

**FUND-RAISING FOR THE REBUILDING
OF THE ARCHBISHOP'S RESIDENCE IN PARIS**

(23 August 1831)

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In the Church of France, there is one bishop about whom the Catholics can no longer remain silent without being ingrates. From now on, their fondness for him is all he has left in the world since, after the popular furor, twice incited against him, left him twice the possessor of a few ruins, authority took over to finish the work of the people, and did not leave one stone for the “outlaw” in the place where he had a residence. This residence was built by his predecessors. It was invaded and plundered in the days of 1830: furniture was thrown out the windows, wainscoting and inlaid floors broken up; doors were ripped off their hinges, window frames were broken, the chart of the Church of Paris was torn, and the scraps trampled on. On the following day, slander occupied the devastated cellars and rooms; there, one saw daggers; here, women’s clothing. Portfolios were filled with awful mysteries whose revelation would be made known to France. One could say that at least half of hell had effectively been caught in the act by the revolution at the Archbishop’s residence. Meanwhile, the illustrious victim hid his head wherever he could; he wandered for six months, from house to house, in fear of compromising the friends who gave him hospitality, and of being pursued in those various asylums by widespread slander. After six months of a very troubled life, it was noticed that the walls of his house were still standing. Once more, something called “the people” rushed forward, and after having completed the devastation of the rooms, set about removing the roof, so that the sun could see what had been done. The cross, which also saw it, fell from Notre-Dame on that day, under the eyes of the impassive authorities, proof of the power of malefactors in the capital of civilization. Those bands, animated by impunity, went upriver to ravage the only place where the thought of their victim could still find peace. The township of Conflans¹ was destroyed. On the third day, with the archbishop having nothing left to lose on earth, tranquility was restored. Eighty thousand men at arms announced to the malefactors that their rule was over, and to Europe, that order had been saved.

We will not bring to mind the other public injuries that our chief pastor had to suffer. We will remain silent about the sacrileges at Saint-Germain, Sainte-Geneviève, the *Abbaye-aux-Bois*, the removal of the statues that decorated the sanctuary of the metropolis;² we will remain silent about the infamous refusal of reparations that France knows today; while being an irrational exception to public order, these incidents took on from this situation and the misfortune of the archbishop the character of a vile persecution. (We have to finish the story.) Authority has instructed us to walk fast when its shame is in question. There were left on the former lawn of the archbishopric, where the palace of the bishops had stood, some stones, hallowed because they belonged to Catholics, the last asylum of an unhappy man, twice delivered defenseless to his enemies; finally, hallowed also because the crime had touched them, and never should society complete what a crime has begun. They could remain there, covered with grass, or be restored with money from the State, or, if economy forbade it, their reparation entrusted to the love of Catholics. If they were unable to offer their bishop a magnificent residence, they could, according to their means, give him proof of their undying affection; the State could have acted properly at no cost to itself. But, aside from justice, there are in this world iniquity and industry; they prevailed. With the help of its architects, the government completed the work of the malefactors: the remnants of our archiepiscopal palace would be razed; trees would be planted on the place; the pleasure of a walk would attract a portion of the population; because of the more frequent use of the passage, the builders of the bridge to the archbishopric would receive every day double or triple their previous tolls. Finally, so that no one would have reason to complain, the government condemned the Archbishop to live far from his cathedral in a residence belonging to the State. With this resolution in place, there will be inserted in the *General List of Notices*, the information that on a certain day, at a certain hour, by decree of the Prefect of the Seine region, a sale will be held at City Hall of the iron, lead, gilt copper, cast iron, gilt wood, wainscoting, coming from the *Archbishop's residence, Notre-Dame, Saint Paul, Saint-Germain l'Auxerrois*, etc. This is how we treated our venerable pontiff for over a year. Which is to say that whoever was able to offer him proof of ill will did so; and everyone was able. The enemies of religion, personal enemies, careless people, ministers, judges, each one attacked the victim; each one in turn tore into him; vain was the search for a kind of injury which he had been spared.

After that, when someone asks whence all that hatred, nobody knows. What had the Archbishop of Paris done that warranted a fate so different from that of his colleagues in the episcopacy? A mild man, loved in his private life, a bishop full of tolerance, he was

well-respected; for all that, no bishop under the Restoration enjoyed less favor at court. One remembered the enthusiasm that came from his vesture in the House of Peers, at the time of Mr. de Villèle; at no other time was he ever the vassal of a minister or of a party. Today, whoever cares to read the words that were a pretext for his misfortune would perhaps be surprised that it took his enemies so much shrewd interpretation to find a crime that would make his previous honorable actions forgotten. Moreover, the courage with which he bore the outcomes of that forgetfulness, proves that his soul was not so boorish that it changed immediately from generous independence to vile ambition. But we have to reveal here the secret of his misfortunes: it is the very courage that never flagged before Mr. de Villèle, nor before Mr. Frayssinous, nor before Mr. Fentrier, nor before the current ministers; it is this courage for which he is not forgiven. If the Archbishop of Paris, after the days of 1830, had supported with some concessions the designs of men of state in order to mitigate the bondage of Catholics, his residence would have been spared in the days of 1831; his residence would have been repaired by funds from France. The gilt cross would still shine behind the towers of Notre-Dame, and would announce to the clergy that on it depended the purchase of peace. Indeed, our ministers ask nothing better than to sell it; they know by heart what Montesquieu said: "It is more effective to attack a religion by good will than by the commodities of life, by hope of good fortune; not by what is warned but by what brings about forgetfulness; not by what is unworthy, because this leads to indifference, while other passions act on our souls, and those inspired by religion fall into silence."³ In fact, by his disinterest and his firmness, the Archbishop of Paris frustrated the plots of good will, which his example would have made very generous if it had encouraged them.

Let us remember the death of Mr. Grégoire,⁴ and compare the behavior of a genuine bishop and a bishop of the court. Unlike the former, the defender of apostolic canons and of Christian freedom, who abandons the walls of the church to forces shameful in themselves, the latter sacrifices order *to their majesties*, and dishonors the sacraments by a ruse that godlessness applauds, because it sees faith as simply a game. Where would we be with bishops like this? What would become of the episcopacy if it were imbued with those lessons? Thanks to our venerable pontiff, the siege of Paris was stronger than misfortune, more invincible than the seduction that toys with disaster. Indeed, now it is up to Catholics as to what their role should be in favor of him who was so persecuted and who was able to draw from his humiliations immortal advantages for the cause of shared freedom.

It is not for us to delve into the secrets of a sorrow that we ought to surround with respect; but any man, however great he be, has need of consolation when he is unhappy; even on the cross, Jesus Christ complained of having been abandoned. Will Catholics abandon one of their bishops, suffering for his salvation and theirs? Will they allow a building to be demolished like that of a public enemy, the remaining stones to be sold at auction, then to be used to restore some drains? Our administrators tell us that the capitol is not rich enough to replace the residence that we built, and that they allowed to be destroyed. Well! Let us deprive them of this pretext. We who are poorer than they are, let us rebuild with love those walls that the furor of men had defaced, and that their “justice” wishes to demolish from top to bottom. If they do not accept our money, it will become clear that a passion other than avarice directs their thoughts. We will be left to seek some location where, if ever vengeance attacks again the residence of our bishops, the ruins will at least be sacred because there, only malefactors will be able to touch them.

Catholics will perhaps be surprised that so often we call upon their charity; yet, they should be even more surprised if we did not. We know of no limits to Christian charity, when misfortunes have none, when injuries have no more limits than the misfortunes. One thing we have to tell Catholics is that their charity alone will preserve their freedom. May they suffer no injustice unless all of them suffer, and every day the injustices will diminish, because men are unjust only toward those who have no assistance. Let us establish a mutual insurance association against tyranny; and tyranny, which is powerful against an isolated citizen, will be powerless against the entire group. To unite together, to love and to help one another: this is charity — and this is also freedom.

ENDNOTES

1. The chateau of the township had been willed to the archbishop. *[Trans.]*
2. That is, the cathedral, Notre-Dame. *[Trans.]*
3. *Esprit des lois*, liv. 25, ch. 12. [The spirit of laws]
4. See: *Obsequies of Mr. Grégoire*. *[Trans.]*

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