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THE DAYS OF TERROR

ROBESPIERRE, THE MODERATE AND
CORRECT REVOLUTIONIST.

Data Words of Marat and Other Jacobins—Robespierre and the King—Defense of Human Rights—Actions of Terrorism.

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OBESPIERRE's fortunes seemed to depend upon fate. When powerful rivalship passed away, as, for instance, Mirabeau and Marat, the little-hood lawyer mounted higher the waves of revolution. He began the reign of terror, but not until long after Marat had principles it and he himself had frowned it down.

Early in the revolution Mirabeau said of Robespierre after one of his speeches, "That young man believes what he says, therefore he will go far." The "young man" was then about 30 and had distinction in the defense of Bonaparte's lightings rods and also by his espousal of the humane principles of Rousseau, which caused him to side with the people against nobility and clergy and to advocate the abolition of capital punishment.

At college Robespierre had won no eminence Burton and Desmoulins, yet when elected deputy to the states general he was one of the most modest of revolutionists. He then lived on his stipend of £10 francs a day and supported his school R. St. Sulpice and also, with but a single cent to his back, and that worn threadbare, he courted retirement and when drawn out of himself was so mysterious and enigmatic as to be feared by his colleagues. His influence at that time consisted in advancing the rights of citizens to serve upon juries and in the national guard and in advancing political rights with the blacks in the colonies. Said he, "Let the colonies perish rather than a principle." When the constitution actually ended in 1801, Robespierre was a hero of the Paris sections. A decree proposed by himself prevented former deputies serving in the next legislature. He traveled in the interior, frequented the Jacobin club and began to publish a revolutionary journal. Mirabeau died at this time and Robespierre succeeded him as the popular idol, but there were too many jealousies at work among leaders to permit one man to rule the realm.

The opening of the Paris sections or the commune, August, 1792, brought the young lawyer again into prominence and power. It appeared before the assembly as the spokesman of a delegation of citizens which demanded the establishment of a criminal court for the trial of the enemies of liberty. The court was promptly organized and Robespierre named as presiding judge, but he refused to serve on the ground that it would not be right to make him judge of those whom he had already denounced as enemies of the country. Against the measures which soon followed under the inspiration of Danton he vigorously protested and ceased to appear at the meetings of the commune.

The spending of the Paris sections or the commune, August, 1792, brought the young lawyer again into prominence and power. It appeared before the assembly as the spokesman of a delegation of citizens which demanded the establishment of a criminal court for the trial of the enemies of liberty. The court was promptly organized and Robespierre named as presiding judge, but he refused to serve on the ground that it would not be right to make him judge of those whom he had already denounced as enemies of the country. Against the measures which soon followed under the inspiration of Danton he vigorously protested and ceased to appear at the meetings of the commune.

Robespierre was elected to the national convention from Paris, and soon afterward the Jacobins accused him of aspiring to dictatorship. Marat decried his rival on this charge and at the same time disclosed the motives of those two men. He said that at his first meeting with Robespierre the latter had drawn him into declaring that he would send certain judges to the state, pointed to Danton, burn the king in his presence and strangle the traitorous representatives in the convention. Said Marat of this interview: "Robespierre listened to me with terror. He grew

pale and very silent for some time. This confirmed me in the opinion that I always had of him, that he united the knowledge of the wise senator to the integrity of a thoroughly good man and the merit of a true patriot, but that he lacked as a statesman either as regards clearness of vision and determination."

Afterward Marat publicly declared in the convention that both Robespierre and Danton had all along repudiated the idea of a dictatorship, of tyranny, of tribunals, of tribunals, which he had put before them. Finally, either as a matter of justice or for his own glorification, he said that he claimed was the first and probably the only man since the ending of the revolution who had openly declared for a triumvirate or dictatorship as the only means of crushing conspirators.

Both Robespierre and Marat drew a hot fire from the Jacobins, and the Jacobins took alarm. One day toward the close of 1792, before the attack upon the king, Citizen Robert add to the Jacobin club: "It is very astonishing that the names of Robespierre and Marat are always coupled together. Marat is a patriot. He has excellent qualities. I admit, but how different is he from Robespierre! The latter is discreet, moderate in his means, whereas Marat is exaggerated and has not the discretion which characterizes Robespierre. It is not sufficient to be a patriot. In order to serve the people usefully it is necessary to be resourceful in the means of execution, and most assuredly Robespierre surpasses Marat in the means of execution."

In the same strain Citizen Bourdon continued: "We ought long since to have acquainted the affiliated societies with our opinions of Marat. How could they ever connect Robespierre and Marat together? Robespierre is a virtuous man with whom we have no fault to find from the commencement of the revolution. Robespierre is moderate in his means, whereas Marat is a violent writer who does great harm to the Jacobins, and besides it's right to observe that Marat does us great injury with the national convention. The deputies imagine we are partisans of Marat. We are called Robespierres. If we see that we duly appreciate Marat, then you will see the deputies draw nearer to the Mountain where we sit. You will see the affiliated societies which have gone astray rally around the cradle of liberty. If Marat is a patriot, he will serve to the nation a man about to make. Marat ought to sacrifice himself to the cause of liberty. I move that his name be stricken from the list of members of this society."

Marat then declared this speech, while others murmured, and in the confusion Citizen Bourdon arose to speak off upon the troubled stage. Said he, "I oppose the motion for expelling Marat from this society. I will not deny the difference that exists between Marat and Robespierre. These two writers who may resemble one another paternally have very striking differences. They have both served the people, but in different ways. Robespierre has defended the true principles with method, with firmness and with all becoming discretion. Marat, on the contrary, has frequently passed the bounds of sound reason and prudence. Still, though admitting the difference that exists between Marat and Robespierre, I am not in favor of the expulsion. If Marat is a patriot, he will serve to the nation a man about to make. Marat ought to sacrifice himself to the cause of liberty. I move that his name be stricken from the list of members of this society."

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This compromise prevailed, but in less than 30 days the moderate Robespierre was calling for the death of the king, said he, "Lions must die that the country may live." After the 6th of June had distinction in the defense of Bonaparte's lightning rods and also by his espousal of the humane principles of Rousseau, which caused him to side with the people against nobility and clergy and to advocate the abolition of capital punishment.

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