

**THE JOURNAL OF A SPY
IN PARIS DURING
THE REIGN OF TERROR:
JANUARY-JULY, 1794**

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The Journal of a Spy in Paris during the Reign of Terror: January-July, 1794 by Raoul Hesdin

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DURING THE REIGN OF TERROR.

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BY

RAOUL HESDIN.

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1895.

PREFACE.

THE following fragment appears to be part of the journal of an English spy in Paris, kept during the terrible months of January to July, 1794. "Raoul Hesdin," the name written upon the brown paper cover of the book, is apparently a mere blind. So is the title, "Quelques Observations sur les Industries," etc. No such person as "Hesdin" can be traced among the employés of the French Government at the time, but there was an enormous number of persons serving

the Committee of Public Safety in various capacities whom it would be now equally impossible to identify. Internal evidence may, indeed, supply many suggestions as to what kind of man he was, and as to his course of life, both in Paris and previously.

He appears to have been trained as a wood-engraver in France in his youth, to have been at one time in North America, and possibly also in Germany; to have been thoroughly familiar with Paris under the *ancien régime*, to have been present at many of the earlier scenes of the Revolution, especially in 1789 and 1790—he may even have seen and spoken with Arthur Young on his famous tour in the former year—and to have returned to Paris late in the year 1793, but whether from England or America seems doubtful. Also it is nowhere directly

stated, though it is difficult to put any but one construction on his words, that he was in the pay of the English Government at this latter time. Anyhow he obtained employment, apparently as an engraver or director of engravings, under the Committee of Public Safety, which, since the suspension of the "Constitution of 1793" in the previous summer, exercised an absolutely despotic and practically irresponsible power in France.

For the benefit of English readers it may be well to recall the composition of that Committee, the minuter history of which may be best studied in the excellent little work of M. Gros, "*Le Comité de Salut Public*" (Paris, 1893). Though this body of men was apparently, and for many purposes, such as the war, really united, the divisions in it, the increase of which Hesdin marks so clearly,

ran somewhat upon these lines: Robespierre, St. Just, and Couthon were the theorists; Billaud, Collot d'Herbois, and Barère were the "men of their hands" in matters internal; Carnot, the two Prieurs, Lindet and Jean Bon St. André were the "War Ministry," the last-named being the head of the naval department. It must be remembered that, under this Committee, "Ministries" up to the 12th Germinal, and "Commissions of Government" after that date, continued to exist, but wholly without power. The "Lesser Committee," or Committee of General Security, of which the leaders were Vadier, Amar, Lebas, and David, and which always seems to have got on badly with the greater, was more directly concerned with matters of police.

It would be quite out of place here to

attempt any summary of the events of the Revolution, either internal or external, during these seven months; and it must suffice to say that the leading fact is the steady elimination of parties and individuals by Robespierre for his own benefit. The followers of Hébert fell in March, those of Danton in April; each party left, however, a "tail," which gradually united with those members of the Committees who were themselves threatened, to work the Revolution of Thermidor. In the history of the war Lord Howe's naval victory of the 1st of June, 1794, did little to compensate for the continued success of the French Republic on land. The defeats of the Vendéens, and the surrender of Toulon in December, 1793, allowed the whole attention of Carnot to be concentrated on the north-eastern frontier,