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The life and literary activities of Chateaubriand

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Thesis

THE LIFE AND LITERARY ACTIVITIES OF CHATEAUBRIAND

Submitted by

Marion Elizabeth Fitzgerald

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The Life and Literary Activities of Chateaubriand

François-René de Chateaubriand was born in a house situated in a narrow dark street of Saint-Malo September 4, 1768, the same year in which Napoleon and Wellington were born. His family was one of the oldest and most famous in France. Its coat-of-arms was originally a design of golden fir-cones on a red field, surmounted by this device:- "I sow gold." Geoffrey, the eleventh baron de Chateaubriand, was taken prisoner with Louis in the battle of Massoure in 1250. He had been wounded at the side of the king, whose banner he was carrying. As a reward for his courage and devotion, the loyal baron received from the king the privilege of replacing the golden fir-cones on his shield with lilies, and of adopting for device:- "Our blood has stained the banner of France." François-René was very proud of his historic name.

Like many of the families of the nobility, it had been overtaken by poverty, but it never forfeited its honor. But, unlike many other families, its members did not have to work for the peasants. This was due to the ambition and care of René-Auguste de Chateaubriand, father of François-René. He had four hundred sixteen francs income, and he made it his sole ambition to wrench a fortune from this amount. He enlisted as a seaman on a schooner which was part of the fleet sent to aid Leczinski, who was besieged by the Russians at Dantzick. He was wounded twice on this expedition, retired, and spent a few years in the Colonies. He returned

to France and married, at the age of thirty-five, Mlle. Apolline de Bédée. After living a number of years at Saint-malo, he settled in his ancestral home, which his thrift enabled him to purchase. This was an old castle at Combours, a few miles from Saint-Malo. He still had his old desire to roam the seas, and, since he could no longer gratify these sea-faring instincts, he became a ship-owner and sent his vessels over the waters which were now closed to him.

There were ten children in the family of the Comte de Chateaubriand, four of whom died when infants. The fifth was Jean-Baptiste, the godfather of François-René, who was the youngest. After Jean-Baptiste came four girls, and then François-René. Although the youngest of the family, he was not spoiled, but spent a normal boyhood playing on the sand and rocks about Saint-Malo. His favorite companion was his sister Lucile, for whom he had the greatest affection. The two children were left alone much of the time, and became very close friends.

When he was about nine years old, the family moved to the old castle at Combours. Here the young lad found new scenes to investigate. He spent his time roaming through the woods or sitting on the rocks watching the ocean, until he was ten years old, when it was time for him to begin his education. He did not like to leave home, but once settled at school at Dol, he showed a remarkable ability in mathema-

tics and languages, a great love for study, and an extraordinary memory. After completing his elementary studies at Dol, he entered the college at Rennes. Here he began his study of the sciences and continued his work in mathematics and Latin. He stayed here for two years and then returned home for a short time. While he was at home his sister Julie was married to M. de Farcy, a member of the nobility and captain of a regiment.

It now became time for the young Chateaubriand to choose a career for himself. Like most of the boys of his native Brittany he expected to follow the sea, so he went to Brest to complete his nautical studies. But for some reason he never received the commission for which he had applied. Instead, he returned home to Combourg and announced his intention of studying for the priesthood. Nothing could have pleased his mother more. Once again he went away to school, this time to Dinan, an ecclesiastical school. He says in his "Mémoires d'outre-Tombe" that when he entered this college he already knew more Latin than his teachers. Apparently his desire for the religious life did not last long, for after two years he returned to Combourg.

Life in the cold dreary castle was not very pleasant for the warm-hearted lad. His only companions were his mother, who spent most of her time in prayer; his sister Lucile, who was no happier than her brother; and his father, whose severity of expression and manner, haughty tyranny,

and chilly silence increased with age. During the daytime hours young Chateaubriand wandered through the fields and woods, sometimes on foot, sometimes on horseback, always carrying his gun. The rest of the time he spent with Lucile or alone with his thoughts.

However, these few pleasures did not satisfy him. He had within him a great longing for happiness which he could neither satisfy nor understand. His friendship for Lucile was his whole life and his only real pleasure. Their days were spent under the watchful eyes of their cold and distant father, but the evenings they could enjoy. When, at ten o'clock, he took his candle and withdrew his sombre presence from them, then their faces lighted up as with returning life; they could now enjoy each other to the utmost.

Lucile, who was now seventeen, was torn between a supposed desire for the religious life and the home life at Combourg. She became pensive and sad, sometimes unable to sleep and at others passing the night in holy extasy. Her brother perceived all this, and thought it was because she was in love with a young man who frequently came to the house on business. This saddened him, and, to offset his sister's unhappiness, he spent more and more of his time in her company. Instead of the silent melancholy youth he had always been, he became very talkative. As they walked through the country he would describe at the scenes which they passed.

"You ought to paint all this," Lucile said to him one day; and to this he ascribes the beginnings of his literary inclinations. He began to write in verse and about the same time his sister started to put on paper her impressions of Nature. She, however, wrote only in prose. But through caprice he soon gave up all his reading, all his attempts at writing, and sought only solitude. This sudden change was probably caused by poor health, because he became ill of fever. It required a long period of nursing to bring him back to health. While he was ill in bed, he told his mother that he had given up all intentions of becoming a priest. Although this news saddened the pious lady, she was reconciled, because, as she said, she would rather have her son no priest than a bad one.

For a long time his father had been irritated by his lack of decision and his wavering in choosing a career. So when François-René suggested offering himself for the Indian service, his father grumblingly gave his consent. The young men went to Saint-Malo to embark, but he dallied there, letting the boat sail without him. He was summoned home by his father, and on arriving at Combourg, he was informed that his brother had secured a commission in the army for him. Since he would not choose a profession for himself, his family had performed the act for him.

He left the old castle at Combourg, which he was to see again only three times, and arrived at Rennes, where

he spent the night with relatives. The next day he set out for Paris. He spent a few days with his brother and with his sister Julie, but he was anxious to be done with the formalities incidental to beginning his military career. After two days he left Paris for Cambrai, where his regiment was garrisoned. When he began his life in the army he was eighteen years old. He applied himself to his studies and duties diligently, but after a few months he was called home by his father's death. After the funeral, the estate was divided, and he received the customary small portion of the youngest son. He spent a few months with his four sisters, who were staying at Fougères; but his enjoyment of the care-free life of an officer on vacation did not last long. He was called back to duty by his brother. The latter wished to have the young officer presented at Court, an event which he felt sure would be of benefit to both of them. However, this plan did not appeal to the younger Chateaubriand, and he wrote a letter refusing his brother's offers. But his sisters, who were more ambitious than he, thought it would be a good opportunity for them to visit Paris, and urged him to accept. So he returned to Paris, and buried himself in the study of Greek until he received the summons to present himself at Court. Marshal Duras presented him at Versailles, and although the King did not speak to him on that day, a few days later he received an invitation to join the royal hunting-party in

7.
Saint Germain forest.

Court life holding no attraction for him, he returned to Paris, where he lived with his sisters. His one ambition at this time was to see some of his verses printed in the "Almanach des Muses." He finally succeeded in getting "l'Amour des Champs" printed. He now began to form literary acquaintances, among whom were Ginguené, La Harpe, Le Brun, and Chamfort. Much of his spare time was spent with the family of M. de Malesherbes. The old man and the young officer found a great deal of pleasure in discussing botany and geography. These were the two fashionable studies of this epoch. Both men were fond of travel, although the younger had not had much opportunity for journeying far.

The chevalier did not spend all his time in Paris. He and his sister took several trips to their home in Brittany. One of these trips gave him a chance to help in quelling a small riot which had been started against the nobility. This was one of the many such disturbances that preceded the Revolution. When he returned to Paris in 1789 he found the Revolution in full swing. He was present at the taking of the Bastille, and witnessed many of the atrocities which took place at that time. He cannot be said to have been in entire sympathy ^{with the Revolution. While he agreed} with its principles, he was too honest to condone the terrible crimes which were caused by it. His own regiment succumbed to the popular fever of

rebelling against authority, but he did not take part in the insurrection.

To avoid and to forget all the unpleasantness, he decided to journey to the United States. Early in 1791 he left Paris for his native Brittany, where he lived a few months with relatives and friends. He managed to obtain a letter of introduction to Washington from the Marquis of Rouarie, one of the brave Frenchmen who came to America during our war for independence. It was he who was so well known by the name of Colonel Armand, and who some years later died in a royalist conspiracy in France. Carrying this letter, and followed by the prayers and advice of his mother as well as the good-wishes and regrets of his friends, he began his journey in April, 1791. He left Saint-Malo in a freight-boat bound for Baltimore, which was carrying a few passengers, among them some Catholic seminarians.

Two months later he landed in America. He made his way at once to Philadelphia, where he hoped to see the President. The letter signed by Armand secured admittance for him, and he was warmly received by Washington. He told the President the plans he had formulated for his trip, namely to travel as far west as the Gulf of California, then north to the Behring Straits, and east to Hudson Bay and Labrador. This enormous project astonished Washington, who expressed some signs of doubt and incredulity. But the young chevalier quickly replied: "It is

easier to open a passage through the North-west than it is to create a nation, which you have done." This flattering reply pleased Washington, and secured for the traveler an invitation to dine with the President on the next day.

But from this time the Chevalier de Chateaubriand found no encouragement for his wild schemes. His plans had been based on imperfect and inaccurate maps, while here the people knew the impossibility of covering that immense area. He visited New York, Boston, and Albany, and was finally forced to abandon his plans for travel in favor of a search for a new inspiration. He decided to travel from Albany to Niagara. He had to forge his way through deep forests, with a half-savage for a guide. But in traversing this wilderness he experienced real joy in being far from cities, monarchies, and kings. Having reached Niagara, he was determined to measure the depth of the Falls, and to descend a little way into them. In attempting this dangerous feat, he fell, and would have been killed but for some savages who rescued him by twisting together stems of plants and throwing them to him.

He remained at Niagara about two weeks to recover from his accident, and then pushed his way into Canada and toward Lake Erie. He then followed the course of the Ohio. The American wilderness was indeed a revelation to his poetic mind, and furnished it with an inexhaustible supply

of imagery. He met and lived with the Indians and here he obtained much of the material for "Les Natchez," "Atala," and "René." After several months of this life he arrived at Chillicothe, and there he read in an English newspaper the account of the flight of Louis XVI. He felt a sudden strong desire to return to his native land. With as few delays as possible he made his way to Philadelphia, and embarked from that city for Havre December 10, 1791.

The trip was full of dangers and very uncomfortable and it was with relief that he landed at Le Havre January 2, 1792. Everywhere he found conditions of unrest. The whole country seemed ready to break out in Revolution. He was absolutely penniless, having made his return trip on credit. He wrote to his mother of his return. She, overjoyed to find him safely back, gladly paid his passage. The family decided that the only way to secure a definite substantial income for the young chevalier was to marry him to an heiress. The girl whom his mother and sisters selected was Céleste Buisson de la Vigne, an orphan barely seventeen years old. All that Chateaubriand knew of her was that she was fair, small, and very pretty, that she had long yellow curls, and that she was reputed to be worth between five and six thousand francs. Both religious and civil ceremonies were performed and in March, 1792, Chateaubriand and his bride went to Paris. Just at this time war was declared between France and Austria. The chevalier could not decide whether to

go or remain. Finally on July 20, he and his brother left for the frontier.

He suffered terrible experiences during the war. In December he managed to reach Brussels, worn out from wounds, illness, exposure, and fatigue. He was refused admittance at the hotel, but happened to meet his brother, who procured medical treatment for him and gave him enough money to take him to Jersey. The older brother returned to France and the younger went to the island of Jersey. He made his way to his uncle's house, where he was kindly received and tenderly cared for. Here he also heard news of his sisters who had been forced to flee from Paris and who had taken refuge in their old home in Brittany.

He remained in Jersey until the spring of 1793, when he decided to go to England. When he reached London, he made the acquaintance of an exile from France, Pelletier, who was the editor of several royalist newspapers. His acquaintance with this man, the need of earning his living, and his desire to finish the story he had begun in America, all induced him to take up the pen and lay aside the sword. He had to choose some profession that would support him while he was writing, but could not decide whether to become a teacher, a secretary, a journalist, or a translator. First of all he had to find someone to teach him English, which he knew but slightly. He worked day and night at translations, and began a huge treatise which he called an

"Essay on Ancient and Modern Revolutions." He submitted his plans for the book to his journalistic friend Pelletier, who heartily approved of it, and suggested that they take rooms together, where they could both work conveniently. But the writing was often hindered by stark hunger, from which they suffered many times. When the chevalier found his despairing room-mate trying to commit suicide, he notified his relatives in England, who promptly arrived and removed him to their home in the country.

Chateaubriand was now alone. His uncle in Jersey sent him a few hundred francs, but he found so many other unfortunates on whom to spend it, that he was soon as poor as before. He heard that an antiquarian society in Suffolk was editing a history of the county and that they were looking for someone who could translate some twelfth century French manuscripts. An Anglican minister was in charge of the work, and to him Chateaubriand applied. He received from his publisher some money in advance of the publication of his book, and also a letter of recommendation. He secured the position under the name of "Combours." But his identity was not to remain a secret. He happened to see in a French paper an account of the death of M. de Malesherbes and of his own brother and sister-in-law, and he could not restrain his grief. Thus his real name was disclosed.

Unfortunately for him and for the "History of the County of Suffolk," the minister's daughter fell in love

with him. When, at dinner one day, her mother offered him her hand in marriage, he had to announce that he was already married. He thereupon fled from the house. Returning to London, he continued working on his book. He finished the first part and decided to publish it. "L'Essai sur les Révolutions" appeared in London in 1797. It was well received, especially by the French "émigrés" in London, and brought fame and "daily bread" to the author.

In this book he followed the progress of the revolutionary movement through Europe, and tried to solve some of its terrible problems. His opinions were divided between the royalists and the republicans, and he wished to bring about a reconciliation between the two. He compared the events which were happening in France to those which had taken place centuries before in Greece and Rome. His principal idea in the whole work is that "there is nothing new under the sun." There is very little systematic order to the book. Into it he has put his memories, his dreams, and his ideas. It reflects his own spirit, confused, disturbed, uneasy. It was sceptical and atheistic.

As a result of the publication of his book, he began to be sought out by some who had neglected him in his days of poverty and distress. Influenced by these friends he moved from the poorer section of London to Hampstead. New groups of "émigrés" were constantly going from France to London. Among these was one who was to be

Chateaubriand's best friend - M. de Fontanes. He had better literary taste than Chateaubriand, and he gave him much help by wise criticism and correction. While he was under the inspiration of Fontanes, he received a letter from his sister Julie which deplored his last book. She begged him to change his last sentiments and repent, and she sent him the last wishes of his mother on her death-bed. She also told him her own thoughts, which were in the nature of a farewell, for she had a presentiment that she would not live long.

This letter had a great effect on Chateaubriand. He resolved to write another book that would be a reparation for his former one. In 1798 he began "le Génie du Christianisme." It took him four years to finish it. In the meanwhile he determined to return to France. The Prussian minister secured a passport for him under the name "Lassagne," and carrying his bulky manuscripts, he started for Dover, accompanied by Mme. d' Agnesseau. They were met at Calais by Mme. Lindsay, and the three journeyed to Paris.

He found that many changes had taken place since he left it last. His mother had been arrested, thrown into a cart, and in this uncomfortable vehicle taken to Paris. There she was forced to remain in prison until the new change in government released her. She went back to Brittany, where she died in misery and poverty. Two of his sisters had been confined in a prison, but were released

in November, 1794. In August, 1796, his favorite sister was married to Jacques-Louis-René, chevalier de Caud.

Chateaubriand rented a room in the Rue de Lille, obtained the required police permission to remain in the city, and, still under his assumed name, found an editor who was willing to advance him some money for his living expenses. Then he continued work on his book. Having spent such a long time in England, he had almost become completely anglicised, and showed the influence of Britain in his speech and manners. He needed the advice and influence of sensible people of taste to change his misanthropic disposition. Fontanes and his friend Joubert restrained by degrees the wild and undisciplined strain in his writing. His inspiration he found in the Countess Pauline de Beaumont. She was a gentle character, incapable of hurting anyone. She received the confidences of the poor but intensely proud young writer, and influenced him a great deal more than he suspected. In the salon of the Countess Chateaubriand first began to be known for his brilliance and talent. Her salon was a small one, not to be compared to the famous ones of the time, such as those of Mme. de Staël or of Mme. Récamier. But it was visited by many kind friends of the countess, among whom were Mme. de Pastoret, Mme. Hocquart, Mme. de Vintimille, M. Pasquier, M. Jullien, M. Fontanes and M. Joubert. Occasionally it was favored by a visit from Mme. de Staël, who brought all her brilliance of conversation, or from Mme. de Krudener. M. Fontanes introduced Chateaubriand to this quiet intimate

circle in 1800. He was now thirty-two years old, slight of figure, but with all his strength concentrated in his face. His forehead was high, and his deep blue eyes looked out from beneath it with a calm, steady look.

As his funds were low, he was obliged to do some newspaper work. In "le Mercure," a paper edited by Fontanes, he replied to a criticism by the editor of a work of Mme. de Staël. The lady was immensely pleased by his reply, and rewarded him by using her influence to get his name removed from the proscribed list of "émigrés." Overjoyed by this mark of the success of his friend, Fontane urged him to publish one of the episodes of "le Génie du Christianisme," which he had already heard several times and had enjoyed. So "Atala" appeared in 1801. It had an immediate success, principally on account of its novelty and originality. It is the story of two Indians in the desert. Châtas the Indian is rescued from death by Atala, the daughter of Lopez, a Spaniard. Her mother has made a vow of virginity for her, and, although she is deeply in love with the Indian, she swallows poison rather than break her vow as she believes that her mother will have to pay the penalty for her. It is a touching tale, intended to show the indomitable power of religion. Being well received by all classes, it brought added fame to its author. Fontanes was delighted, and had Chateaubriand presented first to the sister and later to the brother, Lucien, of the First Consul.

After the strain and excitement resulting from the publication of his new book, Chateaubriand felt the

need of rest. So he retired to the country, and during his sixmonths sojourn, he finished "le Génie du Christianisme."

On Easter Sunday, 1802, the Concordat was solemnly published at Paris. On the same day Bonaparte ratified the Peace of Amiens, and later in the day, accompanied by his wife and along procession of officials, proceeded to Notre-Dame. It was twelve years since that majestic cathedral has opened her doors to an official procession. The Archbishop of Paris with his suite came to the doors to receive the First Consul, and led him in solemn procession to the place reserved for him in front of the altar.

That very day Fontanes announced the publication of "le Génie du Christianisme." Chateaubriand had used all his art and originality to depict the grandeur and glory of Christianity. Its dedication to the First Consul and its preface left no doubts of the author's agreement with the great act of religious peace which was just celebrated. The book was put on sale April 14, 1802, four days after the ceremony at Notre-Dame. On the first page of each volume was the following sentence, which is not found in later editions:- "Chose admirable! la religion chrétienne, qui ne semble avoir d'objet que la félicité de l'autre vie, fait encore notre bonheur dans celle-ci."

In a moment of sudden illumination after his mother's death, he decided to write something that should bring Christianity back to its former place in the world.

Having had the misfortune to attack the Faith, he now craved the honor of defending it, and this ambition he realized in "le Génie du Christianisme." The final argument of the book is expressed in its closing lines: "Though we have not employed the arguments usually advocated by the apologists of Christianity, we have arrived by a different chain of reasoning at the same conclusion: "Christianity is perfect, men are imperfect. Now, a perfect consequence cannot spring from an imperfect principle. Christianity, therefore, is not the work of men."

The book shows an amazing knowledge of the Christian religion. Chateaubriand saw that the Church was the only bulwark against barbaric and social crimes; that it was the torch from which all other torches were lighted; that it was the inspiration of all the arts and sciences. These views he tried to express, not as a theologian or a philosopher, but as a poet. Throughout the whole work he stresses the idea of beauty. In doing this, he aimed to dissipate the prevalent idea that the dogmas of the Church were absurd and her ceremonies ridiculous. He tried to show that the Christian religion is "the most poetic, the most humane, the most favorable to liberty, the arts, and literature; that the modern world owes everything to it, from agriculture to the abstract sciences; from hospitals for the poor to the temples decorated by Raphael; that there is nothing more divine than its moral law, nothing more imposing than

its dogmas, its doctrine, and its worship; that it favors genius, develops virtuous passions, and gives vigor to thought." He did not try to prove the truth of Christianity, but to glorify its beauty. It must be admitted that here and there he insists on details which contribute nothing to ^{its} ~~this~~ strength, and also omits views which might have established it more solidly.

The work is divided into four parts as follows:-

Part I. Dogmas and tenets.

Book I. Mysteries and Sacraments.

Book II. Virtues and moral laws.

Book III. The truths of the Scriptures.

Book IV. Continuation of the truths of the Scriptures.

Book V. The existence of God demonstrated by the wonders of Nature.

Book VI. The immortality of the soul.

Part II. The Poetry of Christianity.

Book I. General survey of Christian epic poems.

Book II. Poetry in its relations to man.

Book III. Continuation of Book II.

Book IV. Poetry in its relations to supernatural beings.

Book V. The harmonies of the Christian religion.

Part IV. Worship.

Book I. Churches, ornaments, singing, etc.

Book II. Tombs.

Book III. The clergy.

Book IV. Missions

Book V. Military orders.

Book VI. Services rendered to mankind by Christianity.

The success of the book was due to circumstances. It came at the right moment, and it was read by all in the same spirit in which it was written. In his "Mémoires" he was clear-sighted enough to see this and courageous enough to admit it.

But Chateaubriand was not satisfied with his literary success. His mind now turned to the pleasures and triumphs of politics. As a means of gratifying this ambition, he dedicated the second edition of his great book to Bonaparte. A de luxe copy of this dedication was sent to the First Consul and to each member of his family. The reply was not long in coming. Chateaubriand was appointed secretary of the embassy at Rome. He accepted the appointment and left for Rome in 1803.

His success in the diplomatic field was brief. He was favorably received by the Pope, no doubt on account of his latest book, which His Holiness had open before him. But it happened that his superior, Cardinal Fisch, rebuked him for some indiscretions, and he was rebellious. He could not stand correction. One thing led to another, and Chateaubriand would have been publicly disgraced were it not for the intervention of Fate. He received news of the arrival at Rome of Countess de Beaumont, who was in very

poor health. Chateaubriand did all in his power to make her last days happy; when she died, he was inconsolable. His great grief and the manner in which he conducted himself reconciled him to the Cardinal, and they parted very good friends in January, 1804. For Chateaubriand had been made representative of the French republic in Valais through the influence of Fontanes, who knew how dissatisfied he was with his work at Rome. This new office was created especially for him, and in it he would be his own master, under no control except that of the minister of Foreign Affairs.

He went from Rome to Paris, and visited many of his friends, among whom was Mme. de Chateaubriand, whom he had not seen for a long time. As she had lost her fortune, he felt it only just that he should take up his life with her again. After finishing his preparations for departure, he went to pay his respects to the First Consul. He was shocked by the great changes which had taken place in Bonaparte's appearance, and he saw that the Consul was making efforts to conceal them. Two days later, when he was leaving the Tuileries, he heard the news-criers shouting that Louis Antoine de Bourbon had been condemned to death. It was like a thunderbolt to him. He says in his "Mémoires": "It changed my life, for it changed Napoleon's." He went home to write his resignation, giving as his reason his wife's poor health; but nobody, not even Napoleon, failed to understand the things he left unsaid.

He retired to private life after this, visited his neighbors, took long walks, and did some writing. About this time word came to him of the death of his sister, Lucile. In 1805 "René" appeared from his pen. It is a morbid and harrowing romance, giving a picture of fatal melancholy and foolish dreams. Like "Atala," it was one of the episodes of "le Génie du Christianisme," but was withdrawn from the book and published separately. René is a youth, who, devoured by a secret sorrow, goes to the wilderness of America seeking solitude and consolation. He feels impelled to tell his story to a savage and a priest, both of whom have been kind to him. His secret is that his sister had fallen in love with him, and to protect herself and him, she enters an order of cloistered nuns. By chance, he discovers her reason for sacrificing herself, and feels bound to spend the rest of his life in tears and lamentation. At the end of his recital, the priest reproves him soundly for expecting pity and sympathy. He accuses him of selfishness and presumptuousness. Chateaubriand received his inspiration for this tale during his own stay in America.

He next began to work on a new book, "Les Martyrs." But he soon laid it aside. He felt that he could not write the account of the struggle between Christianity and paganism without visiting Greece and Jerusalem. He thus exhibits a scrupulousness not very common among writers. He left Trieste July 13, 1806, and returned to Paris June 5, 1807, bringing with him the notes and experiences which were the foundation of "l' Itinéraire de Paris à Jérusalem."

After his long journey he scarcely gave himself time for rest when he began to write again. He had bought "le Mercure" from Fontanes and in this paper he published an article suggested by de la Borde's "Voyage en Espagne." The article had an enormous success, but it cost the writer his paper. "Le Mercure" was suppressed and its editor was fortunate in escaping prison. He realized now that he must listen to reason and avoid danger.

He needed rest very much, so he looked around for a country house. He purchased an estate near Sceaux, called "La Vallée aux Loups." There he wrote "Les Martyrs," "l' Itinéraire de Paris à Jérusalem," "le Dernier des Abencérages," and he began his "Mémoires d' Outre-Tombe." "Les Martyrs" appeared in 1809. He worked over and corrected the manuscript of this more than of any other of his works. It is a poem in prose in which he intended to prove by examples the superiority of Christianity over paganism as a source of poetic inspiration. It was written in better language and style than his other books. But it did not receive a success equal to the work he put into it. The critics were hostile, the public undecided. Fontanes came to the defense of the book and thereby consoled its author. The success of "l' Itinéraire de Paris à Jérusalem" was just the opposite. It appeared in 1811, and the public succumbed to its charm at once.

The death of Joseph Chénier suggested to Chateaubriand's friends the suitability of choosing him to succeed to the place in the Académie Française. Chateaubriand was not entirely pleased with the idea, hesitated, and objected. But

the choice was not even opposed by the Emperor, and he was elected February 20, 1811. However, the Emperor demanded that he submit to him the text of his speech of acceptance. He returned it with corrections and eliminations which showed his disapproval. Chateaubriand would not change a word of it, preferring not to be accepted in the Academy. From this time on he was plunged into party strife. The Prefect of Police invited him to leave the city, and he accepted, staying at Dieppe. From 1811--1813 he spent his time between Dieppe and his beloved "Vallée-Aux-Loups," awaiting the fall of the Empire. In the winter of 1813 he took an apartment in the Rue de Rivoli, opposite the Tuilleries. Here he wrote a pamphlet called "de Bonaparte et des Bourbons" which was said to have done more for the Restoration than an army would have. Napoleon read it at Fontainebleau, and was not surprised at being attacked in his weakness by one who had resisted him in his strength. The little book expressed condemnation of the rule founded on glory; of the rule founded on victory which could not withstand defeat. It suggested as a cure for the wounds of the nation and a solace for its griefs the shelter of legitimate monarchy. "The shelter," he says, "seems to me to be in the authority, moderated according to the times, under which our ancestors lived for eight centuries; when we find no other refuge in a storm than an old ruined building, we accept that."

In 1814 Louis XVIII appointed Chateaubriand ambassador to Sweden. This position had the double advantage of

paying him well and of taking him far away from Paris. He was not a favorite of the king on account of his haughty independence, his inelastic conscience, and his unwillingness to ask for anything, preferring to take what was given to him. He opposed both Talleyrand and Fouché. He hated political intrigues and despised all those who were party to them. In 1816 he took his seat at the desk of the assembly, having been appointed secretary. During the first years of his political life, Chateaubriand professed and practised by turns a militant royalism and a liberal one, torn between the exaltation of his feelings and the moderation of his ideas. His name was removed from the waiting list of ministers and he was reduced to a knight again. He sold all his books except Homer. His house was bought by the Viscount de Montmorency for fifty thousand francs.

At this time he became very friendly with Montmorency, Fitz-James, Vitralles, Villèle, and Corbière, and in company with them started a periodical called "le Conservateur," which aroused great interest and had a wide influence. In his articles in this paper he displayed his literary talents in a new way, joining eloquence to irony.

In 1820, the Minister of Foreign Affairs decided to reinforce himself by the support of Chateaubriand and his allies. He appointed Chateaubriand to the embassy at Berlin, from which post ^{he resigned} in April, 1821. The position of ambassador to London was the prize most eagerly awaited by all aspirants to political honors. This was the next post held by Chateau-

briand. He returned to the city in which he had lived so long in misery and want. He spent much of his time in observing affairs in Europe as they concerned France. These observations and thoughts he has collected in his "Mémoires."

The death of his best friend, Fontanes, in 1822 considerably saddened Chateaubriand's triumphant return to Paris. He was one of the representatives of France at the Congress of Verona, and here he did masterly work in exposing the underhanded methods employed by the ministers of finance and of foreign affairs. The result of his manoeuvres was that the king removed the Minister of Foreign Affairs, forced the hand of the Minister of Finance, and finally signed an ultimatum which led to the war with Spain. In 1824 the king dismissed him for haughtiness of character which made him intolerable to his colleagues. From this time he waged a merciless war for liberal principles against all the ministerial departments, not even sparing royalty itself. He published the good qualities of the new king, Charles X, in a pamphlet entitled: "le Roi est mort! vive le Roi!" This restored him to the king's friendship, which he kept for only a short time. In 1827 the king withdrew his name from the waiting-list of ministers, where it had held first place. Later he changed his mind and offered him the office of Minister of Public Education, which Chateaubriand refused. The king then offered him the ambassadorship at Rome. Some of his biographers call this an office of penance. He resigned from office the next year upon Polignac's accession to office, and when, in 1830, Louis-Phillipe ascended the

throne, he refused to take the oath of allegiance to the new ruler. This was virtually the end of his political career.

In September he retired from public life and took up his residence in the Rue d' Enfer. After an unpleasant episode with the police, he and his wife decided to leave Paris. They lacked the means necessary to do this. However, the old King, exiled in Austria, sent him at this time twenty thousand francs which were due to him and which he had refused to take from the new King. He went to Switzerland, there to cast off all political and literary ties. But the arrest and imprisonment of the Duchess du Berry called him back to Paris. He could not plead for her before the magistrates, but he did plead before the public by his "Mémoire sur la captivité de la Duchesse de Berry." He was implicated and forced to appear in court, but he was acquitted.

From 1838 on, he divided his time between his wife and Mme. Récamier. Every morning he wrote to the latter, and every day at three o'clock he called on her. He arrived almost always on foot and his visit was so carefully timed that he used to say that the people in the neighborhood set their watches when he appeared. By means of Mme. Récamier's salon, Chateaubriand kept up his connection with the literary world, and here, too, he had the consolation of seeing the younger generation turning toward him.

In 1846 Mme. Récamier became afflicted with cataracts and gradually lost her sight. About the same time, Chateaubriand was the victim of a slow paralysis, the result of a carriage accident. What a touching sight it must have been to see

the decadence of beauty and genius, one smiling, the other, proud. Chateaubriand prayed to die before Mme. Récamier, and his prayer was granted. Mme. de Chateaubriand died before either of them, and after her death Chateaubriand offered his name to Mme. Récamier. She sadly refused this ~~this~~ honor. One year later, July 4, 1848, Chateaubriand died, having lived long enough to witness the defeat of anarchy. Four people were present at his death-bed: his nephew, Louis de Chateaubriand, his confessor, a Sister of Charity, and Mme. Récamier. His body was taken from the apartment in the Rue du Bac to the Church of the Foreign Missions, and there it received the farewells of the people of Paris, who, although at that time they were suffering many terrible things, yet realized the great loss to literature which his death meant.

But at Saint-Malo his funeral had the appearance of public mourning. The Academy was represented by M. Ampère. Long before his death he had made arrangements to be buried near the ocean which he had loved as a boy. Twenty-seven years later, September 5, 1875, France completed her homage by erecting at Saint-Malo a bronze statue on a granite pedestal. This was accomplished by public subscription.

In perusing his books one easily discovers Chateaubriand's diversified talents. In his prose poems, such as "Les Martyrs," or his romances, like "Atala," or in the poetic descriptions which occur in "le Génie du

Christianisme" his coloring is vivid and peerless and phraseology harmonious. Without apparent effort he gives to his thoughts a luxuriant richness of expression and elegance. On the other hand, in his political books he is bright, crisp, and incisive. Chateaubriand had beautiful ideas; on the past, in his historical works; on the present, in his political writings, though these may contain some errors; and he has abundant views on the future, particularly on the subject of religion.

The "Mémoires d'outre-Tombe" is a post-humous work, published in 1849 and 1850. It consists of twelve volumes which contain references to every event of his whole life or anything with which he was in any way connected.

Despite his moral weaknesses, Chateaubriand was a Christian from the time of his conversion until his death. Although he had been brought up a Christian, his youthful mind had been contaminated by the anti-Christian spirit then prevalent in France, by the reading of un-Christian books, especially Rousseau, and by his association with the infidel literary men of Paris from 1787 to 1791. When he sailed for America, his faith was only a flickering flame likely to be extinguished at any moment. Finally, the miserable life he was obliged to live in London turned him against both men and institutions. It was a rude shock that awoke his dormant faith. His sister's letter at the time of his mother's death told him that she had made it her dying request that he return to it. Chateaubriand heeded the appeal. His heart was touched by the recollections of his childhood days and

by the pious memories with which the picture of his mother was always connected, and, comparing the awful void made in his soul by the false philosophy with the peace with which his religion had formerly filled it, his doubts were submerged in a flood of tears. "I wept and I believed," he says in the Preface to the first edition of "le Génie du Christianisme."

Chateaubriand's influence on literature is unanimously acknowledged. Romanticism may be traced back to him, and it may even be said that the whole literary movement characteristic of the nineteenth century began with him, although his style is somewhat like Rousseau's. The Abbe Pradt, a writer hostile to his great book, said in 1818: "He reinstated religion in the world, establishing it on a better footing than it had occupied, for until then it had followed, so to speak, in the wake of society, and since then it has marched visibly at the head." Chateaubriand's idea was taken up in the course of the nineteenth century. It is the glory of pioneers to open up new ways in which others go farther than they, but they still retain the merit of having boldly taken the first steps.

SUMMARY.

François-René de Chateaubriand was born at Saint-Malo, September 4, 1768, and died at Paris, July 4, 1868. He studied successively for the navy and the Church, and finally entered the army. As a young man he crossed the Atlantic to America, paid a visit to George Washington, and spent several months traveling through the wilderness. He served his country in diplomatic posts at Rome, Berlin, London, and Verona. He was in favor of a liberal monarchy. His greatest and most famous work is "le Génie du Christianisme." Besides this he also wrote "Les Natchez," "Atala," "René," "Les Martyrs," "L'Itinéraire de Paris à Jérusalem," and "les Mémoires d'outre-Tombe." He also wrote a great number of political articles and pamphlets. His style is clear, poetic, and harmonious.

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