

W I L L I A M H E N R Y H U R L B E R T

Val-des-Bois and the Workers' Corporations

*Voyage en France d'un démocrate américain pendant l'année du
centenaire, anonymous French translation of France and the Republic,
chapter X, p. 199-239*

Paris, Calmann Lévy

1890

THIS EDITION

This is an English translation of the original French text, made for the website leonharmel.com in 2026. It follows the original sentence by sentence, without cuts or additions.

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The notes marked with an asterisk * have been added for this edition, to shed light on the historical context.

Léon Harmel, le Bon Père du Val-des-Bois

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A JOURNEY IN FRANCE
BY AN
AMERICAN DEMOCRAT
DURING
THE CENTENARY YEAR
BY
WILLIAM HENRY HURLBERT



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CHAPTER X

VAL-DES-BOIS AND THE WORKERS' CORPORATIONS

Reims. — Mgr Langénieux. — Val-des-Bois and Mr Harmel. — The Catholic Workers' Circles and Mr de Mun. — The statue of Urban II. — Châtillon-sur-Marne. — The anti-Semitic campaign judged by a priest. — The religious war.

There is no town in France that has more to lose and less to gain from the triumph of the Third Republic than this fine and royal city of Reims. The triumph of the Third Republic, as Mr Challemel-Lacour understood it in 1874, cannot come about without the destruction of religious feeling in France, and the history of Reims can no longer be understood if religious feeling is destroyed. — The day may perhaps come when secularised and atheist Frenchmen will regard Mr Gambetta's balloon journey and the occupation of Tonkin as events of greater importance to mankind than the making of France by Clovis and the raising up of France by Joan of Arc. — God forbid that I should set limits to the credulity of a true unbeliever! But as long as there are Catholics, or even Protestants, I do not see what Reims could gain from the destruction of religious feeling in France.

Of the 200,000 inhabitants of the arrondissement of Reims, more than a third live in the city itself; many work in its numerous factories, and many more still are employed in the various industries to which the champagne trade gives rise. — The centre of this trade is at Épernay; but two or three of the most important houses have long been established at Reims, and some of the most remarkable cellars are to be found in the city. — It is at Reims, at least as much as at Épernay or at Châlons, that one can make the acquaintance of certain growths of Champagne that are not to be found in the trade. I know

very well that in dwelling on the merits of champagne I fall under Mr Canning's famous declaration: "Any man who says he likes champagne says nothing." But what is written is written, and I do not take it back.

What is quite certain is that scientific agriculture has made great progress in the department of the Marne in recent years, and that a real improvement can be seen in the condition of the rural population. This improvement is less marked among the inhabitants of the towns, but it exists, and it is due in great part to the energy and resolve of the Catholics of Reims.

In the course of the very interesting visit I paid in August to the Cardinal Archbishop of Reims, His Eminence was kind enough to enable me to measure the full effect produced on the working population of the region by a broad Christian organisation.

Like all great works, the work of Reims rests on principles. But these principles flow less from scientific theories than from personal and practical experience of the relations between employers and workers. The *Christian Corporations* and the *Catholic Workers' Circles* which form part of their organisation are now known throughout France.

Their founder, Mr Léon Harmel, directs the large mill of Val-des-Bois near Reims. This mill was founded fifty years ago by Mr Harmel's father. He had first directed a mill in the Ardennes which he had inherited; but after handing it over to his brother, he came to settle in the Marne, at Val-des-Bois, in the year 1840. A sincere and practising Catholic, he had lived until then among the quiet Catholic people of the Ardennes: the spirit of his new workers was very different; they were greatly astonished to see him go to Mass. A few women and their daughters might go irregularly; the men never set foot in the churches. Mr Harmel wished to preach only by his example. But thanks to the progress of modern society, "the employer is the enemy", and his example carries little weight. I have heard Mr

Léon Harmel tell the touching story of his father's successes. — Talking one day with some of his workers, he had managed to persuade them to go to Reims to make their confession to an excellent priest who was a friend of his. But he had spoken to each of his men separately, without telling him anything of his conversation with the others: he meets one of his converts coming back from Reims and asks him about his experience. "Ah! sir," replies the worker, "it was all very well, but you'll never catch me at it again. — And why ever not? — Because I thought I was the only one going to confession; I saw nobody at the confessional, the priest was very kind and I came away happy, but when I went up to Communion I saw three of my mates there. You should have seen how we looked at one another! Everyone at the mill will know it by tonight and they'll torment us for six months. Oh no! they won't catch me again!"

If Mr Harmel's example was not enough to shake the religious indifference of his workers, his justice, his kindness and his personal faith nonetheless exerted a useful influence, and the Val-des-Bois mill became well known: disorders and scandals were rare there. That was not enough for Mr Harmel. After twenty years of individual effort, he decided to call in two Sisters of St Vincent de Paul, whom he installed in a former inn. Everything was done simply. The sisters turned the stable into a crèche and set up the school in two small rooms. A mission was organised by two Fathers of the Society of Jesus; there were processions and talks. Curiosity at first, and soon the interest taken in the undertaking, became marked enough for Mr Harmel, with the sisters' help, to found *Christian Associations* for girls: the associations for young men and the associations for workers came afterwards. The sisters found an excellent helper in a young woman born into a farming family, whose devotedness to a mother of very little worth and to a most contemptible sister they had been able to appreciate. She lacked education, but she was generous and bold.

No pressure was put on the workers: they themselves ran the associations they had founded. Mr Harmel and the priest he had called to Val-des-Bois gave their advice or their help only when they were asked for it. A good woman, long employed at the mill and much esteemed by Mr Harmel, was talking one day with that priest, who was surprised at her indifference to the associations. "I take a great interest in them," she replied. "They do good, and if I don't go to them I am useful to them. When I hear people say in the taverns: Old Harmel is a good man, but you have to be a little saint for him to give you work, I answer: Don't talk nonsense; I have worked for him for thirty-five years, I have never done my religious duties and I am treated no worse for it. That shuts them up."

But there was the hostility of the mothers of families to reckon with. They accused the associations of being the death of dances and merrymaking. "Youth must have its fling. We used to enjoy ourselves in our day." It was also said that by dint of going to Mass the girls neglected their other duties. One day the sisters received a visit from a good man whose wife tormented him endlessly because, not content with encouraging his daughters to join the *Christian Societies*, he went to Mass himself. This good man brought the sisters a little money: "It is for my wife," he told them; "she blames you for every ill; buy her a dress with my money; give it to her in your own name; she will get to know you and we shall have peace at home." And the pious fraud was entirely successful.

Need we describe all the obstacles set in the way of the work undertaken? Radicalism is powerful in the region; factories are numerous, as many as sixteen within a radius of three leagues; Reims is only half an hour away; for ten years the local authorities have been fighting the Christian associations, and yet the work prospers.

In 1861 there was not a worker at Val-des-Bois who dared to go to Mass; in 1867, at the request of forty of his men, Mr Harmel drew up for them the statutes of a *Catholic circle*; within a year the number

of the circle's members had doubled. At the time of the invasion it had a life of its own.

"Mr Harmel has done as our Champagne vine-growers do," one of the most interesting men I met at Reims said to me. "It is in the poorest and chalkiest soil that we harvest the best grapes for our most delicate *Ay*. Our vines can thrive only if they are planted close enough together to withstand the harshness of the climate by keeping one another warm. Mr Harmel has acted in the same way. He has taught his men to associate, to act for one another. By being like a father to them, he has led them to regard themselves as members of one family. He has always believed that the *Declaration of the Rights of Man* put the weak at the mercy of the strong and allowed *Capital* to see in *Labour* nothing but an instrument of profit. He has always sought, not the means of getting as much as possible out of his workers, but the best means of fulfilling his duties towards them, fully convinced that they would repay him in kind. When workers lose the sense of their duties towards their employers, they also lose the sense of their duties towards their fellow workers. 'Every man for himself' is the motto of modern democracy, and the unions which the Radicals wished to create by their law of March 1884 had no other aim than to establish terror. The measures ordered by such unions have no other sanction than the fear each member inspires in his companions. In this way one would end by creating a whole machine of despotism, which would one day be at the disposal of the boldest head or the best-filled purse. And the purse has always played a great part in revolutions. Look at our Revolution of 1789. There would be a most instructive history to write on the part played by money at that time; a history made very difficult by the conspiracy of silence.

"Perhaps one day someone will be able to write a true biography of Lepelletier de Saint-Fargeau, the millionaire Mephistopheles of Philippe-Égalité. The hand that struck him down at the Palais-Royal, just after he had voted for the King's death, did not strike at random.

And never, in those dark days, was a more dramatic justice done than by the killing of that man, in that place, between the moment when he had voted for the death of Louis XVI and the execution of the King, which took place the next day.

“But that history cannot yet be written. Look at the reports of the Convention; you will find far more detail there on the death of Lepelletier than on that of the King. A state funeral was voted for him; his daughter (she was a great heiress) was made the ward of the Convention. That was not what he had dreamed of for her. One day I will show you a very curious letter of hers about the Empress Joséphine. She had grown into a charming woman, but a difficult one to guide; she made a love match, as you know, broke her husband’s heart, divorced and remarried. All that could not be told without disturbing the peace of families who are no more responsible for her actions than for her father’s plots. It would be like raising the ghost of that monster Carrier to infuriate his descendants. His son, an excellent man, had changed his name. I know nothing more spiteful than the remark of a Frenchwoman, jealous of the successes won at a foreign court by one of Carrier’s descendants: ‘She is charming, no doubt; but look at her mouth; you will see that her teeth are *carious*.’

“To come back to Lepelletier, if his story is ever told, it will be seen that gold and private ambitions did more to bring about the final catastrophe than all the reasons of the philosophers or the patriots. The same will happen everywhere and always when the idea of duty ceases to be a rule for society. What makes me anxious for the future is far less the discontent of the workers than the selfishness of those who hold capital. And what I admire most in Mr Harmel’s work is the courage and the precision with which he has spoken of the duties of employers towards their workers. Have you read his *Catéchisme du Patron*?”

Mgr Langénieux had given me a copy of that book, one of the most remarkable practical studies I have ever read on the relations between

capital and *labour*; a book that would be interesting even if it were pure theory, but more interesting still because it sums up the victorious experiments of a skilful and resolute man in a field of labour that seemed bound to be barren.

It was only after the war, in 1871, that a Catholic workers' circle was set up in Paris and that the movement began to spread throughout France; but when, in 1874, after the fire at his mill, Mr Harmel had to move his business to La Neuville, more than a hundred Catholic circles took part in the subscription opened for the workers, and on 2 October a brief of His Holiness Pius IX gave formal approval to the Association that had been undertaken.

In 1878 there were in France more than four hundred circles with nearly a hundred thousand members, and with the growth of the circles societies of honorary members were organised to spread the principles of the Christian corporations. In 1875, on the occasion of a parliamentary inquiry, Mr Ducarre, rapporteur of the committee charged with studying the conditions of labour in France, declared that the whole movement in favour of unions proved the need to restore the system of workers' guilds destroyed by the First Republic. But this report met with no success among the Radicals.

Nine years later, on 21 March 1884, a law was passed authorising the formation of professional unions. The aim of the republican majority then in power was to favour the *trade unions* against the employers; but in making these aggressive unions legal, the law was obliged to establish the legality of Christian associations such as those founded by Mr Harmel. It thus laid a heavy responsibility on the employers and on what are called in France the *ruling classes*. If they were willing to set resolutely to work to rebuild the social order on the principles of cooperation and sympathy, the law of 1884, passed to widen the gulf between employers and workers, might serve to bridge it. But the promoters of the movement in favour of Christian corporations meet with more success among the workers than among

the employers. A report presented in 1885 to the bishops of France shows this clearly. This report is signed by the Marquis de la Tour-du-Pin-Chambly, Count de la Bouillierie, Count de Mun and Count Albert de Mun.

The Marquis de la Tour-du-Pin was, from the beginning, one of Mr Harmel's most zealous and most active collaborators. Count Albert de Mun, the soul of the whole Association, resigned his commission as an officer to devote himself to it. Elected deputy for the Morbihan in 1881, to call not only for the restoration of the Monarchy but for the restriction of the franchise, he was returned unopposed in 1889 by the second constituency of Pontivy. The spirit of equality is more powerful in the Morbihan than anywhere else, and the popular contempt for universal suffrage there is most instructive.

"For the Christian corporations as for the workers' circles, you have never and nowhere found obstacles among the workers.... Where the movement languishes, it is owing for the most part to the apathy, the discouragement and the frivolity of the upper classes." This passage from the report mentioned above is worth quoting.

For factories as large as that of Val-des-Bois, the Christian corporations can be self-sufficient. The employer and the workers form among themselves a little world that can manage its own affairs. But the help of the upper classes is needed to develop association among workers who are isolated or who work in small establishments. In the last three or four years, real progress seems to have been made in this respect.

In 1884 the efforts of the Archbishop of Reims, of the Bishop of Angers and of other prelates as well secured the active participation of the Holy See in the work. In February a pilgrimage of members of the Catholic circles was received in special audience by Leo XIII, who, in a remarkable address, gave his blessing and his papal approval to the work undertaken. Other pilgrimages were organised in 1887 and 1889.

These events greatly eased relations between the associations and the parish priests. The clergy are always slow to join without reserve in a religious movement owing much to the activity of laymen. This was clearly seen in England in the attitude of the Protestant clergy towards Wesley and Whitfield; and that is not the only resemblance, an unintended resemblance, between the powerful organisation of the Wesleyans and the one adopted by Mr Harmel.

Mr Harmel's action has not been confined to the moral sphere. The firm of Harmel frères makes contracts, in the name of the corporation, with the suppliers of Val-des-Bois, who undertake to sell their goods to the members of the Christian corporations, and to them alone, at prices always below the current prices. These approved tradesmen receive in payment vouchers of one franc, fifty centimes and ten centimes, issued by the Harmel firm. Every week these vouchers can be exchanged for money at the firm's offices.

If the members prefer to pay the suppliers in cash, the sums so paid are entered in the corporation's account. The profits made by the corporation are a kind of savings bank. Each member receives a pass-book bearing his name and showing the state of his account every quarter; the sums entered in it earn him interest at 5 per cent.

The passbook can be withdrawn only in specified cases, unless its owner has reached the age of fifty. Leaving the firm, illness and incapacity for work give a right to withdrawal. The share that falls to each member from the profits of the association amounts after twenty-five years to 3,300 francs, if the calculation is based on an annual gain of 70 francs per member. And this considerable share has cost him nothing; it is simply the result of the strength that the association between the employer and his employees gives in dealing with suppliers.

For the last ten years, and above all since the law of March 1884, the activity of these *Christian corporations* has spread widely. At Poitiers, the corporation of building contractors under the patronage

of St Radegund, that of Notre-Dame-des-Clefs founded by the drapers, and that of St Honoré created by provision merchants, each have a life of their own. At Lille, the corporation of spinners and weavers, or corporation of St Nicholas, numbered last year eight hundred and eighty-seven members, men and women, among them twenty-six manufacturers, thirty-seven clerks and eight hundred and twenty-four workers. It is presided over by one of the great manufacturers of the city and, under the law of 1884, may own the buildings it needs for its meetings and have a savings bank and a pension and mutual aid fund.

The steady growth of these institutions has led to a general plan of provincial and national administration; the corporations are grouped by provinces, not by departments. The provincial assemblies appoint delegates who meet in Paris in a general assembly. At the meeting of 1889 the work had been divided among four committees.

The organisation rests on the sensible and soldierly maxim of St Vincent de Paul: "Let us keep our rules, and our rules will keep us." I am convinced that the Freemasons and the fanatical unbelievers will learn to their cost that the Christian organisation of the relations between capital and labour will have its effect in politics.

Have we not seen in Germany what became of the *Kultur-Kampf*; and is there not a curious analogy between the spirit of the Catholic circles in France and the ideas of Mgr von Ketteler, from which the great Centre Party drew its inspiration in its struggle against the Chancellor? But the pygmies of Paris have burned their boats, which Mr de Bismarck had never done. He wanted to keep watch over the Catholic Church and to make use of it; they have no other aim, as Jules Simon told them, than to replace a state religion by a state irreligion. When, in 1877, Mr Gambetta raised his war cry, "Clericalism, there is the enemy!", he merely gave a formula to the policy his party had long been following.

As early as 4 September 1874, Mr Challemel-Lacour had claimed for the State the right of control over higher education in order to ensure the *moral unity* of the nation. What would become of that unity if Catholics, Protestants or Jews could found universities granting degrees? The republicans of 1848, like the liberals of 1830, like Mr Guizot, had been gravely mistaken in speaking of freedom of education. Only the Jacobins of 1792 had seen the light; only they had understood the *moral unity of France*. If these are not Mr Challemel-Lacour's very words, they are the substance of his speech. He opposed freedom in the name of unity.

The young men brought up in the independent faculties would become zealous apostles of Catholicism; the more ardour they put into their proselytising, the more they would provoke their opponents. Instead of founding the moral unity of the nation, one would be piling up the fuel for a conflagration. It might even end in cataclysm. That was indeed the principle of the Jacobins of 1792; they organised the *moral unity* of the nation with the help of the guillotine, the Committee of Public Safety and hired assassins. Here, at Reims itself, in September 1792, while in Paris public order and liberty were being established by the massacre of the prisoners, Marat's agents made a vigorous effort to secure the *moral unity* of the country. In his history of the Revolution, Mr Carlyle did not value this effort at its true worth. He speaks of eight persons killed at Reims and seems to believe that these eight persons were massacred by a frenzied mob, worked up by the Paris proclamations. He ought to know that this was a piece of administrative business. The story is worth telling.

The rising of 10 August 1792 had overthrown the Monarchy without founding the Republic. The Constitution was in tatters and power at the mercy of the demagogues. A blow had to be struck that would work on the electors charged with choosing the Convention. The election was in two stages. The delegates chosen on 26 August were to choose their representatives on 2 September. With this elec-

tion in view, and as a means of propaganda, Marat, *the friend of the people*, and Danton, Minister of *Justice*, had fixed the date on which the patriotic task of *emptying the prisons* was to be carried out. A circular signed by Marat, Panis and Sergent, inviting the departments to follow the example of Paris, was sent to every town where a municipality could be counted on that was ready to convince the electors by massacre and pillage.

On 2 September 1792, then, the electors of the department of the Marne were to meet at Reims to elect their deputies to the Convention.

At Reims Marat had a faithful friend, Couplet, the procureur-syndic, an apostate monk married to a former nun. A protégé of Marat and of Danton, he scoffed at the mayor and the municipal authorities. From 19 to 31 August, Couplet poured out violent speeches and inflammatory proclamations. On the 31st he received word from Paris that *volunteers* were making for Reims; he at once had the postmaster, Mr Guérin, arrested, together with a poor postman named Carton, on the charge of having held back and destroyed letters which *republican justice* ought to have seen.

On election day the *volunteers* enter Reims; Couplet receives them; they spread through the town, howling against the aristocrats and demanding justice against the enemies of the people. The unfortunate postmaster is dragged from his prison and massacred; the young postman, protected by a few brave citizens, reaches the Town Hall safely. The murderers follow him there. Couplet urges them on: "Nothing can excuse the postman's treason!" He is at once torn to pieces.

Yet another victim is needed. Mr de Montrosier, former governor of Lille, is arrested at the house of his father-in-law, Mr Andrieux, and taken to prison. The crowd comes to take him from it, drags him out, kills him and parades his head on a pike through the streets.

Two canons of Reims have taken refuge in a village nearby. A detachment goes to fetch them, brings them back and shoots them. Then, as night falls, the apostles of the moral unity of France, most of them drunk, light a great bonfire in front of the Town Hall, throw the bodies of their victims into it and, to finish, hurl into the flames two priests who have just been seized. Another band, which has broken into the church of Saint-Remi, seizes the banners that for fourteen centuries have been gathering above the tomb of the great archbishop; and the banners are used to feed the fire.

During these scenes of horror the electors were in session; but their number dwindled from hour to hour; at the news of these crimes, honest people thought only of getting away as fast as they could. 442 electors had taken part in the first ballot; at the seventh, there remained 203. 135 gave their votes to Drouet, the very man who had stopped the carriage of Louis XVI at Varennes. This Drouet, an associate of Marat, a vicious and venal creature, managed to escape the guillotine and became, under the Empire, sub-prefect of Sainte-Menehould.

Couplet was satisfied. But the volunteers wanted more blood for the money they had received.

The next morning they arrested the venerable Abbé Paquot, parish priest of Saint-Jean, to force him to take the oath to the Civil Constitution of the Clergy. Couplet, before whom he was brought, pointed out in vain that the time limits for the oath had passed; Abbé Paquot, looking his murderers firmly in the face, said to them: "I will not swear. My conscience forbids it. If I had two souls, I would very gladly give one for you. I have only one, and it belongs to God." He had scarcely finished when he was struck dead. Another priest, more than eighty years old, refusing to take the same oath, was hanged from a lamp-post, despite the efforts of the mayor of Reims, who was powerless to disperse the sans-culottes who, according to the historian Carlyle, "barked but did not bite".

All these details are to be found in an official report signed at Reims on 8 September 1792; in 1795, after the fall of Robespierre, two of the wretched murderers of Abbé Paquot and of the parish priest of Rilly were executed. Two others were sentenced to six years' hard labour. For three years the proofs of the crime had been in the hands of the municipal officers of Reims; but for those three years France had been given over to the accomplices of the murderers.

And the mayor of Reims was very fortunate not to pay with his life for the efforts he had made to save the victims. Had he not shown himself an opponent of "moral unity" as it was understood under the First Republic?

After the proclamation of the Republic, proscriptions and confiscations were the order of the day at Reims as everywhere else. The magnificent cathedral itself was constantly threatened; it was saved only by the religious respect of the inhabitants for the memory of Joan of Arc.

The emissaries from Paris did not succeed in carrying the people of Reims with them; but they spared no effort to mutilate this magnificent monument.

I am told that Robespierre strove to put an end to the vandalism of his disciples and that it is to him we owe the preservation of the groups of statues representing the life of the Virgin Mary. If that is so, much must be forgiven Robespierre: the execution of his dear Camille Desmoulins and of his enemy Danton, and even the inscription he had placed above the statue of the Virgin: "The French people believes in the existence of God and in the immortality of the soul." There is no town in France where the memories of the revolutionary orgy are more at odds than at Reims with the present appearance of the town. I was struck by the quiet air and the calm bearing of the workers, as well as by the prosperity and liveliness that reign everywhere. The great cathedral, a perfect example of the great Gothic ar-

chitecture of the thirteenth century, stands, according to the archaeologists, on the very spot where the Romans had built their fortress.

It still dominates the whole city like a citadel of faith, hope and charity. Seven centuries have not shifted its colossal mass, and only last year was some movement noticed in the structure.

But, thank God, the see of Reims is held by a prelate who knows the value of this magnificent building for France, for the Church and for civilisation. One of the first acts of the man who is now Cardinal Langénieux, when he was appointed Archbishop of Reims, was to ask for a report on the state of the cathedral; and this report was entrusted to Mr Millet, the eminent successor of Mr Viollet-le-Duc. It was established in this report that rainwater seeping in was threatening the masonry and damaging the sculptures of the great west portal; that unique portal, as visitors know.

At the Archbishop's request, four of his personal friends, then ministers, Messrs Dufaure, Léon Say, Wallon and Caillaux, came to Reims to study the state of the cathedral and, in December 1875, a law was passed which devoted a sum of 2,033,411 francs, in ten annual instalments, to the restoration of the cathedral.

This restoration, first entrusted to Mr Millet, who died in 1879, then passed to a distinguished architect, Mr Brugère, and is now being carried on by Mr Darcy, who has shown himself a worthy successor of Viollet-le-Duc. The credit voted in 1875 has been spent, but I had the pleasure of seeing in the budget for 1890 a credit of 301,508.26 fr. for the works to be carried out at Reims.

And since I am speaking of the budget, and in connection with a church, I cannot help noting that the whole of the expenditure of the French State on religion, Catholic, Protestant, Jewish and Muslim, does not even reach the figure that the Protestant Episcopal Church of the State of New York alone devotes every year to its clergy, its colleges and its churches. Would it not be curious to compare the budget for public worship with the interest that the property confis-

cated from the clergy during the Revolution might represent? A friend of mine from the south of France assures me that the proportion is not one tenth. Of the total sum of 45,337,145 francs, 228,000 are spent on the civil services of the ministry. Seven deputy heads of department receive salaries of 3,400 to 5,400 francs, while a Protestant minister in Paris has only 3,000 francs and the parish priest of Notre-Dame receives 2,400 francs. Parish priests of the first class have 1,500 to 1,600 francs; those of the second class, 1,500; those of the third class, 1,200 to 1,300 francs. The Archbishop of Paris has 15,000 francs, the salary of a director! The Chief Rabbi of the Central Consistory receives 12,000 francs, the Chief Rabbi of Paris 5,000, and the salaries of the Israelite ministers range from 2,500 down to 600 francs, the lowest being 300 francs less than that of an usher at the ministry. All the salaries, all the pensions, the upkeep of buildings and the travelling expenses make up a total expenditure of 45 millions, that is, a little more than 1 franc per inhabitant, for 1889; and in the same year the Fine Arts department amounts to 12,700,000 francs. I do not mean that this sum is too great, but it is out of all proportion to the sum voted for the maintenance of the religious institutions of the immense majority of Frenchmen. And the budget of 1889 clearly shows the spirit that animates the fanatics of *moral unity*. It represents a reduction of more than *eight millions* on the budget for public worship of 1883. In 1883 Mr Jules Roche, now deputy for Chambéry and a member of the government, had gone so far as to propose reducing the budget for public worship to 4,588,800 francs. The Third Republic is following the path pointed out by Mr Roche.

In 1882 a republican deputy, Mr Alfred Talandier, had asked that an official table of religious opinions in France be drawn up; but the partisans of *moral unity* were too shrewd to fall into the trap their adherent wished to open. It would be rather bold, even for a parliamentary oligarchy, to show on one side a plan to abolish the budget

for public worship and on the other thirty-seven million five hundred thousand Catholics, Protestants and Israelites, not to mention the Muslims!

It was at the very moment when Mr Challemel-Lacour had just issued his declaration of war on all religion that Cardinal Langénieux took possession of the archiepiscopal see of Reims. The Val-des-Bois mill had just burned down, and Pius IX had recognised, in his brief of October 1874, the full importance of the movement of the Catholic circles.

The new Archbishop of Reims was the man made to lead this movement.

A Benedictine of the school of Cluny, brought up in the traditions of that illustrious order to which our Western civilisation owes so large a part of itself, he had been in turn a parish priest in Paris in a working-class district and in the Faubourg Saint-Germain. After spending a year as Bishop of Tarbes, he was transferred to the archiepiscopal see of Reims while still in the full vigour of his life. For fifteen years he has administered this diocese so well that the Christians of Reims and of the Marne seize every opportunity to show their indifference to the *moral unity* of France. In the streets one meets workers who are not afraid to wear religious medals; in the churches, on feast days, a great number of men are to be seen. In the department as a whole, the monarchists and the revisionists won more votes than the supporters of the government in the elections of 1889. The former gathered forty thousand votes; the latter only thirty-five thousand.

The incendiaries may do what they will; they will not be able to destroy the memories of old France; at Reims especially, the history of France will not die; I was well able to see this during a stay in the Marne in July 1887.

For several years already the Cardinal Archbishop of Reims had been pressing the Holy See for the beatification of the great French

pope Urban II, the disciple, friend and successor of Hildebrand. On 14 July 1881 Leo XIII confirmed this beatification and, on 21 July 1887, a magnificent monument raised to the memory of Urban II was inaugurated at Châtillon-sur-Marne. In the presence of the Archbishop of Reims, the papal nuncio in Paris and many bishops, Mgr Freppel, Bishop of Angers, delivered a most remarkable speech full of striking allusions to the religious persecution.

It was one of those fine summer days such as one sees in the north of France. The little town of Châtillon overlooks the green valley of the Marne. It is surrounded by a wide circle of wooded hills on which fine châteaux stand. On a ruined tower of the fortress the French flag and the flag of the Holy See floated side by side. Beside the ruins, on its granite pedestal, rose the colossal statue of Urban II. All around, in the pomp of their festive vestments, stood the crowd of clergy who had come to pay homage to the great pontiff whom the Church did not deem unworthy to carry on the work of Hildebrand. Wherever the song of the Angelus rises on earth, it recalls the memory of the illustrious pope who created the Truce of God to enable the Christians of Europe to unite against the threatening invasion of the followers of Mahomet.

But the thousands of people of all ages and all classes gathered on the great plateau of Châtillon on that summer day to acclaim the inauguration of the monument to this great Frenchman and zealous servant of the Church were not thinking only of the historical interest of this imposing ceremony; they were mindful of the peril facing their country, their homes and their faith. Today as in the eleventh century, France would need "a moral champion of the freedom of the Church, a defender of public peace".

And the eloquent words of the Bishop of Angers gave precise form to the inmost feeling of those gathered there.

The very week in which the monument to Urban II was inaugurated brought round the anniversary of the coronation at Reims of

Charles VII, in the presence of Joan of Arc. The Cardinal Archbishop of Reims wished to follow the demonstration at Châtillon with a solemn celebration in honour of the Maid of Orléans. At his request Gounod, long his friend, had composed the Mass of Joan of Arc. He came from Paris himself to supervise its performance. This beautiful music, simple and grand, in the style of Palestrina, made an excellent impression beneath those deep vaults where, four centuries before, the Maid had knelt, banner in hand. Let those who witnessed the deep and silent emotion of the immense congregation gathered to hear this fine work come and say whether religious feeling is dead in France or about to die there!

On the evening of that day the vast cathedral was full again; and men in great numbers had gathered to hear the eloquent voice of one of the most eloquent French preachers, Canon Lemann of Lyon. In the course of his sermon the preacher recalled, not without force, the ardour with which Urban II had risen against the false crusaders who, on the pretext of defending Christianity against the Infidel, had persecuted and massacred the Jews of Europe. The effect produced on the congregation by this significant protest against anti-Semitic tendencies was truly great. I alluded to this incident in a conversation with a very distinguished clergyman who was dining at the archbishop's palace; he was very pleased by it: "One of the Government's greatest faults," he said to me, "is to contribute to this hostility against the Jews by the way it hands out the most important offices to men who, Israelites by birth, are as bad Jews as they would be bad Christians. Nearly half the prefectures are held by these unprincipled individuals, who have kept nothing of the religion of their fathers but hatred of the Catholic Church, of the religious congregations and of

the sisters of charity^{*}. I know that many Jews regret such a state of affairs and know that the Government's policy is at bottom hostile to all beliefs, to those of the Chief Rabbi as much as to those of the archbishops."

To prove to me the anti-religious hatred of the republicans in power, my companion then told me of an incident that had just taken place in Paris. It is well known that the chaplains have been driven out of the hospitals. "A poor man, to whom the doctors had made it clear that his end was near, had begged the lay attendants to send for a priest to his deathbed. His agony went on for two days without their being willing to grant his wish. At last one of the attendants had the humanity to go and fetch a Lazarist; the priest came; he was received with the utmost rudeness and made to wait a long time in a corridor, and when at last he was allowed to approach the dying man, the coarsest insults were hurled at him by those who would have liked to prevent him from fulfilling his mission of consolation. And the same sectarian spirit shows itself in every secularisation of a school. Out of a hundred families in a village, ninety-nine are Christian families, not families of saints, but families that respect religion and keep a crucifix. There is, or there may be, in the village one family of atheists, and for that family the crucifix in the school is removed, against the express wish of the ninety-nine others. Is that respect for the majority and for universal suffrage? Remember the two statues of the Virgin at Béziers, one in bronze and the other in marble; the municipal authorities had decided to remove them; the clergy refused to take part in this work, and it was the taxpayers' money that had to

^{*} **NOTE** William Henry Hurlbert here reports two Catholic voices from the summer of 1887, shortly after the success of *La France juive* by Édouard Drumont (1886). Canon Lemann's sermon speaks out against the persecutions of the Jews and against "anti-Semitic tendencies". The clergyman he quotes next approves of this sermon, but he explains this hostility by officials of Jewish origin whom he presents as enemies of the Church, which repeats its clichés. We reproduce these lines out of fidelity to the document: they belong to their time, and this edition does not make them its own.

pay for carrying it out. If the Turks committed such profanations in a Christian town, the whole civilised world would be outraged; but this happens in a French town; it is Frenchmen who do it to insult the faith of their fellow citizens! Things of the same kind have just happened at Domrémy. The care of Joan of Arc's house had been entrusted to sisters of charity; next to the Maid's house they had built a school for the children of the neighbourhood. But a day came when Domrémy had to be secularised like everywhere else, and so the sisters were driven out. They have been replaced by a caretaker paid at the expense of the State, and it is at the expense of the State that lay education is given to the children of the village from which Joan of Arc set out to save France."