sonorous, his speech impetuous, his gestures impressive, dramatic. He seizes his hearers and drags them to him. His opponents have rebuked him for his coarse, cynical, and vulgar speech, which seemed to have been dragged through the filth of the gutter. They assert that he maneuvered for the applause of the multitude by means of low comparisons and coarse jokes, of which many an anecdote is retailed, but these all are in contradiction with the speeches that have been actually preserved. There are not many such speeches: a few delivered in the Club of the Jacobins, a speech delivered to the Paris Town Council, another to the National Assembly, and the speeches delivered in the Convention. Unlike the other orators of his time, he took no steps to preserve his fame. He never gave the journalists any manuscripts. Others might meticulously prepare their speeches, adorn them with fine phrases, and then read them in the Parliament or in the club. These were mere written speeches, academic disputations! Danton always spoke extemporaneously. His words poured forth without guidance.

Therefore his frequent repetitions, but therefore also his immense and direct influence. His speech rolled along in mighty billows, supported by his inner emotion. He was fond of many-colored plastic pictures. He often confused them, however, and then his opponents covered him with ridicule. They ridicule him also because he often speaks of himself, because he boasts with naïve pride of his athletic powers and lauds his present and future performances. But he does not speak in order to magnify himself. He is not one of the irresistibles. He speaks only when he has something to say. In almost every case, his speech ends with the proposal of some concrete measure, destined to save the situation. And in most cases his proposals result in resolutions by the Convention.

Danton's name is associated with all the great events of the Revolution. Together with Marat, he is one of the orators and agitators in the *Jardin du palais royal*. He appears to have participated in the storming of the Bastille, for we find him two days later at the head of a detachment which arrests Soulès, the governor of Paris. He is one of the founders of the Club of the Cordeliers, which is recruited from among the radical elements of the district, the revolutionary intelligentsia, court officials, advocates, students, actors and petty bourgeois. He is soon made president of this club, which becomes an asylum for Marat and which for a long time constitutes, together with the theorizing Club of the Jacobins, the organization of the revolutionary initiative and finally becomes the fulcrum of the power of the Hébertists. When the arrogant nobility at Versailles demands the overthrow of the National Assembly and the putting down of the people of Paris, Danton succeeds in having the Cordeliers adopt a resolution which already contains in germ the thoughts of the decree "The nation is in danger!" namely, the active resistance to the royalist provocations and the arming of the revolutionary people. On October 4, 1789, this resolution is posted on the walls and has the effect of an appeal to insurrection. On the following day, the women of Paris, armed with pikes, muskets and cannons, proceed to Versailles in order to clean up the hotbed of counter-revolution. Danton is one of the first to sound the note of battle against the magistracy of Paris, which would crush the popular movement by declaring a condition of siege, in order to secure to the respectable citizens alone the fruits of the Revolution. When Marat is about to be arrested, on January 9, 1790, by a detachment, Danton rushes to the Cordeliers and proposes that they meet force with force: "If necessary, we shall sound the

alarm and appeal to the Faubourg St. Antoine." He succeeds in having a resolution adopted, appointing five Commissaires for the Defense of Liberty, with the right to frustrate the execution in the district of any command that encroaches on the liberty of the citizens. A warrant is at once issued for Danton's arrest also.

On November 10, 1790, Danton is the spokesman of a delegation of the forty-eight Paris districts, which demands and attains the overthrow of the counter-revolutionary ministers by the National Assembly. He becomes the commander of the National Guard of his district and soon thereafter of the Department of Paris. On April 18, 1791, Louis XVI makes his first attempt to escape to St. Cloud. Danton, in a public appeal, preaches the necessity of armed insurrection and organizes the blocking of the roads by armed revolutionaries. After the flight of Louis XVI to Varennes, Danton fans the rising flame of revolution. While the *parlement* is making convulsive efforts to whitewash the king's treason, the idea of the republic germinates in the masses. From the Club of the Cordeliers emanates the movement which leads to the great demonstration on the Champs de Mars, on July 17, 1791. On the Champs de Mars thousands signed the manifesto composed by Brissot and Danton, demanding that the perjured Bourbon be dethroned. The massacre on the Champs de Mars, caused by Bailly and Lafayette, the Friedrich Ebert and Gustav Noske of their day, crushes this movement. The *parlement* timidly capitulates before the bloody heroes of the day. A reign of terror begins; Marat, Robespierre and others are obliged to conceal themselves; Danton for the moment returns to his native province. Hounded by spies, he goes to England for a few weeks. On September 12, he is again in Paris, and is joyously welcomed by the Club of the Jacobins. In December, he is elected alternate public prosecutor of Paris.

Now comes the turn of events which leads at a stormy pace to the culmination of the Revolution. The old powers, particularly Prussia and Austria, menace the Revolution. War is threatened; the royalists and the wealthy burgher section of the Revolution, the Girondists, help increase the danger of war. Some are already planning treason, praying for the defeat of France and the consequent restoration of absolutism. Others expect that the victorious war will lead to the consolidation of bourgeois rule by turning aside the passions of the masses from internal questions of class, to the matter of war. Marat and Robespierre, who see through these machinations, fight desperately against the advo-

cates of war. They demand that the domestic enemy be put down, that the Revolution be consolidated. It will then be possible to defend the country and the Revolution, if necessary, to the utmost. After some vacillation, due to his fear of a split within the Jacobins, Danton also joins them. The war parties are victorious. In April, Louis XVI declares war on Austria, on the Austria with which he has already conspired.

The war leads the Revolution to the brink of destruction. Large portions of the army collapse at once. About a thousand officers, together with several complete regiments of foreign mercenaries, desert to the enemy. All confidence, all discipline, is destroyed. The army is seized with a panic; defeat follows upon defeat; the domestic distress increases; the counter-revolutionaries are busily at work in their task of subversion. Louis XVI disorganizes the government; the *parlement* is cowardly and helpless. But the revolutionary energy is now crystallizing in the masses of the Paris population and in the departments. In Paris, the Cordeliers are at the head of the movement. On June 20, 1792, they come out in an armed demonstration, which ends, to be sure, with a farce in the palace, in which Louis XVI puts on a red cap and drinks blood-brotherhood with the people. But the demonstration reveals the power of the Paris sections.

The demonstration clearly shows that the Gordian knot cannot be untied but must be hewn apart. The *parlement*, hemmed in between revolution and counter-revolution, shrinks together to a mere nothing. Dangers increase apace. The Prussians cross the boundary with sixty thousand men; the Austrians invade Flanders with eighty thousand; Sardinian troops threaten the southwest; Spanish troops cross the Pyrénées. The Province of La Vendée rises to support throne and altar. The Duke of Brunswick issues a manifesto in which he threatens to rule with a conqueror's rights and to raze Paris to the ground.

The Revolution appears to be lost. But the danger now increases the energies of the masses; the republican idea becomes stronger day by day; the citizens take arms into their hands. Their leaders still hesitate. Robespierre looks for a way to overcome the crisis by legal means. He finds a very imposing solution: dissolution of the *parlement*, convocation of a convention to be elected not only by the rich, active citizens, but by all the citizens, a convention which shall adopt a new constitution and control the executive authority. But the *parlement* is not capable of any revolutionary act. Legal methods will no longer suffice to solve the question.

The revolutionary action begins in the section of the Théâtre français (Cordeliers) of which Danton is president. On July 30, this section, in a solemn resolution, signed by Danton, Chaumette and Montmoro, abolishes the distinction between active and passive citizens and admits the propertyless to the communal assembly of the National Guard.

This is an open violation of the constitution, the proclamation of a new order, the creative initiative of the people. Most of the Paris sections follow this example. Danton obtains shelter in his district for the men from Marseilles, the "men who know how to die." In the Hotel de Ville are assembled the voluntarily elected representatives of the sections, who force the old town council to the wall and constitute themselves as a revolutionary executive authority, parallel to the *parlement*. At the same time, the Central Committee of the Federated is constituted from among the representatives of the department, whose secret Directory prepares systematically for insurrection. Danton is the soul of the insurrection, the negotiator between the Commune and the Central Committee. For three weeks, Paris becomes an arsenal. After all the details have been prepared, the insurrection is set for August 10, 1792.

At sunrise, on this day, the sections line up in military array. The Commune assumes authority in a solemn proclamation. The commandant of the National Guard, Mandat, who plans to defend the palace of the Tuileries against the people with his troops, is arrested on Danton's order, sentenced to death and disposed of. Louis seeks asylum with the *parlement*, which promises him the protection of the monarchy. Not long after, it capitulates to the Commune. Meanwhile, the Tuileries are taken by storm. The monarchy is dead. In the evening a new ministry is installed, consisting of Girondists and of the Tribune of the People of Paris, Danton.

Danton's title is that of Minister of Distress. As a matter of actual fact, he is the inspirer and the wielder of the executive power. He whips up flagging energies, squeezes the utmost powers from the people and from the individual. He purifies the administration of justice and establishes elected judges. He organizes the battle against counter-revolution within the country and creates a revolutionary police. He imparts the first powerful impulse to the conscription of the masses for the creation of a revolutionary army, and soon brings about a condition in which two thousand men are daily supplied by Paris, ready to march.

Now come the bloody days of September. The Paris revolu-

tionaries take the prisons by storm and sentence those that are suspected. They will not relinquish Paris to the royalists, they want their backs to be protected if they are to go to the front. It is stated that Danton watched these murders with his "hands in his pockets and his boots washed with blood." This is not true. To be sure, he did not oppose this self-action of the masses, for he knew that terror was necessary in order to intimidate the enemies of the people, and because the revolutionary justice which was part of his program had not yet been created. Later, when the persecutions of the men of September began, Danton intervened in their favor with the words: "On August 10, the Revolution gave birth to republican liberty; on September 2, the after-birth was disposed of."

Meanwhile, the dangers are increasing. The Girondists in the government are cowards. They are afraid of the enemy and they are afraid of this Paris of the *sans-culottes*. They wish to transfer the government to the south, but Danton declares: "France is in Paris. To give up the capital means to hand France over to the enemy. In either victory or defeat, the defense of Paris will be between two fires, the republicans will be so weakened that the royalists will have a majority. In order to frustrate their plans, we must inspire the royalists with fear." And he proceeded to act.

On September 8, Danton is elected to the Convention. When faced with the necessity of choosing whether he would be a minister or a representative of the people, he resigned his ministerial portfolio, and insisted on this decision in spite of much beseeching from the Left. Yet he retained his influence, particularly on the war ministry and the diplomatic service. He pursued the goal as he did later in the Committee of Public Safety, securing a victorious termination of the war by means of weapons and by means of a destruction of the coalition of the powers through diplomatic agencies. As the Convention's Commissaire for the Northern Army, he makes many journeys, he revolutionizes the masses of the people in Belgium, and brings about a union of Belgium and France. He reorganizes the Northern Army and corrects the political mistakes of the generals in the occupied regions. But he cannot prevent the treason of Dumouriez, whom he has trusted too much. This frightful blow against the republic is simultaneously also a blow against Danton. The calumnies of the Girondists are now reinforced by the suspicions of the party of the Mountain. By his revolutionary activity, by the creation of the revolutionary tribunal, by his constant urging of action, he may indeed reduce this suspicion to silence, but he

can no longer slay it. Furthermore, there is an additional element: his conciliatory rôle in the struggle between the Gironde and the Party of the Mountain, until he finds himself obliged to aid in the overthrow of the Girondists, after the latter have attempted to incite the provinces against Paris and have come out frankly for counter-revolution. In July, 1793, he resigns from the Committee of Public Safety and gradually relinquishes his position in the forefront of public events.

The great dangers are now passed. The armies of the Revolution advance victoriously. He plans a diminution of the sharpness of the Terror. He inspires the attacks by Desmoulins on the Hébertists, who have deprived him of his influence in the Club of the Cordeliers. He surrounds himself with associates who are worm-eaten with corruption. After the overthrow of the Girondists, he gives Desmoulins free rein in his struggle against Robespierre and the Terror, which Robespierre himself desires to limit little by little. On 16 Germinal (April 5, 1794), at the age of 34, Danton mounted the scaffold, courageously, as he had lived. To the hangman he said: "You will show my head to the people; it is worth while!" Three months later, on 9 Thermidor, the great epoch of the Revolution closes with the fall of Robespierre.

The struggle between the parties in the great Revolution still rages to this day in the conflict of all historians.¹ Some persons elevate Danton into a superman, others make him a common babbler, a purchasable creature, a traitor. None of these is right. Danton's rise, as well as his tragic end, are indissolubly connected with the enhanced spirit of class struggle which constitutes revolution. Danton was a member of that stratum of independent intellectuals which furnishes leaders to the various parties in every revolution, particularly in the bourgeois revolution. These men occupy a socially intermediate position between the bourgeoisie and the petty bourgeoisie. If they take the side of the lower strata of the lower classes, they will be able to maintain themselves in the moment of actual struggle against the bourgeoisie, only by severing all the bonds connecting them with the bourgeoisie. Danton did not do this. Danton was the enemy of the counter-revolutionary classes and in his struggle against them he displayed all his active energy. He was

¹ The zeal of the parties in this conflict was often ridiculous. The Dantonist Robinet even counted Danton's pocket handkerchiefs in order to clear his hero from the charge of corruption. The Robespierriest Mathiez accumulates a veritable mountain of data in order to justify every word in the accusation against Danton, which is a party document of the basest type.

the national revolutionary, and mobilized all the powers of the people, including the proletariat and the peasants, for the saving of the fatherland. He led the petty bourgeoisie and the proletarian strata of Paris to power. But when these classes defended their specific interests against the bourgeoisie, he failed to understand, and then—after Marat had destined him to be dictator—he lost his leadership. In this struggle he stands between the classes, and for this reason he makes repeated fruitless efforts to restore unity in the Club of the Jacobins, unity between the Gironde and the Mountain; and these efforts cost him the confidence of the masses of the Paris population. In the French Revolution, all the leaders fell, including those leaders who defended the interests of the petty bourgeois and proletarian strata against the bourgeoisie, either because they adopted half-way measures or set up demands for which the time was not yet ripe. This dilemma ultimately leads to the day of 9 Thermidor. Danton represents this class interest only to the extent that it does not seriously endanger the unity of front with the bourgeoisie in the period of revolutionary ascent. Much though he feels for the poor, he rarely has more than charity for the propertyless. This was the reason why his destruction—since he was ground between two opposing classes—was inevitable.

It was inevitable that he would become a victim of the struggle of factions. He was too great to stand between the classes. And he was too great, also, to withdraw from the fight. He tried to do so. He never overcame the effect of the overthrow of the Girondists, who had opposed him most viciously. Furthermore, there were other elements in his defeat. He was counting on the overthrow of the British dictator Pitt, on the victory of the Whigs, and therefore on peace with England. His whole diplomatic system was built up on this expectation. But in uniting Belgium with France and attacking the Netherlands, he made impossible any victory of the Whigs and any settlement with England. This experience discouraged him. He retired to private life; but he remained the man whose gestures were watched for by all, whose opinions were eagerly heard by all. When all the parties hostile to the republic had been destroyed, when he now organized the Right Wing, when he shrugged his shoulders at the decrease of social struggle (maximum prices, measures against speculation, etc., under pain of death), when he advocated moderation, and when his adherents even took up the struggle against the Committee of Public Safety—Danton, against his own desire, became the point of concentration of

the entire counter-revolution, the hope of all those who had trembled before him. Robespierre and Saint-Just now had no choice; they had to destroy him in order to assure the rule of their class and of the Revolution. But, in devising for this purpose an indictment full of idiotic accusations, and in participating in the rending of its own flesh by the party of the Revolution, and thus weakening it, they became the victims of the same tragic destiny that had overtaken Danton.

Only the petty bourgeoisie could achieve the victory of the French Revolution, thereupon to relinquish its rule and the fruits of victory to the bourgeoisie. Having allied themselves completely with the petty bourgeoisie, Marat and Robespierre became the greatest political leaders of the Revolution. But Danton will retain the distinction conferred upon him by Karl Marx, the distinction of having been the greatest master of insurrectionary tactics in the bourgeois revolution.

PAUL FROLICH.

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE: *The text of this edition is based on that of the edition critique, edited by André Fribourg and published in 1910 by the Société de l'Histoire de la Révolution française under the title: Discours de Danton.*

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SPEECHES OF DANTON

THE OVERTHROW OF THE MINISTRY

*(Delivered in the National Assembly,
November 10, 1790)*

In October, 1790, there was an insurrection at Brest. A vote of censure is moved against the cabinet in the National Assembly, which is defeated by a vote of 403 to 340. Great excitement prevailed in Paris. On November 5, the forty-eight sections of Paris decided to submit a petition to the National Assembly in which the Government was censured. The Mayor of Paris, Bailly, twice refused to lead the delegation, but finally accepted. Danton was the spokesman of the delegation.

THE National Assembly considered it unnecessary to deliberate on the motion which had been made to it, to declare to the king that the ministers had lost the public confidence. The National Assembly, the friends of liberty, in fact, of France, had nevertheless every reason to believe that these ministers would not carry their impudence to the point of considering this negative decision as a triumph of their own. All France had a right to expect that they would hand in their resignations, which the National Assembly might ask at any time that might

seem appropriate to it. This commune (of Paris), composed of citizens who represent, in a certain fashion, all of the eighty-three departments, animated with the desire to do their duty in the eyes of all good Frenchmen, their duty as the first outpost of the Constitution, hastens to present a wish which is dear to all the enemies of despotism, a wish which could have been heard from all the parts of the great family of the State, if the sections of the country had been able to meet as promptly as have those of Paris. This wish is the prompt, the immediate recall of the ministers.

One of them, M. Champion, is accused and also convicted of having altered the text of several decrees, of having postponed the carrying out and the forwarding of decrees that were of importance to the public peace, and particularly of the decree which ordered a preliminary procedure against the counter-revolutionaries of Montauban; he is accused of having selected as commissaires of the king a great number of persons, outspoken enemies of the new order of things, and particularly for the tribunal of the district of Moissac, to which he appointed the *procureur-syndic* of the Commune of Montauban, accused of having been one of the most determined creators of trouble in the latter city; and finally, he is accused of having caused to be printed a long instruction for these same commissaires of the king, in which the decrees are amended, and

the powers of these commissaires extended beyond the powers prescribed by the Constitution.

In general, M. Guignard, who knows no other patriotism than that which he learned in the political environment of the Grande Porte, is legally accused of having dared to threaten the heads of patriots with his famous Damascene blade. Persons who have read in the papers the cross-examination of M. Bonne-Savardin, together with his answers, will have no doubts as to the fact that M. Guignard is an accomplice in the plans of the counter-revolution of Maillebois. He is further convicted, by his own writings, of having tried to organize in Brittany the nucleus of an army, around which he would gather malcontents; he is accused of being responsible for the counter-revolution planned at Versailles in September, 1789; he is accused of responsibility in the recent plan, which was frustrated, no sooner than it was formed, to create a personal bodyguard of six thousand men for the king, before the National Assembly had passed any resolutions to that effect; finally, he is accused of having insulted the French Guards, those illustrious helpers of the Revolution, by seeking to corrupt them with promises, as if it were his intention to visit on their own heads the consequences of the patriotic virtues which they have shown, and which will always be unforgivable crimes in the eyes of the ringleaders of despotism.

The third, M. La Four du Pin, who is incapable of performing any act by himself, but who is an enemy of the Revolution, because he considers his patents of nobility and his vanity to be a true mark of human nobility, is less guilty than other men, because his stupidity makes him less dangerous; yet he has stripped bare the boundaries, has oppressed and abused a great number of soldiers and non-commissioned officers. He has brought back to life the *lettres de cachet*, and has kept in prison a non-commissioned officer against whom there had been no sentence, no preliminary procedure, no accusation, and finally, under the very eyes of the National Assembly, he caused to be arrested the delegates of the military body, soldiers who are on leave of absence.¹

It is high time now that these three ministers should no longer be able, under the rule of liberty, to arm themselves against the people with the privileges of being representatives of the people.

You have not drawn up any indictment against Montmorin. He had been accused of having concealed from you, for several days, the armaments of England, under the pretext of not disturbing the festivals of the Federation. But you deliberated as to his motives and accorded him this honorable distinction.

¹ Eight grenadiers of the king's regiment had reported to the National Assembly on a revolt of this regiment in Nancy, which had been put down with bloodshed. They had been arrested.

The Paris Commune is not seeking to make men guilty. But it must be vigilant lest the temple of liberty become the safest asylum of the accomplices of despotism, who consider it necessary to do lip service to liberty as the only means remaining to them for escaping the severity of the laws.

It will be useless to object that the Commune is offering no proofs. The nation has the right to say to the representatives whom it suspects: You are unworthy of the public confidence if only for the fact that you insist on retaining your position as my representative during the preliminary procedure of the very trial which I am urging against you. When the National Assembly, in the decree which we expect from its wisdom, shall have completely destroyed the resources and the hope of the enemies of liberty, it will then constitute the supreme national court, and when some great example shall have taught the ministers that their responsibility is not a mere chimera, we shall perhaps finally behold them submitting to the will of the nation.

The Commune of Paris, in accordance with the denunciation it pronounces of Messrs. Guignard, Champion and La Tour du Pin, entreats the National Assembly:

First, to state to the king that his ministers are unworthy of the public confidence and to request him to dismiss them;

Second, immediately to organize a National Supreme Court, or some other such tribunal, destined to investigate questions of high treason and of the responsibility of ministers and other agents of the executive power;

Third, to order preliminary investigations for a trial, on the basis of the denunciation we have uttered, against Messrs. Champion, La Tour du Pin and Guignard;

Fourth, to take all necessary measures to make it impossible for any minister to leave the kingdom or the capital before he has been declared legally acquitted, and before his discharge of the duties of his office shall have been approved.

The ministry was overthrown a few days later.

ACCUSING LAFAYETTE

(Delivered in the Club of the Jacobins,

June 21, 1791)

On June 20, Louis XVI and his family fled from Paris in order to begin waging war on the side of his allies against the Republic. It is reported, on June 21, that the ministers and the members of the National Assembly are about to visit the Club of the Jacobins.

GENTLEMEN, if the traitors come to this place, I will formally undertake to carry my own head to the scaffold or to prove that theirs should fall at the feet of the nation which they have betrayed.

Immediately after the beginning of Danton's speech, a great number of members of the National Assembly entered the hall. Danton observes that Lafayette is among them; Danton immediately mounts the platform.

Gentlemen, I have matters of the greatest importance to present to this assembly; in fact, whatever may be the result of this session, I may venture to say that it will decide the destiny of the realm.

At this moment, when the chief public functionary of the Empire has just disappeared, men are here assembled who are charged with the duty of regenerating France, some mighty in their genius,

others mighty in their authority. If it were possible for us to settle all our differences, France would be saved. However this may be, I must speak, and I shall speak as if I were engraving tablets of history for future generations.

In the first place, I ask M. Lafayette to tell me why he, who affixed his signature to the system of two legislative chambers, which is destructive of the very Constitution itself, should now come to a meeting of the Friends of the Constitution, under the unhappy circumstances attending the flight of the king, who has gone away in order to change—as he says—the face of the Nation.

I have had secret conferences with M. Lafayette, and the document signed by Sieyès and Lafayette, which appeared only a few days ago, this torch of disorder which seems to have been hurled at random, under these circumstances, into the midst of the eighty-three departments, obliges me to recall these conferences. Let M. Lafayette deny that in one of these conferences, after having sought to weaken my patriotism by reminding me that I, who had shown so much love of liberty, had had only forty-five votes, and that I had then been banished from the Commune by forty-three sections, while M. Bailly received twelve thousand votes; let M. Lafayette deny that after having prepared me by means of this reminder, to accept his views, he then clearly revealed them to me by adding: "Without

reproducing Mounier's (Lafayette's) system, which is in such disrepute that it will be impossible to use the terms calling for two chambers, could we not put in something of about the same nature?"

I ask the members who are present here, and who have played a great part in the Revolution, who know the relations we have had with M. Lafayette, to say whether or not their knowledge agrees with mine.

To what peculiar condition must we ascribe the fact that the king gives the same motives for his flight which had influenced you, M. Lafayette, to favor the establishment of societies of men who, since they were—as you said—interested as proprietors in the reestablishment of the public order, would soon waver and then cause the societies of pretended friends of the Constitution to disappear—these societies which you allege consist entirely of men without principle, pledged to the perpetuation of anarchy.

Let M. Lafayette explain to me how it was possible for him to invite—in an express order—the uniformed National Guards, and even persons who were not in the Guards, to prevent the circulation of documents published by the defenders of the liberty of the people, while protection was granted to the cowardly writers who were destroying the Constitution—unless he is an enemy of the liberty of the press.

I am not seeking to determine guilt, but to ascertain the truth, the whole truth.

How has it been possible for M. Lafayette to permit the appearances of the crime he has committed against the sovereignty of the nation to remain unrepudiated by failing to renounce the individual oath in which a misguided portion of the National Guard in Paris has done homage to him? Let any one explain to me how it was possible for M. Lafayette, who, since April 18, has made known that he was informed of the king's plan for flight, to desire, on that famous day of April 18, to make use of the public force to protect this flight to St. Cloud, which was evidently the central point at which the royal family and those who were guiding the baleful project were to meet after carrying it out.

How could you, M. Lafayette—after having harnessed to your triumphal chariot sixty-four citizens of the Faubourg St. Antoine, who were impelled by the necessity of destroying the last asylum of tyranny, the dungeon of Vincennes—that very evening take under your protection the assassins armed with daggers, who intended to guard the flight of the king?

I shall also ask you how it was possible for the company of grenadiers guarding the Oratoire, which was on duty on April 18, the day chosen by the king for his trip to St. Cloud, to be again on duty

on June 21, after you had so arbitrarily discharged fourteen grenadiers?

Let us not deceive ourselves as to the truth, gentlemen: the flight of the king is nothing more nor less than the result of a great plot. Only a secret understanding with the principal public functionaries could possibly have assured its carrying out.

And you, M. Lafayette, who are still ultimately responsible to us for the person of the king, at the jeopardy of your own head, do you think that your appearing in this assembly is equivalent to a discharge of your duty?

You have sworn that the king would not leave!— Either you have deceived your country, or you were a fool to assume responsibility for a person for whom you could not vouch. Under the best of circumstances, you have thus admitted your inability to lead us.

But I am ready to assume that we can reproach you only with errors. If it were true that the liberty of the French nation depended on one man only, this nation would deserve slavery and serfdom.—But France can be free without you. Your power is a burden to the eighty-three departments. Your reputation has circled the earth from pole to pole. Do you wish now to be truly great? Become a plain citizen once more and cease to afford grounds any longer for the just distrust of a great number of the people.

Danton finally declared that strong measures would be necessary to save the State; that the people demanded satisfaction; that they were tired of being continuously defied by their well-known and outspoken enemies.

It is high time that those who signed the protests against the Constitution should cease to be representatives of the people.

But, if the voice of the defenders of the people is silenced, if—weak as they always have been—your continued consideration for the enemies of your country will keep your country in constant danger, I shall hand you over to the judgment of posterity: let posterity decide between you and me.

I shall now leave the platform; I have said enough to show that though I despise traitors, I have no fear of assassins!

A CONFESSION OF FAITH

*(Delivered in the General Council of the Commune,
January 20, 1792)*

Danton has been elected alternate public prosecutor (*Second substitut de procureur*) of the Commune. On his induction into office, he delivers a speech from which we take the following passage.

PARIS, like all the rest of France, is divided into three classes. One class, hostile to all liberty, to all equality, to any kind of Constitution, is worthy of all the ills with which it has itself burdened and wishes to continue to burden the nation. As for this class, I shall not speak to it, I shall only fight it to the bitter end, to the death. The second class is the chosen body of passionate friends and coöperators, of the foremost supports of our holy revolution; it is this class which has always wanted me to be here: I need not say anything to it either; this class has its opinion of me, and I shall never disappoint its hopes. The third class, as numerous as it is well meaning, also desires liberty, but is afraid of the storms of liberty; it does not hate the defenders of liberty and will aid them always in days of peril; but it often condemns their vigor, habitually

considering it either misdirected or dangerous: this is a class of citizens whom I respect; even though they lend too ready an ear to the treacherous insinuations of those who conceal the viciousness of their designs under the mask of moderation; I say it is to these citizens that I must speak as magistrate of the people, and make myself well understood with a solemn profession of faith on my political principles.

It has fallen to my lot through the gift of nature to possess an athletic frame and the harsh lineaments of freedom. Having escaped the misfortune of being born as a member of one of the classes privileged under our former institutions, which for that very reason are almost always degenerate, I have preserved all my native vigor, making a place for myself in the nation by my own efforts alone, without ceasing for an instant, either in my private life or in the profession I have embraced, to prove that I was capable of a combination of intellectual detachment, warmth of spirit, and firmness of character.

If, from the very earliest days of our regeneration, I have gone through all the ardors of patriotism, if I have even appeared to go to excess, in order not to be guilty of weakness; if I have even been outlawed for having declared aloud the character of the men who wished to impugn the Revolution for having defended those who were called

the fanatics of liberty,¹ it was because I knew what might be expected from the traitors who were openly shielding the serpents of the aristocracy.

If I have always been irrevocably attached to the cause of the people, if I have not shared the notion of a crowd of citizens who were no doubt of honorable intentions, concerning men whose political life appeared to me to show a dangerous versatility; if I have put questions point blank, and in a manner that was just as public as it was honest, to some of these men who believe they were the pivots on which our revolution revolved; if I have wanted them to explain the things that had appeared, in the course of my relations with them, to have been fallacious in their plans, it is because I have always been convinced that the people had to know what it might fear from persons so capable as to be constantly in a position to pass over—according to the course of events—to that party which offered the highest rewards to their ambition; it is because I also believed that it was worthy of me to explain myself in the presence of those very men,² to tell them exactly what I thought of them, even though I well knew that they would secure compensation for their silence by having me depicted in the blackest colors by their accomplices and by preparing new persecutions for me.

¹ Danton here alludes to his defense of Marat; see *Jean Paul Marat*, a volume appearing in this series.

² Mirabeau, Lafayette, Barnave and the Lameths.

If, strong in my cause, which was that of the nation, I have preferred the dangers of a second legal proscription, not even based on the doubtful fact of my participation in a petition which is of such sad memory,³ but on I know not what miserable charge of permitting pistols to be taken away from the room of a military officer, in my presence, on a day that will be memorable forever,⁴ it is because I act constantly in accordance with the eternal laws of justice, it is because I am incapable of maintaining relations with doubtful persons, or of associating my name with those who are not ashamed to desert the cause of the people after having once defended it.

Such has been my life, and such it will always remain.

³ The affair of the Champs de Mars. Danton was at the Champs Mars on July 16, but not on July 17, the day of the shootings.

⁴ It is unknown to what Danton refers here.

THE STRUGGLE WITH THE DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN FOE

*(Delivered in the National Assembly,
August 28, 1792)*

On August 20 the Prussian Army, led by the Duke of Brunswick, invested the fortress of Longwy, the iron gateway to France, and on August 23 the fortress capitulated. The Prussians marched on Verdun. The Paris Commune ordered the gates of Paris to be closed and undertook searches of houses to find weapons and counter-revolutionary persons. Marat and Danton feared that Paris might be deprived of its defenders by the measures of the revolutionary government. But Danton, in this speech, calls upon the people to exert all their strength in the battle with the domestic and foreign enemy.

THE provisional executive authority of the nation has charged me with the duty of addressing the National Assembly concerning the measures which the executive authority considers useful for saving the Republic. I shall expound to you the motives of these measures, as a minister of the people, a revolutionary minister.

Our enemies have taken Longwy, but Longwy is not France. Our armies are still intact. You will understand that the fears as to our present position, which are now being spread, are much exag-

gerated, since we still have other armies ready to pursue the enemy and hurl themselves upon him if he should advance into the country. It was only by means of a mighty upheaval that we succeeded in overthrowing despotism in the capital; it is only by means of a mighty national upheaval that we shall be able to drive out the despots.

You have ordered the levying of thirty thousand men in the Department of Paris and within the neighboring departments. Well meaning but nervous persons have thought for a moment that this levy was to be raised in Paris only; they feared that the center of the Revolution might suddenly be deprived of its bravest defenders. This error has been dissipated and I can assure you that all the departments will furnish their contingents and that the sections will show the greatest zeal in raising theirs. Thus far you have only had a make-believe warfare, waged by Lafayette. We shall now have a more terrible war, the war of the nation against the despots.—It is time to say to the people that they must hurl themselves upon their enemies.

When a ship is in danger of foundering, the crew throw overboard everything that adds to the danger. Similarly, everything that might injure the nation must be cast out from its midst; and everything that might serve the nation must be placed at the disposal of the municipalities, though we reserve the right to compensate for such confiscations. We pro-

pose that you decree that our municipality shall assemble all the men living in it who are capable of bearing arms, that it shall equip them and furnish them with everything necessary for a speedy departure for the border. We propose to the Assembly also that it authorize a house-to-house canvas for determining what weapons are to be found in houses of citizens.

But, in order that these measures may be of value, the gates of the capital have been closed, and very properly so. If it is still necessary to hand over thirty thousand traitors to the law, let them be handed over to-morrow, but let us communicate a similar order to all France. The municipality is endowed with the right to seize all men who are suspected; but let the people come to-morrow to defend you and to communicate with the inhabitants of Paris.

Shall we await the enemy in our own walls after our first feeble armies have been defeated in the provinces? No, we shall go out to meet him. Without such measures, and without some sort of appeal to the people, you would fail of your purpose altogether. We must have eighty thousand muskets in good condition in Paris. Very well, then, let the armed men march to the boundaries. How have those peoples preserved liberty who had once conquered it? They fell upon the enemy; they did not wait for him to come. What would France say, if

Paris should be stupid enough to wait for the arrival of the enemy? The French people wanted to be free; it will be free. Soon numerous forces will arrive in this city. We shall place everything that is necessary at the disposal of the municipalities, assuming the obligation to compensate the owners.

We demand that you issue a decree, authorizing a house-to-house canvas, in order to raise all these resources, and, once these searches have been made, the opening of the gates of Paris and of communications with the surrounding departments, continuing, however, to observe the passport law. We ask finally that the National Assembly shall name commissaires, chosen from its own midst, to go out together with the commissaires of executive authority, to rouse the citizens, in the name of their country, to march to its defense.

ON THE TROUBLES AT ORLEANS

(Delivered in the Convention, September 22, 1792)

Commissaires have come forward from Orleans to announce that as a result of famine riots in that city, the assembled sections have suspended the municipal government. The municipal government has refused to relinquish its power and is preparing to resist by force. Orleans is threatened with the greatest dangers.

You have just heard the grievances of a whole community against its oppressors, the just grievances of a community against its prevaricating rulers. We must not dispose of this question by referring it to a committee; we must spare the blood of the people by means of a prompt decision. We must render justice to the people, and at once, in order that it may not need to take the law into its own hands.

We must kill this evil at its source. The law alone must govern, but the law must really be in force, the law must be terrible, in order that the people, assured of legal redress, shall be peaceful and humane. Judging between the hungry people who rise, and their magistrates who threaten them instead of enlightening them if they are misguided,

I do not hesitate to judge the magistrates guilty; their conduct must be examined very closely.

You must not hesitate to strike with the sword of the laws those magistrates who, in a crisis like that with which we are now dealing, are incapable of sacrificing their private personal interests to the public peace. Under such circumstances, a man of proper disposition will yield to the strongly pronounced desire of an entire people; we shall not find such a man seeking to incite citizens against citizens, merely for the pleasure of retaining his own position, and casting the germs of civil war into the whole city.

I demand that three members of the Convention be instantly instructed to travel to Orleans to verify these facts. And if it should appear that the municipal officers of Orleans have actually done what a counter-revolutionary section in Paris attempted to do on June 20, and I presume that in this case also the magistrates have ventured to oppose the sovereign will of the people, their guilty heads must fall under the sword of the laws.

The law must be stern and everything will be well. I therefore demand that the Convention adopt the measure required by the circumstances, of sending at once to Orleans commissaires from its own midst, who will be charged with the duty and the authority to reëstablish order, to pacify the people, to determine the offenses of the accused municipal

authorities, and to execute them if they consider it necessary.

Prove that you desire a rule of law, but prove also that you desire the welfare of the people, and, above all, spare the blood of Frenchmen!

ON THE ELECTION OF JUDGES

(Delivered in the Convention, September 22, 1792)

The election of judges is being discussed. Gallien asks that the candidates include other citizens besides men trained in law. Lanjuinais moves reference to a committee. A member, speaking for Thomas Paine, opposes any half-way measure, "remarking that nothing would be changed in the actual mode of nomination, and that the question should be referred to a committee." In addition, the Girondists favor the retention of the old condition, which limited the candidacy to the judgeship to men of legal training.

My motion is fully in accord with that of Citizen Thomas Paine. I do not believe that you should change the order of justice at this moment; we should postpone the general reorganization of civil administrative functions until a time when we may consider the reorganization of the government as a whole; but I think, nevertheless, that you should extend the number of those who may become candidates for judges. Do not forget that all legal men represent an aristocracy in insurrection, that almost all of them are interested parties and, to a great extent, the instigators of the ills which have befallen society. If the people is forced to choose among such men, it will not know where to place its confi-

dence. It seems to me that if we wish to exclude any from candidacy to this office, we might establish, on the other hand, the principle of exclusion that would eliminate those legal men who have thus far arrogated to themselves an exclusive privilege which has been one of the burning wrongs of the human race.

Let the people elect, at its own discretion, such talented men as may deserve its confidence. It will have no reason to complain, once it has chosen according to its own will, while it always will have the right to rebel against such men, marked with the stain of the aristocracy, as it may have been forced to choose. Rise to the height of a broad and generous vision. The people does not want to have its enemies in public offices; give it, therefore, the right to choose its friends. Those who made it their sole function to judge men were just like the priests; both of them have ceaselessly deceived the people.

Justice must be rendered in accordance with the simple laws of reason.

I also know these forms, and if the former legal system is defended, I shall undertake to fight it piece by piece, inch by inch, as well as those who make themselves its defenders.

MAKE WAY FOR THE POOR!

*(From a Poster Appearing in Paris,
in September, 1792)*

THE former ediles of Paris wanted to turn the city into a city of luxury, of wealth and of pleasure. May its new magistrates aid it in becoming a mighty city of labor, the bee-hive of all France.

The whole secret of the situation consists in turning the present system upside down. Formerly the rich ruled Paris; now we cry: Make way for the poor! It is now their turn to rule!

We must have no communal taxes any more! Living must become cheaper, in Paris, as well as everywhere else. And in less than a century the needy classes will constitute three-fourths of the population of Paris as a result of a natural and irresistible progress.

Under these circumstances, the last word will inevitably remain with the Republic, for a throne could not offer resistance for long, being beaten to and fro in a capital in which the masses of the people are called upon, to-day, to-morrow, and at every future time, to rise in insurrection.

UNITY AND STRENGTH

(Delivered in the Convention, March 10, 1793)

Bad news is being told to the Convention; the armies report nothing but reverses; Liéges is occupied by the enemy; it has been necessary to raise the siege of Maestricht; the Assembly is in great excitement. Counter-revolutionary plots are being unmasked all over the country. It is under these circumstances that Danton delivers this speech and the one that follows it.

CITIZENS, this is not a time for deliberation; this is a time for action. You have adopted a decree, and this decree must rouse the latent forces everywhere. Let your commissaires set forth; let them set forth at once; let them set forth to-night; and let them say to a class of citizens who are cowardly indeed, let them say to the rich: your riches must repay us for our efforts; the people has nothing but its blood, which it is gladly shedding; now come forth, you wretches, and shed your riches!

Behold the fair destiny that faces you, citizens!

Can you hesitate? You have a whole nation to use as a lever, you have liberty and reason as your fulcrums, and shall you not be able to lift the world out of its hinges?

You must show strength of purpose! Yes! It is

true that we have sometimes been lacking in this characteristic. I shall set aside all passions, all party interests; they shall all be foreign to me; I have no other interest than that of the people; I appeal to every one that wishes to do justice to me, to bear me out in this.

Under far more difficult circumstances, when the enemy was at the gates of Paris, I said to the false patriots who were then in power: "Your dissensions are harmful to the success of liberty. I repudiate you all; you are all traitors. Let us beat the enemy and then we can discuss." I said at that time: "What use is my reputation to me so long as France may be free; what matters it that my name be blemished!" I permit them to call me a drinker of blood! Let us drink the blood of the enemies of humanity, but let Europe at last be free! And it is for you to create this liberty: the world is waiting upon your courage.

Is there any fear that your Assembly is becoming poorer in good citizens? Vain fears! Miserable subterfuges! Set forth, carry your energy everywhere, and you will have discharged your duty! The most sacred duty you can fulfill to the people is to say to it: Follow our instructions! Let our enemies perish! The national debt shall be whittled down at the expense of those who wished to destroy the nation. Equilibrium will be established between the prices of goods and the amount of your wages,

and then, at least, the people will be able to enjoy the pleasures of freedom.

Mark this! And particularly, let the rich mark this! Either we must pay for our debts with our conquests, or the rich will have to pay, and mighty soon, too!

The situation of the country is hard; the currency of France has been disorganized; there is too much paper money as compared with our resources.

The people have been worked up by intrigues; this is the truth; England has done everything to lead the people astray; but also there is a complete lack of proportion between the wages of the impoverished and the price of foodstuffs. The worker receives far less than he needs; this must be changed.

A great effort must be made, a great blow struck; let us occupy Holland; let us rally the party of the patriots in England; let us send forth the troops of France; and our country is saved!

Your names will go down in glory to posterity.

Do your duty, therefore. Let us have no dissensions, no quarrels; let us rise on the flood of liberty!

CREATION OF THE REVOLUTIONARY TRIBUNAL

(Delivered in the Convention, March 10, 1793)

It has been proposed to postpone until the following day the organization of the Tribunal. To cut short the ensuing discussion, a number of voices cry for adjournment. The president declares the session adjourned. Danton dashes to the platform and speaks.

I CALL upon all good citizens to remain in their places! What! Citizens! In a moment in which our position is such that if Miranda were beaten—and this is not impossible—Dumouriez would be obliged to lay down his arms, completely surrounded, could you possibly adjourn without taking the great steps demanded by the welfare of the Republic? I know how important it is to adopt legal measures to punish the counter-revolutionaries; for it is against them that this tribunal is necessary, it is against them that this tribunal must act as a supreme court of the popular vengeance.

The enemies of liberty are raising their brazen brows; involved everywhere, they are everywhere *provocateurs*. Observing the honest citizen busy in his home, the artisan busy in his workshops, they commit the folly of considering themselves to be

in the majority!—Well, drag them yourselves to the popular vengeance, humanity orders you to do this.

Nothing is so difficult as to define a political crime; but if a man of the people is punished at once for any crime that he may commit, if it is so difficult to ascertain the perpetration of a political crime, is it not necessary that extraordinary laws, laws apart from those applying to the social body as a whole, should be used to terrify the rebels and to reach the guilty?

In this matter, the welfare of the people demands great measures, terrible measures. I can see no mutual ground between the ordinary forms of justice and the revolutionary tribunal. History affirms this truth; and since persons have dared, in this Assembly, to recall those bloody days that made all good citizens tremble, I shall go so far as to say that if a tribunal had been in existence then, the people, who have been so often and so cruelly rebuked for the actions of these days, would not have covered them with blood; I shall say—and I am sure I shall have the approval of all those who witnessed these events—that no human power could at that time have halted the excesses of the national vengeance.

Let us profit by the mistakes of our predecessors. Let us do what the Legislative Assembly failed to do: let us be terrible in order that the people may be spared the necessity of being terrible; let us

establish a tribunal, not a good tribunal, to be sure—that is impossible—but a tribunal as good as it can be, so that the people may know that the sword of the law is suspended over the heads of its enemies.

And when you have done this work, I call upon you to take up arms. Send forth your commissaires at once; go about the work of establishing the ministry; for, there is no use concealing the fact, we need ministers. The Minister for the Navy, for example, in a country in which anything can be done because all the materials are available—and I do not deny that he possesses all the qualities of a good citizen—has not created a navy; our frigates have not left port and England is still taking our ships as prizes.

Well, the moment has come; let us be generous with men and money; let us develop all the means of the national strength, but let us place the guiding of these resources only in the hands of men whose necessary and habitual contact with us will assure you the uniformity and the execution of the measures which you shall have devised in favor of the public welfare.

You are not a finished body, for you may constitute yourselves in accordance with your own wills. Beware, citizens, you are responsible to the people for its armies, for its blood, for its assignats; for if its defeats should so much lower the value of this money that the means of subsistence should be

destroyed in its hands, who could retard the effects of its resentment and its vengeance?

If you had displayed the necessary energy when I first asked you to, the enemy would now have been thrown back far beyond your borders.

I therefore move that the revolutionary tribunal be organized before we adjourn, that the executive power, in the new organization, be given all the means of action and of energy which it needs. I am not asking that anything be disorganized, I am asking only ameliorative measures. (*A Voice*: "You are carrying on like a king!")

And I say that you are talking like a coward! I ask that the Convention approve my attitude and censure the insulting and dishonorable remarks made against me.

I also move that your commissaires be sent out at once, as soon as the measures for the general safety have been taken, and that we have no more such silly discussions as to which section of this hall they are to meet in. Let them spread throughout the departments, let them arouse the citizens, let them revive the love of liberty in the departments, and let them—if they regret their inability to take part in the adoption of useful decrees, or to oppose undesirable decrees—remember that their absence was for the good of the country.

Permit me to recapitulate. To-night, organization of the tribunal, organization of the executive power;

to-morrow, action, military action. Let your commissaires be off by to-morrow. Let all France rise and rush to arms and march against the enemy! Let us invade Holland; let Belgium be free; let England's commerce be destroyed; let the friends of liberty triumph over that country; let our armies, everywhere victorious, bring to all nations deliverance and happiness, and then the world will have its day of vengeance!

HOW CAN FRANCE BE SAVED?

(Delivered in the Convention, March 27, 1793)

It has been moved that stricter attention be paid to enforcement of the law forbidding deputies to ask the ministers to give positions to their parents or friends. Other members consider that the Assembly will be wasting its time to go into this matter.

I VENTURE to say that no man can force the hand of a minister. I will say that I myself have recommended excellent patriots to the ministry, who will serve the Republic well in the posts to which they are assigned. The Convention is a revolutionary body; it must be peopled by the people itself.

It is time for us to declare war on our enemies within.

What, citizens, with civil war flaming everywhere, the National Assembly still remains motionless? What, citizens, everywhere the ancient aristocracy insolently raising its head?

You have voted in favor of a tribunal which will cut off the heads of the guilty ones, and your tribunal is not yet organized!

What will the people say, who are ready to rise *en masse*? What will the people say, if they see and feel this situation? Their representatives are agi-

tated by petty differences, when they should turn their energy both against the enemy within as well as against the enemy without.

Citizens, the truth must be told. What is the use of all the legends that may be disseminated on the subject of a man (Danton) who is strong enough to fear nothing! Yes, you are not doing your duty. You say that the people is misled? Yes, no doubt there are men who are wicked enough to mislead it. No doubt this will take place, if you are not at your posts. If you would go about a little in Paris, the people themselves would listen to reason; for, do not forget that the Revolution can be carried out only by the people themselves; the people are the instrument of the Revolution, and it is for you to guide this instrument.

It is in vain that you will tell me that the people's societies are swarming with citizens who are disaffected, and who are muttering absurdly, saying the most shocking things. Well! Why do you not go to these meetings, to recall them from their error? Do you think you can help them by playing the wild-eyed patriot?

Revolutions unchain all passions. A great nation in the process of revolution is like metal boiling in the crucible: the statue of liberty has not yet been cast; the metal is still in flux; if you are unable to control the furnace, you will be devoured by it.

How is it possible for you not to feel, this very

day, that you must pass a decree which will cause all the enemies of the nation to tremble! You must declare that in every municipality all citizens shall receive—at the expense of the rich, who will pay a contribution (and they must *pay* it, for property will not be violated)—each citizen shall receive a pike paid for by the nation.

Do not forget that at Orleans, if you had had pikes, your commissaires would not have been assassinated. They have told you (and the report shows it) that not twenty men of the people had been armed to repulse those who attempted to kill Bourdon.

I repeat! Citizens, every citizen must have a pike, as I have just said.

In the cities, in the departments in which insurrection has broken out, we must declare that any one who dares incite others to counter-revolution, or to display subversive notions, and thus to bring misfortune upon his country, shall be outlawed.

In Rome—at a time when the Republic was in a danger by no means greater than ours—Valerius Publicola had the courage to issue a law permitting any Roman citizen to punish with death any person who should propose to reëstablish tyranny.

Now I declare, since counter-revolution has been proposed publicly, since good citizens are being insulted, since counter-revolution is being preached in all the streets, and everything indicative of misfor-

tune to the Republic is being plotted, I repeat that I declare that any one who will be so bold as to state in my presence his desire to bring about counter-revolution and to provoke men of energy to do so, as certain persons have done—he will pay for it at my own hands, and then, may my own head fall. At least I shall have given a splendid example to posterity.

I move that we pass to the order of the day, disregarding the motion which has given rise to this incidental speech of mine, and that every citizen, every individual who does not enjoy the favors of fortune, be armed with a pike at the expense of the nation.

I demand that the tribunal to punish the counter-revolutionaries be set in motion at once, without delay.

I demand that the Convention declare to the entire world, to the French people, that it is a revolutionary body, that it will maintain liberty, that it is determined to stifle all the serpents that rend its bosom, to crush all the monsters with the aid of an extremely revolutionary law, if necessary. I demand that this declaration be made not an empty gesture, but a statement delivered by men who feel keenly the mission with which they have been charged by the people. You yourselves must declare war against all the aristocrats. State that the public welfare demands laws, aside from all ordinary measures.

Show that you can be terrible, show that you are the people, and you will save the people.

And now, let us speak of our resources! But does it not lie with us to manipulate these resources? You have lost precious time in empty discussions; you have permitted yourselves to be misled by a very vicious system. You have been told that the Revolution was over, that there were now only disorganizers and factionalists. But it is these very factionalists who are falling under the daggers of the assassins.

Peletier, you were a factionalist too; at least, you were described in that way, and the ministers ran you through. That is what is ruining us. A system that is worse than the aristocracy has been depicting every man to the eyes of France as a monster, a scoundrel, if he had any character at all. France is crippled by these accusations. France has been unable to trust any one, or any ideas. Fortunately, the light is spreading among men. Marseilles knows that Paris desires liberty and that it never desired anarchy, as some people had reported. Marseilles now calls itself the Mountain of the Republic. And this Mountain will rise, it will hurl down the rocks of liberty upon the monsters who desire tyranny and welcome oppression.

The Republic is immortal. The enemy might still make some progress, he might perhaps still be able to seize a few of our cities, but he would exhaust

himself in the interior of France. I have seen the new reënforcements which are moving toward the boundaries; they are true children of liberty. In the departments I have traveled through, I have noted that spirit of devotion which is such a terrible menace to our enemies. They have met with success; while we have been deliberating, their despots have gathered up their forces and have pushed us back. But, when driven back upon the soil of his country, the Frenchman, like the giant in the fable, takes on a new lease of life!

I demand of you citizens that you adopt this law I have proposed, but I insist upon something more than a mere law: you must be the people; every man with a spark of patriotism in his breast, every man who wishes to show himself a Frenchman, must stand by the people; it is the people that brought us forth; we are not its fathers, we are its children! If this father should lose his way, we must lead him to the light; we owe him affection and care. Let us tell him what we want, our means of defense, our resources; let us tell him (and not in order to flatter him) that he will be invincible if he will consent to remain united.

In this connection, I shall mention one fact only: do not forget the terrible revolution of August 10. All Paris was then on fire; passions were clashing on every hand; Paris refused to issue forth from its walls; good patriots were hesitating to abandon their

homes, because they feared the enemy and the domestic conspiracies. Everything seemed to presage a rending of France's flesh.

I myself (if I may be permitted to speak of my own acts) induced the Executive Council, the Councils of the Sections, the Municipality, the members of the Commune, the members of the committees of the Legislative Assembly, to meet fraternally in the Town Hall. We there devised together the measures that had to be taken; each section commissaire carried these measures to the people; the people approved them, and supported us, and we were victorious.

I demand that my motion be put to a vote. My motion is: Every Frenchman must be armed at least with a pike; the Revolutionary Tribunal must at once be put to work; you must issue a manifesto to be sent to all the departments, in which you will announce to the French people that you can be as terrible as the people itself, that you will pass all the laws necessary to destroy slavery forever, and that there will never again be any peace or truce between you and the enemies within.

Danton's motion is instantly passed in the midst of general applause.

ON THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE
COMMITTEE OF PUBLIC SAFETY
INTO A PROVISIONAL
GOVERNMENT

(Delivered in the Convention, August 1, 1793)

New reverses are reported; civil war is raging in the Vendée; Marat has been murdered (July 13, 1793) by Charlotte Corday. Counter-revolution has the upper hand in Marseilles and Lyons. Mainz has surrendered to the enemy after a defense of four months. England is using every means to crush the Revolution. Couthon declares from the platform of the Convention: "The English Government is fighting like an assassin against us; we must not hesitate to declare this so that the people may know thoroughly the atrocity of kings. The English Government has declared a traitor to his country every Englishman who would invest money in France. Let us repay them by decreeing that any Frenchman that will invest money in any bank in any country with which we are at war shall be declared a traitor to his country; let us decree also that every Frenchman who has funds in such banks will be held responsible for declaration of this fact after the expiration of a month, for a sum equal to that on deposit, and shall be arrested as a suspicious person."

I SUPPORT this motion all the more, since the time has now come for action on a political scale.

No doubt, a republican people does not wage war

on its enemies by way of corruption, assassination and poison. But the ship of reason must have its rudder. It must be governed by a sound policy. We shall meet with success only if the Convention, reminding itself that the establishment of the Committee of Public Safety is one of the achievements of liberty, will endow this institution with all the energy and all the possibilities of development of which it is capable. And this body has really rendered sufficient service to be capable of protecting this type of government. It is absurd, in a revolution, to leave the government in a divided state. We must have a center of union, a center of power, even though it be only provisional.

Believe me, this Coburg, who is advancing over your territory, is rendering the greatest possible service to the Republic. The events of last year are being repeated to-day; we are threatened by the same dangers. But the people is by no means exhausted, since it has accepted the situation: I can swear to this by the sublime enthusiasm that the constitution has called forth. By this acceptance, the people has undertaken the duty of applying all its energies against its enemies!

Very well, then, let us be terrible; let us make war like lions. Why do we not establish a provisional government which shall second the national energy by means of powerful measures?

I wish to say that I shall not enter into any re-

sponsible committee. I shall reserve my full right of criticism and the faculty of ceaselessly stimulating those who are at the helm; but I must give you a piece of advice by which I hope you will profit; we must use the same means that are used by Pitt, with the exception of those that are criminal.

If you had enlightened the provinces, two months ago, concerning the situation of Paris, if you had spread everywhere a faithful picture of your conduct, if the Minister of the Interior had shown himself great and firm, and had done as much in favor of the Revolution as Roland did against it, federalism and intrigue would not have aroused any commotion in the departments. But nothing is being done; the government has no political means at its disposal.

Until such time, therefore, as the constitution may enter into force, and in order that it may be put in force, let your Committee of Public Safety be established as a political government; let the ministers be nothing more than the chief agents of this committee of government.

I know that it will be objected that the members of the Convention should not be made personally responsible. I have already declared that you are responsible for liberty and that if you save it—and only if you save it—you will obtain the blessings of the people.

We must place at the disposal of this committee of government the necessary funds for the political

expenses which we are obliged to undertake by the perfidy of our enemies. It is cheaper to serve reason than to serve villainy.

Furthermore, this committee should be enabled to put powerful provisional measures into force before they have been published.

Let us not, at this moment, deprive the work of the harvest of the necessary hands for gathering it. Let us adopt a first measure: namely, let us make a rigorous inventory of all cereal products. Pitt has not only been trifling with our finances; he has bought up and exported our foodstuffs. Above all things, we must convince every Frenchman that, now that heaven and earth have blessed us so richly this season, we shall no longer have to fear an artificial famine in a year of plenty.

After the harvest, each commune must furnish a contingent of men who will enroll the more willingly since the moment for the campaign will then be at hand.

In a nation which will be free, the whole nation must be up and marching when its liberty is threatened.—The enemy has thus far seen only the vanguard of our nation. Let him now feel the entire weight of the united efforts of this superb race.

We are setting the world an example that no people has ever set before. The French nation has declared itself man for man, and in writing, in favor of the government which it has adopted; and a

people which cannot defend a government so solemnly approved deserves to perish!

Take note that in the Vendée they are waging war more energetically than we. The indifferent are being forced to fight. But we, who hold the fate of future generations in our hands, we, who draw upon ourselves the eyes of the entire universe, we who, even if we should all perish, should leave glorious names behind us, how can we face with calm inaction the dangers now threatening us? How is it possible that we have not yet launched upon our boundaries an immense number of citizens?

Already, in several departments, the people are indignant at this laxity, and have demanded that the tocsin of general awakening be sounded. The people has more energy than you. Liberty is always more strongly espoused in the lower orders than above. If you show yourself worthy of the people, it will follow your leadership, and your enemies will be exterminated.

I demand that the Convention establish its Committee of Public Safety as a provisional government; that the ministers be only the first servants of this provisional government; that fifty millions be placed at the disposal of this government, which shall render account of this sum at the end of its session; but that it shall have the right to expend the entire sum in one day if it considers this expedient.

Neglect nothing; consider the prodigal expendi-

tures that Pitt is making in favor of despotism! Pitt is lavishing fortunes in order to subjugate you; pour out your fortunes, therefore, to preserve liberty. Immense generosity in the cause of liberty is an investment that will yield a boundless return. Let us be great and political-minded in all things. We have a host of traitors to unmask and undo in France. Well, a sensible government would have a host of agents at work; and take note that it is by this means that you have already discovered a number of precious exchanges of letters. To the force of arms, to the development of the national vigor, you must add all the additional means that men of brains and genius may propose to you. It should be made impossible for the arrogant minister (Pitt) of a despot (King George) to surpass in energy and in resources those who have charged themselves with the duty of regenerating the world. In the name of posterity, I demand—for if you do not hold the reins of government firmly, you will weaken several generations by your necessary exhaustion of the population, in fact, you will condemn them to serfdom and misery—I demand, I say, that you adopt my motion without delay.

Later, you should adopt a measure to take an inventory of all the harvests. You should have all transports of grain closely watched, so that nothing may escape through the seaports or over the boundaries.

You should also take an inventory of arms. Beginning with to-day, you should place at the disposal of the government a hundred millions for the casting of cannons, the manufacture of muskets and pikes. In all towns of any size at all, the anvil must not be struck for any other purpose than for the creation of blades which you are to turn against your enemies.

No sooner than the harvest is over, you must raise additional troops in each commune, and you will see that the situation is not desperate at all.

For the moment, at least, you are purged of intrigues, you are no longer embarrassed in your progress, you are no longer tortured by factions; and our enemies can no longer boast, as did Dumouriez, that they are in control of a portion of the Convention.

The people have confidence in you: be great and worthy of them; for if your weakness should prevent you from saving them, they would save themselves without you, and the stigma would be upon you.

Jeanbon, Saint-André and Cambon raise objections; Barère declares that few men would be willing to serve on a committee which had control of money, and that he himself would resign. He asks a half-way measure: that the committee be left in its present state, that no funds be assigned to it, but that the ministers be abolished.

No true statesman is afraid of calumny! Last year, in the Executive Council, when I was fighting alone and took upon my own responsibility the necessary resources for imparting a great stimulus, for making the nation march to the boundaries, I said to myself: Let them calumniate me, I know they will; it makes no difference to me; though my own name be disgraced, I shall save liberty!

Since the entire burden of this motion, which I did not make until I had discussed it with several of my colleagues, some of them members of the Committee of Public Safety, is being placed upon me, I hereby declare, since I am one of those who are always most calumniated, that I shall never accept any duty on this committee. I swear it by the liberty of my country!

The Convention refers Danton's motion to the Committee of Public Safety for perusal. The motion was adopted on the following day.

ON FREE PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

(Delivered in the Convention, August 13, 1793)

CITIZENS, next to the glory of having given liberty to France, next to the glory of having defeated its enemies, there is no greater glory than that of providing future generations with an education worthy of their free estate.

This is the goal pursued by Peletier. He proceeded from the assumption that all the things which are good about society should be adopted by those who have taken part in the social contract. Now if it is good to enlighten men, our colleague, assassinated by tyranny, deserved well of humanity.

But what should be the duty of the legislator? He must conciliate the demands of principles with the demands of expediency.

It has been urged against the plan that parental affection might oppose its execution. No doubt we must respect the demands of nature, even in its aberrations; but if we do not adopt a decree for compulsory education, we must not deprive the children of the poor of education.

The greatest obstacle is of course that of ex-

pense; but I have already told you that no real expense is involved when money is expended in the public interest; and I should like to add this principle, that the children of the people shall be educated at the expense of the superfluity of those enjoying outrageously large fortunes.

It is to you, famous republicans, that I appeal! Liberate all the fire of your imagination; exert all the energy of your character; it is the people who must be given the benefit of a national education. When you sow grain in all the vast fields of the Republic, you must not count the cost of this sowing, and next to grain, education is the first need of the people.

I demand that we discuss the following question: Shall institutions be established at the expense of the nation to which each citizen shall have the right to send his children to receive public instruction?

It is to the monks, to that miserable rabble, it is to the century of Louis XIV, in which men were great by their learning, that we owe the century of true philosophy, that is to say, the century of reason placed within the reach of the people; it is to the Jesuits, ruined by their political ambition, that we owe those sublime flights of the mind which arouse our admiration.

The Republic was in men's minds at least twenty years before its proclamation. Corneille composed

dedicatory epistles to Montoron, but Corneille had written the "Cid" and "Cinna"; Corneille had talked like a Roman, and he who had declared: "You believe you have the material in you to be more than a king" was a true republican.

Now for the matter of public instruction! Domestic education stunts all the faculties; education together with others expands the faculties.

Some one has raised the objection that paternal affection is involved. I also am a father, and I am more so than the aristocrats who are opposed to public education, for they are not sure of their paternity! Well, when I consider my person as a portion of the general run of men, I begin to feel my importance; my son does not belong to me, but belongs to the Republic; the Republic must tell him what to do that he may serve it well.

It is said that the farmers would find it repugnant to sacrifice their children; Well, you need not force them; simply give them the right to send the children. Let us have classes to which children need to be sent only on Sunday, if the farmer will have it so.

Manners must be formed by institutions. If you wait for an absolute regeneration of the state, you will never have any public instruction.

Every man must develop the moral resources which he has received from nature. For this purpose, you must have public educational institutions,

not obligatory, and you must not waste your time over all these secondary considerations. The rich man will pay, and he will lose nothing if he takes advantage of the institutions and sends his own son to them. I move that—with the necessary modifications—you decree that there shall be national establishments in which children shall be taught, fed and lodged without charge, and classes to which the citizens who may wish to keep their children at home with them shall be able to send them for instruction.

The Convention passed the above motion.

THE FORMATION OF A REVOLUTIONARY ARMY

(*Delivered in the Convention, September 5, 1793*)

The City of Toulon has been surrendered to the English by treachery.

You have just declared publicly to all France that the nation is still in full process of revolution; now is the time to complete this revolution. Be not afraid of the movements that may be attempted by counter-revolutionaries in Paris. No doubt they would like to extinguish the fire of liberty in its most ardent center; but the immense number of true patriots, of *sans-culottes*, who have felled their enemies in time is still alive and alert. This mass is ready for action; show your capacity for guiding it, and it will again frustrate all those machinations.

A revolutionary army is not enough. You must yourselves be revolutionary. Remember that the hard-working men who earn their bread in the sweat of their brow cannot attend the section meetings; remember that intrigues cannot take hold of the sections unless the true patriots absent themselves from the meetings. You must therefore decree that there shall be two general meetings of sections

each week, and that the men of the people who will be present at these political assemblies shall have a just compensation for the time they are obliged to substract from their labor.

It is desirable also that we announce to all our enemies that we shall be continuously and completely equipped against them.

You have voted thirty millions to the Minister of War for the manufacture of arms. Now order that these extraordinary manufactures shall not cease until the nation shall have provided every citizen with a musket. Let us make known our firm resolve to have as many muskets and almost as many cannons as we have *sans-culottes!*

I therefore move that we vote as follows:

First, on Billaud's motion;

Second, that we also decree that the sections of Paris shall meet in extraordinary session on Sundays and Thursdays, and that every citizen attending these assemblies, and who considers that his financial condition requires him to claim an indemnity, shall receive such compensation to the extent of forty sous per meeting;

Third, let the Convention decree that it places at the disposition of the Minister of War one hundred millions for the manufacture of arms, particularly of muskets; that these extraordinary manufactures shall receive every encouragement and other additional appropriation, and that these la-

bors shall not cease until France shall have provided every good citizen with a musket.

I demand, finally, that a report be asked concerning methods for increasing as far as possible the action of the Revolutionary Tribunal.

Let the people see its enemies fall; let it see that the Convention is solicitous of its needs. The people is great and it is giving you at this very moment an excellent evidence of its greatness: in spite of the fact that the people has suffered from the artificial famine, created in order to make it embrace counter-revolution, it felt that it was suffering in its own cause; had these things occurred under the old despotism, the people would long ago have exterminated all government. Such is the character of the Frenchman, hardened and enlightened by four years of revolution. I pay you homage, sublime people! With your greatness you unite pertinacity; you are obstinately determined to have liberty; you shall acquire it. We shall march with you; your enemies shall be confounded; you shall be free!

Danton's three motions are adopted with immense applause and enthusiasm.

ON THE USE OF POLITICAL METHODS

(Delivered in the Convention, September 6, 1793)

The Convention is discouraged by the terrible news it has received; Lyons still opposes the republican forces; Toulon, "bribed by Pitt's gold," has surrendered to the English. A manifesto is voted, addressed to the southern departments, and the session is about to adjourn when Danton takes the floor.

IF it is true that no reverse, whatever be its nature, can ever weaken our courage, I must repeat what I have already stated to the ministers and to the Committee of Public Safety, we must now supplement the national energy with political resources. Where cannons are no longer of avail, let money talk; if Pitt's guineas can undermine the foundations of liberty, why can we not countermine them? It is absurd to leave to our enemies the use of methods that we can apply as well as they.

Fifty millions are at the disposal of the Committee. How was it possible for the Committee to overlook the fact that an expenditure of four millions might mean the reconquest of Toulon and the sending to the gallows of all the aristocratic officers of the Navy?

We must strike the traitors with their own weapons; we must make use of their own means; we must exploit even the weaknesses of individuals. Consider now that it is time to apply these new

means for leading the popular cause to its triumph.

If we had made more assiduous use of the people's clubs, if the patriots who compose their membership, acting as missionaries of liberty, had gone through all our provinces, you may be sure our enemies would now be less bold. A few well spent millions will suffice to crush them all by revolutionary means.

The Committee of Public Safety fears that it will be reproached for spending money secretly; but far from us be such base calculations, far from us be such pusillanimity.

I demand that the Committee file a report of all resources of which it cannot yet make use.

I am not a member of any committee, I never shall be; but I assert that the Committee of Public Safety consists of the best patriots, and that any one who slanders this committee is in my eyes a bad citizen or a misguided man.

Let us revert to my thought: Make use now against your enemies of political means and revolutionary measures. If you do not add this device to your constitution, I tell you you do not know how to govern and you are not worthy of the people you represent.

Gaston says: "Danton at the head of the Revolution! No one but he can carry out this idea. I move that, in spite of himself, he be appointed to the Committee of Public Safety." This motion is applauded and adopted.

DANTON'S DEFENSE BEFORE THE REVOLUTIONARY TRIBUNAL

(From the Official Report in the "Bulletin du Tribunal Criminel Révolutionnaire; Sessions of 13 to 16 Germinal, An II, April 2 to 5, 1794)

Danton was arrested during the night of 10 germinal, an II (March 31, 1794). Paris came to warn him of the committee's decision in the evening; Danton answered: "They will not dare!" Robert Landet came a little later and advised him to leave. "Leave!" he said, "does one carry one's country about with one in one's shoes?" The first questions were as to his pedigree: to which Danton gave the answers, Georges Jacques Danton, age thirty-four; born in Arcis-sur-Aube, Département de l'Aube; lawyer, deputy of the Convention; address, Rue des Cordeliers, Paris; he had first given the answer to the last question: "Soon in oblivion, but my name in the Pantheon." The following transactions are those of the first day (14 germinal).

PRESIDENT OF THE TRIBUNAL: Danton, the National Convention accuses you of having favored Dumouriez, of failing to expose him for what he was, of having participated in his attempts against liberty, as well as of having launched an armed force on Paris in order to destroy the republican government and reestablish the royal power.

DANTON: My voice, which has so often been raised in the cause of the people, in the support and defense of its interests, will not find it difficult to oppose calumny. Will the cowards who slander me dare to attack me in the open? Let them show themselves, and I shall soon cover them with ignominy and with the opprobrium which they so richly deserve!

I have said and I shall repeat: my home will soon be in oblivion, and my name in the Pantheon! Here is my head! It will answer for everything! My life is a burden to me; I shall be glad to be rid of it!

THE PRESIDENT: Danton, impudence is a concomitant of crime; composure is a fitting accompaniment of innocence. No doubt it is a legitimate right to defend oneself; but a defense which remains within the limits of decency and moderation will be able to respect everything, even its accusers. You have been brought to this place by the highest authority: you owe every obedience to its decrees, and should occupy yourself only in clearing yourself of the various counts in the indictment against you. I charge you to answer the questions precisely, and particularly, to limit your statements to facts.

DANTON: Individual audacity is no doubt reprehensible, and I could never be reproached with it. But the national audacity of which I have given so

many evidences, with which I have so often served the Republic, this type of audacity is desirable, it is even necessary in a revolution, and I am proud to have this audacity. Finding myself so gravely and so unjustly accused, how shall I control the feeling of indignation which enflames me against my detractors? Do you expect a revolutionary like me, a pronounced revolutionary like me, to give a calm reply to such accusations?

I am accused of having sold out? Men of my stamp cannot be bought and sold! Upon their brow has been burned in ineradicable characters the seal of liberty, the republican genius. And it is I who am accused of having wallowed at the feet of wretched despots, of having constantly opposed the party of liberty, of having conspired with Mirabeau and Dumouriez! And it is I who am called upon to answer before an inevitable and inflexible justice. As for you, Saint-Just, you will answer to posterity for the defamation pronounced by you against the best friend of the people, against its most ardent defender! When I run through this list of horrors, I feel my very soul shudder! ¹

THE PRESIDENT: Marat was accused as you are now accused. He felt the necessity for justifying himself, established his innocence in respectful terms, and was the more loved for it by the people, whose interests he had never ceased to advocate.

¹ Danton refers to the hostile report drawn up by Saint-Just.

I cannot suggest a better model for you; it is to your interest to follow Marat's example.

DANTON: I shall not stoop to justify myself; I shall follow in my plan of defense the order suggested by Saint-Just.

I am accused of having sold out to Mirabeau, to d'Orléans, to Dumouriez; I am the partisan of royalists and royalty! Have people forgotten that I was appointed administrator in spite of the contrary efforts of all the counter-revolutionists, who execrate me? Communication between me and Mirabeau! But everybody knows that I opposed Mirabeau, that I fought all his projects whenever I considered them harmful to liberty; was I silent on the subject of Mirabeau when I defended Marat, whom the arrogant creature attacked? Did I not do more on that occasion than could be expected from an ordinary citizen? Did I not show myself a patriot when efforts were made to remove the tyrant by taking him off to Saint-Cloud? Had I not received two warrants for arrest under Mirabeau, when I fought against Lafayette? Did I not cause a placard to be posted through the District of the Cordeliers, announcing the necessity of an uprising?

Let him who accuses me furnish the evidence, the half evidence, the indications of my venality! I am in full possession of my senses in now challenging my accusers, in demanding that they meet me face to face. Let them be brought to the spot,

and I shall consign them to the oblivion from which they should never have come forth! Appear, vile impostors, and I shall tear from your faces the masks which protect you from the people's vengeance!

THE PRESIDENT: Danton, you will never convince the jury of your innocence by making such indecent attacks on your accusers. Address the court in a language which it can consent to hear, but do not forget that those who accuse you enjoy the public confidence, and that they have done nothing that might deprive them of this honorable distinction.

DANTON: A man who is accused as I am, who knows words and things, answers before the jury, but does not address the jury; I am defending myself; I am not uttering calumnies.

Never had ambition or cupidity had any influence over me; never have they governed my actions; never have such passions led me to compromise the public weal: devoted entirely to my country, I have given it the generous sacrifice of my entire existence. It is in this spirit that I fought the infamous Pastoret, Lafayette, Bailly, and all the conspirators who were trying to worm their way into the most important posts, the better to assassinate liberty. I must speak of the three rascals who threatened Robespierre's life; I have very important matters to reveal; I demand that I be heard in peace; the welfare of the country demands it.

I return to the subject of my defense. It is a well-known fact that I was elected to the Convention by a very small minority of good citizens and that I was a thorn in the flesh of the wicked.

When Mirabeau was about to depart for Marseilles, I suspected his wicked designs, I exposed them and forced him to remain at his post; that was why he undertook to capture me, to "open my mouth or shut it for me."²

Where is this patriot? Let him come. I ask that he appear so that I may be confounded!³ How strange this blindness of the National Convention, which considered me its friend until to-day; how remarkable this sudden illumination, this sudden awakening to the "truth"!

THE PRESIDENT: The irony you make use of does not invalidate the accusation that you concealed yourself behind the mask of patriotism in order to deceive your colleagues and give secret aid to royalty. Nothing is more common than the use of witticisms by accused persons who feel the burden of their own guilt, without being able to destroy the evidence of it.

DANTON: Oh, yes! I now recall that I provoked the reëstablishment of royalty, the rebirth of the entire monarchic power, that I aided in the flight of the tyrant by opposing his voyage to Saint Cloud

² This is an allusion to the accusation that Danton had received hush money from Mirabeau.

³ An allusion to Robespierre or Saint-Just.

with all my energy, by causing the entire road to bristle with pikes and bayonets, by holding back, as it were, the course of his fiery steeds! If this is equivalent to favoring royalty, to proving oneself a friend of royalty, if the friend of tyranny may be recognized by these traits and on this presupposition, I admit I am guilty of this crime.

I am accused of having stated to a stern patriot, while dining with him, that he was compromising a good cause by leaving the path that was followed by Barnave and Lameth when they deserted the party of the people? This accusation is an outright fabrication, and I challenge any one, whoever he may be, to prove it. When the Lameths had joined the party of the court, Danton fought them in the Jacobins, before the people, and advocated the republic. Under the legislature,⁴ I said: "The proof that it is the court which desires war is in the fact that it has favored it with its initiative and its sanction. Let all patriots rally, and if we then can vanquish our own differences, we shall triumph over all Europe."

Now for my motions on the subject of the incident on the Champs de Mars, and on that of my shameful inaction at Arcis-sur-Aube, when the aristocracy was at grips with patriotism, and on the subject of the alleged tenderness of the murderers of the Champs de Mars toward me. I will under-

⁴ The Legislative Assembly.

take to prove that the petition which I aided in drawing up had none but the purest motives, that, as one of the authors of the petition, I was in danger of being assassinated with the rest, and that murderers were sent to my house to sacrifice me to the fury of the counter-revolutionaries.

Were the tyrants really showing gratitude toward me when the agents of my cruel persecutors, having been unable to assassinate me in my house at Arcis-sur-Aube, tried to inflict upon me the most serious blow for a man of honor, by seeking to obtain a warrant for my arrest and attempting to have it carried out while I was attending the meeting of voters?

THE PRESIDENT: Did you not go to England on July 17, 1789? Have you spent no time in England?

DANTON: My brothers-in-law were going to that country on business and I took advantage of their visit; can I be accused of a crime for having done so? Despotism was still in the saddle; at that time it was impossible to do more than sigh in secret for the rule of liberty. I exiled myself; I went into banishment, and I swore never to return to France until liberty should have been admitted to the country.

THE PRESIDENT: Marat, whose defender and protector you pretend to have been, did not act thus when it was necessary to lay the foundations for

liberty, when liberty was in its cradle, surrounded by the greatest dangers; he did not hesitate to share these dangers.

DANTON: And I tell you that Marat went to England twice, and that Ducos and Fonfrède owe him their safety.

At a time when the royal power was still very formidable, I proposed the law of Valerius Publicola, which made it permissible to kill a man by thus jeopardizing one's own head. I denounced Louvet. At the risk of my own life, I defended the people's clubs, and that at a moment when patriots were few and far between. Ex-Minister Lebrun was attacked and unmasked by me while still in office; when called as a witness against him, I proved his complicity with Brissot.

I am accused of having retired to Arcis-sur-Aube when the events of August 10 were already in prospect, the day on which free men were to fight against slaves. I answer this accusation with the statement that I declared at that time that the French people would be victorious or that I should die. I call upon Citizen Payen as a witness. I added: I need laurels or I need death. Where are the men who then found it necessary to force Danton to show himself on that day? Where are these privileged creatures from whom he had to borrow energy?

The tribunal has now seen Danton face to face

for two days; to-morrow he expects to sleep in the bosom of glory; he has never demanded mercy and you will see him mount the scaffold with the serenity characteristic of a clear conscience.

I had not slept all night. When Petion, leaving the Commune, came to the Cordeliers, he told us that the tocsin should be sounded at midnight and that the following day should see the funeral of tyranny; he told us that the attack of the royalists had been agreed upon for the night, but that he had arranged things in such a way that the whole matter would take place in broad daylight and would be over by noon, and that the victory of the patriots was assured. I told Minister Clavière, who came at the instruction of the Commune, that we would sound the bell for insurrection. After having arranged all details, I threw myself on my couch like a soldier, leaving orders to wake me as soon as necessary. I had spent twelve hours without interruption in my section, and I was back at the meeting at nine o'clock the next morning. This is the shameful laxity of which I was guilty, according to my denouncer. At the municipality, I signed the death warrant of Mandat, who had given orders to shoot at the people.

But let us follow the text of Saint-Just's accusations. Fabre, who was negotiating with the court, was Danton's friend. No doubt the fact that will be offered as evidence is that Fabre courageously

passed through the fire that was being directed against the French.⁵ A courtier said that the patriots were lost. What did Danton do? He did everything to prove his devotion to the Revolution.

I am asked under what circumstances I entered the legislature. And I answer that my entering the legislature was of value to the public welfare and that a number of my actions prove this. I have a right to emphasize my services when they are impugned, and when I am asked what I have done for the Revolution. During my ministry, it was decided to send an ambassador to London to strengthen the alliance of the two nations. Noël, a counter-revolutionary journalist, is proposed for this mission by Lebrun, and I do not oppose him. I answer this accusation with the statement that I was not Minister for Foreign Affairs. The assignments were submitted to me as accomplished facts; I was not the despot of the Council of Ministers. Noël enjoyed Roland's protection; the former Marquis Chauvelin said Noël was a coward, but that he would serve as a good counterweight to Merger, a relative of mine who was only eighteen years old.

I am accused of representing Fabre to the Convention as a reliable man. I did praise Fabre as the author of "Philinte" and as a man of great talents. I am accused of having said that a prince of the royal blood, like d'Orléans, sitting in the midst

⁵ Perhaps an allusion to the blood bath on the Champ de Mars.

of the representatives of the people, would give them more prestige in the eyes of Europe? The accusation is false; it has no other significance than that which my enemies assign to it. I shall state the whole story. Robespierre said: Ask Danton why he had d'Orléans appointed: it would be amusing to have him serve in the Convention as an alternate member. I declare that I did not give my vote to d'Orléans; let anybody prove that I had him appointed!

Fifty millions were placed at my disposition; I grant this; I am ready to give a faithful accounting; it was for the purpose of imparting energy to the Revolution. I spent only two hundred thousand. These funds were the lever with which I electrified the departments. I gave the money to the commissaires of the departments in the presence of Marat and Robespierre. These are the old calumnies of Brissot. I gave six thousand to Billaud-Varenes when he went to the army, and refer you to him for further information. Of the other two hundred thousand, I have expended one hundred thirty thousand and returned the rest. I handed over to Fabre the responsibility for all the sums a secretary might need in order to display his energy; in this, I have done nothing that is not perfectly legal. I have not been informed that Fabre preached in favor of federalism.

I am accused of having issued orders to save

DuPort, in order to encourage a conspiracy instigated at Melun by my emissaries, the object of which was to capture a transport of arms. My reply is that the whole thing is a fabrication, I deny it, I can prove the contrary; I can prove that I gave the most definite orders to arrest DuPort, and I call upon Paris and Duplain to bear me out. This accusation would rather incriminate Marat than me, since he did issue a document with the object of saving DuPort, who, together with Lameth, wished to assassinate me. The document exculpating me can be found, but I did not wish to pursue this matter because I had no final evidence of the premeditated assassination planned against me. Marat was a stubborn and obstinate fellow, who sometimes was deaf to my suggestions; he would not listen to my views on these two creatures, DuPort and Lameth.

I am also accused of having had communications with Guadet, Brissot, Barbaroux, and the whole outlawed crowd. I reply that the fact is by no means compatible with the hostility felt by these persons toward me, for Barbaroux demanded the heads of Danton, Robespierre and Marat.

As to my alleged understanding with Dumouriez, I reply that I never met him more than once, and the subject of our conversation was a private individual with whom he was engaged in litigation, and also seventeen million livres, for which I was asking

an account. It is true that Dumouriez tried to win me over to his side, when he sought to flatter my ambition by proposing that I hold a ministerial post, but I told him that I would not accept any such post except to the accompaniment of the cannon's roar.

I am also accused of having had private meetings with Dumouriez, of having sworn eternal friendship to him at the very moment of his treasons. My answer to these charges is quite simple: Dumouriez was vain enough to pretend to be a great general; after the victory he had gained at Sainte Ménéhould, I did not believe that he should again cross the Marne, and, therefore, I sent Fabre as a messenger to him, who was expressly instructed to flatter the self-love of the ambitious general. I told Fabre to make Dumouriez believe that he would be generalissimo, and to make Kellermann believe that he would be made marshal of France.

There is also mention here of Westermann, but I never had anything to do with him. I know that on the day of the tenth of August, Westermann came down from the Tuileries covered with the blood of royalists, sword in hand, and I told him that it would be possible, according to my plan, to have saved the country with an army of seventeen thousand men. The jurors should recall this session in the Jacobins, in which Westermann was so warmly embraced by the patriots.

A JURYMAN: Can you tell us the reason why Dumouriez did not pursue the Prussians when they retreated?

DANTON: I have never been interested in warfare except in its political phase; military operations were not familiar to me. Besides, I had charged Billaud-Varenes to watch Dumouriez. You must ask Billaud-Varenes about this. He owes you a detailed account of the observations which he was charged to make.

THE JURYMAN: How is it that Billaud-Varenes did not see through the plans of Dumouriez; how is that he did not suspect his treasons and expose them?

DANTON: After the event has come to pass, it is very easy to pass judgment; it is not quite so easy before the veil of the future has been lifted. Furthermore, Billaud did deliver a report to the Convention on Dumouriez and his agents. Billaud seemed to be much embarrassed on the subject of this Dumouriez. He had not formed any definite opinion on this skillful scoundrel, who enjoyed the confidence of all the representatives. "Tell me," said Billaud to me, "does this Dumouriez serve us faithfully or is he a traitor? I cannot make him out." As for me, the man seemed suspicious to me in a number of ways; I therefore considered it my duty to denounce him.

Danton had been speaking for a long time with the vehemence and energy characteristic of his addresses at public meetings. In his enumeration of the accusations that were personal accusations against himself, it was difficult for him to force down his rising fury: his faltering voice several times indicated that it was necessary for him to take a rest. This painful position was obvious to all the judges, who requested him to postpone the rest of his speech of justification in order to resume it with more calm and peace of mind. Danton accepted this suggestion, and said no more. The rest of Danton's testimony was taken on the following day (15 germinal).

THE PUBLIC PROSECUTOR: Danton, you are accused of having reproached Hanriot on May 31,⁶ of having asked for the head of this patriot who was serving liberty so well. In this you were in accord with Héroult and Lacroix. You considered it a crime on his part but they made an effort to escape an act of oppression from you, and you are also accused of having predicted the downfall of Paris.

DANTON: This is a monstrous calumny. I was not an enemy of the Revolution of May 31 either in thought or in action. I combated the opinions of Isnard most emphatically, and I opposed his predictions with energy; I said: "If there are fifty members of the Convention like ourselves, there will be enough of us to annihilate all the enemies of the people." The Convention agreed with me.

⁶ May 31, 1793, the date of an armed demonstration against the Girondists.

THE PUBLIC PROSECUTOR: When you found that you were unable to carry out your plans you suppressed your rage, you looked straight at Hanriot and said to him in a hypocritical manner: "Never mind, have no fear, go right on with your work."

DANTON: Long before the insurrection I had foreseen it; I had said, three months before it broke out, "There cannot be any peace with the Girondists"; we came out to face the armed forces only in order to show that the Convention had not been intimidated, was not a slave. I again ask that the witnesses who might incriminate me be made to appear, and also I ask that those who might exculpate me be called to testify.

A jurymen reproaches Danton for having asked the arrest of Hanriot on May 31.

DANTON: I did not ask for Hanriot's arrest and I was one of his staunchest supporters.

Notes on the Session of 16 Germinal

The public prosecutor informs the accused that their witnesses will not be heard. After the two Frey brothers have been questioned, Danton asks to be permitted to continue his defense.

The public prosecutor asks the jurymen whether they consider that they have received sufficient information, now that the proceedings have been go-

ing on for three days, as is provided in the decree of 7 brumaire, An II.

The accused, particularly Lacroix and Danton, express their indignation at the injustice and the tyranny of their trial. They cry out: "We are to be condemned without a hearing! There is no need for the jury to deliberate. We have lived long enough to be content to slumber in the bosom of glory. Take us to the scaffold!"

These angry outbreaks cause the tribunal to decide to have the accused led out. The jurymen declare that they have received sufficient information. The sentence is pronounced.

THE END

EXPLANATORY NOTES

BAILLY, JEAN SYLVAIN (1736-1793): French astronomer and orator. His reactionary policies infuriated the people of Paris and he retired to Nantes (1791). Late in 1793, he was recognized at Melun, arrested, and brought to Paris. He was condemned to death by the Revolutionary Tribunal (November 10), and guillotined November 12, 1793.

BARBAROUX, CHARLES JEAN (1767-1794): Girondist, originally a lawyer; his newspaper, *L'Observateur marseillais*, brought about the support of Marseilles to the Revolution; member of the Convention, in which he opposed Marat and Robespierre; arrested June 2, 1793, placed on trial and executed.

BARNAVE, PIERRE JOSEPH MARIE (1761-1793): revolutionary leader, founder of the Jacobin Club, demanded the emancipation of Negro slaves in the French colonies; brought the royal family back to Paris after the king's flight; guillotined because of his correspondence with the court.

BILLAUD-VARENNE, JEAN NICOLAS (1756-1819): French revolutionist, member of the Convention and of the Committee of Public Safety; deported to Guiana under the Bourbon restoration, in 1816; came to New York; later went to Haiti.

BRISSOT DE WARVILLE, JEAN PIERRE (1754-1793): a French writer; originator of the Girondists; guillotined.

COBURG, or SAXE-COBURG, FRIEDRICH JOSIAS, PRINCE OF (1737-1815): Austrian general; commanded against the Turks (1789), against the French (1793-94); victorious at Neerwinden (1793); defeated at Fleurus (1794).

COUTHON, GEORGES (1756-1794): Deputy to the Legislative Assembly (1791), to the Convention (1792); one of the Triumvirate with Robespierre and Saint Just, together with whom he was guillotined (July 28, 1794).

CORNEILLE, PIERRE (1606-1684): French dramatist; *Le Cid* (1637) and *Cinna* (1640), are among his most famous tragedies; his characters are frequently embodiments of "Roman virtues" later popular in the Revolution.

DUCOS, PIERRE ROGER (1750-1816): Lawyer and statesman; deputy to the Convention; later Third Consul; exiled as a regicide after the Bourbon restoration, in 1816.

DUMOURIEZ, CHARLES FRANÇOIS (1739-1823): French general, who fought for a time, with Luckner and Kellermann, on the side of the Republic; turned against the latter after the execution of Louis XIV; recalled by the Convention; fled to the Austrian camp; died at Turville Park, near Henley-on-Thames, England.

COMMITTEE OF PUBLIC SAFETY (*Comité de salut public*): A group of nine leaders in the French Revolution, appointed by the Convention of 1793, who acted as a governing body and during the Terror exercised great powers.

CORDELIERS (French for "rope-wearers"): at first the duly ordained Franciscan monks; in the French Revolution, the members of an important political club; at first allied with the Jacobins, the Cordeliers were put down by Robespierre in March 1794, their leaders (Danton, Lacroix, Desmoulins and Héault-Séchelles) being executed in April.

DESMOULINS, BENOIT CAMILLE (1760-1794): see Héault-Séchelles.

FABRE D'ÉGLANTINE, PHILIPPE FRANÇOIS NAZAIRE (1750-1794): French poet and revolutionary, so-called for having won the prize of the wild rose (*églantine*) at the floral games (Toulouse); his comedy, *Le Philinte de Molière*, was very popular; became very rich during the Revolution; guillotined April 5, 1794.

GEORGE III, KING OF ENGLAND (1738-1820): regarded by the Revolutionists in America (1776) and France (1789) as the embodiment of tyranny and incompetent royalty. Ruled while Pitt lived and served as Prime Minister.

HÉAULT-SÉCHELLES, MARIE JEAN (1759-1794): a revolutionary, of noble origin, one of the three persons (the others being Camille Desmoulins and Lacroix) executed with Danton on April 5, 1794, because they were aiding Danton in his efforts to abolish the Terror.

HANRIOT, FRANÇOIS (1761-1794): a revolutionary, released from prison, where he was serving a sentence for theft, in 1792; one of the protagonists of the so-called "September murders" (see September); aided Robespierre in the administration of the Terror and executed with him on 9 Thermidor (July 28), 1794.

ISNARD, MAXIMIN (1758-1825): a Girondist of doubtful political integrity. Although opposed by the Jacobins, he regained admission to the Convention in 1795 and put down the Jacobin insurrection of 1795.

JACOBINS: a French revolutionary club, so called from its meeting in a hall of the former Jacobin convent in the Rue St. Honoré, Paris. It called itself the "Society of Friends of the Constitution." Its 1200 branch societies, led by Robespierre, Danton and Marat, had an enormous influence. It controlled the Legislative Assembly after 1791, and organized the Reign of Terror and the agitation against the king. It was overthrown in November, 1794, but not dissolved until 1799.

LACROIX: see Héault-Séchelles.

LAFAYETTE, MARQUIS DE (1757-1834): Lafayette is particularly known for his participation in the American War of Independence. During the French Revolution he played a reactionary rôle. In May, 1790, he founded the "Society of 1789," which afterward became the Feuillant Club. He retired to private life in 1791.

LAMETH, ALEXANDRE, COMTE DE (1760-1829) and **LAMETH, CHARLES, COMTE DE** (1757-1832): counter-revolutionary French generals.

LOUIS XVI (1754-1793): King of France (1774-1792), and guillotined January 21, 1793.

LOUVET DE COUVRAY, JEAN BAPTISTE (1760-1797): a deputy to the Convention in 1792; author of the lubricious novel, *Les amours du chevalier de Faublas* (1787-1789).

MARAT, JEAN PAUL (1743-1793): Physician and revolutionary leader; stabbed to death by Charlotte Corday; a volume of this series is devoted to his writings.

MIRABEAU, COMTE DE (1749-1791): French statesman and writer; called the French Demosthenes; a member of the Constituent Assembly; a counter-revolutionist.

MONTAUBAN: an ancient city in the southwest of France, one of the centers of the Reformation in France; still largely Protestant; the scene of counter-revolutionary machinations in 1790.

MONTMORIN DE SAINT HÉREM (1745-1792): French reactionary statesman, of a noble Auvergne family; had contact with the Revolution, was accused of favoring the flight of the royal family to Varennes (1791); proscribed August 10, 1792, perished in the "September massacres."

MOUNTAIN: the most revolutionary section (the Jacobins) of the Convention was called the "Mountain," because it occupied the highest benches, farthest removed from the speaker's rostrum.

PAINÉ, THOMAS (1737-1809): a radical active in England, America, and France; helped the American colonies, living in New York at the time, against England; indicted for treason in England, after his return, in May, 1792; escaped to France and became a member of the Convention; suspected by Robespierre, he was imprisoned and narrowly escaped the guillotine; reassigned to the Convention after the fall of Robespierre; returned to America in 1802; died in New Rochelle, on a farm given him by the State of New York; author of *Common Sense*, *The Age of Reason*, etc. A volume of this series is devoted to his speeches.

PARIS: a young man who befriended Danton at the end and urged him to flee in order to escape the action of the Revolutionary Tribunal.

PITT, WILLIAM (1759-1806): British statesman and orator, son of the Earl of Chatham (died 1778); opposed the French Revolution as viciously and pertinaciously as his father had opposed the American Revolution.

ROBESPIERRE, MAXIMILIEN MARIE ISIDORE (1758-1794): a French Jacobin leader, "The Incorruptible," prominent particularly in the early days of the Revolution of 1789; he became a political leader during the Reign of Terror, which began in 1793 and ended with his execution on July 28, 1794; a volume of this series is devoted to his speeches.

ROLAND DE LA PLATIÈRE, JEAN MARIE (1734-1793): prominent in the early days of the Revolution as a Girondist leader; escaped from Paris under the Terror and committed suicide near Rouen, Nov. 15, 1793; his wife, the famous Madame Roland, was guillotined Nov. 8, 1793.

ST.-ANTOINE, FAUBOURG: a faubourg (suburb) of Paris, lying outside the Enceinte of Charles V, and extending from the Place de la Bastille eastward toward Vincennes. Even under Louis XI, the proletariat of Paris was already beginning to settle here. The strength of the Revolution lay largely in this section, which at the time had become entirely proletarian.

SAINT-JUST, LOUIS ANTOINE JEAN DE (1767-1794): one of the

Triumvirate of the Reign of Terror; intimately associated with all of Robespierre's policies; executed, together with Robespierre and nineteen others, on 9 Thermidor (July 28), 1794; a volume of this series is devoted to his writings and speeches.

SANS-CULOTTES ("without knee-breeches"): the poor wore trousers, not knee-breeches; the term was first applied by the aristocrats as a term of reproach to those who started the Revolution; it afterwards became a popular name for one of the revolutionary population; a Jacobin.

SEPTEMBER MURDERS: the deaths of the Swiss Guards and several members of the nobility in the attacks on the Tuileries in September, 1792. Danton was held responsible by some for these deaths, although he and many others considered the killings necessary.

SIEYÈS, EMMANUEL JOSEPH (1748-1836): author of the celebrated pamphlet, "What is the Third Estate?" (*Qu'est-ce que le tiers état?*); renounced his religion, although he was a priest holding high orders, when the Goddess of Reason was installed.

TUILERIES: a French royal palace completed under Louis XIV (1643-1715). It was badly damaged by attacks made upon it in 1792, 1830 and 1848, and burned during the Commune of 1871.

VALERIUS PUBLIUS (surnamed *Publicola*): according to tradition, the colleague of Brutus in the first year of the Roman republic. He introduced various liberal measures and was thrice elected consul.

VENDÉE (LA): a department in central western France; scene of the revolt of local peasants and Royalists against the French Republic in 1793-95.

WESTERMANN, FRANÇOIS JOSEPH: a French revolutionist and general, distinguished in the war against La Vendée; guillotined 1794.

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