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present one to him and it had not yet been indicated.
The session closed at six o'clock in the evening, it
being voted that next Monday, at eight o'clock in
the morning, the assembly should betake itself to
the usual place of its session. It was proposed that
an orator should be named, but it was replied that
it would be useless; that if it was necessary to reply
to the king, M. Bailly, the president, would acquit
himself of the task with the prudence, the sagacity,
and the respectful courage he has manifested since
he had the honor to preside over the assembly.


At half past six in the morning, one of my friends,
the Chevalier de Panges, who was very much in-
terested in the debates of the assembly and who, to
follow their course attentively, had established him-
self at Versailles and attended every session, came
to me and announced that, having gone to the hall,
as he did every day, he had been refused entrance.
He asked me if I had given orders, and I replied in
the negative. . . . I sent a messenger to the hall. I
was informed that it was surrounded by French
guards. I was shown a placard conceived in these
terms: "By Order of the King. . . . The King having
resolved to hold a royal session of the states general,
on the 22d of June, the preparations to be made in the
three halls which serve for the meetings of the orders
make it necessary to suspend these meetings until after
the holding of the said session. His Majesty will
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make known by a fresh proclamation the hour at which on Monday he will betake himself to the assembly of the estates. . . .” A quarter of an hour later I received the following letter from M. le Marquis de Brézé, grand master of ceremonies:

"Versailles, June 20, 1789.

"The King having ordered me, Sir, to make public by heralds his intention to hold on Monday, the twenty-second of this month, a royal session, and at the same time his intention to suspend the assemblies, which the preparations to be made in the halls of the three orders render necessary, I have the honor to inform you of it. I am," etc.

This official knowledge came too late, because we had already learned of it by the public rumor and by the occupation of the hall. It was not sufficient, because it should have been made known not only to me, but also to the assembly, and, the hall being closed and the session suspended, I no longer had any means of communicating with the members. . . . After having weighed all the difficulties of the critical situation in which I found myself I felt that the letter of M. de Brézé did not exempt me from my duties toward the assembly. Friday evening I had set the hour of the session for the next day at eight o'clock. Nothing could release me from this engagement contracted with it and the session ought
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to take place, permitting the assembly, when it had knowledge of the letter, to take, in its wisdom, the course it might judge proper. I wrote immediately to M. de Brézé: "I have not yet received any order from the King, Sir, for the royal session, nor for the suspension of the assemblies; and it is my duty to go to the one I set for this morning at eight o'clock. I have the honor to be," etc.

I dressed quickly and called the secretaries together to consult them upon what we should do. We agreed that we ought to ignore the fact that the hall was closed, to go there as usual and draw up an official statement of the refusal to allow us to enter. In fact, we presented ourselves at the principal entrance in the Avenue de Paris, which we found surrounded by a great crowd in which were many deputies. The sentinel stopped us and forbade us to pass. I asked for the officer of the guard, M. le comte de Vassan, who told me that, the king intending to hold a royal session Monday, the indispensable preparations had made it necessary to order the closing of the hall. I replied to him, according to what had been agreed upon, that I protested against the obstacles put in the way of the holding of the session fixed yesterday for to-day, and which I declared open. After this precaution—necessary in order to safeguard the rights of the legitimately constituted assembly—M. de Vassan had us enter the court in order to get us away from

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the crowd; in every way he conducted himself toward us with the greatest consideration. As we were getting ready to draw up the minutes, and as it was raining a little, he invited us to enter the building and to see the hall and convince ourselves that, occupied as it was, it was impossible to hold the session there. As we were about to enter, the crowd of deputies who were outside the grating in the avenue made a movement to follow us. M. de Vassan called to arms and ran after me to ask me to use my authority as president to prevent an attempt to force an entrance; he called my attention to the embarrassing position in which he found himself between the respect he owed the deputies and his office, which, according to military law, did not permit him in any case to allow his post to be forced. I trembled at the danger; I ran to the grating; I implored the deputies who were without to make no attempt to force the guard and the gate; I assured them that we were coming out to join them. At my voice the movement ceased and everything remained quiet. It was at this moment that a young deputy said to me: "Why do you interfere in this matter? Let it alone." I replied to him, "Sir, you give the advice of a young man." And, in truth, what would have happened if armed force had been opposed to the movement of the deputies, if some of them had been killed and wounded, even if they had been only roughly treated by laying violent hands upon per-
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sons inviolable and almost sacred on account of their office? It would have produced a general conflagration. We attained our end and succeeded by wiser and more legal means. We entered one of the offices of the building, and there I received a second letter from M. de Brézé, who, not having understood me, explained to me that his letter contained the orders of the king:

"Versailles, June 20, 1789.

"It was by positive orders of the King that I had the honor to write to you this morning, Sir, and to inform you that, His Majesty wishing to hold a royal session, which calls for preparations in the three assembly halls of the orders, his intention was that no one should be allowed to enter; that the sessions should be suspended until after the one His Majesty will hold. I am," etc.

It was not possible for me alone to decide what action should be taken upon the declared intentions of the king, nor even upon orders, because I had no right to bind the assembly. It was its business to deliberate upon what it should do; I was responsible to it for my actions as it was responsible for its own to the nation. We were in this office with the secretaries and a dozen deputies who had been allowed to come in with us. M. de Vassan came and explained to us that longer delay in the interior of
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the building would compromise him. We saw that he had realized that a document we might draw up and which would be dated from the inside of the building would be in contradiction with his orders, and would show he had not exactly carried them out. We did not wish to run the risk of embarrassing a man who had comported himself with so much kindness and politeness, and we went out. We rejoined the large gathering of deputies in the avenue. All were of the opinion that it was necessary to call the assembly to order that it might deliberate in so delicate a crisis and, accordingly, to find a suitable hall. M. Guillotin proposed the tennis court. It was voted to go there. I walked at the head of this crowd of deputies, and, for fear that the place might be closed to us for political reasons, asked five or six of the deputies to go ahead and take possession of it. The owner of the tennis court received us with pleasure and hastened to procure for us the greatest number of conveniences possible. Not having a guard, I asked two deputies to place themselves at the door to prevent strangers from entering. But very soon the guard of the city hall came to ask permission to continue their regular service as at the hall, which was granted them with pleasure. Behold, then, the national assembly of France in a tennis court, in a place witness of exercises and games, and which was about to become the witness of the destinies of the empire, in a place where the walls
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were somber and bare, where there was not a seat to sit upon. An arm-chair was offered to me, but I refused it; I did not wish to be seated before a standing assembly. I remained thus all this tiresome day. During the whole session we had only five or six benches and one table for writing. But this place was exalted by the majesty which it contained; the galleries were filled with spectators, a crowd of people surrounded the door and extended for a great distance into the streets, and everything announced that it was the nation which honored the tennis court by its presence.

The deputies arrived one after another, and each one, suspecting what the ministry was trying to do, congratulated himself on seeing the others again and on being united with them. As soon as the assembly could be called to order and silence secured I reported on the two letters I had received from M. de Brézé and on all the steps the secretaries and I had taken. Our conduct was universally approved. They thought that a letter from the grand master of ceremonies was not sufficient, and that a letter from the king himself to the president of the assembly was necessary to communicate directly to him his intentions. In short, when the king had something to communicate to the parliament, he wrote to the first president; for matters touching religion he wrote to the Archbishop of Paris. The assembly, even in its incipiency, had a
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right to ask to be treated as well as the parliament. The maladroitness of the ministry was, then, inconceivable, but it helped the national assembly, and its wisdom profited by all the false measures employed against it. The question as to whether the king had the right to suspend the sessions of the assembly was not treated openly, but the opinion was that it would be very dangerous if the king had this right. It was thought the session could not be suspended, at least in this manner. The principal and fundamental question was not ripe; it was sufficient for the present to have avoided the dangers of separation. It was necessary to occupy ourselves with measures to prevent it from coming up again. The members were excited, and some of them were inclined toward extreme measures, and were of the opinion that the assembly should change its meeting place to Paris, and should depart immediately on foot and in a body. A member wrote out the motion for it; everything would have been lost if this violent step had been taken. Perhaps a troop of cavalry would have been called out to stop the march. At any rate, they would have separated themselves from the king, and this step would have had serious consequences. If the motion had been made, it is to be feared that the effervescence of the moment would have led to its adoption by acclamation and without examination. Another member had the idea of the oath. A general cry of
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approbation arose at once, and after a very short discussion the assembly passed the following decree, so simple but so firm:

"The national assembly, considering itself called to establish the constitution of the kingdom, to work for the regeneration of public order, and to maintain the true principles of the monarchy, cannot be prevented in any way from continuing its deliberations, in whatever place it may be forced to establish itself, and, finally, wherever its members are gathered, there is the national assembly.

"Resolved that all the members of this assembly immediately take a solemn oath never to separate, and to reassemble wherever circumstances require, until the constitution of the kingdom shall be established and fixed upon solid foundations; and that, the said oath being taken, all the members and each one of them in particular shall confirm by their signature this unshakable resolution."

The resolution having been passed, I asked, on account of my rank as president, to take the oath first; the secretaries made the same request. When we had taken this solemn oath, the entire assembly took it at my dictation. I pronounced the formula in a voice so loud and so intelligible that my words were understood by all the people who were in the street, and immediately in the midst of the applause there arose from the assembly and from the crowd of citizens who were without, reiterated and uni-
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versal cries of "Long live the King!" The assembly, in its firm and courageous conduct, if it took useful precautions against the ministry, if it armed itself against its despotism, was still united heart and soul with the king, and had no intention of doing anything against his legitimate authority; it had even taken care to declare in its resolution that one of its duties was to maintain the true principles of the monarchy, in order to thoroughly prove to all that whatever hostility there might be in its measures was directed against despotism and not against the monarchy.

This resolution is still one of the monuments of the wisdom of the national assembly. It secured its safety, it protected the interests of France, and it assured the making of a constitution not yet commenced. There is no doubt but that there was a desire and a plan to dissolve this assembly which promised to be too formidable; preparations were being made, and without doubt troops were gathered in quite large numbers around Paris and Versailles with the intention of making a big change in the ministry and of doing violence to the assembly. It is certain that by the act which the assembly had just passed separation became impossible. If orders had been given they could not have been executed. The experience of the day proved that if the hall were closed the assembly would gather elsewhere; if a meeting place had not been found at
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Versailles, the members would have gone to Paris or to another city. How could it have been prevented? A few deputies could, indeed, have been arrested, but how could six hundred have been imprisoned? Those who remained would still have been the national assembly, wherever they were, and the employment of violence would have roused and armed the kingdom.

Immediately after the taking of the oath the roll was called by baillages, sénéchaussées, provinces, and cities; and each of the members present, on responding to the call, approached the desk and signed.

One member alone, M. Martin d’Auch, had the temerity to add to his signature the word opposed. Instantly a great tumult arose. The assembly was profoundly moved by this defection from the unanimity of the deliberation; indignation followed, and rage took possession of the greater part of the members of the assembly. During this clamor I rushed into the midst of the crowd and mounted upon the table, in order to dominate and be understood. After having the fact explained to me, of which I had been vaguely informed, I had M. Martin d’Auch come forward. He repeated to me what he had already said, that he did not believe that he could swear to execute decrees which had not been sanctioned by the king. I replied to him that the assembly believed in the same principles, that it
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would always recognize the necessity of the royal sanction. (Point du jour, I, page 25.) I explained to him that the resolutions touching the internal affairs of the assembly and the present oath did not appear to be susceptible of sanction. He persisted. I made some fitting remarks on his stubbornness and reproached him as he deserved; I even spoke with very great severity to satisfy the general discontent and quiet the assembly. I said to him that each deputy had his own conscience and was master of his own opinion, but it was not permissible for him to associate his individual opinion with that of the assembly; he could refuse his support to an opinion with which he did not agree, but he could not explain his action in the minutes; that the protest of an individual could be inserted there only by an express vote. That said, I had him withdraw that he might not be exposed to the results of a very legitimate indignation, and I had him pass out by a back door to protect him from an indignation much more redoubtable—that of the people to whom the news had already been carried. The assembly deliberated upon the kind of protest he had indulged in and the word opposed, which he had inserted in the minutes. Some wished to erase the signature and the word, but, the excitement having subsided and good sense having once more taken possession of the deliberations of the assembly, it was decided that the word opposed should be allowed to stand, and that at the
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beginning of the decree it should be stated that it had lacked one vote of passing unanimously.

If this defection had vexed the assembly, it found consolation in the general eagerness of those who asked to be permitted to add their signatures to those of the deputies whose credentials had already been verified. The deputies of Saint-Domingo begged to be admitted immediately that they might sign, and this was granted them provisionally. The deputies whose credentials had not been verified, the substitutes present asked and obtained the same favor. Thus ended this great and glorious day, and the assembly adjourned its session to Monday, the twenty-second, which was to be at the same time the royal session.


Yesterday, at the moment when the president presented himself at the assembly hall, he found it guarded by soldiers who refused him entrance. They gave as a reason that the king was to hold a session Monday and that preparations to be made in the hall required a great deal of time. He insisted and gained access to the hall; he saw that in truth everything was topsy-turvy. Then, by a sudden and almost involuntary movement of all the deputies who were on the spot, it was agreed to assemble in the tennis court. All the members arrived there successively, and after much indignation and many complaints it was proposed to draw up minutes of