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PILLAR OF THE REPUBLIC:

THE VILLAGE SCHOOLMASTER IN BRITTANY 1880-1914

by

BARNETT BRUCE SINGER

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree of

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Approved by

David W. Robinson
(Chairman of Supervisory Committee)

Department

History
(Departmental Faculty sponsoring candidate)

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We have carefully read the dissertation entitled Pillar of the Republic: The Village Schoolmaster in Brittany 1880-1914

_____ submitted by
Barnett Bruce Singer in partial fulfillment of
the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
and recommend its acceptance. In support of this recommendation we present the following joint statement of evaluation to be filed with the dissertation.

This dissertation is a study of the village schoolmaster in Brittany from 1880 to 1914. It first places him in the milieu of the Republic's struggle for survival and its far-reaching educational reforms; goes on to consider his origins, his training, and his ethos; describes his life in the village; sets forth and analyzes his conflict with the village curé; and discusses the role he played and the influence he exerted particularly as the representative of the Republic in his village.

The author's major sources were found in the five departmental archives of Brittany, where the personal dossiers of the teachers provided the most useful data. He also used materials in the Archives nationales (Paris), newspapers, books, and articles, and had a dozen illuminating interviews with retired schoolmasters.

He is probably the first scholar to use systematically Series T (Instruction publique) in any departmental archives. Employing this source to probe one area--Brittany--in depth he has added significantly to the work of Jacques Ozouf, the leading authority on the schoolmasters of the Third Republic. Singer proposes eventually to publish a descriptive and analytical study of the village schoolmasters of all France in the pre-1914 Third Republic. This dissertation, dealing with them in one province, can be the first stone in that edifice, and the experience gained in preparing it will be a guide to future work.

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CHAPTER I

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

To explain the importance of the instituteur of the Third Republic, one must first outline the forces which brought him to prominence. The primary force was the insecurity of the young republic of the 1870's. Conceived almost by accident, as the regime that divided the French least, the Third Republic at its inception seemed destined for a short life. Only the strenuous activity of a minority of fervent republicans, led by Léon Gambetta, enabled the young Republic to survive the crisis of May 16, 1877, and permitted republicans to gain control of the governing apparatus. The republican victory in the senatorial elections of January, 1879, and the resignation of President Patrice de MacMahon in the same year marked the culmination of this process.¹ Only hindsight, however, ascribes a secure future to the Republic from 1879. In fact, it was then very far from being secure.

To give the government a solid foundation, to develop loyalty to it in the thousands of communes of France, certain republican politicians turned to primary education. In a period lacking modern mass media, education seemed the best tool of propaganda at hand.

Education would not only buttress the Republic, it would also regenerate France. A conviction widely held was that the Prussian schoolmaster had defeated the French at

Sédan. A poem written in 1896, La Revanche du maître d'école, is an example of this climate of opinion:

Et ce fut lui [the German teacher] toujours, incarné
 dans Bismarck,
 Qui, volant un pays comme l'on vole un marc,
 Jeta du même geste au fond de sa besace,
 Avec nos cinq milliards, la Lorraine et l'Alsace.²

The German schoolmaster was the architect of their victory, a victory of strong national unity over French discord and weakness. The instituteur must eliminate that French inferiority.³

Educational pressure groups bloomed on the morrow of the defeat of 1870. Chief among these was Jean Macé's 'Ligue de l'Enseignement'. Although it was formed in the late sixties, its influence became strong only after the fall of the Second Empire. On a petition to the National Assembly in 1872--advocating obligatory, free, and laic primary education--it mustered some 1,200,000 signatures. It spawned other societies and influenced republican politicians.

The politician who more than any other was responsible for reform of primary education was Jules Ferry, a deputy from Lorraine. On April 10, 1870, he took his famous oath at the salle Molière in Paris: "I have made myself one promise: among all the problems of the present day I will choose one to which I will devote all my intelligence, soul, and heart, all my physical and moral power: that is the problem of popular education."⁴ Profoundly shaken by the debacle of the same year--and the divisions it wrought in France--he emphasized that proper popular education was the means leading to the end

of social and national unity. Unity was, indeed, the touchstone of Ferry's political thinking, according to Louis Legend, ⁵ the preeminent student of Ferry's intellectual development. For Ferry, "A government was . . . the conservative force which holds together the parts of the social corpus, amid the conflict of passions" ⁶ A democratic primary education imposed on all Frenchmen would make that task much easier.

The main stumbling-block was the Catholic Church. Church domination of primary education was too well-rooted to easily permit "the teacher sovereign in his school; the priest free in his church", as Paul Bert put it. ⁷ To Bert, a militant anticlerical, the Church was the undeniable foe of the Republic. In primary education its influence must be eradicated; the village schoolmaster must supplant the village cure.

And so followed that plethora of school laws that help give to the years 1879-1889 their unity as the laic period in French history. Already a law of 1878 had facilitated school building; another followed in 1883. As Jacques Ozouf writes, "between 1880 and 1914, France covered herself with schools, as formerly she had done with churches." ⁸

To form qualified teachers, the normal schools of the departments had to be upgraded. Guizot's education law of 1833 prescribed a men's normal school in every department, but not all had them, and those that did exist were very uneven in quality. Since the Falloux law of 1850, many normal schools

had become cours normaux annexed to clergy-dominated collèges. These cours normaux were abolished in 1879 to be replaced by bonafide primary normal schools. The law of August 9, 1879, provided for a girl's normal school in every department. In order to staff these schools, the government founded three national institutions in the early eighties--the écoles normales supérieures at Fontenay-aux Roses and Saint-Cloud and the École normale supérieure de jeunes filles at Sèvres. In the formation of these organizations--as in the general organization of education--the grey eminence was Ferdinand Buisson, Ferry's first Director of Primary Education, later a minister of education himself, and certainly one of the most influential men of the pre-World War I Third Republic.

The essential task was the creation of a free, obligatory, and laic public school system. The legislation designed for that end provoked a storm in the assembly and throughout France. Conservative and even moderate parliamentarians opposed the whole trinity. Obligatory schooling would destroy the liberty of both the child and the parents.⁹ Free education would make schooling seem less of a privilege; the teacher would no longer be respected. Laicity was feared most of all: conservatives did not want obligatory laic schools. The debates were ferocious. "During these long weeks", remarked Anatole de Monzie, "it seems that they are voting for God himself in the French Chamber."¹⁰ In the Senate oratory was the most exaggerated. The Vicomte de Logeril bitterly assailed Jules Ferry on March 21, 1882:

Suppose one moment that your schools are filled without difficulty, you will soon see that in a people without God, that is, without the principle of justice, men are without faith, teachers without integrity, women without honour and soldiers without courage.

May the God whom you repudiate ignore the apostasy which you are making of France and banish from my country such shame and degradation!¹¹

The legislation was passed by March 28, 1882. It required that children attend school from the age of six to the age of thirteen. Religious teaching was forbidden in public schools. Thursday was set aside so that the child might receive it elsewhere--hence, the debut of the Thursday cong , so dear to French children.

If the curriculum was laicized, so must be the personnel. The law of June 16, 1881, forbade teachers without recognized degrees to teach in public schools. This was aimed at the clerics with "letters of obedience", hundreds of whom taught in public schools since the Falloux Law of 1850. A law of October 30, 1886, required that all public school personnel be non-clerical. A short delay was allowed for the complete execution of this law. The same law codified and updated all existing primary school legislation and completely organized the complicated system, from Minister of Education through the acad mies, down to the instituteur. Finally, the law of July 19, 1889, made the teacher a functionary of the state, by which he would be paid. No longer did he receive his salary from the commune.

To replace religious teaching in the new laic school a controversial morals and civics course was created, largely by Paul Bert. It reflected the philosophy of the chief proponents of the school system: Bert, Ferry, Buisson, Gambetta, Felix Pécaut, René Goblet, Léon Bourgeois, and others. All were freemasons,¹² and their philosophy was consequently rationalistic. It clearly had no place for Church morality. What these men aspired to inculcate in French children was a new and wider sense of morality based on natural laws. It was a naive, optimistic creed worthy of Flaubert's Homais. For Jules Ferry "there is only one morality . . . and this morality is unified and clear in its precepts" ¹³ Such an ethos is clearly in the tradition of the men of the Enlightenment, who believed, too, that universal laws, based on positive, scientific fact, could be ascertained by right methods of research and thinking. These men were not Positivists in any rigorous fashion; yet most were familiar with the writings of Auguste Comte or of his disciples Émile Littré and Pierre Laffitte, and they were influenced by them.¹⁴ These philosophical propensities, together with a neo-Jacobin patriotism, were the base of the morals and civics course.

The course was a direct affront to the Church. As early as 1883 four textbooks were placed on the Index: Gabriel Compayré's Les Éléments d'instruction morale et civique, Jules Steeg's L'Homme et le citoyen, Mme Greville's L'Instruction morale et civique des jeunes filles, and Paul Bert's

L'Instruction civique à l'école. The ungodliness of the course was the subject of much debate in the Chamber.

The method of teaching the course conformed to the ideas of its founders. According to Ferry, "the teacher should always start with what the children know, and then, proceeding from the known to the unknown, from the easy to the difficult, should lead them by logical succession of oral questions or written exercise to discover the consequences of a principle."¹⁵

The most successful text was G. Bruno's Le Tour de la France par deux enfants,¹⁶ which became an official part of the school curriculum in 1882. The book chronicles the wanderings of two orphan brothers through France, starting, appropriately enough, from Alsace-Lorraine. The events of each stage of their trip are used to illustrate some desirable quality of character. Chapter III is intended to demonstrate "Fraternal love and love of the fatherland"; chapter IV, "Charity toward the poor"; chapter XLV, "Honesty in commerce".

This moral and patriotic tone pervaded other parts of the new public school curriculum. In history the Third Republic is an end-point of a long, upward progression toward the Good. Certain events accelerated that progression--especially the French Revolution; others like the reign of Louis XIV, retarded the eventual birth of the Republic and are clearly bad. In one text the simplistic aura of primary school historiography is very evident:

BEFORE THE REVOLUTION: 'le Roi'	AFTER THE REVOLUTION: 'La Loi'
1) The king was sovereign	1) The Nation was sovereign
.....
6) Liberty to work did not exist	6) Liberty to work exists
7) Equal justice for all did not exist	7) Equal justice for all exists ¹⁷

In another text, written by Alphonse Aulard for higher primary classes, Napoleon III's accession is presented as follows: "The people, subjugated and blinded, approved him by more than seven million votes. France would one day have to pay dearly for this blameworthy abandonment of her liberty."¹⁸

Geography was taught in a similar manner. One article of the period, intended for teachers, stipulated that the map of France should be prominently displayed in class so that the child "will know that there is no country more fertile or rich, or favored by a milder climate." The child must see the unique situation of France between Mediterranean and Atlantic. By examining the location of the colonies the child should perceive that only a country which "tries to extend its civilizing influence throughout the entire universe" can be happy and prosperous.¹⁹

Even art and music in the schools revealed the same ideals. In one report of 1881 on art in the classroom the author asks rhetorically: "Aren't we authorized to desire for the intellectual culture of the country, for moral progress, a truly artistic imagery, introduced in the schools and from there spreading into every family; and using art at the same time to instruct, to propagate the teaching of science, morality, patriotism?"²⁰

In another report of the same year an inspector wrote of "the necessity of diffusing music in the masses as a means of teaching morality."²¹ The preconceptions of the Republican chiefs of staff²² permeated the entire school system and curriculum.

To consider primary school reform as merely of pedagogical significance would be a gross error. The school issue exacerbated an already deep division in French life: the division between Catholic and Laic, between Right and Left.²³ The dichotomy between these two modes of thinking--which the school debate helped to sharpen--was to come to a climax in the Dreyfus Affair. Those who see only antisemitism in the Affair ignore the fact that Catholic antilaicism was grafted onto that bias, making it more potent and popular. As early as 1887 a popular work--La Fille de la France juive ou l'école sans Dieu²⁴--signalled this development in intellectual history. By the Affair antilaicism and antisemitism were merged. In La Croix, January 28, 1898, one finds this statement: "One would not have to be a great intellectual to understand that the school law, which excluded qualified schoolmasters because they were followers of Christ . . . came from the same Pharisees who persuaded . . . the people . . . to vote for the death of innocent Jesus."²⁵ La Croix du Morbihan, taking to task the

putative avarice of girl students at the Vannes normal school, wrote, July 24, 1898: "Ah! there it is, LA MORALE LAÏQUE . . . a little gold buys blood Who is the Jew who found that admirable solution?" One concludes that the school debate clarified and hardened the two prises de position which culminated in the Affair, in the Dreyfusard and anti-Dreyfusard.²⁶

One gains a good idea of the impact of the school as a political and cultural issue by examining the press of the period. In the Catholic press the "école sans Dieu", the "lois scélérates", and the "instituteur impie", are recurring themes. Some authors openly advocated resistance to the laic laws. On October 2, 1882, Louis Veuillot's Univers carried the following exhortation:

In the name of reason and of good sense, in the name of religion, in the name of patriotism, we must curse this day of disastrous innovation, which binds our schools, our children, to an experience of education contrary to the national religion, contrary to political wisdom. It is up to the Catholics to join together and to act to avoid all the evil that must result from this education.²⁷

La Croix, of August 17, 1893, heaped maledictions on voters who condoned the school laws by voting for certain candidates:

Voter, it is you who snatches the child from the arms of his Christian father and mother and delivers him to the atheistic instituteur. It is you who forbid the name of God to be uttered in the schools.

Voter, it is your atheistic laws which multiply all over France, thievery, suicides, homicides, parricides²⁸

This last argument employed by La Croix is ubiquitous in the Catholic press. The school is at the source of all that is bad in contemporary France.

In the Breton press the issue was equally important. The school often commanded the front page of Breton newspapers. For example in "Le Noël du Petit Laïque", the lead article of Le Dolois (published at Dol, in Ille-et-Vilaine), December 27, 1896, we read of a child at a laic school who knows neither of Jesus nor of Christmas and who, though curious, cannot learn about these matters because of the impiety of his teachers and because his father (as befits an unChristian father) is a chronic alcoholic.

In the provincial Croix, too, front-page treatment was frequent. In September, when children went back to school, La Croix was always vociferous in its propaganda for the écoles libres and against the public schools. In 1900 the Croix des Côtes-du-Nord (Saint-Brieuc) published front-page articles on September 2 ("Toujours l'École!"), September 9 ("Le Choix de l'École!"), and September 30 ("Les Promesses!"). And the same paper held back none of its bile in its many references to the instituteur. Its front-page article of July 10, 1904, notes: "In the State, the wind is blowing toward irreligion; the State Schoolmasters, from whom they have taken away the bearings and the check of religious faith, follows this breeze, and soon lands on those banks where internationalism, anticlericalism, and anarchy flower." Again, the teacher and the school are endemic to all evil in the country.²⁹

In the republican press the school and its teacher are, predictably, the object of the same panegyrics we encountered in republican politicians. In La République (Saint-Malo), of October 16, 1903, we find a poem entitled "L'École":

The school! A simple word and a whole future!
 A name which by itself symbolizes Hope,
 Which blooms in hearts, and, suddenly, gives forth
 For the well-being of the People: Art, Progress and
 Science. . . .

Even without the French rhyme the almost mystical reverence to the school is very evident. Schoolmasters are, according to La Chronique de Vitré (Ille-et-Vilaine) of July 31, 1898, the "torches of the nation". The phrase can be found, in similar form, in many other Republican newspapers. There is hardly an issue where the school is not mentioned during the three and a half decades preceding World War I.

These quotations illustrate two pervasive French mentalities, continually at odds with each other.³⁰ One must not lose sight of this political and intellectual background if one would understand the role of the village schoolmaster in France before 1914.

Brittany, on a map, appears to be a monolithic region, a region easy to characterize. Nothing could be further from the truth. If we glance at its history, we realize that this region is as complex as any in France. For Brittany has many roots. First came the Gauls, who arrived in what they would

call "Armor" (the country of the sea), several centuries before Christ. Their hegemony was soon contested by the invading Celts and finally toppled by the Roman invasions in the decade of the fifties before Christ.³¹ Roman Armor was subjected in turn to a wave of Barbarian invasions in the third century A.D., culminating in a general slaughter in the year 275. These Frank and Alemanni invaders did not destroy--as some historians had thought--the Gallo-Roman civilization of Armor, but they did seriously impair its incipient institutions.³²

The Bretons arrived in the first decades of the sixth century. They were primarily Welsh, driven from their homeland by Scots.³³ The Bretons came to dominate a good part of Armor, but a portion of the region remained thoroughly Romanized. This eastern area included Rennes and Nantes.³⁴

Other influences followed. Charlemagne invaded Brittany in 799, and the Carolingian renaissance left its imprint there.³⁵ In the ninth century the Normans began a wave of invasions. These continued into the tenth century and created havoc in Brittany by extirpating Breton ecclesiastical and political leadership. Finally, in 937, Alain Barbetorte retook Nantes from the Normans and reconquered the rest of the occupied territories. Feudal nobles who owed their origins to the defense against the Norman invasion then ruled Brittany for four centuries. In the fourteenth century the area became embroiled in the Hundred Years' War. It emerged ruined from that conflict but rose again under the Montfort dukes.³⁶

Finally, in 1491, came the famous marriage³⁷ of Anne de Bretagne with Charles VIII of France, a marriage which prepared the way for the permanent union of Brittany and France. In 1532 this union was completed, and Brittany, was, henceforth, a French province.

Sometimes it was a recalcitrant province. As we have seen, Brittany had a unique and multivariied historical background, and this, combined with its relative geographical remoteness from the rest of France, encouraged Bretons to be independent-minded. Thus, Brittany zealously guarded the privileges of its Estates and of its parlement at Rennes (one of the strongest of the ancien régime). The province revolted against Louis XIV and against the republic in the 1790's. Her local clerics and nobles fanatically ruled their villages and domains, impeding centralized control of the area.³⁸

There is something unique, too, about the climate of Brittany. Most obviously, there is the proximity of the sea. Consequently, a prevalent mistiness hangs in the air, especially in winter. Anyone who has seen the effect of the mist on the gorse can understand why Brittany is partial to legends and superstitions. There is no finer description of the ethereal character of Brittany than that of L. Gallouédec: "Everywhere, you inspire dreams, withdrawal and mystery, overpowering melancholy, from which one can no more disengage himself than from the light and transparent mist which, when autumn comes, spreads to infinity, the silver strands of its diaphanous veil over your countryside."³⁹ One thinks immediately of Châteaubriand's

sad and romantic depictions of his native Combourg area (in René and Mémoires d'Outre-Tombe).

Yet Brittany has its unromantic side. It is a poor, rough area, and this has had an inevitable effect on its people. Arthur Young was dazzled by Nantes after passing, in autumn 1788 through ". . . all the wastes, the deserts, the heath, ling, furze, broom and bog . . ." ⁴⁰ of what could only have been Breton countryside. This landscape, as well as the rough sea (particularly in the Finistère), make Brittany less than "douce".

But for all that Brittany cannot be considered an entity separate from France. If it is poor, so is Auvergne. If it had its own language, so, too, did Provençals, Alsatians, and Basques. ⁴¹ If its people have a rather particular character, ⁴² so do Normans and Parisians. Its history is interwoven with French history. To call it a nation, as some nationalist Breton historians do, ⁴³ is to me, incomprehensible.

Brittany, then, can stand as a test-case for this study of primary education in France. It is an area which has a definite makeup, yet one from which the student can extrapolate wider conclusions. Let us now examine its educational background within a general history of French primary education, emphasizing

the lot of the pre-Ferry instituteur.

Comparatively little is known about primary education of the ancien regime, in Brittany or elsewhere. What can be said is that it was very uneven, differing from area to area, very rudimentary, mainly for the "better" classes, and controlled entirely by the Church. Before the Revolution the attitude toward a comprehensive scheme of state education was understandably negative; an educated people is a threat to absolutism. So the people were neglected. This state of affairs aroused the wrath of only a few reformers--like the Encyclopedists and the Breton, La Châlotais. Brittany was perhaps more backward in primary education than some other regions, or so thought the Count de Sérent (Morbihan); in a remarkable enlightened letter to the mayor of Sarzeau, September 25, 1787, advising the creation of a school there, he noted: "I have often groaned because of the ignorance and rusticity of our peasants and I have often wondered why we didn't imitate the examples of the other provinces"44 The Count heavily criticized the Breton priests for their inferior teaching but, for moral reasons, preferred that they teach in the new school. "Teaching in the hands of the Clergy", he held, ". . . has an important quality for youth."45

The Revolution came soon after, and the petites écoles of the clergy were abolished. To replace them revolutionary reformers wanted to initiate a genuine system of free and obligatory primary schools, staffed by instituteurs.⁴⁶ Limits of space forbid examination of the proposals of Lakanal, Condorcet, and Talleyrand; suffice it to say that revolutionary aspirations in education were too far ahead of the times. As Antoine Prost writes succinctly, "The Revolution does not have the means to carry out its policy."⁴⁷ In the Finistère the teaching ranks in the new public schools were largely filled by those whom the Revolution had ruined: ". . . court clerks, notaries, lawyers, customs clerks, even defrocked priests"⁴⁸ Unfamiliar with pedagogical techniques, paid capriciously, these teachers were no match for the rough peasantry forced to come to school. In one school of the Finistère (circa 1794), the children, beating their sabots on the tables, shouted:

Bonhomme, bonhomme
 Tu n'es pas le maître dans ta maison
 Ah! Ah! 49

After Thermidor the situation rapidly deteriorated. No legislation--including the establishment of an École normale supérieure in the Year III--could succeed, given the political instability of the time. What Louis Ogès concluded for the Finistère could probably be extended to the rest of Brittany: "In sum, the efforts of the revolutionary Assemblies to replace the educational organization of the Ancien Régime by a different organization, were a total failure."⁵⁰

During the Consulate and Empire there was no improvement. Napoleon neglected primary education, concentrating instead on forming an elite through the new "Université de France". A law of May 1, 1802, stipulating that each commune should take care of primary education, had little practical effect. In a section of the Department of the Var, in 1803-1804, only two of fifty-six women polled and 102 of 237 men could sign their names. Almost all the male illiterates were peasants.⁵¹ In Brittany the situation was no better. The Finistère had few schools and teachers, and those that did exist were very poor in quality. A typical schoolmaster was the one at Fouesnant in 1812, described by a contemporary source, as an "homme dérangé et de capacité nulle."⁵² About all Napoleon did do for primary education was to lay the basis for its administration during the Third Republic by his political centralization and network of académies.

The Restoration made little advance. Again the problem of personnel remained. Seven of fifteen teachers at Rennes in 1817 were former convicts.⁵³ Political antagonisms intensified the struggle between proponents of Royer-Collard's new system of mutual education and those of the religious-oriented method of the "Frères de la Doctrine chrétienne" and the "Frères de Lamennais". Education was totally under the jurisdiction of the bishops, who favoured only the larger, religious establishments.⁵⁴ Communes lacked resources to support schools. On November 28, 1828, the mayor of Arzon (Morbihan) wrote to the

prefect (the Count de Chazelles) on the difficulty of keeping a school in the commune. A succession of schoolmasters had left during the twenties for lack of pay and because of the poor attendance of students. "You must conclude, therefore, that a schoolmaster cannot live in my commune."⁵⁵ Mutual schools (where students taught each other and where religion was not the only subject of importance) were ephemeral, too, ". . . because they were supported by liberals and were accused of furnishing arms against religion and legitimacy."⁵⁶ The high illiteracy rate of the Breton military recruits of 1833 is an indication of the level of education in Brittany during the Restoration:

Finistère	79.9 per cent illiterate
Morbihan	74.8 per cent illiterate
Côtes-du-Nord	73.6 per cent illiterate
Loire-Atlantique	63.5 per cent illiterate
Ille-et-Vilaine	61.0 per cent illiterate ⁵⁷

Primary education was still in its infancy.

With Guizot we enter the "take-off" period. His legislation of 1833 stipulated that every commune must have a school, every department a normal school; communes must tax themselves for education; in every commune, supervision of education was placed under a committee of notables, including curé and mayor. Teachers must have at least a brevet élémentaire.⁵⁸ This was ambitious legislation, and not surprisingly, its application was not always successful. For example, only one école normale in Brittany, that at Rennes, survived the July Monarchy. In 1842 it had 100 students, in 1849, 125 students.⁵⁹ Most of

these graduates taught in the bigger towns, and as before, country schools were often staffed with incompetents. Moreover, the curé often dictated the choice of the local schoolmaster. The mayor of Beuzec-Capsizun (Finistère) wrote to the prefect, February 18, 1834, asking that he ratify the village priest's choice of a schoolmaster. The prospective teacher was the curé's new beadle--schoolmasters before the Ferry laws were often beadles, cantors, church-bell ringers or church sweepers⁶⁰--and his only qualifications were the ability to speak correct French and to write legibly. The prefect's reply (March 6, 1834) is agreeable to the choice.⁶¹ Once appointed such teachers were usually subjected to the curé's direction. The teacher had also to worry about his material welfare. Salaries varied greatly: while the teacher at Douarnenez (Finistère) in 1833 received 800 francs a year, as well as five francs per paying student, at Daoulas, near Brest, the teacher received only ninety francs, with 1.40 francs per paying student.⁶² In the same period, the most niggardly of cotton manufacturers were paying their workers 600-700 francs a year which, nonetheless, was "just enough to keep from starving", according to Robert Mandrou.⁶³ So we have teachers like the one at Saint-André des Eaux (Loire-Atlantique) who was forced to engage in farming to supplément his income; his attic was full of hay and a makeshift barn was attached to the schoolhouse.⁶⁴ Others did outside work like road-measuring or even giving hair-cuts.

The Guizot law, then, did not emancipate teachers. Nor did it guarantee a uniform level of instruction. Education was still abysmal in many country areas. What the law did do was to provide a base for the Ferry laws. Primary inspectors (for conscriptions corresponding roughly to arrondissements) and inspectors of the académies (for each department) were functioning by 1845.⁶⁵ And by the end of the July Monarchy only 15 per cent of the communes of Brittany lacked at least one boy's school.⁶⁶ But sporadic attendance and uncertain quality marred this quantitative advance.

In 1848 revolutionary educational ideals were revived by Hippolyte Carnot. His legislative proposals included free and obligatory education; and though he wanted to retain religious instruction, he also envisaged the addition of a morals and civics course, as well as a course in agricultural methods.⁶⁷ But, as in the past, educational reform was doomed because of a fluid political situation. Instead, a quite different law, sponsored by the Count de Falloux, was passed on March 15, 1850.⁶⁸ It was a reflection of the conservative reaction that began with the June Days. Although it did decree that the minimum wage for teachers would henceforth be 600 francs per year and that every commune of over 800 inhabitants must have a girl's school,⁶⁹ the rest of its legislation was perhaps less enlightened. Enshrining "liberté d'enseignement" as an official state doctrine, it facilitated a rapid rise in Catholic schools and cleric teachers--principally by allowing clerics several kinds of dubious "equivalent degrees", in lieu of the previously

mandatory brevet élémentaire.⁷⁰ The new Superior Council of Public Education and departmental academic councils for supervising education were both Church-controlled; and under the Second Empire curé ruled instituteur as never before.⁷¹

In reports on teachers of Brittany one notices that the primary inspector often questioned the curé as to the performance of the village schoolmaster. Curés could burst into classrooms at any time to check on the teaching of what became a Church-oriented curriculum.⁷² The Second Empire, then, saw the instituteur at his nadir, and generally education was dominated by the Church.

With the 1870's we encounter those political elements which, as we have seen, effected a re-organization of public education. The instituteur was to become the Republic in French communes. And so began the confrontation of two village authorities, schoolmaster and priest.

FOOTNOTES

¹ The best analysis of the battle for the Republic in the 1870's is Daniel Halévy, La République des ducs (Paris, 1937). Reasonable accounts are also found in the standard works of Denis Brogan and Jacques Chastenet.

² Léon L. Berthaut, La Revanche du maître d'école: (poésie dédiée à la société d'instruction populaire de Rennes et dite par l'auteur au banquet annuel de la société--le 13 décembre, 1896). The poem concludes:

"Chante, vieux coq gaulois, et narque la vautour:
Notre maître d'école aura bientôt son tour!"

[Note: I have translated most French quotations save those which lose their flavor in translation.]

³ See Claude Digeon, La Crise allemande de la pensée française 1870-1914 (Paris, 1959). A typical literary product of the immediate post-war period is Ernest Renan's, La Réforme intellectuelle et morale de la France (Calmann-Lévy ed.; Paris, 1967). The idea of French decadence and the need for national purification is the dominant theme. For this, "public education is a subject of capital importance . . . We envy German superiority in this regard." (pp. 144-45).

⁴ Quoted in Georges Duveau, Les Instituteurs (Paris, 1966), p. 110.

⁵ L'Influence du positivisme dans l'oeuvre scolaire de Jules Ferry; Les origines de la laïcité, (Paris, 1961), pp. 101-05.

⁶ Speech at the Republican Association (December 21, 1888) in Paul Robiquet, ed., Discours et opinions de Jules Ferry (Paris, 1897), VII, 21.

⁷ Paul Bert, lecture at the 'Cirque d'hiver' for free laic schools, August 28, 1888, in Bert, L'Instruction religieuse dans l'école (Paris, n.d.), p. 15.

⁸ Ozouf, Nous les maîtres d'école; Autobiographies d'instituteurs de la Belle Époque. (Paris, 1967), p. 7.

⁹ In the Senate, March 13, 1882, the Duc de Broglie described the teacher snatching the child from his poor father who needed him for work in the fields. Annales du Sénat; Débats parlementaires, 1882 (du 10 janvier au 9 août), pp. 209-213. This argument was frequently employed by the opposition.

¹⁰ Quoted in Duveau, Les Instituteurs, p. 116. A contemporary Catholic polemic noted that God was in the Senate watching the second trial of Christ. M. L. Hamon, L'École athée ou l'abrutissement obligatoire (Paris, 1882), p. 11.

¹¹ Annales du Sénat, 1882, (du 10 janvier au 9 août), p. 325.

¹² So were Armand Fallières, Alexandre Millerand, René Viviani, and Joseph Caillaux, which shows how important Freemasonry was in the Republican camp. J. P. Azéma and M. Winock, Naissance et mort: La III^e République (1870-1940) (Paris, 1970), pp. 147-48.

¹³ Speech to teachers at a pedagogical congress, in Revue pédagogique, (1881), (pt. I), 581.

¹⁴ John Eros refers to their generation as "The Positivist Generation of French Republicanism", in Sociological Review, III (December, 1965), pp. 255-77. A positive optimism does pervade many of the speeches made by republicans at their myriad ceremonies and banquets. A good example is that of the sub-prefect of Lannion (Côtes-du-Nord), at the school prize ceremonies at Lannion on July 28, 1882. He concludes: "L'Instruction n'est-elle pas un phare lumineux qui éclaire le monde et qui tient dans sa main le génie de la liberté!" (Le Lannionais, August 5, 1882). The scientific inclinations of Republicans are also significant. One should not forget that Marcelin Berthelot had been a chemist, Auguste Scheurer-Kastner a student of industrial chemistry, Charles Freycinet a mining engineering, Paul Painlevé a mathematician, Émile Combes and George Clemenceau doctors. Harry W. Paul, "The Debate over the Bankruptcy of Science in 1895", French Historical Studies, V (Spring, 1968), 300.

15 Ferry, "Program for Elementary Education", in F. Buisson and F. E. Farrington ed., French Educational Ideals of Today (New York, 1919), pp. 20-21.

16 See Aimé Dupuy, "Histoire sociale et manuels scolaires: Les livres de lecture de G. Bruno", Revue d'histoire économique et sociale, XXXI (1953), 128-51. The book sold over 400,000 copies a year through the 1880's and the nineties.

17 Quoted in Jacques and Mona Ozouf, "Le Thème du patriotisme dans les manuels primaires", Le Mouvement social, No. 49 (October-December, 1964), p. 8.

18 A. Aulard and A. Debidour, Notions d'histoire générale et histoire de France depuis l'antiquité jusqu' à nos jours (Paris, 1904). Aulard wrote the section on 1661 to the present.

19 Charles Bigot, "L'Enseignement patriotique dans les écoles primaires", Revue pédagogique 1884 (pt. II), 194. By stressing France's perfect geographical situation, the author is undoubtedly referring, in part, to a "fact" often cited in primary school geography: France's hexagonal symmetry. See N. B. Smith, "The Idea of the French Hexagon", French Historical Studies, VI (Fall, 1969), pp. 139-55.

20 France, Éducation nationale, Ministère de l'Instruction publique, Commission de la décoration des écoles et de l'imagerie scolaire (Paris, 1881), p. 34.

21 France . . . , Rapports sur l'enseignement du chant dans les écoles primaires (Paris, 1881), p. 34.

22 The military analogy is not far-fetched when one thinks of the "bataillons scolaires", military training units in primary schools organized under the aegis of Ferry and Paul Déroulède in the early eighties.

23 In politics the lines were rigorously drawn on the school issue. On the Left Ferry and Jean Jaurès might disagree profoundly on the function of the laic school. For Jaurès the school and the instituteur should be used to breed socialism in the countryside. (Harvey Goldberg, "Jaurès and Education: The Enlightenment in French Socialism", Harvard Educational Review, XXVII (Winter, 1957), 22-26). But both were clearly Laics, as were almost all Leftists; while the majority of Rightists were Catholic throughout the period of the Third Republic.

24 Cited in Pierre Pierrard's excellent new book Juifs et Catholiques français (Paris, 1970), p. 71.

25 Quoted in Mona Ozouf, L'École, L'Église et La République 1871-1914 (Paris, 1963), p. 196. This little book in the "Kiosque" series on the press is indispensable for this subject.

26 Duveau asserts, perhaps too bluntly, that the instituteurs "made the France of the Dreyfus Affair." Les Instituteurs, p. 120.

27 Quoted in Mona Ozouf, École, Église, p. 82.

28 Quoted in Ibid., p. 185.

29 The reductio ad absurdum of this viewpoint is found in another Catholic newspaper, Le Militant (Brest), for January 31, 1914. A long article entitled "The lascivious, obligatory dance" maintained that the tango was being dictated to Frenchmen by the same forces which created the "école sans Dieu" and made it obligatory.

30 A well-known French journalist, Robert Escarpit, wrote as late as 1961: "One would be unable, then, to reduce the quarrel to simple problems of school organization, nor to cloud it over in metaphysico-religious controversies. Laicity and clericalism are conflicting attitudes which are bound up with the fundamental values of peoples, the basic structures of societies, the political institutions of states." Escarpit, École laïque, école du peuple (Paris, 1961), p. 48.

31 Jean Delumeau et al., Histoire de la Bretagne (Toulouse, 1969), pp. 1-87. This is by far the best history of Brittany

and the one on which I rely. It is in the series for regional history, "Univers de France". I have also used Joseph Char-dronnet, Histoire de la Bretagne (Paris, 1965).

32 Delumeau, Bretagne, p. 104.

33 Ibid., pp. 118-120. In modern historiography the Scots have replaced the Anglo-Saxons as the instigators of this flight.

34 Ibid., pp. 121-34.

35 Ibid., p. 136.

36 Ibid., Chapter V.

37 This marriage is the object of much Breton scorn, Anne de Bretagne, one hears today, was not really wooed by Charles but, rather, seduced him.

38 Anne Douglas Sedgewick (Mrs. Basil de Sélincourt) in A Childhood in Brittany Eighty Years Ago (Boston, 1927), remembers that even in the 1840's her noble mother still required the peasants of their domain (near Quimper) to kneel before her, as they had done during the ancien régime. Ibid., p. 21.

39 L. Gallouédec, La Bretagne, (Paris, 1917), p. 252.

40 Quoted in C. B. A. Behrens, The Ancien Regime (London, 1967), p. 12.

⁴¹ That language was in decline by the nineteenth century, flourishing only in the Finistère and part of the Morbihan. In the Loire-Atlantique, Ille-et-Vilaine, and half of the Côtes-du-Nord the language had never been in use at all in modern Breton history. [Note: I have used the modern name Loire-Atlantique, for what was, until recently, the Loire-Inférieure.]

⁴² According to John Ardagh, "the Bretons are humorous and individual--the Irish of France." Ardagh, The New French Revolution (New York, 1968), p. 131.

⁴³ For example, A. de la Borderie. Writing in the 1890's he thought that "Brittany is better than a province; she is a people, a real nation and a society apart" Quoted in Joseph Chardronnet, Histoire de Bretagne, p. 7.

⁴⁴ "Mémoire inédit sur l'instruction populaire avant la Révolution" (presented by T. Lacroix), Bulletin de la Société polymathique du Morbihan, LXXVI, (1936), 91. Brittany was perhaps not the worst area in education. The Creuse, according to Georges Duveau, was 95 per cent illiterate on the eve of the Revolution. Duveau, Instituteurs, p. 9.

⁴⁵ "Mémoire", 96. Teachers in the petites écoles of the ancien régime were normally clerics.

⁴⁶ This word became the definitive term for teacher in the law of December 12, 1792. (Duveau, p. 3). There is really no perfect equivalent in English, since our primary school teachers were never conceived as "instituting" state dogmas.

⁴⁷ Prost, Histoire de l'enseignement en France 1800-1967 (Paris, 1968), p. 90. This is by far the best history of modern French education. Also useful is Félix Ponteil, Histoire de l'enseignement en France (Paris, 1966).

⁴⁸ Louis Ogès, "L'Instruction dans le Finistère pendant la Révolution" (part IV), Bulletin de la société archéologique du Finistère, LXIX (1939), . . 80.

⁴⁹ Ogès, "Instruction . . . Révolution", . . 91.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 143.

⁵¹ M. Agulhon, "Sur l'instruction élémentaire en Provence intérieure au temps du Consulat", Annales du Midi, LXXVI (1964), . . 556-58.

⁵² Quoted in L. Ogès, "L'Instruction dans le Finistère sous le Consulat et L'Empire 1799-1815", Bull. de la soc. arch. Fin., LXXII (1945-46), . . 40.

- 53 Raymond Sancier, "L'Enseignement primaire en Bretagne de 1815 à 1850", (Part I), Mémoires de la société d'histoire et d'archéologie de Bretagne, XXXII (1952), 64.
- 54 Ibid., 66-83.
- 55 Archives départementales du Morbihan (hereinafter A. D. Morb.), 9T2(10): États de situation des écoles avec correspondance . . . 1828-1829.
- 56 This is the conclusion of M. E. Corgne on the Morbihan: "Les Écoles d'enseignement mutuel dans le Morbihan sous la Restauration", Bull. de la soc. poly. du Morb., LXXIX (1940), p. 11.
- 57 Sancier, "Ens. prim. en Bret.", 88.
- 58 This was the degree which, during the Guizot era, indicated mastery of the fundamentals of reading, writing, spelling, and arithmetic. In that period, with inspectorships in their infancy, the degree varied in value from area to area. By the Ferry era there was a more standardized and difficult examination, embracing subjects like science, geometry, algebra, history. The degree was conferred after completion of the école primaire supérieure. The higher degree for teachers, conferred after an examination at the école normale was the brevet supérieur.

59 Sancier, "Ens. prim.", (pt. II), XXXIII (1953), 161.

60 Duveau, Instituteurs, pp. 57-63.

61 Archives départementales du Finistère (hereinafter A. D. Fin.). T-Dossiers individuels du personnel. Instituteurs 1800-1899.

62 Ogès, "L'Instruction primaire dans le Finistère sous le régime de la loi Guizot", Bull. de la soc. arch. Fin. LXI (1934), 150-51. Teachers were paid "rétribution scolaire" by the students who could pay. The poorer, non-paying students were often relegated to a different area of the class. This state of affairs lasted until the law of 1881 established completely free education.

63 Georges Duby and Robert Mandrou, Histoire de la civilisation française, II (5th ed.; Paris, 1968), p. 193.

64 Archives départementales de la Loire-Atlantique (hereinafter A. D. Loire-At.). 18T1: Plaintes-affaires disciplinaires. Incidents divers mettant en cause les instituteurs et institutrices (publics et privés) 1829-1865. Detail mentioned in letter from the primary inspector of Nantes to the prefect, August 17, 1849.

65 Prost, Enseignement en France, p. 93.

66 Sancier, "Ens. prim. en Bret.", pt. II, : 173.

67 See Paul Carnot, Hippolyte Carnot et le ministère de l'instruction publique de la II^e République (Paris, 1948), pp. 42-52.

68 For the Falloux law, see M. Hebert and M. Carnec, La Loi Falloux et la liberté de l'enseignement (La Rochelle, 1953).

69 The Guizot law made no provision for girl's schools. Still, in Brittany, there were in 1844, 748 girl's schools, controlled, generally, by the Church. Sancier, "Ens.", pt. II, : 156.

70 Brittany was among the areas where Catholic teaching ("enseignement congréganiste") progressed most rapidly from the passage of the Falloux law. Maps in Prost, Enseignement en France, p. 181.

71 In Flaubert's Bouvard et Pécuchet we have the first literary depiction of this village theme.

72 Of five books in the public school at Bignon (Morbihan) in 1852, four, according to the report of the inspector of Pontivy, were the following: Devoirs des Chrétiens, Abrégé

d'histoire sainte, Le Psautier, and Catéchisme du diocèse.

A. D. Morb." T492-Instruction primaire: Livres en usage
dans les ecoles publiques et libres 1852-1882.

CHAPTER II

SCHOOL AND CHURCH: TEACHER AND PRIEST

When one approaches a Breton village, he is invariably confronted by a preeminent structure at the center of the commune: the church. It exudes a certain majesty, as its spires soar against the wind-blown, eternal clouds of the Breton sky. That suggestion of the eternal is enhanced by remnants of the past nearby: the cemetery adjoining the church, the stone war memorial bearing the names of those who died in the Great War.

The magnetic attraction of the church is soon forgotten as the visitor speeds away in his automobile. For the Breton living in or near the village eighty years ago the church could never be forgotten. Its bells echoed out to the peasant in the field, marking the passage of time. Baptism, communion, marriage, Sunday mass, funeral--all took place there. His entire life revolved around the church, and for him, too, the church must have seemed eternal.¹

Brittany was one of the most religious areas in France during the latter decades of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century. All over the countryside wooden and stone calvaries guarded the fields. Sailors and fishermen, preparing for hazardous voyages, offered elaborate prayers to the Virgin Mary in the company of all the villagers.² Mass pilgrimages and pardons (a typically Breton ceremony) occupied the

faithful. To explain this pervasive sense of piety, one must not forget the effect of the climate, the precarious quality of existence, and the strong influence of local priests and nobles.

The church was, then, of vital importance in Breton life. Against it in the late nineteenth century was ranged a new power, the laic school and its schoolmaster. Collision of the two forces was inevitable.

In the Breton village the representative of the church was the curé; and by virtue of the power of the church, he was usually one of the most important men in the commune. It was to the curé that people came with their troubles. His moral authority and his degree of literacy set him above the ordinary villager.³ Now he was threatened by a system of education which repudiated Church dogma and which aimed at wooing a whole generation toward the new Republican religion. Concern for status--as well as solicitude for the souls of children and parents about to be corrupted by laic values--probably underlay his hostility toward the instituteur and the laic school.

To fight his adversary the village priest had a considerable arsenal of weapons. He could, for example, use the parish bulletin, which he controlled, to propagandize against the laic school. The direct, authoritarian style of the rural

parish bulletin was very effective. In the Bulletin paroissial d'Acigné (Ille-et-Vilaine) of September, 1912, parents were warned not to send children to the laic school if there was an école libre nearby. ". . . Remember the divine law: Your children are baptised; they cannot and must not attend any but 'baptised' schools."

Besides the parish bulletins, clerical newspapers were also at the priest's disposal. We have seen how these newspapers were in the vanguard of the anti-school campaign. Being one of the countryside's litterati the village priest often contributed anonymous articles denouncing the Godless schools. And being in the village where he could pick up reports from parishioners he could supply specific details on the supposed abuses of the laic school or of its schoolmaster.

He had other, more effective means of combat. The Sunday sermon offered a weekly opportunity to discredit the opposition. The curé had his flock before him; his message had impact. After an emotional sermon by the curé at Saint-Nicholas-du Pélem (Côtes-du-Nord), in January, 1889, most of the little girl students of the laic institutrice left the church in tears. The sermon contained references to laic students throwing mud on Jesus' crib and stones at a statue of the Virgin Mary. According to the teacher one little girl told her father after the sermon that all the laic girls would go to hell while those of the nun teachers would go to paradise after their deaths.⁴

In a series of sermons given by the vicar at Ploubèzre (Côte-du-Nord), the tone is also exaggerated. One of these sermons, as reported by the adjunct teacher⁵ there to the inspector of the academy, begins as follows:

There is a man in the commune who tells you frightful things. This man already wears the collar of death; he also wears a red tie and passes through the streets with his hands in his pockets. He likes a Prussian as well as a Frenchman: he is a "bad patriot". What must be done with him? Well! we must despise him, we must attach a big stone around his neck and push him to the bottom of the sea.⁶

This last line is perhaps a joke on the part of the curé. But his antipathy toward the teacher is quite clear in the subsequent sermons quoted in this letter. Most significant is the castigation of teachers in general as pseudo-doctors preaching mysterious new scientific doctrines. Again, we are aware of the clergy's genuine fear of the invasion of their domain by a new and alien power.

A more dishonest way of blackening the teacher's reputation was by the use of poison letters. When a new teacher came to Lizio (Morbihan) in 1898, the curé there immediately resorted to the tactic of circulating letters denouncing the "franc-maçon avéré." Again status considerations were capital. The old instituteur, according to the primary inspector of Plôërmel, had been entirely under the thumb of the curé. He was a poor, limited type who sang the lutrin at mass under the priest's direction. Now a vigorous and truly laic teacher was

replacing him.⁷ The curé's letters are those of a desperate, fearful man.

Often the clergy's letters were sent anonymously to the teachers' superiors with the intent of having him transferred out of the commune. One such letter, signed by six conseillers municipaux, was sent to the prefect of the Côtes-du-Nord, June 3, 1889. It demanded that the instituteur and institutrice (husband and wife) at Le Moustoir be dismissed because of their unpopularity in the commune. A thorough investigation by the primary inspector of Guingamp revealed that the letter had been composed by the abbot of Le Moustoir in league with only one conseiller. The signatures of the other five were either false or casually given without their knowledge of the letter's content. The popularity of the husband and wife team had prompted the curé to attack in this manner. (His ally, the conseiller, was aiming, indirectly, at the republican mayor, dependent on the instituteur).⁸ Again, jealousy was probably the motivating force.

The clergy's exhortations in parish bulletins, sermons, and letters sometimes inspired violent reactions against teachers. The teacher at Saint-Anne (Ille-et-Vilaine) in 1893 was harassed by a group of men who burst into his classroom several times, insulting him in front of the students. With the curé egging on this group and with the cider season at its height, the teacher felt that "I am hardly sure of my life at Saint-Anne" Finally, after intervention by the sub-prefect

of Redon, the ringleader of the band was forced to pay a twenty franc fine in court.⁹ At Spézet in the Finistère a young husband and wife teaching there in 1904 were beaten up by a gang on the open road leading to the village. Both the délégué cantonal and the inspector of the academy were certain that the curé was to blame because of his constant incitement of the population against the laic school.¹⁰ The beating was serious enough for the prefect to initiate a detailed investigation with the intention of prosecuting those guilty of the act. But there was no trial, for no one in the village would testify. To do so would be to challenge the authority of the curé and of the reactionary mayor.¹¹ By the end of the year the victims changed posts.

In addition to discrediting or harassing the instituteur directly, the curé could pressure the schoolchildren and their parents. His best occasion for contact with the laic children was at catechism. Legally catechism could be taught on only Thursday or Sunday. In practice the country priest often imposed on children arbitrary--and illegal--hours. An inspector in the Loire-Atlantique in the early 1900's reported violations of the Ferry law on religious instruction in many communes. In some the curé would demand one hour out of one school day in the week; in others one morning or more. At Saint-Étienne de Montluc in 1903 children were at catechism Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday at eleven o'clock.¹²

The prefect of the Loire-Atlantique, informed of these violations, protested several times to the bishop of Nantes. The answers were evasive; for example: "Duly informed, the Curés will certainly strive to reconcile the requirements of religious instruction, more necessary now than ever, with those of instruction given in the public schools."¹³ Violations continued.

The longer the hours of catechism the more opportunity the curé had to wean the child away from the laic school. Catechism was not merely religious instruction. Notorious additions--pertaining to education--were made to official catechisms and they were clearly intended for parents as much as for children. In Ille-et-Vilaine in the early 1890's, an inflated catechism which found its way into many villages stirred much controversy. The "duty of parents" vis-a-vis "bad schools" was stressed:

-Can parents send their children to bad schools?
-No, parents cannot send their children to bad schools.

What do you understand by the term "bad schools"?
-I understand by bad schools that one [sic] where instituteurs or institutrices put impious books in children's hands or use words contrary to religion and Christian morality in front of them.

Do parents commit a grave sin by sending their children to bad schools?
-Yes, for they expose children to a loss of faith and innocence and perpetual damnation.¹⁴

No wonder schoolteachers feared the religious instruction given outside class.

Catechism was the principal preparation for the child's communion; and communions--particularly the first communion--

were major events in family life. The curé's requirements in catechism became stiffer as communion drew near. By threatening not to pass the child on communion he could bring effective pressure upon parents of laic schoolchildren. One of the teachers I interviewed remembers that as a boy in Plouha--a small town by the sea in the Côtes-du-Nord--he had made the mistake one night of peeking in the door of the schoolhouse at a local republican rally. At the meeting one of the favorite cries was "à bas la calotte". When the curé found out that the boy and two of his friends had heard such unedifying words, he promptly announced that they would be expelled from their first communions, scheduled very soon after that episode. It should be noted that neither the father nor the mother of the future teacher was a practicing Catholic. Yet for them communion was an important social function highlighted by a great meal for relatives from far and near. The father was furious and went straight to the church. He asked the priest whether the boy knew his catechism. When the curé replied in the affirmative, the father told him that unless he allowed his son to take communion he would--and this in all seriousness--push the curé's head into the holy water. Realizing that the man meant what he said, the curé ceded, and the boy took his first communion.¹⁵ Few parents could emulate this example; and when a curé failed their children on communions merely because they were "laïques"--as at Plouzané-La Trinité (Finistère) in 1904¹⁶--they could do little about it.

A more direct threat to parents was refusal of absolution. This was an extreme measure, but many curés, desperately trying to maintain their hegemony in the villages, did not shrink from using it. Normally it was the mothers of laiques who when faced with refusal of absolution at confession gave in and prevailed upon the fathers to withdraw the children from the school. At Pleudihen (Côtes-du-Nord) in 1897 the instituteur found that it was, indeed, always the women who succumbed to the curé's blackmail at confession.¹⁷ Yet some men too were susceptible to this pressure. One man, threatened by the curé at La Trinité-Porhœt (Morbihan) in 1903, came to the teacher at the laic school in tears.¹⁸ To him and to others absolution was a real concern. Admittedly, it was more important at certain times than at others. Refusal of absolution on holy days was akin to an expulsion from first communion. At Sévérac, in a very reactionary area of the Loire-Atlantique, the parents of one of the few children at the laic school were refused absolution on All Saint's Day (La Toussaint), 1903. According to the teacher there "these fine people are placed on the index by the whole population, and by their relatives, egged on by the priests" Their twelve-year old child was then kept at home.¹⁹ He probably ended up going to the école libre.

Besides these purely religious strategems the curé had other cards to play. Allied with the local noble he wielded influence upon frightened tenant farmers. One teacher remembers that at Pleugueneuc, near Saint-Malo, the curé visited farmers

in the month of September, 1891, urging them not to send their children to the new laic schoolmasters if they wanted their leases renewed.²⁰ In the same year the local noble of the Paimpont Forest, with the support of the curé of Plélan (Ille-et-Vilaine), began threatening his tenants. According to the teacher at Plélan, the noble warned the poor farmers that they would henceforth have no wood from his forest nor the bread and clothes they habitually received for winter if they persisted in placing their children in the laic school. To day-laborers the noble threatened outright dismissal; with indigents the curé raised the spectre of no future doles from the bureau de bienfaisance.²¹ In a commune like Orvault in the Loire-Atlantique, the local noble was so strong that laic schoolmasters could not fight back. A certain M. de la Brosse was mayor and patriarch of the area, and his tenants and workers could not oppose him for fear of being sent away. Between 1884 and 1911 the school for boys and girls went from zero to three students!²² That commune and others like Touvois --where the institutrice noted that "these people are so afraid of crossing all the nobles that one would believe we were still under the Ancien Régime"²³--were as reactionary as those of the surrounding Vendée. For laic schoolmasters there existence meant combat.

The farmers in the fields were prey to the nobles; within the commune the storekeepers were sometimes harassed, mainly by the curé alone. A commerçant in a hamlet outside of

Arradon (Morbihan) had the temerity to send his two youngest daughters to the laic school there in 1913. The cure at Arradon was an unusually powerful man in the area, and the laic schoolmistress had only a handful of students. Not surprisingly, he exercised his influence upon the inhabitants of the commune, and soon the commerçant, for fear of losing all his customers, withdrew his daughters from the disappointed institutrice.²⁴

Storekeepers often refused to sell to schoolteachers, especially when they first arrived in the village. When a young man and wife came to teach at the boys' and girls' laic schools of Brêlés (near Brest) in 1907, they were met by a "population entirely dominated by the clergy" and hostile to the laic school. No one would sell to the couple, and for months the teacher had to walk several kilometers every day to get milk for their young baby.²⁵ The institutrice at Touvois, in the letter referred to above, mentioned that she and her institutrices adjointes were obliged to buy their goods surreptitiously at night to avoid the cure's daytime spies.

In many of these cases I have alluded to the conflict between école libre and laic school, what the French call "la concurrence". In correspondence between the inspector of the academy and the prefect of a department, between primary inspector and inspector of the academy, one often finds reference to the term "concurrence". Was this teacher surviving the concurrence, was that one being defeated by it?--these are questions often raised in discussing a teacher's performance in a commune. It was as if he were sent to the commune to fight a war.

We have seen how it was often the curé who declared that war on the teacher and his school. On the curé's side was the personnel of the écoles libres, the teaching nuns and monks. They took an active part in opposing the rival school. Often, just before the return to school in September, they would visit all the families of the area trying to win the children they knew would be going to the laic school. Thus in the week of September 19-September 26, 1898, the nuns teaching in the Catholic girls' school at Plévin (C^otes-du-Nord) accompanied the vicar and the curés of the area in their traditional collection of wheat (quête de blé) after the harvest. This derivative of the dîme was a perfect opportunity to campaign at the beginning of the new school year.²⁶ At catechism, too, the children might come into contact with the congréganistes. In 1900, at Pont-Rousseau near Nantes, the curé convened catechism in a private chapel which happened also to be the site of the école libre. The teaching monks there were present at catechism in order to persuade the laic children to come to their school. The same tactic had been employed at nearby Batz, in defiance of a law stipulating that catechism must be taught only in Church. The prefect of the department sent several angry letters to the bishop of Nantes about this violation between 1900 and 1903.²⁷ We do not know whether the conflict was resolved.

To gain students the congréganistes and their supporters were not above "buying" them. This seems to have been most

prevalent in the Cotes-du-Nord. The institutrice at Brusvily explained to her primary inspector why she was losing prospective girl students in 1897: "The sister has promised them dollas and candies and dresses from the Countess of Kérouent."²⁸ At Paimpol in 1891 the curé and the monks at the école libre, fearing the rising star of the laic school, began to promise clothes to children and distribute money--up to 100 francs according to the laic teacher--to parents.²⁹ Here the concur-rence was definitely won by the laic side. In 1891, in the letter cited, the teacher mentioned that there were ninety-eight laic boy students, 144 at the école libre de garçons. By 1902, when the école congreganiste was closed, the boys' laic school counted 159 students.³⁰

A gulf existed between laic and libre children. At church squabbles often developed over which benches the in-stituteur's children were entitled to. In his diary Chalmel, the teacher in Ille-et-Vilaine (referred to in footnote 20), noted several times that his children had constantly to shift benches because of the curé's injunctions, or also, as on December 6, 1891, because the école libre students stuck pins into the laiques.³¹ Sometimes the curé refused to sanction any bench for the laic school students. This was the case at Baguen-Morvan, near Saint-Malo, in 1892, where each Sunday the patient instituteur brought a bench to the church and each Sunday the priest removed it.³² At all religious processions the

libre children, led by their teachers, were kept apart from the laics, led by theirs.

This division of école libre and laic school children understandably bred a genuine hostility between the two groups. At Cordemais, in the Loire-Atlantique, the curé had decreed it a sin for soeurs and their girls even to look at laic school-children at mass. This injection of antipathy to the laic school engendered rather unChristian consequences. Four times in the week of February 22 to February 28, 1886, human excrements were found spread over the doorstep of the girls' laic school. The institutrice finally discovered the culprit, a fourteen-year old girl student of the soeurs and a member of a family very close to the curé. The inspector of the academy at Nantes, in a letter to the prefect of the department, advised bringing charges against the girl, but nothing was done.³³

Violent fights between students of the rival schools--about which one still hears in contemporary Brittany--were legion in that period. At Plêchatel (Ille-et-Vilaine) in 1894, the teacher wrote:

My students . . . are chased and hit on the roads by those of the private school, who call them red republicans and freemasons. After each of the two letters which I wrote . . . to the head of the private school, his students came to the meadow and field adjoining my school, almost every day between twelve-thirty and one o'clock to throw stones into our school-yard and at my students³⁴

At Saint-Malo-de Guersac (Loire-Atlantique) in 1903 the students of an illegal école congréganiste (supposedly closed) attacked laic children on their way to school and pulled one by his ears to their school. There he was jeered at, forced by the head frère to remain on his knees for several hours, and finally dismissed dodging stones thrown by his little enemies.³⁵ Fights could have serious results. In 1893 a twelve-year old student of the laic school at Campénéac (Morbihan) was surrounded by eight of the frère's children on his long walk home and severely beaten. Less than three weeks after the beating he was dead from the injuries he received.³⁶ The encouragement of Catholic teachers contributed to such a state of affairs. Teaching sisters, who sometimes doubled as doctors in small villages, would even let laiques die rather than give them care. At Motreff, in the Finistère, the sick brother of a laic girl student died in 1896 without the benefit of attention by "la soeur medecine". The latter had answered the father's pleas for help by saying that "so long as your daughter goes to that school, it is of no use to come and disturb me."³⁷

In explaining the genesis of such antipathy to the laic school and its teachers and students one cannot overlook the effect of laicizations of public school personnel, that is, replacement of clerics by laic teachers. To this process of laicization I must now turn.

The law of October 30, 1886, allowed a five-year delay for the replacement of male congréganistes by instituteurs. In the case of females no replacement was to be made till the post fell vacant by retirement or transfer of the congréganiste. Before that law Brittany already had many instituteurs laïques but few institutrices. Now laicizations of public schools-- particularly of girl's schools--proceeded apace, even with these limitations.

Laicizations created the problem of concurrence already described. When nuns or monks were excluded from public school posts, those clerics often ended up within a few years in an école libre in the same area. Usually the latter was built solely for the purpose of combatting the secularized public school. The period 1880-1900 saw, then, a rapid growth of écoles libres to counter the ever-increasing number of laic schools.³⁸

Laicizations were difficult to effect in Brittany and in the West generally. Just after the passage of the law in 1886 a convention of Catholic notables was held in Nantes for the purpose of inciting resistance to secularization of public school personnel.³⁹ Full support was pledged to threatened congréganistes. To resist laicization the congréganistes, sometimes with aid of the mayor and his council, often claimed ownership of the school building itself. If no funds were available to build or to rent a new public school in the village, this claim could cause much difficulty, sometimes litigation for

republican authorities. At Tréguier--birthplace of Ernest Renan--a long dispute developed between the frères de Plöérmel and the sub-prefect at Lannion over the ownership of the public school. Both sides invoked history, and finally, in 1890, the sub-prefect prevailed, using this argument: "In effect, the locale of the Tréguier boy's school under the Ancien Régime was part of the biens du clergé, being an ecclesiastical collège; as such, it was [to be?] placed at the disposition of the nation . . . November 2-November 4, 1789." The school was laicized in 1891.⁴⁰ Other more complex cases of disputes over ownership indicate that laicization was no easy matter.

The actual process of laicization was sometimes very disruptive to village life. In clerical or noble-dominated areas it was not unusual for congréganistes to be expelled by force. The congréganistes would barricade themselves within the schoolhouse obliging police to remove them, amid shouts such as "Vive les soeurs" or "Vive la liberté". On the eve of laicizations Catholic newspapers helped stir up passions. The imminent secularization of the girls' school of Morlaix was announced by a black headline--"Le Renvoi des Soeurs"--in La Résistance of Morlaix, April 9, 1887. The article began:

Yesterday, Holy-Thursday, between eight and nine o'clock in the evening, at the exact moment when, in front of the Christian people, in all the churches of the Catholic universe, unfolded the story--always old, always new--of the Passion of Christ, with the vulgar hypocrisy of the Pharasees, the ignoble treason of Judas, the cowardly condescension of Pilate,

at this same hour, Mr. A. Cloarec, mayor of Morlaix, was receiving . . . the authorization to send away our Sisters from the schools

Such rhetoric undoubtedly contributed to the big demonstration that accompanied the expulsion.⁴¹ The curé, too was often behind such demonstrations and indeed, the smoothness or the turmoil of laicizations depended largely on him. The teacher at Loc-Envêl (Côtes-du-Nord), commenting on the relative ease in replacing the soeurs by his wife at the girls' school in 1902, noted: "The priest himself didn't protest, nor did he say anything against the laic school from the pulpit. He is a peaceful man, who worries much more about waging war on rabbits and hares than teasing teachers."⁴² Unfortunately not all cures were of a like character, and laicizations could leave deep scars in the commune.

The teacher coming to newly laicized schools was often to be pitied. A young girl replaced the soeurs at Lanvellec (Côtes-du-Nord) in May, 1897. She was driven there in a carriage from another village. En route the lady drive of the carriage suddenly asked her: "You wouldn't be the new institutrice of Lanvellec, by chance?"

"Yes, madam, I am."

"God have mercy on me," exclaimed the good lady; "I cannot let you continue this trip with me."

"Why not?"

"Oh! I have nothing against you, my poor girl, but I need to make a living for myself and my children. If they saw

me arriving at Lanvellec with you in my carriage, I would never work again."

The girl had to walk several miles to the village. The next morning she was met by thirty men armed with clubs. The mayor refused to open the schoolhouse, and two weeks passed before the sub-prefect could get her installed in the school.⁴³ The instituteur who replaced the frères at Saint-Anne in 1892 found all the school furniture gone, thanks to the collusion of mayor and curé.⁴⁴ At Saint-Philbert de Grand-Lieu (Loire-Atlantique), the new teacher at the boy's school in 1885 was met by an illegal strike of all the schoolchildren which lasted, off and on, throughout the year and paralysed his efforts.⁴⁵ Laicizations were no simple matters.

Nevertheless, by 1914 almost all Breton public schools were laicized. In the Loire-Atlantique only three girls' schools were left to be secularized, while in the C^otes-du-Nord sixteen public schools operated by the soeurs remained.⁴⁶

Most laicizations had taken place before 1901, but the most difficult were effected after that date. To eradicate refractory congreganistes, new laws--the product of the Dreyfus revolution--were brought to bear upon them. Waldeck-Rousseau's law of July 1, 1901, was the first attempt to control the congregations, of which certain ones, like the Assumptionists and Jesuits, had played a major part in politicizing the Dreyfus Case. Waldeck-Rousseau had envisioned supervising the congregations by giving them a legal authorization to exist. Under

his successor, Émile Combes, the emphasis was distinctly different: it was to destroy the congregations by withholding authorization. A spate of écoles congréganistes were closed in 1902, and much violence ensued in Brittany. Combes went farther by his law of July 7, 1904, which forbade any congréganiste to teach. A delay of ten years was allowed for the full execution of the law.⁴⁷ The crown of the edifice was the Separation of Church and State, passed under the leadership of Aristide Briand on December 9, 1905. It ushered in a new era.

It is difficult to periodize a subject of this genre because the clerical tactics which I have examined in detail occurred from 1880 through to the World War. Nevertheless, a tentative chronological division of three sub-eras might be useful. The first corresponds to the period of the foundation of the Ferryste laic school, from the early 1880's roughly to the height of the Dreyfus Affair. In Brittany the school was besieged by the clergy but survived.⁴⁸ Then follows a kind of transitional period in the aftermath of the Affair, when the legislation of Waldeck-Rousseau and Combes was passed, when the Church seemed perhaps to be reeling against the resurgent republican front. And finally comes a third period which is more easily characterized as a "period" than the preceding ones:

1906-1914, or from the Separation to the War. This era saw the hardening of the laic position but more important, a "clerical rebound". When David Thompson says that the Church-State problem was over in 1905⁴⁹, he is certainly ignoring the explosive battle that raged in Brittany and in the West in these pre-war years.

The law of 1901 and resultant expulsions of congréganistes opened deep wounds in Brittany; the Separation was the ultimate blow. In the Separation Law of December 9, 1905, article III prescribed inventories of ecclesiastical property. These took place in February and March, 1906, and predictably, the West was one of the areas where resistance was heaviest.⁵⁰ Angry demonstrators, armed with clubs and grouped around the curé often met the percepteur (who appraised clerical property). At Petit-Mars (Loire-Atlantique) the percepteur was cut in the face by a sword, and the noble mayor--who had whipped up the massive crowd--was arrested and sentenced to four months in prison.⁵¹ According to J. M. Mayeur, in the article cited, such hostility to the inventories was not merely Catholic-inspired--indeed, several Catholic areas of France were indifferent to the appraisals--but also political, marked by antipathy to centralization and even by counter-revolutionary motivations. The same forces, I would contend, opposed the obligatory laic school imposed on remote areas by Paris, and now that opposition was revived by the Separation.

Perhaps better than others, the laic teachers perceived the unfortunate consequences of the ending of the Concordat. In response to a circular from the inspector of the academy at Quimper, February 3, 1906, asking that they be witnesses at inventories, many teachers averred that it would be dangerous for them even to be seen near the proceedings.⁵² For the lady teacher at Drefféac in the Loire-Atlantique the Separation was a disaster. In the early 1900's, according to the primary inspector's reports, she was making considerable progress in the commune, gaining new girl students and the trust of the families. With the Combes-Briand law the situation deteriorated overnight. By February, 1906, she had lost almost all her students. On March 5, she and her family were besieged in their home by a rock-throwing group of attackers who broke many windows and damaged some of her furniture. And then came the day of the inventories, March 9. In her letter to the inspector of the academy she related the events:

On Friday for the first time in my life I was afraid. From mid-day, at the sound of the tocsin an enormous crowd was gathering on the square. The men armed with scythes, axes, bill-hooks, forks; the women provided with knotted sticks.

I was in the attic whence without being seen I could observe this shouting crowd.

While waiting for the agent du fisc, and at the instigation of the clergy and of the hobereaux, the crowd made its way toward the school. They booed me, they let out different sorts of shouts. The little girls were placed under my windows where they sang canticles.

That night she and the instituteur were guarded by police. The next day the father of one of her remaining students was badly beaten.⁵³ On March 15, 1906, this highly-rated schoolmistress was transferred to another commune, defeated.

After the Separation, remaining laicizations of public schools were very often akin to the inventory riots of March, 1906. At Guégon (Morbihan) in November, 1906, the soeurs were replaced by a laic institutrice. It was necessary for the sub-prefect to enter the village with an infantry company and fifty policemen to remove the people massed in front of the school-house. The school was opened by axe and the soeurs expelled.⁵⁴ The identical scene was re-enacted in various villages of Brittany, although sometimes a locksmith was summoned rather than an axeman!⁵⁵

In the aftermath of the Separation another pretext for battle was the presence of crucifixes in laic schools. Since the Ferry era the display of religious emblems in public schools was forbidden; but again, there was, in the West, a distinct difference between the theory and the practice of laicity, and by the 1900's many schools still had crucifixes hanging on the walls. A circular by the Minister of Education (J. Chaumié) to the prefects on April 9, 1903, recommended that new school buildings contain no religious emblems but that in old buildings where the crucifixes were traditional they be removed "only with all the prudence and respect necessary, in places where one might risk openly shocking popular feelings . . . so as to avoid

any agitation or scenes." This was hardly a declaration of war. From 1903 to 1905 there were scattered incidents over crucifixes in the Loire-Atlantique (for which we have the best sources) and elsewhere. The tepid circular of 1903 had been of little effect, and so, on September 15, 1906, Briand, the new Minister of Education, sent a stronger directive to the prefects asking that they find out, via the sub-prefects, where crucifixes still existed in public schools and whether they could be removed without trouble. The sub-prefects' responses to the prefect of the Loire-Atlantique indicated that more than 150 public schools in the department still had crucifixes and that some would be very difficult to remove without incidents.⁵⁶

In October 1906 a new government was formed by a priest-eater of long standing, Georges Clemenceau.⁵⁷ As Minister of the Interior he exhorted his prefects to act immediately on the crucifix question. In the Loire-Atlantique, on Sunday, November 18, the teachers--ordered by the inspector of the academy--removed every crucifix from their school walls and handed them over to the mayors. Coming so soon after the explosive inventories of March, such a step could only provoke bitter indignation. In many communes there were "reparations" ceremonies. The mayor, surrounded by conseil, curé, notables, and populace would march to the schoolhouse and place the crosses back in their place. The crosses were sometimes wrapped in flowers, and notables gave solemn speeches evoking exclamations like "Vive le Christ!", "Vive la France!" from the crowd. Clemenceau was not daunted by

recalcitrant mayors and after due warning, removed from office the most fanatic Royalists among them. Many others, some twenty in all, were suspended for a minimum of a month, some of them indefinitely.⁵⁸ The collection of sources on the Loire-Atlantique ends in 1907, but incidents must have continued. In the Côtes-du-Nord we find a "cérémonie réparatrice" announced by the parish bulletin of Hillion for June 21, 1908, and in the Morbihan a big battle over crucifixes at Marzan as late as 1911.⁵⁹

After the Separation and crucifix affairs of 1906-1907 laic-clerical relations quickly worsened in Brittany and in France generally. On the laic side one notices a new toughness. Teachers in their amicales and syndicats (which will be discussed later) now demanded that their superiors actively defend them against clerical abuses. The laic chiefs of staff, too, had changed since the Ferry days. No longer did they stress the concept of the "neutral school", perfectly tolerant of Catholics. Alphonse Aulard, the eminent professor at the Sorbonne and leading laïque, (in Le Matin, September 13, 1908) made it clear that strict neutrality was outdated: "People ask me what I think about 'neutralité scolaire'. I think that it is an equivocal term, a dangerous term . . . And it is certainly true that we [the laic side] do not attain it. A laic schoolmaster, if he is an upright person, can do nothing else but not attain it, under pain of renouncing his role as an educator"60 Here was admission that laicity no longer stood for universality, that it had become a doctrine to be defended at all cost.

The Catholic side likewise displayed a new militance. Now it had intellectual underpinnings: a whole new Catholic elite, inspired mainly by Bergson, was celebrating the hollowness of rationalism, the glory of mystic religion. Epitomizing the potency of this renaissance was the defection of Charles Péguy, formerly Dreyfusard par excellence, to the Catholic fold. Besides the literary elite one could point, too, to the influence of Marc Sangnier's social Catholic movement (Le Sillon) and, from 1908, of Charles Maurras' Action française. Succeeding events in the Catholic-laic struggle must be viewed against this background.

In the fall of 1908 French bishops encouraged the formation of pères de famille associations designed to survey public school teaching for signs of anti-Catholic bias. Such associations were particularly active in Brittany. But Church authorities were not satisfied. On September 14, 1909, a famous letter, signed by all the cardinals, bishops, and archbishops of France and supported by the Vatican, declared war on the French laic school, on the grounds that "neutralité scolaire" had become a sham. In the letter (which appeared on the front page of many newspapers) parents were urged to support the building of écoles libres and to send their children to those schools when possible. Moreover, about a dozen text-books in use in the public schools were condemned and placed on the Index. The majority were histories of France, and the remainder were on morals and civics instruction. Aulard

had the distinction of being represented in both these categories.

The letter caused immediate repercussions. In the Finistère a newspaper called L'Alerte was established, at Quimper, on October 21, 1909, with "a very clear purpose: to demand the suppression of school texts which contain certain pages offensive to Catholics." Curés and fathers organized sporadic strikes of children until the condemned texts were removed. On October 27 the prefect of the Finistère, in a letter to the Minister of the Interior, estimated that already one-tenth of the laic students in the clerical arrondissement of Brest had defected to écoles libres.⁶¹ In Ille-et-Vilaine trouble erupted in at least a dozen communes immediately after the publication of the letter. At Dompierre-du-Chemin six of twenty-one laic girls, ten of twenty-seven boys had quit school by the end of October; the condemned Gauthier and Deschamps history text was being burned publicly, and mass school strikes were being threatened.⁶² At Roz-Landrieux parents burned several books.⁶³ In the Loire-Atlantique teachers reported numerous incidents of book-burning--probably the most of the five Breton departments. We have less evidence for the Morbihan and Côtes-du-Nord, but the book controversy certainly affected those departments.⁶⁴

Rather than enlarge upon the battle of the books ("affaire des manuels") in the villages it is more important to situate

the episode within the larger context of a genuine clerical resurgence. As Gaston Doumergue, Minister of Education during this crisis, put it, "The war on the books . . . is only a pretext; it is the school itself that they are aiming at."⁶⁵ In the period coincident with the battle of the books--that is, 1909-1911--the clergy attacked the laic school in the manner described at the beginning of this chapter but more vigorously. For example, at Le Verger (Ille-et-Vilaine) during the height of the textbook affair, all the parents of laiques were refused absolution at the Toussaint and threatened with excommunication.⁶⁶ Reports of the inspectors of the academy in Brittany indicate that the years 1909-1911 saw the most numerous and severe incidents of clerical pressure recorded under the Third Republic to that date. Liberated from government jurisdiction the Church was determined to regain control of young Frenchmen's minds wherever and however it could.

A new phenomenon was the travelling mission--members of religious orders sent into communes to preach against the laic school. The parish bulletin of Escoublac-La Baule of December 13, 1908, announced, in bellicose terms, a forthcoming mission in that area of the Loire-Atlantique: "Ah! my dear friends, thank the good Lord, for having sent us apostles, that is, real missionaries who are tacticians, manoeuverers, men of war in a word, who are going to overthrow, in our Parish, the domain of Satan." At Plénée-Jugon (Côtes-du-Nord) in April, 1913, a missionary burnt a schoolbook in a solemn ceremony in front of

the church.⁶⁷ Dire letters written by teachers to their superiors testify to the effect of the missions.

Supporting the curés and the missions, as well as inciting the faithful to resistance, was the clerical press, at its most abrasive in this period. The principal target was the instituteur. It was now de rigueur to accuse all teachers of being anti-patriotic because a minority--especially those of the Seine--had begun to embrace socialism.⁶⁸ Typical was the speech of Pierre L'Ermite at a congress of La Croix, entitled "Le Curé et l'instituteur":

What characterizes the past year, is the fact that in every village, there is someone who is trying to become king, tyrant. And that someone is the insti-
tuteur

Don't you see this France, la douce, the fatherland of all the arts, of all the delicacies falling hopelessly into the gross hands of the primary schoolteacher, cretinized to the point of anti-militarism by the Lodges?⁶⁹

A new symbol for the teacher was the Aliboron, the ass in one of La Fontaine's fables. The connotation of the term was a pseudo-intellectual spouting vague theories devoid of meaning. A front-page article in the Express de l'Ouest (Nantes), February 9, 1909, noted: "With maxims such as those that are taught to children of our laic schools and with the ethos of good pleasure that they dispense, our Aliborons, mohammeds of the modern spirit, are preparing the wave of Godless and Fatherlandless for the conquest of society"70 The teacher had become a blackened stereotype.

Concomitant with the battle of the books and the clerical assaults from pulpit and press was the phenomenal rise in écoles libres. Their significance was well grasped by the prefect of the Loire-Atlantique (in a letter to the Minister of Education of October 26, 1909):

The principal cause of the depopulation of our public schools must above all be attributed to the more and more numerous openings of private schools. As I indicated to you in my last monthly report, the order of the day given to the militants by the reactionary and clerical press is 'It is better to build a school than a Church.'⁷¹

From May 1909 to May 1911 the number of écoles libres grew by 1,460 in the Finistère, 2,698 in the Loire-Atlantique, 3,518 in the Côtes-du-Nord, 3,624 in Ille-et-Vilaine, and 5,060 in the Morbihan.⁷²

Little wonder that in a period when 16,380 new écoles libres were created, concurrence was more bitter than it had hitherto been in Brittany. In countless communes even highly-rated and successful teachers were being defeated by the new competition. The schoolmaster at Ploumoguier (Finistère), in a sad letter to the inspector of the academy at Quimper, June 12, 1909, described the deterioration of his once happy position there. After the Separation the clerical campaign had really become intense, he reported. Its culmination was the establishment of a new école libre in the commune, scheduled for opening in the fall of 1910. So in this village, "dominated by the nobility or the priests", his laic school could no longer prosper.

He was transferred out of the commune on October 1, 1910.⁷³ In the Morbihan a fine woman teacher at the mixed school of Montertelot was defeated not by one private school but by twelve, situated in neighboring communes. Harassed by several cures of the area, hounded by groups of pères de famille she left the commune in the summer of 1912.⁷⁴ Laic schools in such communes were often reduced to a handful of students, making the villages "disgrace posts" ("postes de disgrace") for poorly qualified teachers.

Another reason for the strength of the concurrence was the reappearance of dismissed congréganistes at the helm of some écoles libres. They either shed their frock or pretended to. Some kept teaching illegally, and it was often difficult for the government to re-eliminate them.⁷⁵

Against this clerical rebound the government resolved, as early as 1909, to take an uncompromising stand. But though many words were expended in debate nothing was actually accomplished. To the embattled schoolmaster--the real target of the clerical campaign--the republican chiefs of staff could offer only moral encouragement. Briand's speech in the Chamber, January 21, 1910, was in this vein:

And, it must also be said: these instituteurs and these institutrices so denigrated, have given, in the face of abuses, an admirable spectacle of dignity. (Loud applause on the left and the extreme-left.) They have proven themselves, at this juncture, worthy of the high mission with which the nation has entrusted them, and I am sure that tomorrow they will prove themselves to be even worthier of it.⁷⁶

Finally, a vague law of défense laïque was passed on January 20, 1914, never to be used.

Not surprisingly, teachers in Brittany--throughout the period 1880-1914--were moderate in their responses to Church pressure. Overt anti-clericalism was just not possible in many parts of this region, particularly in the 1880's and even well into the nineties. During this era--when the laic school was being established--one finds that many teachers could co-exist with clergy and Catholic populations by exhibiting a rather unlaic solicitude for Church rites. One lady teacher of the Belle Époque remembers her father's pleasant relationship with curé and parishioners at Plounévez-Lochrist (Finistère) in the early 1890's. Here the Church was very important: mass, vespers, and the other services were "la seule distraction". The teacher was a regular churchgoer, and his daughter attended the école des soeurs (there was no girl's laic school in the immediate vicinity). In this commune near Morlaix, where the Count de Mun was the unanimous choice of voters for deputy and where the mayor was an autocratic and reactionary noble, there was little sense in not demonstrating at least an outward adhesion to Catholicism. This the teacher did, and between him and curé in those pre-Dreyfus years "c'était l'union sacrée".⁷⁷ The two notables could co-exist.

As a general rule the teachers who could best meet the

test of the cures were those who could bend without prostrating themselves. One of the best of the Loire-Atlantique (according to inspection reports) invited the vicar and cure of Pont-Rousseau to the public school prize ceremonies in August, 1889. This was practically unheard of, and in order to obtain their consent he promised to have the "Marseillaise" played at the end of the program, after their departure. For this unprecedented procedure he was criticized by "a sincere republican" in an anonymous letter sent to the prefect, but he was completely vindicated and praised by the inspector of the academy.⁷⁸

In the West at this time educational authorities encouraged a conciliatory attitude. Compromise with M. le cure would help facilitate growth of still-fragile laic schools. At Guer in the Morbihan trouble was brewing between priest and schoolmaster in 1890. Here was what the primary inspector of Plöermel prescribed:

. . . It would perhaps be good politics to officially authorize the teacher to act like many [my italics] of his colleagues; that is, to have a short prayer recited morning and night, and to pay some attention to the teaching of catechism after school, especially for the form. Sometimes one is indeed obliged to swim with the current.⁷⁹

Significantly, this report was approved by both inspector of the academy and prefect. They were not averse to diluting their ideals of laicity in the interest of peace. Sometimes they allowed teachers who were clearly Catholic, not laic, to

continue at certain posts because of their happy relations with the dangerous curé. The instituteur at Saint-Mars du Désert in 1884 was still, illegally, the curé's cantor. Here was a man manifestly out of step with the Ferry ethic. And yet he was allowed to keep his church job until the end of the decade and remained as instituteur of the village till 1900! Again, a primary inspector's report is instructive: "M. G[. . .] is certainly reactionary, but he does his class well, and his successor would be badly received in the commune. I am far from being inclined to great tenderness toward the clergy, but I think it is sometimes good to avoid annoying it, when it is a question of the school's success."⁸⁰

For women teachers laicity was even less rigorous. Less numerous than men, frequently recent replacements for nuns, women teachers were normally expected to maintain a fairly strong commitment to religion in girls' schools, where they ordinarily taught. Indeed, mothers held religion to be far more important for their little girls than for little boys. No institutrice could ignore that fact.

The majority of Brittany's institutrices of this first generation--particularly in the 1880's--were undoubtedly practicing Catholics. Academic authorities not only tolerated this but in some cases encouraged it. An important letter from the inspector of the academy of the Loire-Atlantique to the prefect of that department (August 30, 1886) demonstrates this attitude.

Justifying the choice of a curé's niece and protégé as new laic teacher at Saint-Vincent-des-Landes, he points out:

This quality will protect her to some degree against the possible hostility of the Curé of St. Vincent. Assuredly Mlle C . . . has clerical tendencies, which is very common [my italics] with our institutrices; but in her quality as a laic schoolmistress she is docile to our direction and has no militant ardor. We have proven that for effecting the transition between congréganistes and laic institutrices, this category of Catholic schoolmistresses rendered serious services.⁸¹

That the laic school managed to survive in the West is largely due to this spirit of modus vivendi with the church.

Around 1898--though such dates are approximate--another generation of instituteurs was coming to the villages. The majority now were normaliens unlike their predecessors. They were more imbued with laic ideals. Soon, under the influence of doctrines like solidarism, they began to band together in amicales.⁸² It was, in short a generation of teachers more inclined to stand firm against clerical maneuvers.

Yet side by side with this new attitude of firmness, with this new reverence for laicity, most teachers in Brittany could still be characterized as circumspect in dealing with the clergy. Servile no longer, they were nonetheless not rabid priest-eaters. Those who could not bridle their feelings of anti-clericalism were usually failures, unless they taught in completely republicanized areas. One man teaching in Ille-et-Vilaine in this period could not last long in any post because

of his lack of tact. He occupied nine in all. His problems at Saint-Onen in 1899 are typical. According to the inspector:

They reproach him with being on bad terms with the parish clergy; with not going regularly to mass every Sunday; with formerly refusing to do the catechism outside of class hours--he does some now--with having said in class that those who don't go to mass are as good as the others⁸³

For women, too, prudence was still essential; prudence combined with strength. In a procession at Lou-du-Lac (Ille-et-Vilaine) in 1902 the institutrice was struck several times by the curé. A sentence of one day of work and court costs did not transform the curé's feelings toward the schoolmistress, and the war continued. How did she react? In her own words, ". . . I disdain both all their words and all their acts and I restrict myself to replying by a shrug of the shoulder or by appearing to hear nothing."⁸⁴ Another lady teacher, at Saint-Père in 1908, faced with a vicious campaign marked by refusals of absolution, responded, with her adjointes, in a similar manner: "Our calm kills the slanderers who by their way of acting kill themselves."⁸⁵ Such courage is remarkable. The desperation of these teachers, easily perceived in their letters, was admirably concealed from M. le curé.

During the period of the battle of the books Brittany's instituteurs were tested as never before. Thanks in no small part to their strength of character the affair subsided by 1911; and the immediate pre-war years were somewhat more tranquil than those running from the Separation through to 1911. A letter

written at the end of 1910 by a great inspector of the academy --M. Dodu of Ille-et-Vilaine--congratulated the instituteurs for keeping calm during the dark days of clerical confrontation. Except for two teachers none had given in on the question of changing books. Neither had they acted radically toward the clergy (as did, for example, certain amicales of several areas which took legal action against the "defamation of character" contained in the bishops' letter). According to Dodu the quiet courage of the instituteurs was the major factor in deflating the book problem in Ille-et-Vilaine. In the Loire-Atlantique their attitude was perhaps more conciliatory than firm. But the crisis subsided there, too.⁸⁶ Barrès' portrait of teachers as fanatics "lacking calm and serenity . . ." was wide of the mark.⁸⁷

The clerical problem remained alive in Brittany right up to the war. There, two camps were ranged against each other. But the two camp division was not peculiar to Brittany, even if more intense than in the rest of the country. According to Antoine Prost, "the France which goes to war in 1914 is still a France where the school problem demarcates right from left."⁸⁸ In Brittany the even more rigorous opposition of bleu and blanc still obtained. So did that of school against school, curé against instituteur. That the latter confrontation did not create anarchy in primary education but rather, growth, is largely due to the admirably even temper of the teaching corps

vis-à-vis clerical threats. The response of instituteur to cure in that period is rich with lessons for those "confronted" today.

FOOTNOTES

¹One parish bulletin--L'Ami du Clocher: Bulletin paroissial de Saint-Étienne de Corcoué (Loire-Atlantique) for December 21, 1913--described the effect of the bells ringing from the church tower, "rappelant aux enfants la foi des siècles qui les ont élevés à la gloire de Dieu."

²Pierre Loti's novel, Pêcheur d'Islande, gives us a good picture of these services for the cod-fishermen of Paimpol (Côtes-du-Nord) in the 1880's.

³There is, unfortunately, little on the sociological importance of the village curé. Novels like Balzac's Le Curé de village and Bernanos' Journal d'un curé de campagne-- though not written during our period--are of use in understanding the curé's rural position. Bernanos, in the 1930's, laments the decline of the curé's importance under the Third Republic before 1914.

⁴Archives départementales des Côtes-du-Nord (hereinafter A. D. Côtes-Nord). T: Fonds de l'académie. Dossiers par commune. Institutrice, Saint-Nicholas-du-Pélem, to primary inspector, Guingamp, January 14, 1889. I have often relied upon testimony of teachers. Teachers had little reason to falsify facts in letters to their superiors and their statements are often confirmed in reports of the primary inspectors, who were normally

dependable. I have rejected any testimonies that seemed ambiguous or untrue. Further research on the clerical side--particularly interviews with curés of the period--might modify certain conclusions in this chapter.

⁵Adjunct teachers ("instituteurs-adjoints") were teachers subordinate to the head teacher ("directeur d'école"), in schools where there were more than one class.

⁶A. D. Côtes-Nord. T: Fonds d'acad. Doss. par comm. Instituteur-adjoint, Ploubèzre, to inspector of academy, Saint-Brieuc (undated, early 1900's).

⁷A. D. Morb. T1687: Enseignement primaire. Plaintes et pétitions contre les instituteurs 1878-1934. Instituteur, Lizio, to prim. inspector, Plôërmel, June 6, 1898; Prim. inspector, Plôërmel to insp. of acad., Vannes, June 12, 1898.

⁸A. D. Côtes-Nord. T: Fonds d'acad. Doss. par comm. Prim. insp., Guingamp, to insp. of acad., Saint-Brieuc, July 2, 1889. This letter--like some other anonymous letters fortunately preserved--is neatly written and this is the first clue that points to the curé as author. Peasants' anonymous letters are filled with spelling errors and badly written.

⁹Archives départementales d'Ille-et-Vilaine (hereinafter A.D. Ill-Vil). 2T: Instruction primaire: nominations et affaires diverses (préfecture), 1893. Teacher, Saint-Anne, to prim. insp., Redon (transferred to prefect), October 7, 1893; tribunal de première instance, Redon, to prefect, November 4, 1893.

¹⁰A. D. Fin. T: Dossiers individuels du personnel. Instituteurs 1901-1919. Délégué cantonal [an education official elected in cantons], Carhaix, to prim. insp., Châteaulin, January 5, 1904; insp. acad., Quimper, to prefect of Fin., January 6, 1904.

¹¹Ibid., insp. of acad., to prim. insp., Châteaulin, January 9, 1904.

¹²A. D. Loire-At. sT321: Enseignement primaire: Heures consacrées à l'enseignement du catéchisme-conflits-1903-1914. Insp. of acad., Nantes, to prefect, Loire-At., October 15, 1903.

¹³Ibid., bishop, Nantes, to prefect, October 27, 1903.

¹⁴A. D. Ill-Vil. 5M46: Rapports entre le gouvernement, les municipalités et le clergé. "Supplément au Catéchisme diocésain." (1891) In the same catechism there were also politically-oriented couplets which displeased many:

QUESTION "Is it a sin to vote badly in elections."
ANSWER "Yes, it is a sin to vote badly in elections."

QUESTION "How does one vote badly in elections?"
ANSWER "Voting badly in elections is to vote for men who would not be resolute in defending the interests of Religion and Society."

¹⁵Interview with L. L. at Saint-Brieuc, February 14, 1970. This episode took place about 1903.

¹⁶A. D. Fin. T: Dossiers individuels du personnel. Institutrices--1901-1919. Lady teacher at "mixed school" (boys and girls) at Plouzané--La Trinité to prim. insp., Brest, January 13, 1904.

¹⁷A. D. Côtes-Nord. T: Fonds acad. Doss. comm. Teacher, Pleudihen, to prim. insp., Dinan, October 23, 1897.

¹⁸A. D. Morb. T1701: Enseignement primaire: Incidents entre écoles libres et écoles laïques 1883-1903. Teacher, La Trinité-Porhoët, to prim. insp., Plöërmel, April 12, 1903.

¹⁹A. D. Loire-At. sT321: Heures . . . catéchisme . . . 1903-1914. Teacher, Sévérac, to insp. of acad., Nantes, November 30, 1903.

²⁰A. D. Ill-Vil. F1768: Dossier d'un instituteur (T. Chalmel). This is a long diary wirtten by an "elite teacher" of the pre-1914 period. In September, 1891, he arrived in Pleugueneuc as

new director of the laic school. He had no students at the beginning, and his reception by the deputy mayor was not encouraging: "You come here to dechristianize the area and to attack religion and its priests. You have no students. For my parts, I'll do everything so that you won't get any." A week later the curé started his campaign with sermons, refusals of absolution, and the pressures on farmers. But by September 30 the young man had twelve students, and the school was really launched.

²¹A. D. Ill-Vil. 2T: Préfecture [unclassified]-J-L. Teacher, Plélan, to prim. insp., Montfort (transferred to prefect), March 26, 1891.

²²A. D. Loire-At. sTi367: Enseignement primaire: Correspondance avec les communes 1870-1950. Prim. insp., Nantes to insp. acad., Nantes, October 23, 1911. The character of the area is reflected in the longevity of its nobility. As late as 1952, a de la Brosse was mayor.

²³A. D. Loire-At. sT115: Enseignement primaire: dossiers individuels des instituteurs et institutrices, ayant cessé leurs fonctions de 1870 à 1948. Schoolmistress, Touvois, to prim. insp., Nantes, October 13, 1902. One area of Brittany free of nobles during this period was the Cornouaille (south Finistère). André Siegfried, Tableau politique de la France de l'ouest sous la troisième république (Paris, 1913), pp. 164-65.

²⁴A. D. Morb, T1272: Écoles publiques: créations, suppressions A-BE. Insp. of acad., Vannes, to prefect, July 4, 1913.

²⁵A. D. Fin. T: Doss. ind. du pers. Instituteurs 1901-1919. Teacher, Brêlés, to insp. acad., Quimper, January 24, 1907. He and his wife were kept in this intolerable commune until April, 1909; the number of their students rose from six to twenty-one.

²⁶A. D. Côtes-Nord. T: Fonds d'acad. Doss. comm. Institutrice, Plévin, to prim. insp., Guingamp, November 6, 1891.

²⁷A. D. Loire-At. sT321: Ens. prim. Heures . . . catéchisme. Correspondance between prefect and bishop of Nantes, beginning October 9, 1900.

²⁸A. D. Côtes-Nord. T: Fonds d'acad. Doss. Comm. Institutrice, Brusvily, to prim. insp., Dinan, October 22, 1897.

²⁹Ibid. Teacher, Paimpol, to insp. acad., Saint-Brieuc, October 16, 1891.

³⁰Ibid. Teacher, Paimpol, to insp. acad., October 27, 1902. I am uncertain whether the école libre was reopened later or not. Paimpol was, according to Siegfried, writing in 1913, "the most republican fishing port in all Brittany." Tableau politique de la France de l'ouest, p. 119.

³¹A. D. Ill-Vil. F1768: Doss. d'un instituteur.

³²A. D. Ill-Vil. 2T: Préfecture--affaires diverses--1893. Teacher, Baguen-Morvan, to sub-prefect, Saint-Malo, November 19, 1892 (transferred to prefect). Several letters were exchanged between the prefect of Ille-et-Vilaine and the Archbishop of Rennes, defending teacher and curé respectively; and whether the bench finally remained in the church is not revealed by the documents.

³³A. D. Loire-At. 18-T-4: Plaintes. Affaires disciplinaires. Incidents divers mettant en cause les instituteurs et institutrices (publics et privés), 1883-1906. Insp. acad. to pref., March 4, 1886. The teacher at Bignan, in a letter to the primary inspector at Plôërmel (Morbihan), June 20, 1898, gives a description of a similar act. "On Monday the fifth, at 11:30 in the morning, eight little girls from the nun's school took hold of my daughter Josephine and tried, with all their might, to make her eat pig excrements! Not having succeeded, they put the said excrements on my doorstep. . ." A. D. Morb. T1687: Ens. Prim. Plaintes . . . instituteurs 1878-1934.

³⁴A. D. Ill-Vil. T: Dossiers individuels du personnel: Instituteurs. Quoted in prim. insp., Redon, to insp. acad., Rennes, June 9, 1894.

³⁵A. D. Loire-At. sT25: Plaintes--affaires disciplinaires. Incidents divers mettant en cause les instituteurs et institutrices (publics et privés) 1901-1911. Teacher, Saint-Malo-de-Guersac, to prim. insp., Saint-Nazaire, May 28, 1903; prim. insp., Saint-Nazaire to insp. acad., Nantes, May 30, 1903.

³⁶A. D. Morb. T1701: Ens. prim.: Incidents . . . écoles libres . . . écoles laïques 1883-1903. Police ("chef de brigade") Plöermel report March 28, 1893. This report, the dilatoriness of the primary inspector in investigating the affair, and the very sketchy autopsy by a clerical doctor were roundly criticized by the prefect of the Morbihan to insp. acad., Vannes, April 8, 1893.

³⁷A. D. Fin. T: Doss. ind. du pers.: Instituteurs--1901-1919. Teacher (husband of laic girls' schoolteacher), Motreff, to prim. insp., Châteaulin, July 3, 1896. The importance of the "soeurs medecine" was recognized by a schoolmistress of the Côtes-du-Nord, whose students, in 1898, numbered only six: "The nun teachers will always be preferred to the laic schoolmistress at La Chèze, because the commune being without a doctor, one of them who practices medicine, renders a service to the villagers which they appreciate far in excess of its real value." A. D. Côtes-Nord. T: Fonds acad. doss. comm. Lady teacher, La Chèze, to insp. acad., Saint-Brieuc, October 22, 1898.

³⁸The number of écoles libres in France almost doubled between 1878 and 1901. Antoine Prost, Histoire de l'enseignement en France (Paris, 1968), p. 204. In Brittany the rate of growth was definitely greater. The law on obligatory schooling was part of the reason for this growth.

³⁹Congres des Catholiques de l'Ouest tenu à Nantes du 16 au 21 novembre 1886. Rapport par Anthime Ménard. (Nantes, 1886).

⁴⁰A. D. Côtes-Nord. 1T: Écoles publiques congréganistes. Laïcisations 1882-1930. Sub-prefect, Lannion, to prefect, June 10, 1890.

⁴¹That demonstration was ridiculed by L'Avenir de Morlaix, the republican foe of Le Militant, May 7, 1887. It described earlier expulsions of laic teachers under other regimes. "Those unfortunate victims of clerical hate left sadly, alone and without escort, humiliated, a heavy heart, eyes reddened by tears"

⁴²A. D. Côtes-Nord. T: Doss. comm. Teacher, Loc-Envel, to insp. acad., September 28, 1902.

⁴³A. D. Côtes-Nord. 1T: Écoles . . . congréganistes. Laïcisations 1882-1930. Prim. insp., Lannion, to insp. acad., May 25, 1897.

⁴⁴A. D. Ill-Vil. 2T: Préf. divers. Sub-prefect, Redon, to prefect, November 14, 1892.

⁴⁵A. D. Loire-At. 74-T-1: Laïcisations des écoles publiques; Instructions, statistiques, arrêtés--incidents divers--1870-1885. Insp. acad. to prefect, April 20, 1885.

⁴⁶A. D. Loire-At. 74-T-3: Laïcisations . . . 1906-1913. Prefect's note, March 6, 1914; A. D. Côtes-Nord. 1T: Laïcisations 1882-1930. Insp. acad. to prefect, July 31, 1914.

⁴⁷Adrien Dansette, Religious History of Modern France, (London, 1961); translated and slightly abridged by John Dingle), II, 187-206.

⁴⁸Professor Jacques Ozouf (in a private conversation) hypothesized that the Ralliement in the early nineties might have signalled a pause in the war between curé and instituteur, but I could find no evidence of the Ralliement's effect in Brittany.

⁴⁹David Thompson, Democracy in France since 1870 (4th ed; London, 1964), pp. 129-130 and passim.

⁵⁰J. M. Mayeur, "Religion et politique: Géographie de la résistance. aux inventaires (février-mars 1906)", Annales: Économies-Sociétés - Civilisations, XXI, (November-December, 1966), 1259.

The Haute-Loire department of the Massif Central area had the most violent demonstrations. Ibid., 1261. See also J. M. Mayeur, La Séparation de l'Église et de l'État (Paris, 1966).

⁵¹Paul Pageaud, Histoire de Petit Mars (Nantes, 1961), pp. 225-26. Pageaud includes a witness' excellent diary of the event.

⁵²Some thirty of these letters are found in: A. D. Fin. 2V21: Personnel chargé de l'établissement des inventaires. Participation des instituteurs.

⁵³A. D. Loire-At. sTi216: Dossiers individuels . . . instituteurs et institutrices. Prim. insp., Saint-Nazaire, to insp. acad., February 1, 1906; Institutrice, Drefféac, to prim. insp., Saint-Nazaire, March 5, 1906, to insp. acad., March 9, 1906.

⁵⁴The account of the vents in L'Arvor (Vannes, Catholic newspaper) of December 18, 1906, conforms almost exactly to what the sub-prefect of Ploërmel (to prefect, Morb., November 6, 1906) had predicted just before the day of laicization. [A. D. Morb. T1269: Laïcisation d'écoles G-LA].

⁵⁵For the laicization at Plougar in November, 1906, no locksmith in the intensely Catholic area around Morlaix could be persuaded to come and one had to be brought from Brest. The gravity of these events in Catholic regions cannot be underestimated. Detail

in A. D. Fin. T43: Enseignement privé: Écoles primaires. Laïcisations d'écoles--1893-1913. Arrondissement de Morlaix. Sub-pref., Morlaix, to prefect, November 8, 1906.

⁵⁶A. D. Loire-At. ST322: Enseignement primaire: Enlèvement des emblèmes religieux dans les écoles; Révocation des maires opposants. 1905-1907. We have copies here of the circulars cited.

⁵⁷It is noteworthy that the major figures involved in the anti-clerical campaign of this era were familiar with clerical conditions of the West. Clemenceau was a Vendean, Briand and Waldeck-Rousseau were lawyers in Saint-Nazaire and Nantes, respectively, and Combes was once a student in theology at Rennes.

⁵⁸The copies of Clemenceau's orders carried out by the sub-prefects are in ST322 [Loire-At.].

⁵⁹A. D. Morb. T1171: Instruction primaire: Affaires diverses. Communes A-P. Insp. acad. to prefect, Morbihan, December 7, 1911.

⁶⁰Quoted in François Cornu, Dans la Mêlée laïque (Brest, 1927), p. 110.

⁶¹Archives nationales (hereinafter A.N.). F¹⁷9125⁵: Loi du 28 mars, 1882: préparation; application; résistance du clergé: 1879-1912.

⁶²Ibid., prim. insp., Fougères, to insp. acad., October 30, 1909.

⁶³A. D. Ill-Vil. 5M46: Rapports . . . clergé. Insp. acad. to prefect, October 26, 1909.

⁶⁴In the carton A. N. F¹⁷9125², we have an excellent source for the incidence of the book problem all over France. Copious press clippings and dispatches from officials indicate that it was a significant event on the national scale.

⁶⁵Quoted in the Chronique de Fougères (January 22, 1910).

⁶⁶A. N. F¹⁷9125⁵: Loi. . . résistance. Teacher, Le Verger, to prim. insp., Rennes, November 2, 1909 (transferred to Minister of Education).

⁶⁷A. D. Côtes-Nord. T: Doss. comm. Prim. insp., Lamballe, to insp. acad., April 21, 1913.

⁶⁸Teachers were definitely not antipatriotic at any time before 1914, yet they were reputed to be so in many quarters. One teacher of the Loire-Atlantique remembers that when he entered military service near Paris in 1913, he was surveyed very closely by the adjutant for signs of antipatriotic ideas. Interview with H. L. at Nantes, May 27, 1970. For a fuller discussion of the ideology of teachers in Brittany, see Chapter V.

⁶⁹Quoted in Le Courrier Breton (Rennes), January 3, 1909. The speech appeared on the front page of other Catholic newspapers.

⁷⁰The tone of anti-intellectualism is significant. It is my opinion that this current was formed during the Dreyfus Affair and that in the instituteur, Catholics had a continuing object on which to vent their disdain of intellectualism and rationalism.

⁷¹A. N. F¹⁷9125⁵: Loi . . . clergé.

⁷²A. D. Ill-Vil. 2T: Enseignement primaire: Préfecture: Instituteurs--institutrices-mouvements 1910-1911. Statistic dated July 7, 1911.

⁷³A. D. Fin. T: Instituteurs--1901-1919.

⁷⁴A. D. Morb. T1942: Instruction publique. "Personnel". Dossiers individuels antérieurs à 1926. A-G. Sub-prefect, Plœrmel, to prefect, June 27, 1912; prim. insp., Plœrmel to insp. acad., June 30, 1912.

⁷⁵The fat dossier A. D. Fin. T126: Écoles clandestines 1902-1920 gives us a good idea of the extent of this development in one Breton department.

⁷⁶Annales de la Chambre des Députés. Débats parlementaires
Session ordinaire I, 1910 (du 11 janvier au 16 février), p. 329.

⁷⁷ Interview with Mme Louis Ogès at Quimper, August 28, 1970.

[Note: I have used this institutrice's name by permission.

For almost all others cited I have kept them anonymous.]

⁷⁸ A. D. Loire-At. sT12: Enseignement primaire: personnel des instituteurs et institutrices--nominations, mutations (dossiers individuels) 1889-1892. Anonymous letter to prefect, August 31, 1889; insp. acad. to pref., September 28, 1889. The primary inspector at Nantes would praise him soon after (to acad., October 22, 1891) as "a cultivated mind, a prudent and circumspect man".

⁷⁹ A. D. Morb. T1220: Ens. prim.: affaires diverses, 1874-1920; Enseignement du catéchisme 1884-1910. Prim. insp., Plôërmel to insp. acad., November 3, 1890. Catechism was even taught, by some instituteurs, in class itself, as at Plouer (Côtes-du-Nord), where not until 1891 did it become an out-of-class subject. The teacher and his adjoints (to prim. insp., Dinan, October 1, 1891) justified this violation of Ferry's law on laicity by saying that it had been necessary in order to silence the clergy. (A. D. Côtes-Nord. T: Doss. comm.)

⁸⁰ A. D. Loire-At. sT1144: Doss. inds. . . .1870-1949. Prim. insp., Châteaubriant to insp. acad., May 4, 1884; instituteur (renouncing cantor job) to insp. acad., November 11, 1889.

⁸¹A. D. Loire-At. sTi380: Enseignement primaire: Correspondance avec les communes 1870-1950.

⁸²This will be developed further in Chapter V.

⁸³A. D. Ill-Vil. T: Instituteurs, Dossiers individuels. Prim. insp., Redon, to insp. acad., March 26, 1899.

⁸⁴AD. D. Ill-Vil. T: Institutrices. Dossiers individuels. Teacher to prim. insp., Rennes, October 18, 1902.

⁸⁵A. D. Ill-Vil. F1776: Dossier de Mme Chalmel née Angèle-Joséphine Lesénéchal, Institutrice publique, 1901-1924. This diary is shorter than her husband's (previously cited) but pithier.

⁸⁶A. N. F¹⁷-9125⁵: Loi . . . clergé. Dodu to Min. of Education, December 31, 1910.

⁸⁷Annales . . . Députés, I, 1910, p. 200. The debate of January 18 was one of the hottest on education under the Third Republic, and the instituteur was the main topic for Barrès, Briand, de Mun, and Doumergue, all of whom participated in the debate.

⁸⁸Prost, Enseignement en France, p. 210.

CHAPTER III

LIFE IN THE VILLAGES

In 1901 a novel written by a former teacher, Antonin Lavergne, appeared in Charles Péguy's Cahiers de la Quinzaine. Entitled Jean Coste, it was a moving portrait of the misery and despair of a country schoolmaster. Such a revelation could not go unnoticed. Péguy himself, shocked by the plight of an institutrice forced to ask for part-time work at the Cahiers office, wrote an angry diatribe, De Jean Coste, in his journal. Published in 1902, this work condemned the laic republicans, from Ferry to Combes, who mouthed noble ideals yet had contrived to enslave the teaching corps of France.¹

Both of these books were essentially muckraking in style. They raised the problem but failed to give a complete picture of the village schoolmaster's condition. The difficulties facing the country instituteur were complex and to understand them requires careful examination. Brittany's villages provide fertile soil for such an inquiry.

One begins with a certainty: teachers of the pre-1914 era were underpaid. Money worry was a frequent, sometimes constant, theme in their lives, and only those whose incomes were optimal for their profession were comfortably situated.

In 1881 teachers' salaries were paid by local authorities and ranged between 700 and 1200 francs a year.² In the same year they lost the added benefit of rétribution scolaire paid by students, and it had already rapidly diminished during the 1870's. Their wages during the remainder of the decade were unpredictable and depended not only on valid criteria such as length of time in the profession but also upon the resources of villages. Both the departmental and central authorities increasingly aided villages in assuming the burden of salaries, but nevertheless salaries varied. Examining the Loire-Atlantique alone one finds incongruities such as an institutrice of one village, with three years' experience, drawing 800 francs a year, while in another of comparable size the institutrice received the same salary after fifteen years' teaching.³ Wages during the eighties averaged perhaps 1100 francs per year.

In 1889 the republicans completed the core of their educational program by making the instituteur their paid functionary. Henceforth, all were paid directly by the central government. Basic salaries were fixed and gradated according to classes, as follows:

	<u>Instituteurs</u>	<u>Institutrices</u>
Fifth Class	1000 fr.	1000 fr.
Fourth Class	1200 fr.	1200 fr.
Third Class	1500 fr.	1400 fr.
Second Class	1800 fr.	1500 fr.
First Class	2000 fr.	1600 fr.
<hr/>		
<u>Annales . . . députés.</u>	<u>Docs. parl. (sess. ord.),</u>	
II, 1889 (du quatorze mai au quinze juillet), 306.		

Added to this income was 200 francs for a directorship above two classes and 400 francs for a directorship of over four classes. In theory communes of a certain size must provide the teacher either lodging or an indemnity for lodging. Secretaryships to the mayor or adult courses might provide additional income.

The salary scale, nonetheless, was woefully inadequate and unjust. The system of promotion was based upon percentages: 35 per cent of teaching effectives had to be in the fifth class; 25 per cent in the fourth; 15 per cent in the third; 5 per cent in the second and in the first together. To accede to the top salaries--the liveable salaries--could take a lifetime, and indeed, many teachers never reached the upper two classes. The remaining 20 per cent of teachers were stagiaires, untenured novice teachers whose salary was a pitiful 800 francs without any other benefits. Until they passed an examination conferring the Certificat d'Aptitude pédagogique (C.A.P.) they were doomed to remain in this servile state, and stagiaires of five years experience were not uncommon.⁴

Protest followed adoption of the law of 1889. In 1891 a courageous group of teachers in the Department of the Var began circulating petitions and forming committees with the intent of forcing passage of a more favorable law on salaries. The petitions reached Brittany's instituteurs, but they were in no position to press such demands. Inspectors of the academy forbade the

formation of committees or any mention of the petitions by teachers. The inspector of the Loire-Atlantique, in a letter to the Minister of Education of February 7, 1891, urged repression of teachers trying to "'explode' all over France, claims, exaggerated and collective demands which good sense as much as respect for discipline should forbid them to do . . .

. . ." ⁵ Soon, however, politicians like Jean Jaurès were broaching the issue of salary reform. The Socialist leader gave a long, impassioned ripost to Raymond Poincaré, rapporteur of the 1893 budget in the Chamber, affirming that ". . . the application of the law of 1889 has brought the teachers little but disappointments, vain expectations, and it is for that reason that they became discouraged" ⁶

Reform was essential, but only the minimum was done. Laws of the 1890's raised salaries slightly; in 1902 the percentage system was replaced by one of seniority; and by 1905, the salary scale ranged from 1100 to 2200 francs (2300 francs in 1913). ⁷ Passage from class to class, however, could still require five or six years, and the new salary scale was still too low. The experienced German schoolmaster, for instance, received almost twice as much as his French counterpart in 1913; and the average instituteur's salary, even after 1905, amounted to little more than the average French industrial worker's wages. ⁸

Little wonder, then, that money troubles were endemic to the occupation of instituteur. The young stagiaires, with the lowest salaries of all teachers, were constrained to budget

tightly. Their pay barely covered the cost of pension--usually taken at the local auberge--and left them next to nothing for important expenses such as clothes. Chalmel, of Ille-et-Vilaine, recalled how he had to be very parsimonious with his 700 francs per year as stagiaire in 1886. Even the pension that took the lion's share of his income was not worth the money. Meals normally consisted of a kind of cheese purée in the morning, lamb stew at mid-day, and the purée once again at night. There was no heat in his room.⁹ H. L., whom I interviewed at Nantes, offered more precise details of the stagiaire's finances. In 1912 he was drawing exactly 65 francs, 30 centimes a month, of which an incredible 60 francs was allotted for pension. With 5 francs 30 left he could buy almost nothing without long saving. A decent pair of shoes cost 15 francs; a suit 45 francs; a used bicycle (of great use for a daily seven kilometer trip between lodging and school) about 90 francs.¹⁰ A desperate stagiaire's letter in 1892 illustrated the effect of forced penny-pinching: "It is in vain that I maneuver, calculate, skimp even on what is necessary, the more I do the more my distress deepens. Is humanity banned from the school code?"¹¹

For older teachers with families life could be comfortable when circumstances were fortuitous: a small family to support, husband and wife both teaching, or outside income, all helped. Unforeseen occurrences, however, could drastically alter a pleasant existence. Certain examples demonstrate this precariousness of life. A fine teacher at Plouézoch (Finistère) in 1886

had his salary as secretary to the mayor cut from 300 to 100 francs a year. For him, as he made clear, the reduction meant disaster. His regular salary of 1200 francs a year was already an impossible wage for the bread-winner of a family of six and one who as a teacher must also "dress suitably".¹² Sickness was another unwelcome intrusion into teacher's lives because doctor's fees made heavy inroads into tight budgets. An institutrice at Arthon-en-Retz (Loire-Atlantique) in 1906 had to support her ailing husband, her parents, and two children both stricken with diseases--meningitis and eye troubles--necessitating costly medical attention in Nantes. For her, life on 1500 francs a year was a terrible struggle sapping all the forces of a forty-year-old lady with twenty-two years' teaching experience. She finally received her retirement in 1921 with probably little vigor left to enjoy it.¹³

Teachers were not supposed to incur debts. According to both academy and villagers indebtedness--always a stigma in France--was unacceptable for an important public servant. A young teacher in Ille-et-Vilaine made the mistake of amassing debts for books ordered from Paris and for medical expenses in the early eighties. The blot against his record was never forgiven him by the academy and even though he had his C.A.P. and his performance in class was constantly improving, he was forced to remain a stagiaire, scraping along on 700 francs a year until his death in 1894 at age thirty-three.¹⁴ The files of the

academies are replete with angry and often petty letters taking to task indebted instituteurs. Butchers, bakers, grocery-store owners would not hesitate to write the teacher's superiors when he owed a few francs at the store. In 1893 the manager of the department store, "Aux Classes Laborieuses" in Paris, informed the inspector of the academy of the C^otes-du-Nord that one of his institutrices owed twelve francs there.¹⁵ Letters of this sort were not conducive to the teacher's advancement.

Teachers who had money troubles were not respected in their communes. A schoolmaster in a hamlet of the Finistère in 1903 had eight children and a wife to support on 1500 francs a year. The primary inspector observed that "his children . . . are in rags and go around most of the time in bare feet. The whole family must suffer from hunger at certain times." Up to his ears in debt to all of the food suppliers, mocked by villagers for scrounging after dead wood and dragging it home in full view, the teacher had to be transferred. The inspector blamed him for poor money management.¹⁶ No extenuating circumstances were recognized in such a case.

Getting out of debt was often an arduous process for teachers in view of their salaries. One expedient was to petition the academy for a "secours". But these were granted only to those teachers or more usually, ex-teachers, in the greatest indigence. A typical recipient was an institutrice of thirty-eight years' service who was paralyzed and in debt in 1890.¹⁷

A secours rarely amounted to more than 100 francs annually, of little use to someone very much in debt. A very human impulse of some teachers was to seek a short-cut out of debt, as did an instituteur-adjoint at Rostrenen (Côtes-du-Nord) in 1886. Putting his trust in a group of charlatans, he was ruined by them in a business deal that recalls the dealings of Balzac's ingenious César Birotteau.¹⁸

One should not paint too dire a picture: some teachers did succeed in living quite well in the pre-1914 period. But even those who succeeded could point to a time in their careers when they had felt the pinch of poverty. The discrepancy between what the republicans promised the teacher--freedom from material need--and what they actually gave him was striking.

Comfortably ensconced in modern buildings one has difficulty in envisaging the sheer physical discomforts faced daily by the instituteur de village eighty years ago. His schoolhouse and his lodging were often in poor condition making his life a harsh one. Fundamental repairs or building were delayed sometimes for decades.

A mayor friendly to the laic school, in full command of the conseil and village purse, and responsive to recommendations of educational authorities could render the physical conditions of a teacher's life agreeable. Unfortunately many of those in

Brittany failed to do so. There were, most obviously, the completely reactionary mayors, often nobles, who usually opposed any improvements relating to the laic school or its occupants.¹⁹ Even moderate or republican mayors, however, were sometimes hostile to an amelioration of the teacher's school or lodging. The authoritarian rural mayor, one sometimes senses, delighted in keeping the teacher subordinate to him; procrastinating on the teacher's requests was one way of doing so.²⁰ The mayor of Taupont (Morbihan) repeatedly dodged the teacher's plea for wood during the winter of 1908; and even the heating stove itself was out of order for a long time, sending far more smoke than heat into the classrooms. After several cold months the mayor, in consultation with the town council, finally granted 2 1/2 francs to repair the stove, not nearly enough.²¹

Not only schools dating back to the 1830's and 40's but even some new ones built under the Third Republic were manifestly inadequate, even unsafe. A four-class school at Saint-Joachim (Loire-Atlantique) in the 1880's had many holes in the roof allowing the prevalent winter rain to shower the classroom; stoves were very frequently out of order affording no relief from the cold winds which penetrated the many broken window panes.²² The mixed school at Locarn (C^otes-du-Nord) was worse. A report by the primary inspector in 1900 gave a graphic description of the school: classroom floors of loose, wet earth; moist walls covered with saltpeter, of which a half-pound could

be easily scraped off at a time; blackened windows that could not be opened and therefore provided no ventilation in the exceedingly cramped classrooms save that of the wind's gusts from under the door; one outside toilet for 125 pupils of both sexes, prey to hecklers and undesirables. The insensitive mayor, supported by a penny-pinching citizenry, would not discuss plans for a new school until 1909.²³

Roads leading to the schools were often nothing more than rivers of thick mud. Schools were sometimes poorly situated: the establishment for girls at La Plaine was built next to a charcuterie. A combination of rain water and entrails created a sickening odor for the school's occupants when the window above the heap of rotting flesh, the sole window in the schoolhouse, was opened. (At that school, too, the toilet was chronically out of order--as at many others--and the little girls had to unburden themselves wherever they could outside the school.)²⁴

Teaching in such schools was very difficult to say the least. In some, necessary equipment was lacking, as at the seaside hamlet school for boys and girls at Lescoff (Finistère), which in 1893 was without maps, inkwells, and brooms, as well as a toilet and a schoolyard. Children, too, were sometimes without notebooks, pencils, and other vital articles. These materials ("fournitures scolaires") were not free, and in the poorer areas some parents could not afford to buy them. Teachers would frequently be obliged to donate school books and supplies to indigents and were not always reimbursed by the academy.²⁵

Breton children were a rather difficult lot to teach, and a major cause was of course the intolerable conditions described above. At one unheated school the children "could not hold a pencil in their hands"; at another one where ventilation was virtually non-existent the institutrice, according to the inspector, could not rouse them from their torpor.²⁶ And even though the école libre siphoned off many students from the public school, the latter was often terribly overcrowded. Forty children huddled together in a tiny, poorly-lit, poorly-heated classroom are akin to at least seventy children in a modern classroom. At Mâel-Carhaix, another school of the Côtes-du-Nord, 135 boys were crowded into two small rooms in 1887.²⁷

On the other side of the coin was the recurrent problem of attendance (fréquentation scolaire). Fréquentation was the subject of Chamber debates at various times between passage of the laws of 1882 and 1914. Perhaps nowhere did attendance fluctuate more than in Brittany. Teachers who were evaluated partly on successful recruitment of pupils had constantly to compete with the exigencies of fields and sea. Children were valuable at harvest time for gathering wheat, apples, and potatoes. In the rich Saint-Pol-de Léon area of the Finistère--noted for its cultivation of vegetables--the aid of children, being free, was indispensable. Children also guarded animals and generally performed many duties on a farm. H. L. remembers that at twelve

he was almost running the family plot north of Nantes.²⁸ The fishermen of Brittany also required periodic help from their offspring. During the nineties the boy's school at Île-Tudy (Finistère) was almost full in winter but almost empty during June, July, September, and October, as all but the youngest children had to help their fathers with preparations for fishing. At the hamlet of Trézien children collected seaweed, a task that frequently kept them out of school.²⁹

Fréquentation was a problem also because schools for a long time in many parts of Brittany were unattractive and, in many cases, far from the children's dwellings. Breton communes, then as now, were among the largest in France. The sub-prefect of Ancenis, in a report on the problem of attendance, stated that distances between home and school were often from six to eight kilometers.³⁰ The effect of winter rain upon muddy roads and paths compounded the difficulty. The fields were a better alternative than school for some children.

A primary goal for the teacher was, then, to render school attractive to his charges, and this was difficult. Making inattentive rural children digest complicated moral propositions, mathematical methods, or historical data could be impossible for even a very skilled normalien. Fishermen's sons were perhaps more stubborn in the face of authority than peasants' sons. The director of the boys' school of the Ville-Close at Concarneau in 1886 analyzed the problem:

The population of the Ville-Close is composed entirely of sailors. Now, you surely know that sailors, obliged to absent themselves continually, and often for long periods, have little part in bringing up their children; that task devolves to the mother and she is often weak, so that, as a general rule, the children are accustomed to do only what they want to do, and later on will not submit to anyone.³¹

In another section I will amplify upon the teacher's life in the classroom. Here I emphasize only that a life spent in classrooms sometimes not worthy of that appellation, struggling with children frequently recalcitrant to direction, almost eleven months a year, was enough to discourage the strongest of instituteurs.

If he had no extracurricular duties, the teacher went home at night after nine or ten hours in the schoolhouse. What was his lodging like? Quite often it was in the same deplorable state as the school he had just left. From Charybdis in the daytime he went to Scylla at night.

While the young stagiaire usually procured his own abode at the village auberge, the established teacher could usually expect a rent-free lodging or an indemnity for rent from the municipality. Often the teacher's flat (which he furnished himself) was situated above the school or the mairie, which might itself be connected to the school. Proximity to the mairie, particularly if its occupant was inimical to the laic school, made life tense. The institutrice and her husband at Saint-

Fiacre in 1898 lived almost in the mairie on the same floor above the school. Somehow it was situated between her kitchen and bedroom. A partition of old boards afforded no real privacy, and the mayor, an unruly type fond of liquor, was far from being a pleasant neighbor. There was only one key to the building, which the institutrice had to request from the mayor's sister. The youthful nephew of the mayor, his secretary, also lived in the building and saw nothing wrong in waking up everyone at five o'clock in the morning, even challenging the institutrice's husband to a fight when the latter chose to remonstrate against this thoughtlessness. The teacher complained for four long years about the intolerable conditions she endured, and the dossier ends without any resolution to the problem.³² At a more important village, Guidel, in the Morbihan, the highly-rated instituteur in the 1890's was opposed by a formidable foe: the noble mayor, M. de Polignac ". . . an outspoken enemy of republican institutions, of which the only representative in his commune is the Instituteur."³³ The teacher's sixteen-page letter to the academy in the same year, confirmed by subsequent investigation, gave a detailed account of his life in a flat in the mairie. The mayor's secretary had been tyrannizing the instituteur's watch-dog, kicking him, and throwing stones at him. The dog was indispensable to the teacher by warning him if people were spying on him or if they were about to enter his apartment thinking themselves in the mairie, as regularly happened. The

secretary would also bang on their wall repeatedly to wake up their baby and frighten him, particularly when the couple was out. Vagabonds found their way into the attic, above his apartment.³⁴

With luck suitable lodgings might be found in the village apart from school or mairie. At most villages the choice was narrow. The only lodging available for the teacher and his wife at Radenac in 1890 was above an auberge, of the kind considered fit only for a stagiaire. The teacher's wife and the lady proprietor quarreled violently, referring to each other as putain. The teacher, involved willy-nilly in the dispute, was transferred at the end of the year, luckily to a better post.³⁵

Adjunct-teachers were worse off than directeurs. Those with families were often in extremely cramped quarters. A prefectoral form of Ille-et-Vilaine for 1893 gives the exact measurements of adjuncts' apartments in various villages of the department. Married adjuncts would have two small rooms with a kitchen in one. Unmarried adjuncts usually had a single room. The one at Hirel was two and a half by two meters, certainly not mammoth in size.³⁶

Some adjuncts lived with their directors, and the crowding produced friction. At Pommérit-Jaudy (Côtes-du-Nord) in 1902 a young married adjunct with a child lived in his head teacher's house. Cramped surroundings were made worse by the fact that the director had a loud, outspoken wife and an unmarried daughter

resentful that the adjunct was not an attractive bachelor. In order to rid themselves of the young teacher they employed methods similar to those of the mayor's secretary referred to above, waking up the baby almost every morning at five.³⁷

Lodgings might be as rundown as schoolhouses. The institutrice at Quelneuc (Morbihan) in 1903 was afraid that the ceiling in her rotting dwelling would cave in on her at any moment. Without heat, save for a kitchen stove that filled the ramshackle place with smoke, she was miserably cold all winter. The locks on her doors did not work, and she had no privacy above the mairie.³⁸ In sum, physical conditions of life for teachers--both at home and in school--could be harsh.

Living and working in "barns"--the term was sometimes employed by inspectors--was unhealthy as well as annoying. Long, difficult hours of work spent in drafty or airless, cold or wet surroundings produced frequent illnesses among teachers. Like money trouble, the problem of health is a constant theme in documents on the instituteurs.

A schoolmaster of the Loire-Atlantique in the 1880's, trying to support a family of four on a small salary and fighting debt, teaching in a hamlet school packed with sometimes over 100 students, was continually plagued with breakdowns in health

throughout the decade. Pneumonia, influenza and simply "general weakness, due to great fatigue", as one doctor put it, forced the teacher to take frequent leaves of absence.³⁹ At Allineuc (Côtes-du-Nord), where a reactionary mayor ruled over a long period, both the instituteur and institutrice--husband and wife--fell sick repeatedly owing to an unheated, damp schoolhouse. Costly medical expenses plunged these parents of three children into debt.⁴⁰

In defective, crowded schools epidemics were frequent. Measles, for example, did not stop with a few children. At Cournon (Morbihan) in 1891, thirty-nine of forty-one boys and thirty-one of thirty-three girls caught it.⁴¹ Smallpox, mumps, and flu wreaked havoc on school attendance. These diseases were obviously more serious then than now. A random sampling of items from the documents of the Côtes-du-Nord indicate: one child died of mumps, along with typhoid fever, at Le Moustoir, March 18, 1893; one died in the measles epidemic at Mâel-Carhaix in 1891; three died of the same disease at Plouagat in 1885; two died of croup at Saint-Fiacre in 1896; one of "mucous fever" at Uzel in 1884, and so on.⁴² Teachers were prey to diseases like smallpox, which raged through the school of Coray (Finistère) in 1888 forcing an adjunct institutrice to bed.⁴³

The wet climate of Brittany exacerbated unhealthy conditions. Nowhere did the climate have a worse influence upon teachers than in the marsh (marais) area of the Loire-Atlantique principally west of Nantes. There, where Vendéans had once

taken refuge from pursuing republican armies, teachers succumbed to ailments usually of the throat or chest. The dossier of an instituteur who taught at Saint-Étienne-de-Mer Morte, a village of this region, reveals periodic sick leaves. According to him, "before going to Saint-Étienne-de-Mer Morte, I was very rarely sick." Chronic bronchitis ended his career prematurely. Another commune, Rouans, was situated in the middle of a bog covered with water all winter. A young teacher struggled there for four years in the 1880's. Never having been sick before, he rapidly contracted a chest disease which he laid to the vapors rising from the swamp. His wife, too, was constantly ill, as was his third and sole surviving baby. Teaching in that area could permanently ruin a teacher's health; fortunately this last teacher pulled through and terminated his distinguished career much later in a school at Nantes.⁴⁴

The instituteur of Brittany often died before his time. Many short, tragic careers are delineated in the documents. For instance, a well-rated teacher at Berrien (Finistère) was crushed by the burden of an overloaded class. In a letter supporting the teacher's petition for a leave, the primary inspector wondered "how he could have held out so long with more than 130 school-children in one relatively small classroom." The inspector also recognized what it cost the teacher in terms of health to be constrained to yell in order to make himself heard and to discipline an unusually obstreperous group of students. With his wife as his adjunct in the second class (sixty pupils!) he was

making progress in the school. But in 1899 he developed acute stomach pains; in 1900 this was diagnosed as an ulcer coupled with serious anemia. He died at the beginning of 1901 at age thirty-three.⁴⁵ Women seem to have had more difficulty than men in accommodating themselves to the rigors of the teaching profession. A fine institutrice of Ille-et-Vilaine died in 1902 at thirty-seven, pregnant with a third child. She had acute pains in her legs and bronchitis at the time. One searches for clues. A report of 1898 reveals that the school where she taught was "very badly installed, the worst of the district conscription [of Saint-Malo]" and that her lodging was also very poor. She had been at that school since 1892. One of her letters of that year deplored the fact that she had to teach two full classes over a long period of time while her adjunct had a baby and then a slow recovery. "So I am therefore absolutely alone with two classes to do, without a monitor old enough to replace me, and all this with a weak constitution, facing the most bitter and perfidious concurrency . . . This state of affairs cannot last." Supply teachers were then difficult to obtain, and when she bore her first two children she had only very limited leaves. The clues are scattered; but they afford us some comprehension of why her career was cut short.⁴⁶ A schoolmistress at La Bernerie (Loire-Atlantique) died in 1901 at forty-two from a heart malady complicated by influenza; and the mayor of the village paid heartfelt tribute to "the lady who for eight years was to the little children of the lower class of the school, an excellent

institutrice and more important, a veritable mother"47

Perhaps had she read those lines the bitter memories of struggling in unhealthy places like Chapelle Basse-Mer would have been somewhat sweetened. Another outstanding institutrice was so successful at Querrien (Finistere) that she filled her class with sixty-eight girls by 1892, after ten years of intense concurrence.

The inspector's reports were glowing; for example: "Mlle L . . . is a schoolmistress of the kind which the countryside needs in quantity. Then the laic schools could fight with chances of success against congréganiste establishments . . . She is very well-liked by the population of Querrien." But an unhealthy lodging, an overloaded class, the persistent concurrence, and her own admirable penchant for working herself to the bone for her school doomed her to an early death. Doctors' reports mention anemia, fever, gingivitis, severe gastric trouble. She died on September 30, 1894, at age thirty-eight.⁴⁸

Women were particularly susceptible to chest, throat and lung ailments, to bronchitis and laryngitis. A testimony given by a young girl teaching at La Gallonnière (Ille-et-Vilaine) in the eighties is of a kind found countless times in these documents: "My throat has become more swollen and I spit out blood, I can't stop coughing, and my voice gives out on me at every moment."⁴⁹ The great scourge of the era was tuberculosis. What was often diagnosed as bronchitis or laryngitis was really tuberculosis. It was the most feared nemesis of teachers confined in

places fertile to the disease. The incidence of the disease among teachers in Brittany--especially institutrices--was staggering. Many died in their early twenties. On the subject of tuberculosis, the doctors' letters in the documents supporting leaves for teachers are frequently misleading. One young institutrice of Ille-et-Vilaine was chronically ill from 1909 on. A typical diagnosis among many was that of the doctor at La Mézière in 1910 who designated her ailment as simply "bronchitis with anemia." Not until 1917--the reader must carefully thumb through the doctors' letters--was tuberculosis mentioned. The girl died three years later at thirty.⁵⁰

I do not wish to imply that teachers were the only group which then contracted tuberculosis; witness the ravages the disease made on urban workers. Nevertheless, I re-emphasize the critical connection between teachers' conditions of work and the disease. At Campénéac (Morbihan) the instituteur's run-down lodging in the pre-war decades was scandalous, as the primary inspector of Plœrmel pointed out. Two teachers in a row had died there of tuberculosis, and the new one in 1912 was justifiably fearful for his family and for himself.⁵¹

Blame for the severity of tuberculosis among teachers must also be directed toward the educational administration itself. Its policy on leaves--vital to teachers who needed to recuperate--was hard-hearted; to be brief it did not encourage them. A report of the Minister of Education (J. Chaumié) in 1903 implied

that teachers demanded leaves for frivolous and unsubstantial reasons: "But during the year we have not ceased recommending to the inspectors and to the prefects that they redouble their surveillance and only accord the leaves in cases of illness that are clearly established."⁵² As with pensions the administration used a panoply of complex laws and regulations to make leaves difficult to obtain or to hold for a long time.⁵³ Those granted were generally of three kinds: Leaves on no pay, on half-pay, and on full pay. Predictably one must show perfectly incontrovertible evidence of grave sickness in order to qualify for full pay. Sometimes teachers with severe pulmonary disorders would have their first leave on their regular salary; but if they fell sick again the next would be on half-pay. Faced with mounting bills, teachers sometimes found it too costly to remain away from work. Tuberculous teachers often taught in dank schoolhouses for years after contracting the disease.⁵⁴

It is astounding how often one finds the administration awarding a leave only when it was too late. For instance, the primary inspector of Saint-Malo recommended in 1899 that a leave be given to the institutrice of Bécherel. The note to the academy was written on April 4, describing the teacher's ailments as congestive pneumonia and pulmonary emphysema. On April 7, three days later, she was dead (at thirty-one).⁵⁵ No mention of illness or leaves is found in the dossier before the eleventh hour.

Other administrators were certainly more humane, like the

inspector of Plœrmel whom we have already met. By 1907 his district had been robbed of several good teachers by tuberculosis, and others had contracted the disease; he thus considered it imperative "that energetic measures of preservation be taken by not leaving teachers with the terrible disease at their posts; this is a financial sacrifice from which the administration must not shrink."⁵⁶ The sacrifice involved paying for leaves and replacements. To be fair it must be pointed out that qualified supply teachers were sometimes hard to find. Teachers were not in oversupply until just prior to the war, and even then only in Ille-et-Vilaine and the Loire-Atlantique of the five Breton departments. But the balance-sheet of the administration's record toward sick instituteurs is negative.

Today we have little patience for physical suffering: our empathy lasts only so long. For spiritual or psychological distress, however, we have been more magnanimous with our attention since Freud began to interest us in such matters. To these more intangible problems of the village schoolmaster I now turn.

The fundamental difficulty for teachers in villages was the fact that their position therein was ambivalent. Neither bourgeois nor proletarians, much less peasants, they were something of an anomaly, even when well accepted. Without a class

with which they could really identify they were always doomed to a certain degree of isolation.

By their learning teachers were outside the orbit of the average peasant. H. L. of the Loire-Atlantique remembers his teacher at Guénouvry as a very cultivated, intelligent man. Though universally respected for his culture--"c'était un monsieur" according to the peasants--he was always considered above and apart because of his seemingly abnormal taste for books.⁵⁷ Then too, the instituteur dressed differently from the other villagers. He had to be attired in a suit with a tie and be well-groomed. As one stagiaire put it, we must spend all our money on a costume in order to "tromper l'oeil par un extérieur assez correct".⁵⁸ People expected the teacher to dress comme il faut. The tactless instituteur of Ille-et-Vilaine referred to in the last chapter was reviled by villagers partly because of his sartorial eccentricities: "he is considered original with the cuffs of his pants tight around his ankles and sometimes with a knitted wool jacket which no one in the region wears any more."⁵⁹

Teachers were constantly reminded of the exigencies of their position by their superiors. In his "Conseils pratiques aux instituteurs", the primary inspector of Fontainebleau stressed the necessity of an impeccable appearance: hair must be of medium length and beard trimmed, teachers must not slouch, and so forth.⁶⁰ Furthermore, instituteurs must not become too friendly with anyone in the villages. They must preserve their special, unsullied status as guardians of future French citizens. A young

adjunct at La Rouëxière was chastised by the inspector of Ancenis for being too close with a group of young workers, thereby losing "the dignity and the consideration which an instituteur needs in order to succeed . . . in his task."⁶¹ The father of Madame Ogès, though very well-liked at Plounévez-Lochrist, would have been, in the estimation of his inspector, "better respected if he showed himself to be less familiar with everybody."⁶² This statement gives a good indication of how teachers were forced to walk the tightrope between over-cultivation and under-cultivation of villagers' friendship.

By extension the teacher's marriage partner must be of the right sort. The primary inspector of Fougères proposed the transfer of a recently-married institutrice out of the commune of Baillé. "She married a farm boy, from Baillé, too familiar with the inhabitants and whom everybody tutoies, which it appears is harmful to her reputation."⁶³ A teacher's wife in the town of Hennebont had to give up the café she ran because it reflected on the teacher.⁶⁴

The teacher was above others but not in the way the bourgeois was superior to the peasant. Although he was supposed to live bourgeoisement, everyone knew that he was not really a bourgeois, if only because of his meager pecuniary resources. In addition, the bourgeois as well as the peasant were sometimes inclined to denigrate the teacher for the leisure of his summer vacation, not realizing how demanding and burdensome was his work.

One institutrice of the Finistère told how the peasants treated her and other teachers as high-livers ("mangeurs de fricot").⁶⁵ This slight resentment could and did co-exist with a general respect for the teacher.

To get the money to "live high", like a bourgeois, was usually impossible for teachers. Regulations excluded them from any outside work save that of secretary to the mayor. In extraordinary cases they were also allowed to be receveurs-buralistes, that is, to collect certain taxes usually in a tobacco shop or at the mairie. But educational authorities generally frowned on this sort of work. The primary inspector of Quimper vetoed the request of villagers at Penmarch that their teacher occupy this post, for "this function of Receveur-buraliste placing him in constant relations with the storekeepers of the area, would perhaps have a pernicious effect upon the moral authority that an Instituteur must have."⁶⁶ Much less could teachers undertake any kind of paid manual labor in summer, manual labor being too demeaning for them.⁶⁷

Perhaps worse than social isolation was intellectual isolation. The gulf that separated peasant from teacher in culture has been mentioned. The instituteur might have no one in a whole village with whom he could discuss the heady positivist lectures imbibed at normal school, or Hugo, or French foreign policy, or whatever. Certainly those who came nearest to his station in life--the rural postman, the road surveyor (agent voyer), the mayor--were at the same time usually inferior to him in

intellectual attainments. A moving passage written by a lifetime laïque of distinction, Jean Guéhenno, gives an indication of what must have obtained for many Breton teachers of the pre-World War I era:

On les laisse dans un isolement intellectuel affreux. Je pense à ce qu'est un jeune instituteur à vingt ans, quand il sort de l'École Normale, si avide de savoir, si magnifiquement curieux, éveillé à tous les problèmes. Il rejoint son poste, le plus petit hameau le plus éloigné. Et soudain c'est le silence autour de lui. Un océan de terre! Rien que l'inertie de la terre! L'inquiétude se meurt devant tant de sérénité. Et pas un livre! La paye est trop maigre qui permettrait d'en acheter. Personne à qui parler. Quelle volonté est nécessaire pour demeurer alors préoccupé de vivre comme un esprit. Il n'est guère pour l'intelligence d'aventure plus tragique.⁶⁸

This situation was most prevalent with young stagiaires or adjuncts not yet established, although to a lesser extent it might apply even to the successful director of a four-class school.

Teachers of different areas saw each other perhaps once a month at a pedagogical conference. To go to visit a colleague of another village on a Sunday was difficult if one's village was not near a train line. Distances obviously were far greater than they are today. In 1887, the primary inspector of Nantes invited an institutrice from Légé to come to talk to him "if however the temperature [winter] can permit her to make such a trip: for you have to allow more than four hours of bad public coach ride, in ordinary weather, to come here, and as much to return."⁶⁹ Légé, on the border of the Department of the Vendée,

is no more than thirty-six miles south of Nantes. Isolation would become less of a problem for Breton teachers only after the war with better roads and means of transportation.⁷⁰

One further factor contributed to a sense of isolation in teachers of Brittany: the use of the Breton language. In areas where Breton was the preferred medium of expression it behooved teachers to know the language in order to communicate with villagers; those who spoke only French were at a great disadvantage in such places. A young stagiaire from Corrèze, teaching in the North Finistère in 1906, wrote a dire letter to the academy on the subject of Breton: "Since I am now in the middle of the Léon countryside, almost everyone expresses himself in Breton, and people with whom I can chat are quite rare. I am therefore alone all day and incapable of talking to parents of my students."⁷¹ On his dossier one sees that he returned to the Corrèze three years later. In the Morbihan in 1890, a petition to the prefect signed by some 100 inhabitants of Bignan demanded a new teacher asseverating that ". . . the Instituteurs of Bignan have not succeeded in gaining the confidence of families because, knowing neither Breton nor the customs of the area, they cannot give the children religious Teaching, a prerequisite in this commune" ⁷² This area was one where catechism was given in Breton, as in several parts of the province, so at least some knowledge of Breton was necessary.

The problem of Breton was really, in a larger sense, the problem of accommodating to Bretons. When the primary inspector

of Lannion discussed a successor to the esteemed teacher there, he recommended that the new teacher have absolute command of Breton. Almost all the inhabitants could certainly understand and speak French, but Breton was the preferred tongue among the lower classes. "The Breton, the homme du peuple, of course, is, by his nature timid, not very expansive, purposely distrustful. How can his reserve be conquered . . . if one is, so to speak, a foreigner to him?"⁷³ Here is the crux of the matter: the teacher knowing no Breton in such areas was a foreigner. The same difficulty existed for Huguette Bastide, author of a best-selling account of an institutrice's life today in a village of Lozère. Unable to speak patois she found a constant barrier between herself and the villagers.⁷⁴ This source of differentiation between teacher and villagers probably existed in many areas of Brittany, and France generally, during our period--even where French was the only tongue employed. For teachers spoke a more polished and urbane French than the average peasant. Language helped set him off from the local population.

Not only was the teacher socially and intellectually unique, he was also morally unique. Most important, the teachers were representatives of a new secular morality on trial. They must act almost like saints. Directives from the academies and from politicians in Paris unceasingly emphasized this to teachers; for instance, the circular of the inspector of the academy of the Bouches-du-Rhône for 1882: "Our teachers must not forget it: teaching of morals imposes upon them, in turn, a moral obligation,

that of putting their conduct in accord with their teaching

. . . The master is the example."⁷⁵

Villagers concurred with inspectors: teachers who took their children from the fields had better be upright. They permitted the teacher little deviation from the moral norm. Inhabitants of villages were, it is true, hard on anyone involved in the slightest scandal. They were, moreover, prone to building up and spreading false rumors about people's behavior, perhaps in order to liven up their mundane existences. The teacher was often a victim of this practice. Anonymous letters from peasants about instituteurs' personal lives inundated the files of the prefectures and academies of Brittany. Commenting on a letter attacking her unjustly, a young schoolmistress of the Morbihan referred to this "miserable countryside of little jealous hates, of coteries."⁷⁶ The description is apt.

Women teachers most often bore the brunt of morals charges. Just as they had to be prudent in their relations with the Church so also did they have to be careful to lead an exemplary private life. A lady teacher at Ille-et-Vilaine, though excellent in the classroom, was considered anathema at Lillemer because she had had a baby too soon after her marriage before coming there. For the first year she was snubbed by most people, and right up until she left the commune three years later she was slandered in numerous anonymous letters.⁷⁷ Another woman teacher came to the reactionary village of Marsac (Loire-Atlantique) from the Department of the Gers in 1907. When the people heard that

she had married a defrocked curé, their venom was unbridled.

One of the anonymous letters in her file is a shameless castigation of her morals:

Depuis l'an dernier, on a comme maîtresse d'école une vrai coureuse, elle a été chassée de son pays car elle vivait avec son curé--ils sont parti ensemble depuis qu'elle est arrivez ice il était lui a St. Nazaire elle allait couchez avec lui tous les dimanches et des fois plus souvent ils sont mariés à présent mais ils ont une petite fille qui avait 3 ans avant qu'ils sont maries et tout le monde sait cela, il ne faut toute de même pas se moquer de nous nos filles ne vont plus a l'école on aime mieux qu'elle save pas lire que d'aller chez une femme de mauvaise vie

An investigation by the inspector found this letter to be a complete prevarication. But by the end of the year the highly-rated institutrice had to leave the commune, transferred to Saint-Nazaire, where she taught from 1907 to 1936.⁷⁸

In some other cases sex scandals did have an adverse effect upon teachers' careers. An instituteur of the Loire-Atlantique had been doing well at Le Pellerin from 1886 until 1897, when his wife's love affair behind his back came to the attention of the villagers. The French traditionally have made the cocu an object of their mirth, and this teacher was hastily sent to Touvois, an inferior post.⁷⁹ Another teacher, a young stagiaire at Saint-Ouën la Rouerie (Ille-et-Vilaine), was sent to the Department of the Nord after two people spied him in the house of a thirty-eight year-old woman "who is weak-minded". Their description of what they saw through a hole in the shutters,

certified by M. le maire as honorable testimony, was sufficient evidence for the inspector.⁸⁰ The most spectacular case of this sort that I came upon involved an institutrice who was caught embracing a man on a beach near Saint-Nazaire in 1887. The detailed police investigation for "Outrages publics à la pudeur" contains more than a dozen testimonies of people who watched them from behind the trees on a hill overlooking the beach. Using a pair of binoculars an old man called some youths to the spot to take a look and then more observers came over. The institutrice was forced to resign soon after.⁸¹

In the latter two instances it is certain that the stagiaire and the institutrice had actually engaged in activities providing grist for snoopers' mills. The institutrice made no attempt to recant when confronted with evidence against her. At other times, however, instituteurs were unjustly involved in sex scandals. A major affair of this sort took place in the Finistère in 1907. A fifty-four year-old father of two had been teaching at Gouesnou since 1880. From about 1900 he had fallen out with the mayor, who fired him from his post as secretary and successively, accused him of brutality to students, drunkenness, and exploitation of children in the classroom--charges thoroughly investigated by the inspector and found to be unsupported by evidence. Meanwhile, the mayor had roused groups of pères de famille against the teacher. All of this was prelude to the scandal that followed. On August 13, 1907, the teacher--this is

his version--was reading a newspaper in his favorite field near the village. Three young girls, two of them sisters, aged eight, eleven, and twelve years old, asked him if he could see their cow, and one had him lift her up in order to gaze over the field. They went away shortly afterward. Late in the day their mothers charged him with serious sexual offences. The full report of the inspector of Brest, relating the detailed investigations he undertook, reveals to us the gravity of the affair. The story he heard from the girls and their mothers was that the teacher had called them over, encouraged them to do somersaults, and began to commit certain perverse acts with them. The girls returned home crying. The primary inspector noted that the mother of the two sisters modified her story a few times. She was also known as a drinker and being very poor was dependent on charity administered by the mayor and a noble landowner of the area. Furthermore, the inspector noticed that the field was very close to a main road making such escapades difficult to conceal. Finally, all three girls were pupils at the rival libre establishment. On the other hand, the girls sounded sincere to him, and the mayor supported them, although he was certainly not an impartial bystander. This report--a model of clarity and balance--ended: "It is difficult to conclude; but I am rather disposed to conclude that the teacher is innocent." The dimensions of the affair quickly widened; on August 31, the influential daily, La Dépêche de Brest, carried a long article entitled "Gros scandale en perspective," which sided with the mayor and

his whole conseil municipal against the teacher. Other newspapers took up the case soon after. On September 10 a huge petition with 100 signatures of pères de famille, validated by the mayor, was sent to the prefect asking that the teacher be sent out of the village for "immoral acts". The instituteur did not resume his duties in the new school year, and everybody waited for the outcome of his trial at the Cour d'assises of the Finistère at Quimper. The verdict came on April 4, 1908, after a long-closed-door trial, that is, with no minutes available as befitted an affair of this genre: the teacher was acquitted. He retired in August, certainly at a plausible age for retirement but blackened for life.⁸²

One should not think that the academy protected the teacher in such a case. Though less capricious than villagers, inspectors enforced almost the same moral standards. They continually warned teachers not to give occasion for gossip, even going so far, in several cases, as to censure women teachers for bicycle-riding through villages! The most closely-watched teachers were those who could get into the most trouble, youthful stagiaires and adjunct teachers. Inspectors used the directors to inform them of the whereabouts and particularly the nocturnal habits of their young subordinates.⁸³

Besides sex the other great moral pitfall for teachers was alcohol. In France, and especially in Brittany, a necessary concomitant of social intercourse has always been the coup de rouge, but for teachers it was forbidden fruit. Use of spirits

was damaging to the reputation of instituteurs who, themselves, taught courses on the evils of alcoholism. Yet to eschew the friendly drink, as H. L.'s teacher at Guénouvry always did, was once again to isolate oneself. The pressure was very strong to be one of the boys by having a drink. A schoolmaster at Leuhan (Finistère) was transferred out of the commune in 1912 after twenty-five successful years there because he was too fond of going to the bar with mayor and conseil after meetings where he was the secretary.⁸⁴

Stagiaires and adjoints were involved in many drinking scandals. A young teacher of Muel (Ille-et-Vilaine) became so inebriated on a Sunday at a nearby village that he fell in the street and nearly split his head open. His explanatory letter to the inspector tells how he kept meeting people--the postman, the policeman, an old friend--who invited him for a drink. He was dismissed before the end of the year.⁸⁵ Incidents of this sort could hurt the laic school immensely, particularly if it was not well established. A capable young adjunct at Geneston (Loire-Atlantique) had a weakness for getting drunk once a month when he drew his paycheck, and in December 1891, he was found staggering in the streets. According to his director, "some people . . . more or less enemies of laic schools, as they all are at Geneston with two or three exceptions, put a gun in his hands and had him fire on a rooster which he killed in the streets to the great delight of the audience." His teaching contract

was revoked a month later.⁸⁶

Clearly, drinking might be the consequence of despair. Spiritual conditions affected the mental well-being of teachers just as physical conditions could alter their health.

Only a minority of teachers succumbed to intense feelings of frustration. Generally, young teachers and institutrices were most prone to depression. One young schoolmistress of Ille-et-Vilaine wrote in 1913: "How sad it is for an institutrice to be far from her family in the middle of this Brittany where one is attacked so strongly and is at the mercy of so many enemies."⁸⁷ It was necessary to be strong in order to adapt to solitude or calumny. Generalizing for his district in an unusually sensitive report of 1903, the primary inspector of Vannes noted: "The life of the laic Institutrice is often very painful; the unfortunate Institutrice is, in rural areas, often kept apart and I wonder how, in many cases, she does not become totally discouraged."⁸⁸ Assignment to recently-created posts, as seen in the last chapter, was cause for despair. The inspector of Guingamp related how he tried to raise the morale of the young institutrice who replaced the soeurs at Loscouet-sur-Meu in 1892. Feeling that she could not succeed she cried for hours in his presence.⁸⁹

The next step beyond depression was mental illness. Neurasthenia could sometimes result from overwork and worry. A schoolmistress of the Loire-Atlantique was plagued with it, and the causes are easily charted: struggling in one country post on 63 francs a month and trying to raise a young son after the death of her chronically sick husband; financial and motherly anxiety over a long, serious, and costly illness that her son next underwent; then working very hard in a classe unique of seventy girls, where she had many extracurricular duties and ran a lunch cantine; and finally, being the target of merciless slanders of a délégué cantonal who was competing with her new husband for a secretaryship to the mayor. After several leaves for neurasthenia during this career she died at forty-three years of age.⁹⁰ A male teacher of the same department died at twenty-six after illness marked by coliques néphrétiques. Just before his death he had been censured by the Catholic newspaper L'Ami de la Vérité (Nantes), which accused him of telling children to spit on crucifixes and of really doing nothing in class, even allowing his wife to come in and caress his moustache. An exceedingly conscientious and bright teacher, as is indicated by reports, he might well have been stung deeply by such false accusations particularly since they were repeated throughout the entire village. He petitioned for a transfer and then died soon afterward, leaving a wife and a little child.⁹¹

Most serious mental illness in teachers was characterized by signs of paranoia. Village life might breed the insane

feeling that literally everyone was against you. A teacher at Ancenis mentioned in a letter of 1882 that many people, led by the curé, were spreading false rumors about him. By 1891 his collapse was impending: in that year he wildly accused all of his colleagues at a pedagogical conference of whispering about him and plotting against him. His career ended in 1897 in a mental hospital at Nantes. He was suffering from "manie délirante et hallucinatoire".⁹² Desperate teachers who drank heavily were most likely to show symptoms of paranoia. The reason is psychological: the liquor that most alcoholics regularly drank was eau-de-vie de cidre or what the Normans call Calvados. In large quantities it is harmful to the brain. A young teacher of the Morbihan, dismissed from teaching in 1910, was described by the prefect as "an alcoholic tinged with madness. He accuses you [inspector of the academy], he accuses Arton, he accuses his colleagues, of persecuting him, of setting traps for him." Indeed, in his numerous letters to the authorities the teacher constantly referred to the traps set for him by various people.⁹³ Other teachers of this stamp were known to run into the streets trying to fight off imaginary enemies, even devils. Drinking also led to what the doctors referred to as "la folie des grandeurs". For example, a drunk schoolmistress of Ille-et-Vilaine with incipient mental derangement spent several days in the bars of Broualon calling herself Madame Bourdon (the wife of her primary inspector) then Madame Dodu (the inspector of the academy's spouse).⁹⁴

In addition to paranoia another sort of mental illness encountered in documents is what I would call the complex of claustrophobia. This is to some degree a peculiarity of Brittany. Bretons, more than most other Frenchmen, were at that time migrators, to Paris and even to America. Given the fact that villages could be stultifying it is not surprising that teachers might abandon their posts when really depressed, even if only for a few days. When this became chronic--as in the case of Mlle D... of the Morbihan in the 1900's--it could be classified as mental illness. Every post she was sent to she eventually left for varying lengths of time. The conseil départemental de l'enseignement primaire, which reviewed cases of this kind involving teachers, gave the opinion in 1913 that she should be dismissed, and she was, subsequent to that meeting. The council's report is illuminating: "Mentally Mlle D... is an unstable person She engages in an epistolary outpouring happily unique in the department: from May 31, 1912 to May 17, 1913, one can find in the dossier thirty-five of her letters. These letters repeat themselves, contradict each other, are filled with protests . . . She is incapable of finding peace in any post" ⁹⁵ The inability to find peace was usually a feminine attribute, as the institutrices appear to have been less impervious than males to village constraints and to the Breton climate. A poem published by another schoolmistress of the Morbihan entitled "Vibrant Heart" is worth quoting; the second stanza demonstrates the effect of the weather on an emotional person:

Éclats de foudres et sanglots
 Vont y répercuter leurs plaintes;
 Brises d'Avril, rumeurs des flots
 Viennent y chanter leurs complaints.⁹⁶

The last resort of despondent teachers was suicide. It is impossible for the researcher to gauge its exact incidence, as many deaths of teachers are often not accompanied in the documents by a precise description of the cause of death. With certain teachers one can merely conjecture that suicide might have been the reason for death. Take the cases of two young instituteurs of Ille-et-Vilaine: the first began his career in one of the worst posts of the department, Saint-Colombe, where he was liked but was admonished by his inspector for not doing as much as he could. One morning he was found dead by his wife. He was twenty-eight. The second teacher, a twenty-two year-old stagiaire, was sent from the cantonal capital, Saint-Brice-en-Coglès, to Gosné because he had been frequenting a lady with a somewhat tarnished reputation. After two months in the new post he too was found dead one morning.⁹⁷ In neither dossier was there mention of previous physical ailments. Suicide is a logical hypothesis.

In other cases it is explicit. An institutrice-adjointe of eighteen years of age, fresh out of normal school, died several months after she began her career at Nozay (Loire-Atlantique) in 1888. She had hung herself. The inspector of the academy conducted his own investigation and found that the head schoolmistress "had been cold and hard with her young novice

adjunct teacher as with those who preceded her. She had made her sleep alone in the rez-de-chaussée. She had refused to give her pension . . . Mlle T... [adjunct] was sickly, impressionable."⁹⁸ A male adjunct teacher from the Pas-de-Calais commenced teaching in the Finistère in 1882 and was similarly alienated from the beginning. Here, the reasons were his lack of Breton, the country food "insufficient for my well-being", perhaps also the effect of the climate and of being away from his own "pays". He committed suicide at Pont L'Abbé in 1891 after a mental collapse.⁹⁹ An instituteur teaching in the same region for twelve years shot himself in the head in 1898. His posts were at Beuzec-Cap Sizun and Esquibien, both near the wind-swept Pointe du Raz on the sea. In a letter of October 19, 1896, the teacher described the adverse effect of the climate on his wife. Another clue is found in his letter of March 9, 1897, in which he mentioned that for a long time he had been unsuccessfully requesting several vital repairs to his schoolhouse and lodging. At Esquibien fishing was of prime importance, and he had a constant battle with fréquentation. Finally, one notes that he had five children to raise on his paltry 1400 francs a year.¹⁰⁰ Is it too much to suggest that a combination of these factors prepared the ground for suicide? The latter teacher, according to his adjuncts, had shown no outward sign of depression; much was probably concealed. A fifty-three year-old single instituteur jumped to her death into a cistern at Saint-Servan-Quelmer

in the vicinity of Saint-Malo. Only after a thorough investigation did the inspector learn from certain people that the schoolmistress had, of late, been even more taciturn than she habitually was. But no one had imagined that she would even contemplate such a step.¹⁰¹ Many teachers, I suspect, kept silent their frustration or distress.

The modern urban man sometimes looks back wistfully to the pristine purity of rural living. Numerous Frenchmen today probably indulge in such reverie from time to time. Village life in Brittany and probably in France as a whole was something less than ideal in the last period of French history when that mode of existence still predominated. In the village one was scrutinized by one's fellows whereas the city now guarantees a certain anonymity. Moreover, conveniences too often taken for granted have lessened distances, made climates more bearable, and allowed greater scope for diversion.¹⁰² To understand the schoolmaster's life before 1914 one must picture the village as it actually was, for its less desirable aspects often weighed heavily upon him.

FOOTNOTES

¹ The kind of rhetoric he referred to is exemplified in Ferry's speech to the teachers in 1881: "You have been freed as citizens by the French Revolution, you are going to be emancipated as instituteurs by the Republic of 1880" Revue Pédagogique (1881), part I, 581. Peguy's work is conveniently found in his Oeuvres complètes (Gallimard; Paris, 1920), II.

² Antoine Prost, Histoire de L'enseignement en France 1880-1967 (Paris, 1968), p. 372. Salaries for teachers of the Seine are always higher than for those of the rest of the country between 1880 and 1914.

³ These figures are from dossiers taken at random in A. D. Loire-At. sTil02: Dossiers individuels . . . instituteurs et institutrices.

⁴ For information on salaries I have used Octave Gréard's excellent compendium, La Législation de l'instruction primaire en France depuis 1789 jusqu'à nos jours (Paris, 1898-1900), VI and VII. Gréard was one of the most important men in primary education in France in this period, holding several high posts. For the period after 1900 Prost's Enseignement en France is a reliable source.

⁵ A. D. Loire-At. 26-T-4: Enseignement primaire: Traitement des instituteurs et institutrices-affaires diverses 1881-1927.

⁶ Annales . . . députés, Débs. parl. (sess. ord.), I, 1893 (vingt fév. au six avril), 1255. His colleague in the debate, August Bouge, stated that "up until today, we have given, from the height of this tribune as in official ceremonies, much praise to the instituteurs; but it can be said that that is about all we have given them." Ibid, p. 1267.

⁷ Prost, Enseignement en France, p. 381, p. 372.

⁸ Peter Sandiford ed., Comparative Education (London, 1918), pp. 324-27. The experienced German teacher's salary cited for 1913 is 3700 marks (4125 francs). The average industrial worker's wage for 1906, according to Jacques Chastenet, was roughly 1350 francs a year. Chastenet, La France de M. Fallières (Paris, 1949), p. 172.

⁹ A. D. Ill-Vil. F1768: Dossier d'un instituteur.

¹⁰ Interview with H. L., Nantes, May 15, 1970. Because of its price (compounded by a tax) the bicycle was a luxury item for teachers right up to the war. See Eugen Weber, "Gymnastics and Sports in Fin-de-Siècle France: Opium of the Classes", American Historical Review, LXXVI (February, 1971), 80-81.

¹¹ A. D. Loire-At. sTi219: Doss. inds. . . . instituteurs et institutrices; Stagiaire, La Régrippière, to prim. insp., Nantes, July 9, 1892.

¹² A. D. Fin. T: Instituteurs--1901-1919; Teacher, Plouézoch, to prim. insp., Morlaix, February 15, 1886.

¹³ A. D. Loire-At. sTil08: Doss. inds. . . . instituteurs et institutrices; Institutrice, Arthon-en-Retz, to acad., April 1, 1906. She lost her first son to meningitis, and the second drowned when his boat sank, so for her, the material sacrifices bore no fruit. Eligibility for retirement pension was a very complicated matter, but in general, to receive the full pension one must teach at least thirty years. Otherwise one could draw what was called a "proportional pension" (retraite proportionnelle), usually inadequate for teachers with dependents. Many teachers, hence, were forced to teach until eligible for a full pension; and yet some, inexplicably, could never qualify for their pension even with a lifetime of experience thanks to the complex school code.

¹⁴ A. D. Ill-Vil. T: Instituteurs. Doss. inds. On the principal debts, there is a letter from a Paris bookseller to the inspector of the academy, May 16, 1882. From 1887 to 1894 the teacher's dossier is filled with his plaintive requests for advancement.

¹⁵ A. D. Côtes-Nord. T: Doss. comm. Letter, February 16, 1898, about institutrice of Saint-Fiacre. Letters from the food merchants are found in the dossier of the teacher at Saint-Thors (Finistère) mentioned in the following footnote.

¹⁶ A. D. Fin. T: Instituteurs--1901-1919. Prim. insp., Châteaulin, to acad., May 8, 1903, about teacher at Saint-Thors. A lady teacher of Ille-et-Vilaine was the object of village derision for activities similar to those of this teacher. In debt because of medical expenses and dependents, she began raising animals. Searching for grass to feed them she was accused by several people of stealing and of general immorality and was transferred out of the village of Saint-Leroux. A. D. Ill-Vil. T: Institutrices. Doss. inds. Prim. insp., Redon, to acad., May 19, 1913.

¹⁷ A. D. Ill-Vil. 2T--Préfecture-secours--1888-1890.

¹⁸ A. D. Côtes-Nord. T: Doss. comm. Teacher, Loscouet-sur-Meu, to acad., July 21, 1886. A promising teacher, he had been sent to a "disgrace post" because of debts which he finally paid off about 1890.

19 In 1909, 216 of some 1500 Breton mayors were nobles. Jean Delumeau ed., Histoire de la Bretagne (Toulouse, 1969), p. 482. Noble mayors considered the mairie as part of their patrimony and prestige, like the property they owned. See Andre Siegfried, Tableau politique de la France de l'ouest sous la troisième république (Paris, 1913), p. 422.

20 Little research has been done on the character of the rural mayor of the period. I would hazard the assumption that many ruled their villages with an iron hand--often dissimulating their autarchic bent by an innate craftiness common among political men. Barthélemy Piéchut, the mayor in Gabriel Chevallier's classic caricature of rural mores, Clochemerle (Paris, 1934), was of that type. So was the mayor of a cantonal capital near Rennes with whom I recently dined. His contemptuous refusal of the local schoolmistress' demand for a telephone in her school reminded me of the attitude of mayors of previous generations. Mayors also felt responsible to villagers, much like a father, according to Charles Schmitt in Le Maire de la commune rurale (Paris, 1959), pp. 30-31.

21 A. D. Morb. T1271: Laïcisations d'écoles R-V. Letters on the dilapidated school begin with sub. pref., Plôermel, to pref., November 30, 1907, continue throughout 1908.

²² A. D. Loire-At. sTi377: Corr. avec les comms. Teacher, Saint-Joachim, to prim. insp., Saint-Nazaire, December 9, 1886. He had undergone this intolerable situation for four years.

²³ A. D. C[^]ôtes-Nord. T: Doss. comm. Prim. insp., Guingamp, to acad., October 4, 1900. In a supplement issue of the Électeur des C[^]ôtes-du-Nord (undated, 1903), a long article by a group of tax-payers enjoined the mayor to stand firm against the erection of "new palaces".

²⁴ A. D. Loire-At. sTi361: Corr. avec les comm. Prim. insp., Paimboeuf, to acad., March 6, 1908. In four years at this school the institutrice had raised the effectives from four to thirty in spite of these great obstacles.

²⁵ A. D. Fin. T: Institutrices--1901-1919--Institutrice, Lescoff, to prim. insp., Quimper, October 13, 1893.

²⁶ A. D. C[^]ôtes-Nord. T: Doss. comm. Institutrice, Louargat, to acad., December 8, 1902; prim. insp., Lannion- to acad. (on school at Caöüennec), December 17, 1892. S. L., Instituteur at La Chapelle-des-Marais in the 1880's, donated books to poor children there and was rarely paid. A. D. Loire-At. sTi171: Doss. inds...instituteurs et institutrices. Teacher to acad., June 5, 1890.

²⁷ A. D. Côtes-Nord. T: Doss. comm. Teacher, Mael-Carhaix, to acad., November 11, 1887. Brittany had many children of school age, perhaps more than most other areas of France. The province suffered from intense rural overpopulation in this period in contrast to general French demographic trends. Gordon Wright, Rural Revolution in France: The Peasantry in the Twentieth Century (Stanford, 1964), pp. 25-26. Of this population a relatively high proportion was schoolable youth. At the beginning of the twentieth century 41 per cent of the population was under twenty years of age. Delumeau ed., Histoire de Bretagne, p. 465.

²⁸ Interview with H. L., Nantes, May 15, 1970.

²⁹ A. D. Fin. T: Instituteurs--1800-1899. Teacher, Île-Tudy, to prim. insp., Quimper, May 19, 1897; prim. insp., Brest, to acad., February 12, 1898 (on Trézien).

³⁰ A. D. Loire-At. 7-T-1: Exécution de la loi du 28 mars 1882--arrondissement de Paimboeuf--1882-1886. The sub-prefect's report is dated November 20, 1882.

³¹ A. D. Fin. T: Instituteurs--1901-1919. Teacher, Concarneau, to prim. insp., Quimperlé, January 21, 1886.

³² A. D. C[^]otes-Nord. T: Doss. comm. Best description of these conditions is prim. insp., Guingamp, to pref., December 9, 1898. At Ablon (Calvados) in 1970 a bitter quarrel took place between institutrice and mayor because the mairie was on the same floor as her lodging (for her husband and six children). The room where the conseil deliberated was situated between the bathroom and a bedroom and not infrequently, people coming to the mairie mistakenly entered her bathroom. France-Soir, February 9, 1970.

³³ A. D. Morb. T1687: Ens. prim. Plaintes . . . instituteurs 1787-1934. Sub-pref., Lorient, to pref., November 9, 1898.

³⁴ A. D. Morb. T1687: Ens. prim. Plaintes . . . instituteurs 1878-1934. Teacher, Guidel, to acad., August 4, 1898.

³⁵ A. D. Morb. T1687: Ens. prim. Plaintes . . . instituteurs 1878-1934. Acad. to pref., June 20, 1890.

³⁶ The prefect's form is in A.D. Ill-Vil. 2T: Ens. prim. Instituteurs, institutrices--mouvements--1893.

³⁷ A. D. C[^]otes-Nord. T: Doss. Comm. The adjunct's letter to the inspector of the academy, October 16, 1902, is the most reasonable of a thick batch of letters. Those of the head instituteur are less convincing. The adjunct was given a better post, Lézardrieux, at the end of the year.

³⁸ A. D. Morb. T1270: Laïcisations L-Q. Institutrice, Quelneuc, to prim. insp., Vannes, September 21, October 28, 1903.

³⁹ A. D. Loire-At. sTil29: Doss. inds. . . . instituteurs et institutrices. Many letters in dossier. First doctor's letter to acad., February 1, 1882.

⁴⁰ A. D. Côtes-Nord. T: Doss. comm. Instituteur, Allineuc, to acad., February 5, 1901. The husband died soon after.

⁴¹ A. D. Morb. 54T (92): Instruction primaire. Épidémies dans les écoles 1890-1900. Prefectoral form, February 10, 1891.

⁴² Examples taken from A. D. Côtes-Nord. T: Doss. comm.

⁴³ A. D. Fin. T92: Instruction publique. Enseignement primaire. Épidémies dans les écoles 1866-1903. Institutrice, Coray, to prim. insp., Châteaulin, March 10, 1888. Mme C. L., who taught at Louvigné-du-Désert (Ille-et-Vilaine) just after the War of 1914-1918, remembers that croup and diphtheria frequently raged through her unhealthy classroom. One boy with tuberculosis (and a badly abscessed leg) was even allowed to remain in class by her director. Interview with Mme C. L. at Châteaugiron (Ille-et-Vilaine), January 31, 1970.

⁴⁴ A. D. Loire-At. sTi217: Doss. inds. . . . instituteurs et institutrices. First teacher to acad., April 3, 1900, summarizes his declining health from 1885 when he came to Saint-Étienne; second teacher, Rouans, to acad., February 16, 1888.

⁴⁵ A. D. Fin. T: Instituteurs--1800-1899. Prim. insp., Château-lin, acad., May 19, May 27, 1900; wife to acad., September 5, 1900. I would speculate that the teacher died of cancer.

⁴⁶ A. D. Ill-Vil. T: Institutrices. Doss. inds. Institutrice to prim. insp., Montfort, February 21, 1892; prim. insp., Saint-Malo [The Montfort district was abolished by them] to acad., March 21, 1898; doctor's letter to acad., May 13, 1902.

⁴⁷ A. D. Loire-At. sTi131: Doss. inds. . . . instituteurs et institutrices. Mayor, La Bernerie, to prim. insp., Paimboeuf, March 29, 1901.

⁴⁸ A. D. Fin. T: Institutrices--1801-1900. Prim. insp., Quimperlé, to acad., June 13, 1892; doctors' letters to acad., February 21, April 19, 1894.

⁴⁹ A. D. Ill-Vil. T: Institutrices. Doss. inds. Institutrice to acad., February 16, 1887. The inspector had mentioned in a report the extreme humidity of her apartment.

- 50 A. D. Ill-Vil. T: Institutrices. Doss. inds. Doctor to acad., October 29, 190. The 1917 letter to the academy has no exact date.
- 51 A. D. Morb. T1941: Inst. pub. "Personnel". Doss. inds. ant. à 1926-Le-V. Prim. insp., Plœr^{me}l, to acad., March 7, 1912.
- 52 The report is found in Annales . . . députés. Documents parlés. (sess. ord.), LXV, 1902 (vingt oct. au trente déc.), 250.
- 53 The primary inspector of Quimper invoked an obscure law of the Second Empire to turn down the request of a teacher for an extended sick leave with pay. That teacher died very soon after at age thirty-three. A. D. Fin. T: Instituteurs--1800-1899. Prim. insp., Quimper, to teacher, La For^êt-Fouesnant, December 9, 1899.
- 54 For example, the teacher of La For^êt-Fouesnant mentioned above.
- 55 A. D. Ill-Vil. T: Institutrices. Doss. inds.
- 56 A. D. Morb. T1049: Instruction primaire. Statistiques 1903-1908. Rapport sur la situation de l'enseignement primaire en 1906-1907 dans l'arrondissement de Plœr^{me}l.

57 Interview with H. L., Nantes, May 15, 1970. For the theoretical groundwork of this discussion of teachers' ambivalent status, I am indebted to Mona Ozouf, L'École L'Église et la République 1871-1914 (Paris, 1963), pp. 151-53.

58 A. D. Loire-At. sTi219: Doss. inds. . . instituteurs et institutrices. Stagiaire-adjoint, La Regrippière, to prim. insp., Nantes, July 9, 1892.

59 A. D. Ill-Vil. T: Instituteurs--doss. inds. Prim. insp., Redon, to acad., November 12, 1905.

60 A. Richard, "Conseils pratiques aux instituteurs", Revue Pédagogique (1881), pt. I, 394-407.

61 A. D. Loire-At. sTi220: Doss. inds. . . instituteurs et institutrices. Prim. insp., Ancenis, to acad., August 7, 1886.

62 A. D. Fin. T: Instituteurs--1901-1919. Prim. insp., Morlaix, to acad., December 11, 1893.

63 A. D. Ill-Vil. T: Institutrices. Doss. inds. Prim. insp., Fougères, to acad., September 12, 1897.

64 A. D. Morb. T1945: inst. pub. "Personnel". Doss. inds. antérieurs à 1930. A-Le. Prim. insp., Lorient, to acad., March 31, 1911.

65 Ida Berger ed., Lettres d'institutrices rurales d'autrefois. Rédigées à la suite de l'enquête de Francisque Sarcey en 1897 (Paris, n.d. [1960's], p. 38. This lady-teacher was at Locmiquévilic.

66 A. D. Fin. T: Instituteurs--1901-1919. Prim. insp., Quimper to acad., August 7, 1896.

67 Thorstein Veblen in his Theory of the Leisure Class (New York, 1922), pp. 105-114, clearly points out how people consider manual labor to be incompatible with honorable or virtuous status.

68 Jean Guéhenno, Sur le chemin des hommes (Paris, 1959), pp. 152-53.

69 A. D. Loire-At. sTil01: Doss. inds. . . . instituteurs et institutrices. Prim. insp., Nantes, to acad., January 18, 1887, describes voyage. [His underlining].

70 For a good fictional portrait of an isolated couple teaching in an eastern French village during the Belle Époque, see Roger Martin du Gard's novel, Vieille France in Oeuvres complètes, (Gallimard; Paris, 1955), II.

- 71 A. D. Fin. T: Instituteurs--1910--1919. Stagiaire, Le Tréhou, to acad., May 30, 1906.
- 72 A. D. Morb. T1261: Inst. prim. Personnel. plaintes 1875-1912. Petition to pref., August, 1890.
- 73 A. D. C^otés-Nord. T: Doss. comm. Prim. insp., Lannion, to acad., January 6, 1901. Marc Bloch wrote in 1940 of ". . . une opinion villageoise, comme la nôtre, volontiers méfiante de l'étranger et un peu repliée sur elle-même." L'Étrange Défaite (Paris, 1957), p. 101.
- 74 Huguette Bastide, Institutrice de village (Paris, 1969), p. 55. She writes: "Je ne sais pas me dégeler, je répons, mes phrases figées m'énervent. J'aimerais leur parler patois, je ne sais pas, m'asseoir avec eux et manger un morceau de lard ou de fromage. . . ."
- 75 Circular in Revue pédagogique (1882), pt. I, 223.
- 76 A. D. Morb. T1683; Enseignement primaire. Instituteurs: distinctions honorifiques--1873-1929; Teacher, école annexe [where normal school students got teaching practice] at girl's normal school, Vannes, to préf., June 8, 1908.

77 A. D. Ill-Vil. T: Instituteurs. Doss. inds. Prim. insp., Fougères, to acad., September 28, 1911. The anonymous letters are in this dossier. The woman died soon after departing the commune at age thirty-one, partly from unhealthy conditions there and perhaps also due to the hate campaign.

78 A. D. Loire-At. sTil05: Doss. inds. . . . instituteurs et institutrices. Anonymous letter [with original punctuation and spelling] to acad., March 2, 1907; prim. insp., Châteaubriant, to acad., March 17, 1907. A recent film highly acclaimed in France, La Fiancée du pirate, concerns an illegitimate girl growing up in a village. She is continually reminded of her fallen state--like this institutrice--but ultimately takes revenge on the whole village by becoming a prostitute, tape-recording compromising words spoken by her clients (including the curé), and playing the tapes from behind a pillar in Church one Sunday. The movie illuminates the worst aspects of village mentality in France.

79 A. D. Loire-At. sTil44: Doss. inds. . . . instituteurs et institutrices. Prim. insp., Paimboeuf, to acad., February 18, 1897.

80 A. D. Ill-Vil. T: Instituteurs. Doss. inds. Prim. insp., Fougères, to acad., October 31, 1891.

⁸¹ A. D. Loire-At. sT24: Enseignement primaire. Personnel: plaintes, affaires diverses mettant en cause les instituteurs (publics et privés)--1887-1945. Copies of all the testimonies are in the file and are very precise in nature.

⁸² A. D. Fin. T: Instituteurs--1901-1919. Teacher's letter August 25, 1907; prim. insp., Brest, to acad., August 28, 1907 and March 2, 1907 (most important reports). The verdict is in the Dépêche de Brest of April 4, 1908 (the archives lacked papers of the Cours d'assises for 1908). The petition--for which some of the signatures do not appear authentic--is also in this file. If acquitted the teacher was undoubtedly innocent. According to M. Jacques Léonard, an assistant professor at Rennes, French judicial authorities then were very stringent in morals affairs and made painstaking investigations of them.

⁸³ For censure of bicycle-riding, see A. D. Loire-At. sTil39: Doss. inds. . . instituteurs et institutrices. Prim. insp., Saint-Nazaire, to acad., June 14, 1884, on institutrice at Saint-Nazaire. A teacher at Scrignac (Finistere) to prim. insp., Châteaulin, January 1, 1900, told of his adjunct's nights out in Brest. A. D. Fin. T: Instituteurs--1800-1899.

⁸⁴ A. D. Fin. T: Instituteurs--1901-1919. Prim. insp., Châteaulin, to acad., October 24, 1912. Interview with H. L., Nantes, May 15 (for teacher at Guénouvry).

⁸⁵ A. D. Ill-Vil. T: Instituteurs. Doss. inds. Teacher to prim. insp., Redon, February 27, 1899. The inspector found that he had in fact drunk with all those designated in his letter. One feels again that it was not easy for some teachers to resist drinking invitations from friends.

⁸⁶ A. D. Loire-At. sTi226: Doss. inds. . . .instituteurs et institutrices. Directeur to acad., January 12, 1891.

⁸⁷ A. D. Ill-Vil. T: Institutrices. Doss. inds. Mlle B..., Saint-Méen, to acad., 1913 [no exact date].

⁸⁸ A. D. Morb. T1049: Instruction primaire. Statistiques-- 1903-1908. "Rapport sur la situation de l'enseignement primaire dans l'arrondissement."

⁸⁹ A. D. Côtes-Nord. T: Doss. comm. Prim. insp., Guingamp, to acad., December 14, 1892. A male teacher in the ultra-Catholic commune of Amanlis during the Belle Époque was also prone to crying: "The pupils notice that the master is often sad and even come upon him sometimes when he is crying. Life is not droll for the instituteur public at Amanlis." Raymond Chabirand, Amanlis: Histoire d'une paroisse rurale (Rennes, 1968), p. 236.

⁹⁰ A. D. Loire-At. sTil46: Doss. inds. . . .instituteurs et institutrices. Doctor's letters to acad., November 25, 1904, and March 5, 1906, mention roots of her illness; prim. insp., Paimboéuf, to acad., April 2, 1906, on overwork and competition of délégué et La Sicaudais-Arton. She died in that year. Reports on her were glowing, and she was rewarded for her zeal with several honors during her career.

⁹¹ A. D. Loire-At. sTi96: Doss. inds. . . .instituteurs et institutrices. Ami de la Vérité, February 3, 1889; prim. insp., Châteaubriant, to acad., April 18, 1890, September 23, 1890.

⁹² A. D. Loire-At. sTil46: Doss. inds. . . .instituteurs et institutrices. Teacher to acad., April 27, 1882; prim. insp., Ancenis, to acad., May 8, 1891; doctor's note, August 12, 1897.

⁹³ A. D. Morb. T1941: Inst. pub. "Personnel". Doss. inds. Antérieurs à 1923. Le-V. Pref. to acad., July 6, 1910. The file is thick with the teacher's own letters.

⁹⁴ A. D. Ill-Vil. T: Institutrices. Doss. inds. Prim. insp., Saint-Malo, to acad., July 10, 1908. She ended her career within a few months. In Clochemerle the instituteur Tafardel got drunk one night and, though far from mentally deranged,

significantly addressed himself to the imaginary inspector of the academy in the following terms: "Hors d'ici, sal-timbanque, piteux jocrisse! Et chapeau bas, monsieur, devant l'illustre Tafardel." Chevallier, Clochemerle, p. 115.

95

A. D. Morb. T117: Instruction publique. Peines--C-L. Report of conseil départemental, June 20, 1913. The most amazing letter of this species that I discovered was by another mercurial institutrice of the Morbihan. Characterized by the "outpouring" style it was 150 pages long! Here is a short excerpt: "C'est dans un vaste pillage au bonheur le plus épouvantable attentat à la dignité humaine qui se soit jamais vu et même un assassinat moral dans toute sa hideur si vous avez crée en matière d'existence humaine un fait aussi inouï que serait celui d'une plainte qui n'aurait aucun nom qui ne serait créée ni pour être une fleur ni pour être une herbe alimentaire ni pour être utile ni pour être belle." The institutrice was clearly mentally unbalanced. Paranoia is evident in a reference to all her fellow teachers of the department as "la fine fleur de la canaille".

A. D. Morb. T1261: Inst. prim. Personnel. . . plaintes 1875-1912. Institutrice to prim. insp. Pontivy, March 1895.

The unfeeling response of the administration to such mental illness is also significant. In a report to the prefect dismissing her (March 18, 1895), the inspector of the academy

mentioned only how her strange ranting were an affront to the authorities, making no attempt to understand them nor showing any compassion whatsoever. In ibid.

⁹⁶ The poem is found printed on a postcard in A. D. Morb. T1940: Inst. pub. "personnel". Doss. inds. antérieurs à 1923. A- Les Jules. Ernest Renan, in his Souvenirs d'enfance et de jeunesse (Paris, 1883), pp. 20-21, remembered that there were numerous mentally-disturbed people at Tréguier, where he grew up. They were harmless souls withdrawn completely into their make-believe worlds. He explained mental illness of that type by the fact that the Bretons were a "race de rêve".

⁹⁷ A. D. Ill-Vil. T: Instituteurs. Doss. inds. Prim. insp., Vitré, to acad., October 19, 1892 and extract from death register at Saint-Colombe, June 27, 1893; prim. insp., Fougères, to acad., September 24, 1900.

⁹⁸ A. D. Loire-At. sTll: Ens. prim. Personnel des instituteurs et institutrices--nominations, mutations (dossiers individuels). 1886-1888. Acad. to pref., December 26, 1888.

⁹⁹ A. D. Fin. T: Instituteurs--1800-1899. Teacher to acad., April 8, 1884; report of procureur de la République, Quimper, to acad., November 16, 1891.

¹⁰⁰ A. D. Fin. T: Instituteurs--1800-1899. Teacher's letters to acad. and prim. insp., Quimper; prim. insp.'s note March 9, 1896; adjuncts to prim. insp., February 21, 1898 and March 1, 1898 on suicide of teacher.

¹⁰¹ A. D. Ill-Vil. T: Institutrices. Doss. inds. Prim. insp., Saint-Malo, to acad., June 1, 1891.

¹⁰² Cf. Harvey Cox, The Secular City (New York, 1965), passim. Interviews with the old people of the seaside village of Plodémet (South-Finistère) indicate that there is little nostalgia for the past. Life before the First World War was harder and less attractive than now. Edgar Morin, The Red and the White: Report from a French Village (New York, 1970, tr. by A. M. Sheridan-Smith), pp. 116-121.

CHAPTER IV

THE SCHOOLMASTER AS NOTABLE

On the eve of the cataclysm of 1914 France had approximately 125,000 teachers, and they constituted the most cohesive corporation of republican agents then in existence. The instituteurs represented, in the countryside and the towns of France, republican virtues and doctrines in their quintessence. They were the "ideological cement"¹ of the regime.

If some of these instituteurs became notables, it was not merely because they were spokesmen for the regime in far-flung villages and hamlets; it was also because, being literate and knowledgeable, they could provide real services for peasants and villages. The successful instituteur, therefore, played a significant political and intellectual role in provincial France. These two strands form the subject of the present chapter.

The teacher represented the Republic both in the classroom and outside it. In school he taught from patriotic textbooks of history and from books of morality which contained the essence of the republican philosophy. Children learned to admire their government, its leaders, and its ideals: they

were taught to be loyal republicans. Thus Félix Pécaut, a leading formulator of school curricula, wrote in 1907: "It is you, instituteurs and institutrices, whom we are making, certainly not exclusively, but principally responsible for the political conduct . . . of future generations."² Whether didactic exercises in civic loyalty actually had an effect on Frenchmen will be dealt with later. In any case the teacher's classroom role was clear: to teach in a good republican fashion.

His political role outside the class was much less clear-cut. Politicians vacillated and contradicted each other on just what they expected from teachers. At the outset of the laic period the high priest of republican dogma, Paul Bert, warned a group of educators that "the teacher must be delivered from the anxieties of politics, sheltered from its oscillations, entirely dedicated to his sublime task."³ In succeeding years various republicans tempered that absolute advocacy of neutrality. The Minister of Education in 1889, Armand Fallières, found it necessary to issue a circular on "the Role which teachers have to fill in our society". He felt that the legislation of the eighties "should not have made, has not made of [the teacher] a political agent; but it does not command him to affect a systematic indifference, which would be the most significant of manifestations against the Republic itself. . . All functionaries must in concert aim at the same goal: the good of the State and of the Republic. The instituteurs must not neglect this superior end."⁴ In the 1890's heated debates

took place in the Chamber on the instituteur's involvement in politics. From the Right and from Jaurès on the far Left came charges that the teacher was much more than a pedagogue and was actively engaged in politics. These allegations were either parried by denials from the majority of republicans or, as in one debate, met by calls such as "The combat for the Republic! That's a fine language" or "They are the servants of the legal government of the country."⁵ Debates on the teacher's duties vis-a-vis the government continued up to the war.

Before an examination of this question can be essayed, an important point must be emphasized: the teacher was named to his post by a political authority, the prefect of his department. Napoleon III's regime had instituted the prefectoral nomination of teachers in 1854, and republicans decided to maintain it despite steadily mounting criticism which continued after the war. Not until 1944 was the nomination transferred from prefect to rector of the academy, that is from a political authority to an educational authority. The prefect of the pre-1914 Third Republic often heeded or endorsed the recommendation of the inspector of the academy, who in turn consulted his primary inspector as to the suitability of a certain teacher for a particular post. The academy also named stagiaires to their posts without consultation with the prefect. Nevertheless, some nominations were connected with politics. Letters

of recommendation in behalf of teachers poured into the prefects from conseillers-généraux, sub-prefects, and deputies. The prefectural files for Ille-et-Vilaine contain many such missives: for example, a letter of 1883 from General Georges Boulanger in the War Ministry recommending a candidate fresh out of the army; or one from Deputy Robert Surcouf to the prefect in 1905 requesting that an institutrice from another department be given a good post in Ille-et-Vilaine.⁶ The success of such steps depended on the personalities involved: a strong-minded inspector of the academy, like Dodu of Ille-et-Vilaine, usually won out over the prefect when a dispute arose over which candidate deserved which village. In 1909, for example, the instituteur of Saint-Broladre retired, and immediately, the conseiller-général of the canton dispatched a letter to the prefect extolling the virtues of a certain teacher as worthy of the post; another candidate was supported by the sub-prefect of Saint-Malo and a deputy. Who was finally nominated? Neither one. Dodu carefully assessed the requirements of the position--three-class directorate and secretariat to the mayor (with pay), and he chose a third teacher who merited that sort of village.⁷ In a department where strong deputies controlled the prefect and where the inspector of the academy was overshadowed the political side might have more of a hand in the mutation of teachers. Inspector Guéry of the Côtes-du-Nord was sent out of the department in 1906 after

quarreling with a deputy over the nomination of a teacher; he committed suicide shortly thereafter.⁸

Deputies or prefects were usually responding to the wishes of local republicans while the inspector of the academy based his nominations on reports of his primary inspectors. Whereas inspectors emphasized the pedagogical nature of the teacher's mission, the local notables saw the teacher as a political animal. Here is a typical speech by a conseiller-général at a banquet of 1903, at Saint-Méloir-des-Ôndes:

The struggle in which we are engaged today is still the struggle of Republic against Monarchy, the struggle of bleus against chouans. In the first rank of defenders of the Republic, whom do we see omnipresent: the Instituteur, who appears to all as the born-protector, the propagandist of the republican idea. In the opposite camp: ignorant people, behind hobereaux and members of the clergy.⁹

In a letter to the sub-prefect of Morlaix in 1913 the mayor (and délégué cantonal) of Roscoff asked for a new director at the public school who could exert a solid republican influence in the village and environs. He was specific: "Try however not to send us any unified socialism!--that would have a deplorable result here, where one has to use a lot of tact with our kind of population."¹⁰ Political considerations, in sum, figured in the nominations of at least some teachers.

The Third Republic did not create the "political instituteur"; teachers had helped certain governmental candidates get elected under the Second Empire. After the elections to the Corps législatif in 1869 the sub-prefect of Châteaubriant

congratulated the teacher at La Chapelle-Glain for "the assiduous and useful aid he gave the administration in order to assure the triumph of the official candidate . . . at the time of the last elections." According to the sub-prefect the curé and the teacher's primary inspector were supporting the Legitimist candidate of the opposition.¹¹

Under the Third Republic, too, the curé was not infrequently embroiled in politics, particularly in the West; here was another justification--in addition to historical precedents--for allowing the teacher to be, to some degree, a political person. He would counteract the sway of his usual opposite number. The curé's political influence in Brittany was potent, particularly in the eastern half or completely French-speaking part of Brittany as well as in the Léon, northeast of Brest.¹² The curé often worked in concert with the noble at election time in these areas. Abbé Floch, a well-known priest at Plouédern (Léon area), had his own man nominated and elected mayor in 1904.¹³ At a school of the Morbihan the curé had an electoral base where he passed out pamphlets until the school was laicized in 1882; and at several villages of the Côtes-du-Nord it appears that bonnes soeurs told children or parents for whom it was desirable to vote.¹⁴

This background permits a discussion of the teacher's political behavior. The difficulty here is that the teacher's action was usually discreet, even covert--especially up to the turn of the century. We do hear of a teacher who frankly

campaigned for the republican list at Guignen (Ille-et-Vilaine) in 1885, which got him into trouble with the reactionary mayor there.¹⁵ This, however, was a relatively rare occurrence. More representative of the influential instituteur's political deportment was that of the teacher of Brandivy (Morbihan) in 1900. According to the mayor it was largely due to the teacher that this commune was the only republican commune in the district of Vannes. Besides being a good teacher and circumspect with Catholics, "he is also a good republican devoted, without fanfare, to the Republic, and one who, without distributing bulletins, nor making visits to everyone (which would be beyond the scope of his role), knows how to guide the voter very discreetly in his choice."¹⁶ Prefectoral and sub-prefectoral reports are more vague than this, but it is certain that some teachers had an important part to play in the political arena. The prefect of Ille-et-Vilaine noted in 1888 that "the death of M.L..., an old instituteur [at Renac] whose influence was very great, could raise the spirits of the reaction"¹⁷ Describing a teacher at Mouzeil (Loire-Atlantique) in 1896, the sub-prefect of Ancenis called him "a militant who has been largely responsible for bringing this commune, formerly in the hands of the reaction, to the Republic. An excellent teacher." This sub-prefect also praised M.R...of Couffé in the same year for having alerted the authorities to a royalist demonstration in his commune.¹⁸ In this earlier period of the Third Republic, then, teachers might be used for political ends; but the documents

I have seen indicate that few campaigned overtly for republican candidates in Brittany. Reports of inspectors of the academy in 1898 confirm this impression for areas outside Brittany, too. For instance, the inspector of Aveyron wrote on his department: "The instituteurs have known how to disengage themselves almost entirely from political incidents and, during the period of the legislative elections, they have abstained . . . from propagandizing in favor of candidates." The inspector for Deux-Sèvres declared: "Our instituteurs are completely and sincerely devoted to the Republic; they endeavor to heed our advice and to resist the passions of party conflicts and petty local divisions" ¹⁹

On the period from the turn of the century to the war the documents are again quite reticent, but I notice a change in tone in the utterances of politicians concerning the schoolmasters. For example, in 1906 the prefect of the Finistère was ambiguous in his criticism of some instituteurs who had accompanied a prospective deputy on his campaign tours near Châteaulin: "It appears to me to be in the interest of public education that the instituteurs not engage in active politics and that in any case they abstain from attending electoral meetings during class hours, whatever candidates they are interested in." ²⁰ This was far from a wholesale condemnation. The sub-prefect of Vitré enthusiastically endorsed the maneuvers of another teacher. He wrote of the teacher: "He was able to

direct the republican party, group it, and in the course of a complementary election in the month of October, 1909, two of our friends were elected. This little success allows us to anticipate a far more extensive one in the renewal of 1912." Dodu was far less enamored of that teacher because he neglected his pedagogical duties.²¹ The skilful teacher, on the other hand, could satisfy both the political and educational authorities. In a letter to the prefect of Ille-et-Vilaine in 1909, a délegué cantonal asked that a certain teacher be retained, for political expediency, at Sixt: "I think that he would be a good support for us in the elections for the Chamber; since he doesn't talk a lot, all of his words are listened to."²² Even in this second period most teachers were probably tactful and reserved in their politics. The fundamental difference is that political authorities of Brittany now tolerated those who did take a more militant and direct part in republican affairs. Such an attitude was consonant with increasing republican inflexibility vis-a-vis the Church, discussed in Chapter II.

Teachers could never divorce themselves completely from the political arena. They were often employed as vote counters--like the father of Madame Ogès²³--or as supervisors of the balloting apparatus. Being near voters they were caught in the passionate scenes that were associated with French elections. The instituteur of Parcé (Ille-et-Vilaine) in 1884 headed the counting of the scrutin for the intensely-fought conseil

elections. It took six hours to tally the votes because a fight broke out between partisans of the republican mayor and the opposition. Eggs were thrown at the mayor and at the teacher's counting booth, and one republican candidate was chased into the teacher's apartment. The teacher demanded police protection for the next scrutin.²⁴ The cafés were always filled on important election days, and drink heightened political animosities. At a café in Landeleau in 1912, a teacher was delineating the inadequacies of the opponent to the incumbent republican mayor: he was slugged twice in the face by the candidate himself, who was made to pay a sixteen-franc fine for that gesture.²⁵ Teachers also affixed posters for certain candidates, which led to heated exchanges.²⁶

Teachers who did not engage in such activities were still, on occasion, themselves the issue in elections. A poor teacher disgraced republicans in the public eye and provided fodder for the cannons of the other side. At the conseil election of 1884 at Le Sel, a cantonal capital of Ille-et-Vilaine, the republicans were badly beaten, only four of their twelve original councillors being returned. The sub-prefect traced the disaster to the recent laicization there and specifically, to the new instituteur. "The laic instituteur sent to this difficult post has not been equal to his important mission. The clergy has jesuitically exploited the scandals of his family life. All of the old conseillers who voted the laicization have been

the victims of this poor choice and these maneuvers."²⁷ In countless cases, moreover, teachers were maintained in difficult posts until the end of important elections: a transfer at election time gave the Right a shot in the arm, signifying the capitulation of their habitual quarry, the instituteur.²⁸

The teacher in Brittany was rarely a loud campaigner. But by virtue of what he represented and by quiet action he was without doubt a political force to be reckoned with in the countryside.

As time passed one post became the fief of village schoolmasters: secretary to the mayor. Teachers monopolized this position in republicanized areas, and even in reactionary parts of Brittany many were called in to perform this function. Their knowledge and clerical ability were indispensable to the average mayor. The mayor of Dourdain (Ille-et-Vilaine) wrote the prefect in 1912 soliciting a new teacher who could be his secretary; his old one had discontinued his duties at the mairie owing to poor health and, as the mayor stressed, no one at Dourdain could replace him.²⁹

Some mayors became very dependent upon the aid of teachers. A teacher-secretary at Le Tour du Parc (Morbihan) was upbraided by a villager, in a letter to the prefect, for having

entrusted his class to a monitor who then struck a child. The mayor immediately wrote the prefect relating to him how he had asked the teacher to step outside to sign a paper. He testified to his great confidence in the instituteur in the following terms: "It would be very unfortunate if you penalized this teacher for such a little thing. We have never had such a good one since I have known this commune. He is very devoted to his class, to his work at the mairie, and performs services for all the inhabitants. As I am the cause of M.B... 's exit [that day], if he receives a punishment or a transfer, I resign." Another mayor--a moderate republican at Donges (Loire-Atlantique)--likewise threatened to resign if his mildly-clerical but able secretary were sent to another village. Both were maintained.³⁰

The adroit instituteur might indeed come to dominate the mayor if the latter were of an easy-going disposition. Such was the case at La Chapelle Henlin (Loire-Atlantique) from 1879 to 1888, where, in the words of an inspector, a mayor "with little knowledge and lacking initiative" was ruled by his secretary, "a man, on the contrary, who [was] active and ardent." The mayor was turned out of office in 1888 terminating that situation. M.A..., teacher and secretary at La Fresnais (Ille-et-Vilaine) throughout the 1880's, similarly ruled the mairie but in a manner injurious to republicans: he was on intimate terms with the curé, sedulously cultivated

reactionary members of the conseil, and counselled the right-wing mayor at all times. "He is today the real mayor", opined a group of chagrined republicans.³¹

Other mayors made life difficult for teacher-secretaries. The right-wing mayor at Saint-André-des-Eaux in 1903 permitted his teacher no liberties as secretary, locking up necessary papers and information so that people coming to the mairie for advice were usually disappointed: this undermined popular confidence in him. He was also continually insulted by the mayor's subordinate, the rural policeman. Finally in 1906 he obtained a transfer to Lot-et-Garonne.³² For the schoolmaster at the beautiful seaside village of Trébeurden (Côtes-du-Nord) in the 1880's, the trouble with his mayor stemmed from the teacher's amicable relationship with the curé whom the mayor absolutely detested. The teacher desired friendship with both authorities, but as that was impossible he resigned from his secretaryship in 1887. He soon was sent out of the commune, which, in turn, provoked a controversy between the sub-prefect of Lannion--who wanted to place the teacher in a poor post due to his lack of political ardor--and the primary inspector of Lannion, who considered the teacher's neutral behavior a salutary trait.³³

Being secretary required on the teacher's part an accurate assessment of the mayor's expectations. Some mayors wanted an assertive secretary, while others criticized the

instituteur-secrétaire who opened his mouth too frequently, above all at conseil meetings.³⁴ The teacher-secretary must, in short, be as tactful with the mayor as with his other superiors: "a serious man, sober, devoted and balanced, though a firm republican . . . many qualities for one man to have!"³⁵

Other political notables came into contact with teachers. These were men whose class guaranteed them a voice in local affairs; for instance, notaires or doctors. Relations between instituteurs and these men were sometimes strained, as at Grand-Champ (Morbihan), where a quarrel in 1909 between schoolmaster and justice of the peace eventually divided a large part of the village.³⁶ At Clohars-Carnöët (Finistère) in 1898 a doctor accused a married teacher of engaging in sexual relations with a young Parisian girl. A prompt investigation by the inspector illuminated the cause of what he considered a false allegation. The doctor had lost in the latest election for the conseil and had blamed the teacher; at the recent senatorial elections he had coveted a delegateship but had gotten only one vote, while the teacher--without being a candidate--received twelve votes; and finally, the mayor told the doctor that his fees were too high for indigents and replaced him with a doctor from another commune. Since the teacher was the mayor's secretary and right-hand man, the doctor directed his rancor at him. The instituteur was stunned by the accusation and in tears when interviewed. He was supported by a large segment of the village

population including the mayor and was given a favorable transfer, later terminating a distinguished career in an important directorship at Quimperlé.³⁷ At the coastal fishing port of Audierne, a pharmacist--as well as adjunct to the mayor--ridiculed a teacher at a republican meeting in 1908, and the teacher responded by striking him. A trial and an investigation followed. Almost all of the local republican notables came out, once again, for the schoolmaster in what was another case of political rivalry. According to a doctor of the area the apothecary was a fair-weather republican forced to join the republican committee in 1907 on the arrival of a republican pharmacist there. The latter was serious competition, and indeed, the teacher had recently taken his business to the newcomer. The teacher was transferred and he, too, ended his career in a large directorship at Morlaix.³⁸ Schisms among republican notables placed the instituteurs in an awkward position. They were obligated to choose one side, however difficult that might be. For ten years the instituteur of Saint-Méen (Ille-et-Vilaine) had quietly accompanied a doctor of the environs in his farm tours before crucial elections. The honeymoon ended abruptly in 1910 when a certain republican candidate demanded the teacher's adherence before the approaching municipal election. That candidate, it turned out, was inimical to the doctor, and the teacher was soon at odds with several important republicans as well as with his erstwhile friend, the doctor.³⁹

At the afore-mentioned center, Saint-Méen, where different strains of republicanism existed, the schoolmaster had to choose his allegiance. However, in Brittany republicanism before 1914 was usually of a monolithic, moderate figuration, especially in the countryside. Republicans grouped together where the reaction was potent. The teacher might become the leader of these republican conclaves just as he could direct certain mayors. When an instituteur at Saint-Julien de Concelles (Loire-Atlantique) was sent out of the commune in 1893, all the leading men on the local republican committee there resigned in protest against the prefect. Without the aggressive teacher they felt rudderless.⁴⁰ A talented teacher of the Morbihan left the cantonal capital of La Roche-Bernard in 1912 for the difficult post of Gourin, preferring the challenge of that post to several more attractive choices. A letter written by the president of the Republican Committee of La Roche-Bernard sheds light on the teacher's political pre-eminence there: "The departure of our devoted secretary will be a strong blow to our group, a blow which could be mortal" He went on to demand a "directeur d'école of firm opinions, that is, a real republican like the one we are losing." As a token of gratitude they subsequently voted to give the teacher of Gourin the perpetual title of honorary secretary to the committee.⁴¹

At least some teachers, then, plainly attained the status of important political notables. They never eclipsed

the alliance of curé and large landowner as important political forces in the community. Unlike his counterpart in fiercely anticlerical regions of France the instituteur--notable of Brittany always had to face the big guns of the opposition--as well as the normal exigencies of his superiors and fellow republicans. Life in the political arena of the West was as demanding, but sometimes as satisfying, as life in the classroom.

The village schoolmaster became, under the Third Republic, what the curé had been for centuries: the omniscient advisor to French villagers. In the West he did not have the whole stage for himself as soon was the case in other regions; but the Breton instituteur could attain great favor because of his general acumen and his sensitivity to peasants' needs. The judgment of a Breton teacher, L. Flatrès, set forth in 1913, was accurate concerning numerous schoolmasters of Brittany: "In the Breton countryside, the instituteur is not only a schoolmaster . . . He is the universal secretary, the disinterested arbiter, the economic expert, the 'obligatory, laic, and free' counsellor. . . the walking repertory of all human knowledge"42

At the mairie he was continually consulted in his capacity of secretary. He was notary where notaries did not exist; he

wrote letters for peasants; he gave information on taxes; he resolved disputes. It was imperative that the secretary-teacher be at everyone's disposition.

In addition to secretary to the mayor the instituteur furnished other services in his commune; for instance, land-surveying (arpentage). Where no land-measurers could be found the instituteur was the likely candidate for the task. Even when a licensed land-surveyor could be located, the mayor might have recourse to the teacher, who saved the commune money by doing the work free of charge. This occurred at Lohéac (Ille-et-Vilaine) in 1913. The teacher's primary inspector, however, was irate and forbade the teacher to survey again if that meant unemployment for a bona fide measurer.⁴³ At a deliberation of the conseil general of the Morbihan in 1903 on "Instituteurs géomètres", a lively debate took place between the Duke of Rohan and the prefect. The noble maintained that teachers all over the department were measuring farmers' land free or for a minimal price with which licensed measurers could not compete. The prefect affected to know nothing of such proceedings, and one of his supporters named several villages, such as on Belle-Île, where measurers were unobtainable--hence the need for the instituteurs.⁴⁴ Many teachers must have engaged in that occupation. Another function, that of receveur-buraliste, was only acceptable to the academy when virtually a whole village requested the teacher for the post--as happened at Saint-Sulpice la Forêt (Ille-et-Vilaine) in 1912.

No one else was capable of handling the recette, and the mayor assured the inspector that the teacher would spend no more than a half hour per day at the mairie for this purpose.⁴⁵ Finally, the teacher could be summoned for medical advice. Doctors generally practiced in fairly large towns and the smaller villages were without them. Brittany was probably worse off than most of France with regard to medical care: in 1893 the C^otes-du-Nord had sixteen doctors and eight midwives per 100,000 inhabitants while the national average was thirty-nine and thirty-eight respectively.⁴⁶ To fill the need were the bonnes soeurs, but people also sought the instituteur and institutrice for medical attention. L. L. remembers that teachers in the area around Tréveneuc and Plouha ministered to petites maladies and began to give vaccinations in the pre-war years.⁴⁷ Notaire, measurer, tax collector, doctor--these were positions the rural instituteurs were called upon to fill.

The daily concern of the French peasant was evidently agriculture, and the teacher was of utility in this endeavor, too. Alfred Gernoux--a teacher of the Loire-Atlantique whom I interviewed--outlined the efforts of his father at Noyal-sur-Brutz in the years 1887 to 1908: "He fought against fallow land, forced the use of liquid manure and other fertilizers, had nurseries and orchards created, had transplants brought from different regions and distributed them."⁴⁸ Just after the First World War, L. L. personally brought wagon loads of Tunisian phosphates to farmers of the Plouha-Paimpol area and,

despite their initial misgivings, he got the peasants to buy them at a favorable price. Older teachers had similarly propagated the use of fertilizers in that region before 1914.⁴⁹ The schoolmaster simply could not afford to be ignorant in agricultural matters, for farmers often asked his opinion on what methods were proper to employ.

Instituteurs were innovators in agricultural movements, particularly after the turn of the century. A novel idea then was that of cooperatives--of pooling animals, for example, so that a disaster involving an individual farmer could be absorbed by the group. A fine teacher at Piriac (Loire-Atlantique) from 1898 to 1907 founded the Mutuelle de bétail there and was secretary of the society. He also passed out pamphlets instructing farmers on the care of tuberculous animals.⁵⁰ A teacher at Poligné (Ille-et-Vilaine) founded--like many others--an insurance society among farmers to recompense those whose farm animals died prematurely. Teachers such as these acted as they did at least partly because of their sanguine faith in the perfectability of their fellow man. A glowing primary inspector's report on the last teacher mentioned underlined this translation of principle into deed.⁵¹

Teachers who helped to organize the agrarian syndicalist movement in Brittany ran the risk of incurring antagonisms: the teacher-secretary of the "Syndicat des Agriculteurs de Treflez" (Finistère) was vilified in 1909 by a newspaper representing urban merchants who dealt with farmers and also attacked

by republicans for serving on the syndicat alongside a priest, albeit a rather left-wing one.⁵² In 1906 Dodu of Ille-et-Vilaine received strong complaints from a large "syndicat de négociants" at Rennes on teachers representing the "syndicat Méret", a farmers' cooperative. As middlemen between individual farmers and the union, the instituteurs were telling farmers how to join the union and how to obtain machines and fertilizers at lower prices. For this, the teachers were receiving a 2 per cent commission from dues paid to the union, which covered the cost of their work. Dodu, in a circular, admonished the teachers for not being cognizant of merchants' interests but did not forbid them to continue their propagandizing role.⁵³ In coastal areas teachers played a part in the embryonic movement of fishermen's syndicalism. A. B., who taught at the new école de pêche of Concarneau from 1901 until his death in 1907, was secretary of the "Syndicat des Marins Pêcheurs" there. At a gathering in his honor after his death, a deputy, a senator, the prefect, and a host of instituteurs paid homage to the late notable.⁵⁴

Teachers taught classes on agriculture, fishing, and a multitude of other matters. Their vehicle was the night adult courses which proliferated during this era. Chalmel had his thirty adults of the class of 1897 prepare reports on agricultural problems; teachers in the Morbihan at the turn of the century taught about the weather, boats to be used for various kinds of fishing, the preparation and conservation of cider,

industry in the department.⁵⁵ Instituteurs also endeavored to discuss theoretical notions with adults, for example, morals and civics. Here they had to hurdle the barrier of anti-intellectualism. A letter from the mayor of Saint-Ouën la Rouerie (Ille-et-Vilaine) to the prefect in 1896 indicated that "our rural inhabitants . . . cannot comprehend the utility and importance of general education, nor the advantages of night courses, [being] only very vaguely conscious of intellectual and moral culture that has no immediate or tangible rapport with pecuniary profit."⁵⁶ The mayor and the conseil of La Regrippière specifically demanded in 1895 that adult courses relate almost exclusively to subjects like business letters, land-measuring, and transplanting.⁵⁷ In other places teachers broke down this fear of abstract forms of instruction. Geography, history, even literature came to be taught. An instituteur on the Île-d'Arz gave an adult class on La Fontaine's fables illustrating them with slide projections (projections lumineuses). The occasion was marred only by the mayor, who burst into the dark hall at the end of the evening to protest a gathering of both sexes in such obscurity.⁵⁸

The use of projections was beneficial to the instituteur's reputation. He was a spreader of light in a period lacking cinema or radio. For peasants who never left their department--save for military service--slides of far-off lands,

or even of parts of France like Burgundy, were a marvel to behold. The instituteurs were enthusiastic, too, sincerely believing that the conquest of ignorance would usher in a new age of felicity in France. Their letters clearly convey this ardent faith in the promise of instruction.⁵⁹

In addition to adult courses some instituteurs gave periodic lectures (conférences populaires) to villagers. One of their favorite subjects was the evils of alcoholism, which in Brittany was a scourge on the order of a plague. They also held forth on the desirability of inoculation against disease.

One should imagine the impact of these night courses. Five hundred people crowded into the school at Mâél-Carhaix in 1905 to see the "tableaux vivants" of Korea, enhanced by background music played on a phonograph belonging to the justice of the peace.⁶⁰ By such means a teacher occasionally won over a formerly reactionary area. This was the case at Guégon (Morbihan) in the 1890's, where the lectures of M. Le G...attracted as many as 400 people at a time, some from villages six kilometers distant. The sub-prefect of Plöërmel exulted over the fact that even the hitherto anti-laic mayor there had been proselytized. He lauded M. Le G...for having "obtained an unexpected success. . . which has had a considerable effect in the region."⁶¹ In certain villages adult courses were not easy to launch. But some schoolmasters in Brittany, as in other

parts of rural France, undoubtedly did become what Péguy called "ministers of culture."

Teachers founded numerous societies. They initiated, besides agricultural cooperatives, cooperative credit societies, cooperative societies for the old (caisses de retraite pour la vieillesse) as well as for specific occupational groups like fireman (société de secours mutuels des sapeurs-pompiers) or suppliers of flour to bakers (société de panification). The idea of mutual aid predominated after 1900, owing to the influence of Léon Bourgeois' doctrine of solidarism.⁶³ Other kinds of groupings spawned under the teacher's aegis were shooting societies, temperance societies, antituberculosis societies, bicycle societies (just before the war), associations for former students, and orchestras of all sorts. Teachers at certain posts were required to know music. The mayor of Uzel (Côtes-du-Nord) requested a new teachers in 1904 who could lead the ensemble started by the former teacher there. Another mayor of Ille-et-Vilaine demanded a schoolmaster knowing violin. In both of these villages rival orchestras led by clerical supporters threatened the prestige of the laic coterie.⁶⁴ Rival shooting societies and other Catholic associations similarly existed in many villages of the West. If they were to gain villagers' esteem, teachers could not confine themselves to school activities alone.

On the other hand instituteurs derived at least a part of their notability from their in-school performance. Parents did not of course inspect teachers, but they had other means of evaluating their effectiveness. If their children appeared to be learning well or began to behave in an improved fashion parents applauded the teacher. They were interested as well in the schoolmasters' extracurricular efforts within the school. The most universal of these was the school savings bank (caisse d'épargne scolaire); teachers put aside the pennies of pupils and issued them pass-books. Children presumably thus learned thrift.⁶⁵ Parents were probably impressed by the knowledge of nature children imbibed on Thursday walks. These "promenades scolaires" in the country were led by the teacher, who explained plants or rocks of whatever subject was examined that week.⁶⁶ The canteens that some teachers instituted in their schools were also appreciated by busy parents. The teacher at Lizio, referred to previously, gained the admiration of a hostile village and mayor partly because of his canteen. This was made clear in an inspector's report of 1904:

The pupils like M. P...a lot. For a long time he has organized a soupe scolaire which I have seen function with great interest. M. P...provides free the vegetables from his garden and can thus give the children a hot meal at noon. That is one of the causes for the high number of pupils and the good attendance [in school]. He is very esteemed by the population. On my visit to Lizio, I did not meet one peasant who failed to greet him and exchange with him a friendly word.⁶⁷

In poorer areas teachers, as I have pointed out, would distribute schoolbooks to children free of charge. At Saint-Léger, the institutrice in the first decade of the twentieth century gave out--besides textbooks--skirts and wool to girls, shirts and socks that she had made herself to boys, even sabots. The primary inspector of Nantes saluted her efforts, congratulating her and her husband on holding their own against the écoles libres of contiguous communes.⁶⁸ All of these endeavors rendered school more congenial to children and parents and gave the instituteur a good name.

A tangible index of a teacher's prestige was the number of successful candidates he could produce at the annual examination for the certificat d'études primaires. This examination was taken by a small proportion of the pupils who were ready to leave the school at approximately age twelve. The selected candidates travelled to the cantonal capital to undergo the oral and written test in the company of pupils from other communes. The examination and subsequent prize ceremonies were major events in village life, and children knew how much was expected of them. A composition written for the certificat examination of 1889 by a girl from Tréméheuc (Ille-et-Vilaine) indicated her impressions en route to the scene of the ordeal (this being the required subject of the exposé):

je fait un voyage ce matin pour venir a
l'examen qui ma fait beaucoup plaisir mais
un peu triste quand je pensait a cette examen
La description du pays que j'ai traversé, j'ai passé
par un chemin, j'ai aperçu plusieurs choses assez
belles? Les impresions que j'ai eut sont que

javait peur et je me demendait en moi même si j'allais
 être admise et je m'attendais en
 pensant à cela car être admise s'est une
 honneur d'avoir son certificat d'étude⁶⁹

Needless to say the girl did not pass. The success of candidates redounded to the teacher's credit. A couple teaching at Saint-Frégant (Finistère) had done consistently well in this regard and were always praised by the conseil municipal, as in 1898 when seven boys and two girls (out of a total of eleven candidates) passed the examination. This pedagogical success buttressed the schoolmasters' high standing there, and when the couple left in 1908 after twelve years at the post, the noble mayor, M. du Plessix-Quinquis, made the following declaration:

The President [of the conseil] reminds you of the unfavorable circumstances in which M. et Mme B...arrived twelve years ago in the commune: the school was completely disorganized. The population, having had for many years, only teachers sent in disgrace to Saint-Frégant, was quite mistrustful of the new schoolmasters . . . Although they hadn't the same political and religious opinions as the villagers, they avoided ruffling anybody, by their perfect tact, and have attracted the sympathy of all. It is with the greatest regret that all the inhabitants saw them depart the commune.⁷⁰

A pattern encountered quite often in these documents-- as well as in Jacques Ozouf's questionnaire (Nous: Les maîtres d'école)--is that after an initial period of strained relations teachers overcame suspicious misgivings and earned the trust of villagers. In anticlerical areas this was perhaps to be expected but, quite remarkably, it occurred in many villages

of the West as well. A teacher "made it" in the fullest sense when a reactionary mayor and population were forced to concede his ability. It was thus a personal triumph for the instituteur when over 1000 people in a clerical area attended a fête of the laic school, as happened at Chéméré (Loire-Atlantique) in 1909.⁷¹ Obviously teachers who remained at a post for a long duration had a better chance of becoming a notable there than those who remained only a short time. Some teachers taught throughout their whole careers in one village, becoming more and more esteemed as time went on. One such instituteur was J. D...at Bolazec (Finistère), who began in 1888 and retired in 1924. From thirty students at his debut he raised the effectives to 127 (and three classes) by 1913! Another first-rate schoolmaster taught at Saint-Étienne de Corcoué (Loire-Atlantique) from 1881 to 1921, spanning our whole period. In 1893 his students had marched to a fire and formed a chain to pass water to the fire-fighters. Events of this sort--and the growing number of certificats turned out--placed the laic school on a solid footing.⁷²

Certain gestures of villagers manifested their respect for teachers. Monsieur and Madame Ogès remembered that the peasants of Gouesnac'h near Quimper always brought a pile of crêpes to them when a marriage was celebrated. Even girls who had not gone to the laic school honored the teachers in that manner. Schoolmistresses gave advice to couples about to be

married or were the object of an honorary visit after the ceremony.⁷³ We hear of teachers receiving special favors outside Brittany too, such as the only hunting permit awarded in a village above Grenoble.⁷⁴ Some teachers of the Belle Époque became mayors after the First World War; for instance, the teacher in the village of Mazières (Deux-Sèvres). In this village--the subject of a fine book by Roger Thabault--the instituteur was revered by all.⁷⁵ Finally, one perceives the status of some teachers by the numbers of people attending their funerals. Madame Chalmel, who taught in the area of Saint-Malo from 1901 to 1924, died in 1936; a list of those who came to her funeral--appended to her diary--ran to almost 400 names!⁷⁶

Little wonder that from about the turn of the century, the teacher was widely assailed as a king, as a Jupiter, as the omnipotent controller of mairie and village.⁷⁷ Such exaggerated depictions of the teacher by the reactionary press testify nevertheless to his having "made it". With curé and noble, the Breton teacher was--at least in some villages--a figure of distinction.

After a description of the role and traits of our village notable a logical sequel is a discussion of the actual influence he exercised. This is a thorny problem. Here I shall

attempt to discuss the more obvious facets of the instituteur's influence, reserving the more questionable hypotheses for the final pages of this study.

What was the teacher's political influence? Jacques Chastenet entertained no doubts on the subject: "The great influence in the village is that of the instituteur . . . it is in great part to the instituteur that radicalism owes its triumph in the countryside, it is thanks to him that socialism begins to have certain successes."⁷⁸ This thesis has many weaknesses. It neglects the importance of economic, social, geographic, and a host of other determinants for political behavior. An example that will boggle the mind of an intellectual historian is cited from André Siegfried by François Goguel: in the Vendée of the Third Republic cantons of granite were conservative while those of calcium were republican.⁷⁹

Brittany, unfortunately for Chastenet's thesis, remained largely conservative up to and after the First World War. In our period there were only light manifestations even of moderate republicanism--mostly in the 1890's.⁸⁰

I would not, however, go so far as to say, with Paul Bois,⁸¹ that the instituteurs had no political effect whatever in the West. His study is based on the Sarthe alone; in Brittany two significant rural pockets were detached from conservatism just after the war: the Cornouaille (South Finistère) and the Trégor (roughly the western half of the Côtes-du-Nord).

In the Trégor, a group of radical notables were in part responsible for the shift beginning around the turn of the century. According to the great sociologist, Gabriel Le Bras, the notables "found support in the families of instituteurs, the Trégor [alternate spelling] being a breeding-ground for the Normal School (and thus for secretaryships to the mayors)" But again, reservations are in order. The Cornouaille as has been noted, was free of nobles; the conversion of the Trégor was bounded on one flank by a natural frontier, the Morlaix river, demonstrating the effect of the terrain upon political manifestations in the area. Both the Cornouaille and the Trégor contained numerous fishing ports, usually more left-leaning than the Breton interior.⁸² In other words, other stimuli besides education came into play in these regions, too. To conclude: teachers could aid immensely in organizing republicanism in areas already susceptible to their influence. But even where favorite sons of the Right were inevitably elected in Brittany, teachers, it seems to me, helped impose a comity about the Republic's desirability: that, at least, it should exist. We cannot forget that certain nobles respected their efforts and implicitly accorded the Republic and its school recognition. Thus, even in conservative Brittany the instituteur was of political importance by toning down the hitherto counterrevolutionary quality of the Right. To give Chastenet his due, the teacher's action in politicizing the

countryside in provinces already very favorable to the Republic must have been greater than in Brittany.

The school and its teachers were instrumental in the eradication of illiteracy in France. In Brittany the con-
currence between école libre and laic school did not retard this development, for almost all children now learned the rudimentary skills of reading and writing in either school. In 1913 illiteracy in the entirely French-speaking departments of Brittany was almost a thing of the past: the draftees of the Loire-Atlantique were 1.4 per cent illiterate, those of Ille-et-Vilaine, 2.5 per cent. In the other departments of the province illiteracy was still a minor problem: the figure for the draftees of the Côtes-du-Nord for 1913 was 7.9 percent; of the Finistère 8.9 percent; of the Morbihan 10 percent. In 1899 the illiterate draftees of the latter two departments mentioned constituted respectively, 12.9 percent and 19.7 percent of the total. This indicates that even in the "Bretonnant" areas illiteracy was rapidly declining, due in great part to the school.⁸³

The decline of the Breton tongue must be attributed-- along with factors such as urbanization and the regiment--to the influence of the school. In a recent polemical best-seller Morvan Lebesque accused the instituteurs of the Third Republic of cultural genocide in Brittany, exonerating them only insofar as they were taking orders from more criminal

superiors. The charge is perhaps valid. Breton and other local French variations were condemned as early as the eighteenth century by the universalist philosophes of the Enlightenment. The French Revolution likewise espoused the idea of levelling France into a homogeneous entity without regional tongues or traditions. France never really experienced a folk-soil reaction to the abstract eighteenth century as occurred in Germany after the Napoleonic wars. Certainly in the thinking of a Michelet, for one, the cult of local specificity did emerge but not as an all-embracing system. The Third Republic, then, instituted an anti-patois, anti-regional policy that had long been in the air. Circulars sent to teachers in Brittany stressed the need for literally extirpating Breton. The primary inspector of the district of Vannes, in a report for 1903-1904, noted unhappily that children were still occasionally employing the "élocution vicieuse". It is difficult to know how often teachers resorted to the proverbial punishment of tying a sabot around the neck of a child guilty of speaking Breton. My own opinion based on documents I have seen is that such punishments were rare. But there is no doubt that the school and its teacher greatly diminished the use of Breton as well as other languages and patois in France.⁸⁴

On the other hand, the unity that the school fostered served the country well in time of crisis: I will expand upon this in the last chapter, assessing the effect of a patriotic curriculum.

As for the morals course and the moral teacher, what were their influence? Certainly the men of the Third Republic thought that good morals would result from the right sort of teaching given by an upright instituteur. As Ferry put it, this teaching "seeks. . . to produce a moral act, to cause it to recur, to make it habitual so that it shall dominate life."⁸⁵ A more empirical primary inspector noted the following about an elite teacher of the Finistère: "M. C...who has taught at Invillac for almost twenty-five years has been able to exercise an excellent influence upon the population, which is immediately recognized by the politeness and good spirit of the villagers."⁸⁶ Today most believe that many acts have an irrational, instinctual, or subconscious basis, diametrically opposed to what has been persistently inculcated as desirable conduct.⁸⁷ I restrict myself, therefore, to a conclusion germane only to intellectual history: the French educational reformers and, as will be seen, the teachers as well, assumed that virtue could be instilled didactically in children.

The instituteur de village, when accepted, became a notable in every sense of the term in the pre-1914 era. He had a commanding voice in rural areas. The defeat of that world

by tractors, televisions, and automobiles would spell the demise of a rural notability anchored firmly in a specific span of time.

FOOTNOTES

¹ This is the term employed by J. P. Azéma and M. Winock in Naissance et mort; La III^e République (1870-1940) (Paris, 1970), p. 131.

² F. Pécaut, L'Éducation publique et la vie nationale (Paris, 1907), p. 127.

³ Revue internationale de l'enseignement, II (1881), 593.

⁴ From Fallières' circular, August 20, 1889, in Octave Gréard ed., La Législation de l'Instruction primaire en France depuis 1789 jusqu' à nos jours, (Paris, 1898-1900) VI, 200,201.

⁵ Annales . . . députés. Débs. parlés. (sess. ord.), I, 1893 (du vingt féb. au six avril), 1267-1268. The debate was on March 18.

⁶ A. D. Ill-Vil. 2T: Inst. prim. Nominations et affaires diverses. 1883. Boulanger to pref., August 4, 1883; 2T: Ens. prim. Instituteurs-institutrices-mouvements--1892-1914. Surcouf to pref., May 9, 1905. On the multitude of recommendations given by politicians for fonctionnaires c. f. Robert de Jouvenel: "The Parliament does not rule, does not govern, it writes. The regime which presides over our destinies is neither Republic, nor Empire, nor Royalty, nor autocracy, nor

democracy--it is Correspondance." La République des camarades (Grasset; Paris, 1934), p. 24. The book was written in 1913.

⁷ A. D. Ill-Vil. 2T: Instituteurs-institutrices--mouvements 1909-1910. Cons. gén., Pleine-Fougères, to pref., July 23, 1909; sub-pref., Saint-Malo, to pref., July 22, 1909 and deputy [unreadable signature] to pref., July 31, 1909; Dodu to pref. (undated, 1909).

⁸ For the "affaire Guéry", see Antoine Prost, Histoire de l'enseignement en France 1800-1967 (Paris, 1968), p. 388.

⁹ Speech in La République (Saint-Malo), October 16, 1903.

¹⁰ A. D. Fin. T: Instituteurs--1901-1919. Mayor, Roscoff, to sub-pref., Morlaix, June 15, 1913.

¹¹ A. D. Loire-At. 18-T-2: Plaintes-affaires disciplinaires. Incidents divers mettant en cause les instituteurs et institutrices (publics et privés). 1866-1875. Sub-pref. to pref., April 1, 1870. For further examples of the action of teachers in politics during the Second Empire, see Theodore Zeldin, The Political System of Napoleon III (W. W. Norton and Co.; New York, [1971], pp. 84-85.

¹² Andre Siegfried, Tableau politique de la France de l'ouest sous la troisième république (Paris, 1913), chapter XXXV ("L'Influence politique du clergé catholique").

¹³ A. D. Fin. T: Instituteurs--1901-1919. Sub-pref., Brest, to pref., August 11, 1904.

¹⁴ A. D. Morb. T1269: Laïcisations d'écoles. Insp. acad. to pref., February 22, 1882; A. D. Côtes-Nord. 1T: Laïcisations. 1882-1930. Conseiller-municipal, Saint-Pever, to pref., January 29, 1886, on bonne soeur there; sub-pref., Dinan, to pref., May 27, 1902, on bonnes soeurs of several villages with explicit details.

¹⁵ A. D. Ill-Vil. 3ML47: Élections-maires et adjoints. Sub-pref., Redon, to pref., December 8, 1885.

¹⁶ A. D. Morb. T1701: Incidents entre écoles libres et écoles laïques 1883-1903. Mayor, Brandivy, to prim. insp., Vannes, May 7, 1900.

¹⁷ A. D. Ill-Vil. 3Mk22: Maires et adjoints: Situation politique. Renouvellement de Mai, 1888. Pref. to Min. of Interior, April 27, 1888.

¹⁸ A. D. Loire-At. sT7-9: Ens. prim. Personnel des Instituteurs et Institutrices: fiches individuelles de renseignements--1896. These are cards kept by the sub-prefects on the political attitude of teachers.

¹⁹ Quoted in Maurice Pellisson, "La Situation de l'enseignement primaire en 1898 d'après les rapports des inspecteurs d'académie!", Revue pédagogique (1899), pt. II, 117.

²⁰ A. D. Fin. T42: Inst. pub. Ens. prim. Attaques contre l'école laïque. Associations des familles 1905-1937. Pref. to acad., April 25, 1906; acad. to pref., April 29, 1906, was also vague on what steps should be taken against the teachers.

²¹ A. D. Ill-Vil. 2T: Mouvements--1909-1911. Sub-pref., Vitré, to pref., August 13, 1910; Dodu to pref., August 16, 1910. The teacher was transferred from Auxilles to Piré.

²² A. D. Ill-Vil. 2T Mouvements--1909-1911. Délégué cantonal to pref., July 25, 1909.

²³ Interview with Madame Ogès, Quimper, August 28, 1970.

²⁴ A. D. Ill-Vil. 3Mh9: Conseils municipaux. 1884-1904. Affaires generales. Teacher to pref., May 5, 1884.

- ²⁵ A. D. Fin. T. Instituteurs--1901-1919. Prim. insp., Châteaulin, to acad., April 28, 1912.
- ²⁶ A teacher at Princé lent a conseiller his glue for putting up signs, which provoked a controversy, the transfer of the teacher, and the resignation of the conseiller. See Le Journal de Rennes, September 12, 1910.
- ²⁷ A. D. Ill-Vil. 3Mh9: Cons. munic. 1884-1904. Affaires géns. Sub-pref. to pref., undated (winter, 1884-1885).
- ²⁸ Chalmel, for example, taught at the difficult village of Pleugueneuc in the 1890's and was to be sent to a better post in the spring of 1895; but the mayor of the commune asked that he be kept there until the fall elections for the sake of appearance. This was done. A. D. Ill-Vil. 2T: Mouvements--1895. Mayor to pref., May 2, 1895; F1768: Doss. d'un instituteur.
- ²⁹ A. D. Ill-Vil. 2T: Mouvements--1912. Mayor, Dourdain, to pref., January 20, 1912.
- ³⁰ A. D. Morb. T1687: Ens. prim. Plaintes . . . instituteurs 1878-1934. Villager to pref., May 29, 1901, mayor to pref., May 30, 1901, and acad. to pref., June 7, 1901; A. D. Loire-At. sT25: Plaintes. Affaires disciplinaires. Incidents divers

mettant en cause les instituteurs et institutrices (publics et privés). 1901-1911. Sub-pref., Saint-Nazaire, to pref., June 27, 1905, relates conversation with mayor.

³¹ A. D. Loire-At. sTil36: Doss. inds . . . instituteurs et institutrices. Prim. insp., Nantes, to acad., July 22, 1888; A. D. Ill-Vil T: Instituteurs. Doss. inds. Letter signed by six republicans to pref., August 14, 1890; substantially confirmed by prim. insp., Saint-Malo, to acad., September 1, 1890, who however was reluctant to discipline this pedagogically sound teacher.

³² A. D. Loire-At. sTl4: Ens. prim. Pers. des instituteurs et institutrices--noms., muts. (doss. inds.). 1901-1903. Teacher to pref., August 22, 1903; pref.'s note, February 5, 1906.

³³ A. D. Côtes-Nord. T: Doss. comm. Teacher to prim. insp., Lannion, September 2, 1887; sub-pref., Lannion, to acad., September 6, 1887; prim. insp., Lannion, to acad., September 11, 1887. The documents do not show which post he obtained.

³⁴ One primary inspector commented: "For a teacher-secretary to the mayor, whose presence is necessary at municipal meetings, whose advice is indispensable, it is so difficult to remain on an even keel." A. D. Côtes-Nord. T: Doss. comm. Prim. insp., Lannion, to acad., July 28, 1900.

35 A. D. Ill-Vil. 2T: Mouvements--1912. Sub-pref., Montfort, to pref., July 23, 1912. (His italics). He was discussing the need for a new teacher to aid the mayor at the village of La Chapelle-Thourault.

36 A. D. Morb. T1941: Inst. pub. "Personnel". Doss. inds. ant. à 1926-Le-V. The file contains at least twenty letters on the miniature affair, including many from semi-literate peasants to the prefect supporting either the teacher or the judge. Several of the peasants' letters indicate that the judge bought them drinks and had them hastily sign petitions to the prefect. Prim. insp., Vannes, to pref., September 11, 1909, saw the conflict rooted in jealousy and advised the prefect to let the affair die down of itself.

37 A. D. Fin. T: Instituteur--1901-1919. Prim. insp., Quimperlé, to acad., August 20, 1898. The teacher's grades on reports were among the highest I saw and he was awarded several honors.

38 A. D. Fin. T: Instituteurs--1901-1919. Doctor, Audierne, to prim. insp., Quimper, September 5, 1908; prim. insp., Quimper, to acad., September 21, 1908. Neither the educational authorities nor the courts took punitive action against the teacher.

³⁹ A. D. Ill-Vil. 2T: Mouvements--1912. Teacher to prim. insp., Redon, December 27, 1912, sums up the situation.

⁴⁰ A. D. Loire-At. sT24: Ens. prim. Pers: plaintes, affaires . . . instituteurs 1887-1945. Justice of peace, canton of Le Loroux-Bottereau, to pref., July 14, 1894.

⁴¹ A. D. Morb. T1940: Inst. pub. "Personnel". Doss. inds. ants. à 1923-A-Les Jules. Pres. of committee to pref., July 29, 1912; new secretary to pref., January 7, 1913. The mayor of Quiberon (to pref., June 28, 1912) had wanted the teacher to come there as a political ally.

⁴² L. Flatrès, L'Enseignement du français et en particulier de la composition française dans les écoles rurales bretonnes (Quimper, 1920). Flatrès wrote the book prior to the war. C.f. also, the description of the teacher written much later by H. Michard and A. Glossinde in their Condition et mission de l'instituteur (Paris, 1945), pp. 71-72: "He is the official receptacle of knowledge, the master of understanding . . . People consult him on everything and the common people listen to him like an oracle."

⁴³ A. D. Ill-Vil. T: Instituteurs. Doss. inds. Prim. insp., Redon, to acad., April 1, 1913.

- 44 Extract of the deliberation in A. D. Morb. T1173: Personnel. Affaires diverses 1875-1924.
- 45 A. D. Ill-Vil. T: Instituteurs. Doss. inds. Prim. insp., Fougères, to acad., December 30, 1912. For receveurs-buralistes, see Chapter III, p. 115.
- 46 Jean Delumeau et al., Histoire de la Bretagne (Toulouse, 1969), p. 465.
- 47 Interview with L. L., Saint-Brieuc, February 24, 1970.
- 48 Alfred Gernoux, Les Pionniers de l'enseignement public (Châteaubriant, 1931), p. 23. He told me substantially the same thing in an interview at Nantes, June 3, 1970. Gernoux is now president of the local historical association in Nantes.
- 49 Interview with L. L., Saint-Brieuc, February 24, 1970.
- 50 A. D. Loire-At. sTil74: Doss. inds . . . instituteurs et institutrices. Teacher to prim. insp., Saint-Nazaire, August 13, 1906, on his activities. He and his equally talented wife terminated their careers at a big school in Nantes after the war. Both received several honors.

⁵¹ A. D. Ill-Vil. T: Instituteurs. Doss. inds. Prim. insp., Redon, inspection report of November 24, 1904. The teacher received an overall grade of $\frac{18}{20}$, extremely high. He was "profoundly imbued with laic and republican ideals, a man of action and of vivid faith" and a great influence in the commune (according to the report).

⁵² La Bretagne commerciale (Brest), March 21, 1909; A. D. Fin. T: Instituteurs--1901-1919. Prim. insp., Morlaix, to acad., April 1, 1909; doctor's note, January 18, 1909, on his neurasthenia resulting in his death in 1913.

⁵³ A. D. Ill-Vil. 2T: Mouvements--1892-1914. Circular of insp. acad., October 16, 1906. Teachers in the Côtes-du-Nord and the Morbihan were also connected with this cooperative. On the rise of agrarian syndicalism, see Gordon Wright, Rural Revolution in France (Stanford, 1964), pp. 19-25. One of the most illustrious if much-maligned figures in the movement was the Breton Abbé Trochu, a very liberal priest and founder of the Ouest-Éclair (now Ouest-France and one of the largest French dailies). Wright, pp. 24-25.

⁵⁴ A. D. Fin. T: Instituteurs--1901-1919. Many speeches in the dossier attest to the teacher's great reputation in the region.

- 55 A. D. Ill-Vil. F1768: Doss. d'un instituteur; A. D. Morb. T333: Cours d'adultes 1898-1899. These examples were taken at random from this file.
- 56 A. D. Ill-Vil. 2T: Cours d'adultes 1881-1896. Letter dated May 26, 1896.
- 57 A. D. Loire-At. 64-T-4: Cours d'adultes 1895-1926. Extract from the register of deliberations of the conseil municipal, La Regrippière, November 3, 1895.
- 58 A. D. Morb. T1690: Ens. prim. Cours d'adultes 1896-1900. Prim. insp., Vannes to acad., February 3, 1896; mayor's pompous "Procès-verbal sur un fait à l'école d'Adultes", January 28, 1896.
- 59 For example, that of a young adjunct at Kerpert (Côtes-du-Nord) telling his inspector about his extracurricular activities, including the lending of books from his bibliothèque scolaire. His élan permeated the letter. A. D. Côtes-Nord. T: Doss. comm. Teacher to prim. insp., Guingamp, October 14, 1904. Teachers were sometimes paid, more often unpaid for adult courses.
- 60 A. D. Côtes-Nord. T: Doss. comm. Teacher, Mâel-Carhaix, to prim. insp., Guingamp, March 20, 1905.

⁶¹ A. D. Morb. T1683: Ens. prim. Instituteurs: distinctions honorifiques 1873-1929. Sub-pref. to pref., March 2, 1897.

⁶² Charles Péguy, Notre Jeunesse (Gallimard; Paris, 1957), p. 51. He wrote the book in 1910. With the urbanization of the countryside, the teacher's cultural importance diminished. See André Bianconi, "Les Instituteurs", Revue française de science politique, IX (1959), 947-49.

⁶³ The latter two examples were noted respectively in: A. D. Ill-Vil. 2T: Mouvements--1892-1914. Letter from a cantonal authority to pref. January 24, 1911, on teacher at Saint-Méloir-des Ondes; and A. D. Morb. T1683: Ens. prim. Instituteurs-distinctions honorifiques. Sub-pref., Lorient, to pref., September 20, 1898, on teacher at Locmiquélic en Riantec. The other kinds of cooperatives are found in many documents. For solidarism, see J. E. S. Hayward, "The Official Philosophy of the French Third Republic: Léon Bourgeois and Solidarism", International Review of Social History, VI (1961), 19-48 and "Educational Pressure Groups and the Indoctrination of the Radical Ideology of Solidarism, 1895-1914", Ibid., VIII (1963), 1-17.

⁶⁴ A. D. Côtes-Nord. T: Doss. comm. Mayor to pref., June 26, 1904; A. D. Ill-Vil. 2T: Mouvements--1912. Mayor, Montreuil-sur-Ille, to pref., June, 1912. Dodu located a graduate of the Normal School who played violin (Académie June, 1912). The societies listed were the most common.

⁶⁵ An English observer of French schools in 1891 greatly admired this system. Thomas H. Teegan, Elementary Education in France (London, 1891), pp. 107-108.

⁶⁶ See Edmond Blanguernon, "Les Classes-promenades", L'Éducation, I (1909), 326.

⁶⁷ A. D. Morb. T1687: Ens. prim. Plaintes . . . instituteurs 1878-1934. Prim. insp., Ploërmel, to acad., January 25, 1904. Another report on a teacher of Ille-et-Vilaine in 1910 mentioned how the odor of the soup, prepared by his wife and the mayor's spouse, made school attractive to children. Prim. insp., Fougères, report of March 2, 1910 on M. B...in A. D. Ill-Vil. T: Instituteurs. Doss. inds.

⁶⁸ A. D. Loire-At. sTil41: Doss. inds . . . instituteurs et institutrices. Prim. insp., Nantes, to acad., October 27, 1908. From 1905 to 1908, their enrollments had only dipped very slightly in a period of intense concurrence. They had about fifty pupils in 1908.

⁶⁹ The actual composition (with her strike-overs) is found, with others, in the dossier of the teacher at Tréméheuc, in A. D. Ill-Vil. T: Instituteurs. Doss. inds. C.f. also, the splendid evocation of the examination--day atmosphere in Laurence Wyllie, Village in the Vaucluse (2nd ed., New York, 1964), pp. 91-93,

and Colette's Claudine à l'école in Oeuvres complètes, (Le Fleuron; Paris, 1948), I. She reminisced in a graceful fashion about the school at Montigny in the 1880's. One girl, after failing an examination, stammered: "Ma foi, voui, que j'aime mieux garder les vaches chez papa" Ibid., p. 185.

⁷⁰ A. D. Fin. T: Instituteurs--1901-1919. Extracts of deliberations of the conseil, July 16, 1898; March 28, 1908.

⁷¹ A. D. Loire-At. sTil46: Doss. inds. . . instituteurs et institutrices. Prim. insp., Paimboeuf, to acad., May 10, 1909. He marvelled at the fact that the playing of the Marseillaise--in front of the schoolhouse bedecked in the national colors--was twice applauded. See also, Jacques Ozouf, Nous les maîtres d'école (Paris, 1967), chapter five ("Forcer l'estime").

⁷² A. D. Fin. T: Instituteurs--1901-1919. Prim. insp., Châteaulin, report, February 26, 1913; A. D. Loire-At. sTil97: Doss. inds . . . instituteurs et institutrices. Teacher to prim. insp., Nantes, June 7, 1893. He married off his daughter--an institutrice at the girl's school--to his adjunct. Most likely they continued in that village. Last source is prim. insp., Nantes, to acad., October 5, 1913, which also mentioned the certificats.

73 Interview with Monsieur and Madame Ogès, Quimper, August 28, 1970; see also, the speech of the president of the teacher's amicale of Ille-et-Vilaine at the death of a highly-rated institutrice, at Vieux-Vy from 1880 to 1907: he mentioned the fact that she was consulted by couples. A large crowd was in attendance. Speech in her dossier, A. D. Ill-Vil. T: Institutrices. Doss. inds.

74 This detail is found in J. Garavel's excellent little study of Les Paysans de Morette: un siècle de vie rurale dans une commune du Dauphiné (Paris, 1948), p. 89.

75 Roger Thabault, Mon Village (Paris, 1944), pp. 205-41. The fact that dossiers are closed for the post-bellum era renders difficult the evaluation of social ascension (for example, to mayor) of teachers.

76 A. D. Ill-Vil. F1776: Dossier de Mme Chalmel . . . institutrice publique 1901-1924.

77 The reference to Jupiter is taken from Le Montfortais (Ille-et-Vilaine), January 2, 1898; another good example of this literature is the front-page article entitled "L'Instituteur au pouvoir" in Le Nouvelliste de Bretagne et de la région de l'Ouest (Rennes), October 10, 1908.

78 Jacques Chastenet, La France de M. Fallières (Paris, 1949), pp. 198-99.

79 François Goguel, La Politique des partis sous la III^e République (3d ed., Paris, 1958), p. 27.

80 See François Goguel, Géographie des élections françaises sous la troisième et la quatrième République (Paris, 1951), an indispensable tome.

81 Paul Bois, "Dans l'Ouest: Politique et enseignement primaire", Annales: Économies-Sociétés -Civilisations, IX (July-September, 1954), 356-67.

82 For the Trégor, see Gabriel Le Bras, Études de sociologie religieuse (Paris, 1956), II, 605-06 (quote p. 606), and Alain de Vulpian, "Physionomie agraire et orientation politique dans le département des Côtes-du-Nord", Revue française de science politique, I (May, 1951), 123-26. For the Cornouaille, Le Bras, Ibid., (1955), I, p. 174. At Plodémet (Cornouaille), teachers helped cement a radical-socialist dynasty from 1877 to 1959. Edgar Morin, The Red and the White: Report from a French Village (New York, 1970; tr. by A. M. Sheridan-Smith), pp. 26-37. Many other factors were involved in the stability of republicanism there.

83 I have calculated these percentages from statistics in: A. D. Loire-At. 62-T10: Statistique des illettrés. Examen primaire des conscrits 1913; and A. N. F¹⁷14270: États numériques par départements et cantons des conscrits avec indication de leur degré d'instruction--1899. For 1913, other random figures can be given here: Dordogne: 6.8 percent; Meuse: 1.7 per cent; Loire: 1.9 per cent. It is interesting that Brittany had four departments in the eight most heavily conscripted in 1913. The Nord and the Pas-de-Calais were the top two. [62-T-10].

84 Morvan Lebesque, Comment peut-on être Breton: Essai sur la démocratie française (Paris, 1970), pp. 96-99; M. J. Sydenham, The French Revolution (New York, 1966), p. 217; Charles Rearick, "Symbol, Legend, and History: Michelet as Folklorist-Historian", French Historical Studies, VII (Spring, 1971), 72-92; report of inspector in A. D. Morb. T1049: Inst. prim. Statistiques 1903-1908. Children who spoke provençal were punished, too, under the Third Republic. Laurence Wyllie, "Social Change at the Grass Roots" in Stanley Hoffmann et al., In Search of France (Cambridge, Mass., 1963), pp. 197-98.

85 Extract from Ferry's "Program for Elementary Education" in Ferdinand Buisson and F. E. Farrington, ed., French Educational Ideals of Today (New York, 1919), p. 23. This is an excellent anthology.

⁸⁶ A. D. Fin. T: Instituteurs--1901-1919. Prim. insp.,
Brest, report of December 3, 1912.

⁸⁷ See H. Stuart Hughes, Consciousness and Society (New York, 1958). One of the most sophisticated critiques of positivist morality is Henri Bergson's Les Deux Sources de la morale et de la religion (58th ed., Paris, 1948).

CHAPTER V

PORTRAIT OF THE INSTITUTEUR

The instituteur was an important symbol of diverse phenomena in the pre-1914 Third Republic. Newspaper writers and parliamentary debaters conjured up, in the person of teachers, disparate images of antimilitarism, of morality, of socialism, of anarchy. Three eminent novelists--Émile Zola, Ernest Psichari, and Jules Romains--employed the instituteur to develop such themes. Zola, in his allegory of the Dreyfus Affair entitled Vérité, pitted clerical intriguers against the instituteur Simon. Simon was both the analogue of Dreyfus and the incarnation of truth and justice. In the end he was defeated by the forces of darkness and committed suicide. Psichari's L'Appel des armes was a product of the nationalist revival just prior to the war. The conversion of his hero, Vincent, from the ideals of Dreyfusism and anti-Dreyfusism was intensified by the fact that the elder Vincent was a schoolmaster. An army captain, typifying the nationalist side, wooed the son away from the side of justice and universalism represented by the instituteur. Finally Jules Romains depicted an instituteur (Clanricard) in Men of Good Will who foresaw, better than anyone else, how awful a disaster the First World War would be. Clanricard seems to symbolize the prescience that most of his generation lacked.¹

Each of these books made of the instituteur a typed

figure. In this concluding chapter I aim to portray him as he was, in Brittany, paying particular attention to his thinking and ideology.

Teachers generally came from the lower classes of society. The occupations of their parents, though diverse, had in common low remuneration. Gernoux' father was an instituteur as was Madame Ogès'. Monsieur Ogès' father was a sailor in a family that had produced sailors since the time of Henri IV. F. T., whom I interviewed at Saint-Anne la Palud (Finistère), was the son of a poor carpenter; his wife's father was a railway worker. H. L.'s parents were both farmers and millworkers, barely eking out a living. L. L.'s parents were farmers who were slightly better off than their neighbors. François Dallet, a teacher of the Loire-Atlantique, was the son of a rural postman earning two francs a day.² Instituteurs were mainly gens du peuple; but exceptionally certain institutrices hailed from the bourgeoisie: this was perhaps less of a social regression for a female than for a male. Two schoolmistresses of the Finistère, for instance, were respectively the daughter of a doctor and a justice of the peace.³

Besides similar social origins, another trait common to teachers of Brittany was that they usually taught in the department where they were born. There was little outward mobility

in the group. In a random sample of fifty institutrices of the Finistère forty-three were natives of the department. Of the remaining seven, three were from other Breton departments leaving only 8 per cent of the total from other sections of the country. Since the Finistère was never oversupplied with teachers--sometimes having to recruit from other areas--the proportion of natives was probably lower than in other Breton departments such as Ille-et-Vilaine. In Ille-et-Vilaine and the Loire-Atlantique teaching posts became progressively scarcer before the war, prompting the academy to reject almost all "foreign candidatures" in favor of worthy local products. This policy, as well as the predilection of teachers for remaining in their petit pays, limited extra-departmental migrations. Indeed, of the nine teachers I interviewed all were born, taught, and retired in the same department, except for Madame C. L. who taught briefly in the Finistère before re-entering Ille-et-Vilaine.⁴

Why did young men and women choose a teaching career? Their motives were numerous. Most felt a genuine vocation for teaching, especially the second generation of pre-1914 instituteurs who usually attended normal school, unlike the majority of their predecessors. Social advancement, too, was obviously a factor. H. L. remembered his feelings of social inferiority at public school owing to his poverty: children seemed to be mocking his wooden sabots and an adjunct referred to him in

class, he thought, in a disparaging manner. By espousing the teaching profession he could overcome this complex. For girls who did not envisage marriage pedagogy was a socially acceptable alternative. Teaching promised material stability. Letters poured into the académies from young people possessing a brevet élémentaire and desiring to teach, and these letters often cited financial need. For example: "I belong to a family of cultivateurs, composed of eight children. My parents are not rich and impose upon themselves heavy sacrifices to raise and educate the large family." This boy did receive a post and taught in the Finistère from 1906 to 1939. People like L. L., from a more affluent background, were more disappointed by the situation teaching provided. Young people also entered this profession because of the direct influence of parents or teachers. Madame F. T. recalled that for her parents "instruction was something marvelous" and they wanted her to become a part of the lustrous scholastic world. Three male teachers--F.T., Gernoux, and Ogès--emphasized the effect of fine schoolmasters upon their future plans. Emulation seemed desirable. Additionally, one must point to character traits of future teachers. H.L. and François Dallet both considered themselves leaders early in life, and they desired to guide future generations of children entrusted to them. J. Le Hénaff, an eminent teacher of the Côtes-du-Nord, was, by his own admission, an altruist who saw in the profession an outlet for that

quality. Teaching was, for other people, a pis aller. Moreover, a concatenation of circumstances could also determine a person, quite apart from prior volition, to embark on the career. M. Le G., another teacher of the Finistère whom I interviewed, replied to my query on his decision to be an instituteur with a preliminary "je n'en sais rien". He then explained that several of his brighter friends at the école primaire supérieure of Concarneau, including Ogès, enjoined him to compete for entrance to normal school as they were planning to do. He followed their lead without having had any previous ideas on the subject. More than one of the motives listed normally figured concurrently in the decision to become a teacher. The career was, in sum, a very desirable one for intelligent men and women of lower-class origins.⁵

To sharpen our view of the teachers a brief discussion of their marital habits is in order. In the early laic period--from the Ferry laws to about the time of the Dreyfus Affair--a small minority of male teachers married institutrices. L. L. remembered that in the 1890's instituteurs usually married a girl of the countryside having no connection with teaching. And as "young teachers were very much in demand for marriage in the region" the choice was wide.⁶ Institutrices were not in abundance in Brittany until after the wave of laicizations of the 1880's and early nineties. Also Jacques Ozouf's finding for the Department of the Manche--that many institutrices

of the early period were forced to practice a chastity equalling that of recently-expelled bonnes soeurs--must have obtained in some measure for Brittany as well. The single institutrice was more common before the turn of the century than after. Ozouf's study of the Manche indicated that the percentage of married institutrices more than tripled between 1897 and 1922.⁷ After 1900, too, the administration and teachers at normal schools began to preach the virtues of marriages within the teaching community. Madame C. L. remembered how her head-mistress at the Rennes Normal School warned the girls to keep themselves attractive in order to marry someone worthwhile, preferably a male teacher. Above all they must not succumb to the blandishments of shiftless coqs de village for whom a young institutrice was a prized marriage prospect.⁸ Marriage between teachers was also a solution to problems of isolation and finances.

It would be interesting to know the occupations of instituteurs' offspring in order to gauge the social mobility of the group. I have unfortunately only a few straws in the wind to rely on. Three of the teachers I interviewed chanced to mention their children. The F. T.'s only child is now a high functionary in the finance administration in Paris--a bourgeois in income and life-style. Madame C. L. referred to one of her children, an engineer. L. L.'s daughter, an only child, emulated her mother by teaching in the Girl's Normal School at Saint-Brieuc.⁹ I would speculate that a substantial percentage

of teachers' offspring chose an academic career of some sort. Jacques Ozouf referred to a recent colloquium at the École Normale Supérieure (Paris) where one university professor affected to apologize to his confrères for not being the son of an instituteur, as most there were.¹⁰ This problem of mobility obviously requires much further research. It is important to realize that intelligent youths of the post-World War I and World War II eras who would have embraced the primary school teaching career before 1914 often chose other professions in the later period: this was a consequence of the declining status of the teaching profession and the democratization of other avenues of advancement. Social mobility is, of course, difficult to evaluate in a century when criteria for its measurement have changed so rapidly. How much status has a hypothetical graduate of the École Normale Supérieure and professor at the Sorbonne in 1950 really gained over that of his father, a teacher of the Belle Époque? Not nearly so much as one might at first suppose.

Teachers of the pre-1914 Third Republic were laic but in varying degrees. Generally the first generation of teachers in Brittany was more moderate than the second relative to the Church, relations with the Catholics being one test of laicity. Madame Ogès' and M. Gernoux' fathers were regular church-goers;

their offspring were religiously indifferent.¹¹ Compromise between teacher and curé--as has been discussed in Chapter II--was more current in the 1880's than in the 1900's. However, both the pre-Dreyfus and post-Dreyfus instituteurs displayed a common reverence for laic ideals propounded by the great school reformers. These universals were never called into question in Brittany. What H. L. recalled about his attitude in the years 1908-1911 probably applied to most teachers of the entire period in the province: "We were laïques. We knew that we were being entrusted with a moral mission and we wanted to be worthy of carrying it out We were laic apostles."¹² This faith informed the outlook of every teacher I interviewed. Ferry, Bert, Combes, Buisson--all were deemed irreproachable men. Consider an adjunct-teacher's description of a school fête at the town of Bannalec (Finistère) in 1907: "The Fête of the Schools had this year as object the glorification of Jules Ferry, immortal author of the school Laws With the glorious name of Jules Ferry we honor all of the excellence of our educational trilogy: Gratuity, Obligation, Laicity!"¹³

Teachers did not merely pay lip-service to ideals such as tolerance, liberty, solicitude for one's fellow man: most on whom I have evidence actually lived and radiated these ideals. One teacher of the Finistère who was assaulted by an ex-student of frères abstained from initiating judicial

proceedings; he wished to give villagers "a lesson of morality in action."¹⁴ Faith and idealism were an antidote for depressing difficulties--cures, money, health--confronting many teachers. J. Le Hénaff, who was the target of an acrimonious clerical campaign at Lannion, wrote in 1896: "What consoles me is that I am working for the cause of liberty and justice, and that I am paying my beloved France a small tribute of gratitude by throwing a little light into the minds of ignorant and impressionable people."¹⁵

Moral rectitude and faith were apparent in the outward appearance of the schoolmaster. He usually dressed all in black, save perhaps for a white turned-down collar. His polished shoes, buttoned frock-coat, and crisp bow-tie bespoke self-discipline. In the street he normally wore a hat of a bowler variety and sometimes a pince-nez. Most teachers had moustaches, less frequently beards, and their hair was close-cropped. H. L. recalls perfectly today the countenance of his first teacher at La Grigonnais: "He was impressive and dignified--like a curé." Women were similarly dignified in long dresses of conservative color. Their hair was usually done in a neat bun--inspectors referred several times to the lascivious effect of hair "falling on the shoulders"--and they had to be impeccably groomed.¹⁶

The next vital topic to be dealt with is the patriotism of teachers--vital because it was the subject of intense

controversy before World War I. As I pointed out in Chapter II, the Catholic press seized upon the moderate pacifism of a minority of urban teachers and, from roughly 1905, saddled the whole corps with the label of antipatriotism. The charges stung most instituteurs, and one who taught in Paris wrote a book in 1905 both to disprove Catholic allegations of widespread antipatriotism as well as to chastise those few teachers who seemed to be indulging in it.¹⁷ The book had impact, but the issue continued to be hotly debated. In the vanguard of the pacifists was a former teacher, Gustave Hervé, well-known for his opinion that the flag should be placed in a pile of manure. Editor of the Socialist and pacifist Revue de l'enseignement primaire (with a circulation of roughly 14,000) he was one of the most often-attacked figures of the period. The problem of teachers' patriotism was not defused until the war.¹⁸

Schoolmasters of Brittany were never antipatriotic before the war. Both the first and second generations of pre-war instituteurs were at one in their firm allegiance to the patrie. Some were passionately nationalistic; witness a poem written by a teacher in 1907 and dedicated to the inspector of the academy of the Finistère:

Les Soldats de la Revanche

Écoliers, joyeux travailleurs
 Espoir de la France,
 Rimons, nos frères et nos soeurs,
 Ces amis d'enfance'
 Mais n'oublions pas la Patrie,
 Cette bonne Mère chérie,¹⁹
 Soldats de la Revanche!

Even the most pacifist teachers were not really unpatriotic at all. J. L..., a young adjunct at Nantes, was closely watched by inspectors in 1913 for signs of antipatriotism. He had composed these suspect lines for his civics course, and they merit a lengthy citation:

1. Brutality, shameful in individuals, is criminal in peoples and is called war. The day when peoples, like individuals, respect the rights of others, on that day there will be no more wars. For that it is necessary that everywhere justice take precedence over force.
2. War is a horrible crime: entire regions given over to pillage and fires, thousands of young and strong men killed by bullets and shrapnel, millions of women and old people without bread, thousands of children without fathers, frightful misery everywhere, that is war: it is a disgrace for all humanity.
3. However there are legitimate wars and from which no people can draw away: these are defensive wars. Only cowards are capable of refusing to defend their fatherland when it is attacked
4. Thus, so long as our fatherland could be attacked, it is a sacred duty for all of us to be ready to defend it, even at the cost of our lives.²⁰

When the war came the teachers were not found lacking. Their role in the conflict deserves some commentary as a corollary to this question of their patriotism. Of the six males I interviewed all served except for Ogès, who had tuberculosis at the time. Two of them lost eyes (as did François Dallet), one was wounded in a limb, another taken prisoner. The teaching

corps of France was surely hit hard by the war. Of 35,000 schoolmasters mobilized, 8,419 were killed--22.6 per cent of the group.²¹ Statistics do not suffice to indicate the extent of the loss: one must read through the numerous dossiers of promising young teachers whose lives were cut short, "mort sur le champ d'honneur" or "tué à l'ennemi", as the academy marked laconically on the outside of the dossiers.

Even hard-core pacifists went to war, including Gustave Hervé (who much later became a fascist). J. L..., the young adjunct accused of faltering patriotism before the cataclysm, was vindicated in 1916: an army captain at the front wrote the teacher's wife, now widow, eulogizing the dead soldier in the following terms: "Sergeant L...was adored by his men and had all our confidence and esteem . . . An excellent soul, acting only when he knew the situation, very brave, of admirable coolness, your husband had all the qualities of a soldier who reasons, who understands, and who knows."²² That teacher was a reasoning patriot like another who fought with a copy of Spinoza in his pocket.²³

Teachers probably reflected more deeply than the average Frenchman on the meaning of the war to humanity. A teacher of the Loire-Atlantique who delivered a speech in English to Canadian troops in 1917 believed that the war would transform the world. An allied victory would spell the demise of autocracy and barbarism (Germany), and the new age of universal liberty would

eventually dawn. Already, Russia was turning to democracy and other nations, even inscrutable China, would follow suit.²⁴ François Dallet similarly conceived of the war as a struggle between barbarians and civilization.²⁵ In sum, teachers easily reconciled patriotism with the democratic ethos both before and during the war: only after the conflict would such idealism wane.

The patriotism of the instituteur was, finally, ambivalent in that it was at once idealistic and down-to-earth. Teachers revered "la France" as Barrès did, but they loved equally the particular little corner of the country where they lived and taught. When in 1915 L. L. was trapped in the no-man's land between the German and French trenches--his entire company already dead--he was obsessed by the idea of getting back to "ma Bretagne", meaning for him the seaside country around Saint-Brieuc. After playing possum for a whole day he regained his lines and subsequently returned to his native region. The Ogès remember well how they treasured the immediate area around Gouesnac'h where they began teaching in 1911. They took boat rides on the Odet river, fished for shrimp, walked in the woods. Though they could have obtained a better post they remained there twelve years. When they transferred it was to a nearby village, then to Quimper--all in the same part of the Cornouaille.²⁶

Schoolmasters wrote about the land and its people. Many composed definitive monographs on the communes where they

taught.²⁷ A lecture by a teacher of the Loire-Atlantique, published in a Parisian journal, won a prize for its lucid treatment of rural depopulation. The exposé was well-stocked with concrete references to regions as diverse as the Beauce and Poitou, to the different kinds of land-holding, and other influencing factors.²⁸ Ogès' Géographie du Finistère sold over 100,000 copies and went through several editions.²⁹ Of all the teachers who prized the French land and wrote about it one stood out in the pre-war years: Louis Pergaud. This instituteur was idolized by his peers and was well-known in France for his novels about animals--one of which received a Goncourt prize in 1910. His knowledge of the creatures and topography of Franche-Comté was encyclopedic. A peaceful lover of the soil, he died in the war, April 18, 1915, and was widely mourned.³⁰

One last comment must be appended to this analysis. Though instituteurs were local-minded, they were rarely folk-minded. That is to say, they preferred French to dialects and were suspicious of irrational customs (to them) like religious pardons or anachronisms like Breton coiffes. Breton movements for autonomy attracted no schoolmasters until after the war.³¹ Teachers' patriotism was clearly a balance of local and national allegiances. Neither predominated.

Politically, teachers of Brittany were quite homogeneous. They were of the "left", as the teachers I interviewed all said. Opportunists in the 1880's, Radical-Socialists in the 1900's--

such labels imply a transformation in political spirit that really did not occur. The laic issue unified village schoolmasters throughout the entire period under examination. With respect to the Dreyfus Affair--an acid-test of republicanism--I should imagine that they were at least spiritually Dreyfusard. Evidence is however lacking to demonstrate Léon Blum's assertion that "the University at all its levels was the first social or professional category upon which Dreyfusism could rely for support." I found one instance of a teacher discussing Dreyfus in a village of Brittany. He provoked a great controversy in a reactionary part of the Loire-Atlantique and was censured by his inspector for such outspoken behavior. In a letter to the prefect of Ille-et-Vilaine of 1904, a notaire thought to insert the word "Dreyfusard" in his recommendation of a certain instituteur. These are merely isolated examples, and I would conclude that while teachers of Brittany may have been sympathetic to the Dreyfusards they normally did not vocalize their philosophical inclination. Such a conclusion can probably be extended to all of rural France. In fact, the Dreyfus Affair appears to have been far less of an incendiary issue in the provinces than in the capital.³²

Reticent on the Dreyfusard question rural teachers were not much more forthright in espousing Socialism and Syndicalism when these movements became established during the Belle Époque. I emphasize the appellation "rural" for some urban teachers did indeed go beyond the Ferry-Combes lineage to new red horizons.

Teachers' syndicalism--where it existed before 1914--was a direct outgrowth of amicales organizations, themselves a derivative of mutual aid societies among teachers. The latter were found in every department as early as the 1860's. The amicales began to replace these mutual aid societies by the 1880's and 1890's. With the philosophical basis of solidarism and the impetus provided in 1901 by Waldeck-Rousseau's law authorizing certain associations, they came to embrace the majority of teachers of the Belle Époque. In 1907, 85,000 teachers belong to such groups. The theoretical assumptions of the representatives in the amicales were those of most instituteurs: succor for one's fellow man and teacher, unity in the struggle "between the partisans of obscurantism and the partisans of progress", as the journal of an amicale of the Morbihan stated in 1909. Instituteurs in amicales were not just innocuous philosophizers. They were vociferous advocates of salary reform for their profession and ardently defended individual members who were calumniated in their villages--sometimes in conjunction with The League of the Rights of Man and other post-Dreyfus pressure groups.³³

In the years 1903-1907 a number of dissatisfied members of the amicales split off to form syndicats. The syndicats were strongest in departments like the Seine, Bouches-du-Rhône, and Var in whose principal cities syndicalist movements were already noted. Frankly socialist, these teachers viewed their condition as identical with the proletariat's and wanted to

improve it by concerted, radical activity. Young urban adjuncts were especially militant. They resented the oppressive tutelage of their directeurs as do some graduate school students today. One stagiaire at Cléder (Finistère) led a revolt of adjuncts against the head instituteur there in 1911. The immediate pretext was the corvée of classroom-sweeping which they felt they should no longer undergo. This was only a symptom of general discontent among a small but angry minority of young teachers. Though given strident support by a major Socialist newspaper the stagiaire was temporarily dismissed from teaching. A letter of the inspector of Morlaix to the academy reflected the administration's attitude toward dissent: "A bad wind is blowing over some young schoolmasters of my district (happily very very rare). I am disposed to fight energetically against these young people as a professional duty and to indicate to you ceaselessly those who seem to be poorly executing such an important and fine task--that of educating and teaching morality to our young Bretons."³⁴

Theoretically, teachers' syndicalism was illegal. They were not included in Waldeck-Rousseau's labor law of 1884 sanctioning workers' unions. Educational authorities reiterated that fact in numerous speeches and circulars. As early as 1887 Minister of Education Eugène Spuller stated explicitly that collective bargaining--the *raison d'être* of unions-- was only possible for the negotiation of a salaire between worker and employer. Teachers received a traitement paid by

governmental authorities and it was non-negotiable: there could thus be no question of creating a union. In spite of such warnings--more and more frequent as time elapsed--teachers proceeded to federate their departmental syndicats into a national organization and in the years 1907-1911 endeavored unsuccessfully to effect an alliance with the C.G.T. Meanwhile, the administration dismissed certain militants but took no global step to dissolve the illegal formation until the year 1912. In August of that year the seventh congress of the Federation of teachers' syndicats was convoked at the picturesque mountain town of Chambéry. At this meeting most delegates decided to support an antimilitarist coterie called the Sou du Soldat. Raymond Poincaré, head of the government, immediately announced the dissolution of the federation and individual syndicats and was upheld by a majority of the Chamber. The order was executed in the departments by the prefects, who punished unrepentant syndicalists--that is, those still faithful to the Chambéry resolution--by reprimands or temporary dismissals. Some individual syndicats continued to exist, but the movement as a whole was henceforth moribund, recovering only after the war.³⁵

At its height the teachers' syndicalist movement prior to 1914 counted 4 per cent of the nation's instituteurs. Most were urban-based and young. An excellent dossier on the syndicat of the Morbihan showed that the core of the syndicat's

leadership was composed almost entirely of instituteurs teaching at the port of Lorient or in its outskirts. Furthermore, their average age was twenty-eight. The brilliant young prefect Roth, who compiled this set of documents, analyzed the effect of the milieu of Lorient on impressionable teachers:

At Lorient, as in all ports, morals are easy; and perhaps more than elsewhere, political quarrels and economic agitations create an instability in ideas and interests which can disturb a young man. Strikes are frequent. The workers at the Arsenal (there are 4,000) practice revolutionary syndicalism; they furnish the majority of delegates to the Bourse du Travail. The latter is directed and agitated by a handful of radicals, from twenty-five to thirty years old. And in the whole town, functionaries and retired people engage in politicking and [specifically] in the petite politique of coteries, their favorite pastime.

Perhaps Roth exaggerated but it is certain that syndicalism among teachers flourished only in important industrial centers like Brest, Paris, Lyon, Marseille, and Toulon, where workers' movements provided a model to be imitated. The one exception was the strong syndicat of Maine-et-Loire, but there the tone of the organization was more anti-clerical than socialist.³⁶

Of my nine interviewees, only H. L. was enrolled in a syndicat before 1914. He also kept his membership in the amicale of the Loire-Atlantique and was, in his own estimation, an "independent", certainly not a doctrinaire. Those teachers with whom I spoke, and undoubtedly many other rural teachers, were admirers of Jaurès but not rigorous adherents

of his doctrines. Gernoux was perhaps closest to the truth when he said that his generation of pre-1914 instituteurs of the West was, if vaguely socialist, overridingly laic.³⁷

This dissertation is only tangentially a study in educational history, but one cannot completely avoid the pedagogical character of the instituteur. He was a man of the school.

In grade school the future teacher absorbed notions that he would later develop himself in a more sophisticated fashion. After the certificat d'études, he prepared his basic teaching degree--the brevet élémentaire--usually at an école primaire supérieure. The latter existed only in towns, not in villages. By enrolling in the école primaire supérieure for the B. E., the teacher was following the "primary" path. The lycée, except for a very few, was out of the question for prospective teachers. Their education was completely separate from that of the professeur.

The B. E. required a good measure of work. By the time H. L. took it in the early 1900's there were twelve subjects to be studied for the degree. Still preoccupied with farm duties he found the time spent on the B.E. a "veritable torture".³⁸ The B.E. was the terminal degree for most instituteurs of the early laic period. In the year 1885-1886 the the Departments of the Loire-Atlantique and Côtes-du-Nord

together numbered only fifty-three instituteurs and twenty-five institutrices with brevets supérieurs, the degree conferred on graduation from the école normale primaire. The écoles normales of the 1880's were just beginning to re-form after the enervating influence of the Falloux law upon them. Places were few in recently-built girls' normal schools. For lack of space only fourteen girls were accepted into the first year of the école normale d'institutrices at Quimper in 1885-1886.⁴⁰ According to an approximative chart of Antoine Prost, the number of normaliennes in France sharply rose between 1880 and 1914. This was to be expected. But he saw the number of normaliens as almost constant. My impression for Brittany, however, is that males, too, went to normal school in increasing numbers in this period--that there were more normaliens during the Belle Époque than during the 1880's.⁴¹

It is certain that at least by the Separation in 1905 a majority of future Breton teachers passed through the école normale primaire. Not all graduated, either because of poor grades or pecuniary need. Even though the school was free one had to dress appropriately and, of course, three years of earnings were sacrificed--for some, a serious hardship.

The dominant impression that teachers still conserve of their days at the école normale is one of being continually occupied with work. Discipline was Spartan. Normaliens

of the Finistère rose at five o'clock in the morning, those of the Loire-Atlantique at six. The day was filled with a regular dosage of study hours, classes, and unappetizing meals. By nine at night future teachers were content to go to sleep. Sunday was the only day of change from this regimen, when the student had some free time to himself. Even then, headmasters permitted no smoking, drinking in cafés, or dancing. To qualify for the restricted liberty that Sunday afforded, students must not infringe upon any rules during the week: that is, they must not skip any courses, raise their voices at meals, balk at odd jobs assigned to them, like sweeping or drying dishes after meals, nor go to bed too late.

Students at the écoles normales of Brittany during the Belle Époque were, on the whole, apolitical. According to my interviewees, heated debates on government policy or on the merits of certain parties were rare. The young men were more interested in current sports events, especially the Tour de France bicycle race and the soccer matches. Young women talked of domestic matters.⁴²

Schoolwork was the most significant fact of the student's life at the normale. He had thirteen subjects to study, ranging from physiology and chemistry to drawing and music. Patriotic and moral values were infused in the curriculum. An examination in French composition for normaliennes of the Finistère in 1905 posed this question:

Beaumarchais has written: "What do the revolutions of Athens and Rome mean to me, peaceful subject of a monarchist state of the eighteenth century? What can interest me in the death of a tyrant or

sacrifice of a young person in Aulide? In all of that I see nothing, no moral which enlightens me: You will find, restricting yourself to examples chosen from the tragedies of Racine in the program of the brevet supérieur, the interest which Racine's works present, the lessons and teachings they contain.

Not all examinations were quite so parochial. The following questions--among others--appeared on the men's test in English composition in the same year and department:

1. Could you swim the English Channel? Why?
2. Could you state and briefly describe the different operations by which bread is produced? ⁴³

Such questions require a fairly strong vocabulary in English. While in some ways naive, education at these institutions was of a creditable standard.

Teachers at the normal schools were products of the écoles normales supérieures of Saint-Cloud and Fontenay-aux-Roses and were undoubtedly competent. They expected more than a modicum of effort from their students and emphasized personality traits of future teachers almost as much as intellectual ability. In letters written to the inspector of the academy, the headmistress of the girls' normal school at Rennes in 1892 noted the timidity of one prospective institutrice, the capricious disposition of another, and so on. Her resumé of one term of 1895 indicates what was deemed valuable at such a school: "In sum, this trimester leaves a memory of calm, of work, of a common life very much sweetened by good camaraderie."⁴⁴

Fitting into the group, I sense, was of primordial importance for these students.

The instituteurs with whom I talked were remarkably sparing of criticism regarding their training at normal school. Despite references to these institutions as "laic seminaries", most now consider as beneficial that severe weaning of neophytes into the pedagogical world. They feel that the ideals and self-discipline derived from their days at the école normale served them in good stead throughout their careers. The sole doubt expressed about the validity of the normale was that it did not adequately prepare a person for day-to-day, practical problems of the classroom. Not until his first-year of actual teaching, as an adjunct under a fine directeur, did L. L. learn how to plan his day's work and how to render his classes interesting yet useful.⁴⁵

After earning the brevet élémentaire and/or brevet supérieur, young men and women were stagiaires until they passed the certificat d'aptitude pédagogique. They then attained the rank of titulaire at which time they pledged themselves to at least ten years teaching. Dismissals for poor conduct, illness, or other special circumstances permitted such contracts to lapse. Titulaires were of three kinds: adjuncts (with the C.A.P.), instituteurs at one-class schools, and directeurs at schools with more than one class (and subordinate adjuncts). Most schools were of several classes.

What constituted a good teacher? To answer that question it is first desirable to outline what a good teacher was not. Without doubt a major defect of some teachers of the Third Republic was pedantry. Gabriel Chevallier's depiction of the instituteur Tafardel in Clochemerle, while hyperbolic, contains more than a little verisimilitude. Tafardel had memorized a few Latin aphorisms in order to impress others; his teaching was "rather bad, being in all things boring and doctrinaire."⁴⁶ I found aspects of Tafardel in some teachers' dossiers and even in a few of my interviewees. Closely allied to pedantry was a sort of naiveté peculiar to certain schoolmasters. When this trait entirely colored a person's teaching it must have soured pupils. Charles Péguy criticized his "good masters of the primary school" for having intimated, in effect, that "on January 1, 1789 people everywhere installed electric light."⁴⁷

A number of schoolmasters were manifestly incapable. Poor teachers cropped up more frequently in the pre-Dreyfus period than during the Belle Époque. An adjunct at Plouhinec (Finistère) in 1896 was wont to give disquisitions on morals to pupils who did not listen to a word. The teacher seemed incognizant of the futility of his methods, the need to encourage participation of his pupils in the lesson. While he was giving one of these talks, the fifty-two students, according to an outraged inspector, "were making a deafening uproar, throwing,

from one end of the class to the other, either their berets or little stones--with the teacher not intervening to stop them." One immediately associates this kind of class with that of the early 1850's described by Anatole France, where flying catechisms and bread crusts created constant disturbance in the room.⁴⁸ A thirty-seven year-old man teaching at Soulvache (Loire-Atlantique) in 1896 was so bad that the enrollment was plummeting and numerous complaints emanated from irate parents. As evidence of the man's ineffective teaching, the inspector cited a dozen dictations taken in poor fashion by eleven year-old pupils.⁴⁹

The paucity of qualified women teachers, especially in the 1880's and early 1890's, brought many into the profession who were less apt for teaching than the males heretofore described. I found countless examples of institutrices who regularly failed to meet their classes at all owing to the influence of alcohol. Mlle B...at Belligné (Loire-Atlantique) in 1889 used children to get spirits for her at the store, also as domestics to clean her room. She was frequently found lying on the ground drunk near the school and was, of course, eventually dismissed.⁵⁰ Some institutrices simply did not know how to teach at all and, their will-power notwithstanding, were abject failures. At the girls' school of Ploudaniel (Finistère) in 1892 the inspector found the schoolmistress employing only a rudimentary version of the mutual mode of instruction which would have been more appreciated in the 1820's

or 1830's; at another girls' school of the same department two years later the four pupils sat motionless, absorbing absolutely nothing from the lesson. The only real sign of life in the classroom was the occasional shrieking of a cat tormented by the institutrice's daughter.⁵¹

Teachers such as the foregoing were designated by inspectors as "bad", at best "mediocre". A good teacher was their antithesis--competent and conscientious. Inspectors looked for a tone of seriousness in the classroom, like that exhibited by the instituteur Seurel in Fournier's Le Grand Meaulnes. They wanted to see children at work and absorbing what was being explicated. They applauded teachers who made an extra effort to obtain results.⁵²

The teacher who surpassed the mere requisite of pedagogical diligence; who injected zeal and faith into his teaching without the attendant disadvantages of pedantry or ingenuousness--this was, in inspectors' lexicon, an elite instituteur. A schoolmaster of Redon in 1906 was of this genre. The inspector graded him $\frac{17}{20}$ (very high) and remarked: "What makes for the force, prestige, and authority of M.C...is his great morality, his belief . . . in duty and virtue."⁵³ Finally, the teacher of distinction was one who, in addition to being able and idealistic, actually loved his metier. Madame C. L. had little time for politics or other pursuits: her whole life, she asserted, was devoted to her classroom. Most teachers whom

I interviewed said they would go into teaching again--although several considered as unpalatable a teaching career in the contemporary maelstrom of student protest.⁵⁴

The pre-war instituteurs stand out as a unique group, for after the war of 1914-1918 the corps underwent a metamorphosis. Almost all became socialists, some communists. This was due in part to the decline of Radicalism, in part to the rapid growth of syndicalism, in greatest part to the effect of the war. Pacifism seemed more worthwhile in the 1920's and 1930's--after what F. T. called the "butchery"--than in the antebellum era; and the Socialists were the staunchest French pacifists.⁵⁵

The pacifism of post-war teachers was, it appears, reflected in their actions at school. Instituteurs taught the horrors of war, took war toys from children, and by the pressure of their Syndicat had twenty-six textbooks purified or eliminated because of their overly militaristic tenor.⁵⁶ An article in a newspaper of the syndicat of the Finistère, written in 1933, presented an historical rationale for teachers' pacifism:

The teacher, at school, around the school and out of school, will be a leader of minds. They said in 1870: the German instituteur defeated the French instituteur. One may say in a certain measure that the reverse took place in 1914. We know the bitter fruit of these victories where all our losers . . . all except the international scum which live off the manure of war.⁵⁷

Schoolmasters of the entre-guerre period became more militant politically than they formerly were. Fourteen of the forty-three leaders of the extreme left-wing Socialists cited by Donald Baker in a recent article were teachers. In the 1930's instituteurs were important propagators of Socialism in the provinces.⁵⁸

When the debacle of 1940 came many politicians and army officers cast bitter animadversions upon the entire teaching profession. Marshal Pétain excoriated "teachers who were Socialists and not patriots"; General Maxime Weygand wanted punishment for those "who had refused to develop in the children the sense of patriotism and sacrifice."⁵⁹ Punished it seems many were: I saw forms that the Vichy authorities sent to teachers forcing them to abjure their pre-war views or be incarcerated. Probably a number of them were not even given such a choice.⁶⁰

Besides the drift toward pacifism and socialism a transformation also took place in the teachers' relationship toward the village. Urbanization and the spread of literacy undermined their influential position in the villages. They might still be leaders of sports teams or run cinema projectors;⁶¹ but I think they were seldom village oracles as so often was the case before 1914. Moreover, many teachers probably identified less than before the war with the villages where they

taught, coveting advancement to urban posts, marking time in the bleds perdus.⁶²

Albert Thibaudet has written: "Republic of the Professors, that also meant . . . Republic of the Instituteurs."⁶³ Before 1914 the teachers were the ubiquitous delegates of the Republic. Laic, patriotic, more flexible with the Church--at least in the West--than has been supposed, they were a breed who indubitably stamped their generation with some of their conviction and their idealism. In a certain measure the unity of 1914 must be traced to them. "Black hussars of the Republic" is Péguy's often-quoted description of them. In reality the instituteurs were not impractical ideologues but interested themselves in concrete concerns of villagers such as agriculture, health care, and local government. They were courageous in the face of manifold problems that village existence presented. They frequently surmounted these difficulties and attained a significant place in the life of the community. The historian of provincial France during the first half of the Third Republic--whether his emphasis be political, social, cultural or religious--must inevitably consider the role of the village schoolmaster.

FOOTNOTES

¹ Zola's novel is found in Oeuvres complètes (Fasquelle; Paris, 1968), VIII. This fine edition is part of the series "Cercle du Livre précieux". Psichari's novel is in Oeuvres complètes de Ernest Psichari (Conard; Paris, 1948), II. In Romains' Men of Good Will (Alfred Knopf; New York, 1936; tr. by W. B. Welles), see especially I, chapter four. C.f. also, Léon Bourgeois on the instituteur: "You are the representative of reason. You are the representative of the national idea and of social conscience." Quoted in Ida Berger ed., Lettres d'institutrices rurales d'autrefois. Rédigées à la suite de l'enquête de Francisque Sarcey en 1897 (Paris, [n.d.], 1960's), p. xi.

² Interviews with: Alfred Gernoux, Nantes, June 3, 1970; Monsieur and Madame Ogès, Quimper, August 28, 1970; Monsieur and Madame F. T., Saint-Anne La Palud, August 9, 1970; H. L., Nantes, May 15, 1970; L. L., Saint-Brieuc, February 24, 1970. Aveugle et Maître d'école: François Dallet (Nantes, 1950), pp. 5-9 [no author given].

³ A. D. Fin. T: Institutrices--1901-1919. Dél. cant., Saint-Thégonnec, to prim. insp., Morlaix, July 31, 1887, recommended the daughter of a doctor at Plounéor; Mlle N. B... to acad., April 16, 1902, told of death of her father, justice of the peace.

⁴ Sample taken from A. D. Fin. T: Institutrices--1901-1919; Dodu to pref., November 28, 1910, mentioned "foreign candidatures" when rejecting an aspirant from the Gironde [A. D. Ill-Vil. 2T: Mouvements--1909-1911]; insp., acad., Loire-Atlantique, to pref., February 13, 1899, also said he was very selective with extra-departmental candidates [A. D. Loire-At. sT13: Ens. prim. Pers. des instituteurs et institutrices: noms., muts. (doss. inds.) 1893-1900]; interview with Mme C. L., Châteaugiron, January 31, 1970.

⁵ Interviews: H. L., Nantes, May 15, 1970, L. L., Saint-Brieuc, February 24, 1970, the F. T.'s, Saint-Anne la Palud, August 9, 1970, A. Gernoux, Nantes, June 3, 1970, the Ogès, Quimper, August 28, 1970; M. Le G., Quimper, August 28, 1970. A. D. Côtes-Nord. T[unclassified]: J. Le Hénaff, Un Maître laïque (1896, unpublished), p. 154; Aveugle et Maître d'école, pp. 8-9; letter from J. B...to acad., July 6, 1906 is in A. D. Fin. T: Instituteurs--1901-1919. Jacques Ozouf has done a statistical analysis for the Department of Saône-et-Loire on this subject but has artificially attributed one overriding motive to each teacher. Jacques Ozouf, "L'Enquête d'opinion en histoire: Un exemple: l'instituteur français, 1900-1914", Le Mouvement social, no. 49 (July-September 1963), 19. Most of the teachers I interviewed gave several motives for becoming teachers. F. T. listed four, for instance.

⁶ Interview, L. L., Saint-Brieuc, February 14, 1970.

⁷ Jacques Ozouf, "Les Instituteurs de la Manche et leurs associations au début du XX^e siècle", Revue d'histoire moderne et contemporaine, XIII (January-March, 1966), 98-99.

⁸ Interview, Madame C. L., Châteaugiron, January 31, 1970.
She married a railway worker.

⁹ Interviews: the F. T.'s, Saint-Anne la Palud, August 9, 1970; Mme C. L., Châteaugiron, January 31, 1970; and L. L., Saint-Brieuc, February 24, 1970.

¹⁰ Jacques Ozouf, Nous les maîtres d'école (Paris, 1967), pp. 7-8.

¹¹ Interviews with Mme Ogès, Quimper, August 28, 1970 and Alfred Gernoux, Nantes, June 3, 1970.

¹² Interview with H. L., Nantes, May 27, 1970.

¹³ A. D. Fin. T: Instituteurs--1901-1919. Adjunct, Bannalec, to acad., June 1907, on the fête of June 15, typical of many described in these documents. Women were often less ardent laïques than male teachers, as they were forced to be more moderate with the Church. See Chapter II.

¹⁴ A. D. Fin. T: Instituteurs--1901-1919. Teacher, Saint-Thamec (Moélan) to prim. insp., Quimperlé, November 3, 1903.

¹⁵ A. D. Côtes-Nord. T: J. Le Hénaff, Un Maître Laïque, p. 236. He outlined the troubles he surmounted at Lannion in an accompanying volume Histoire de la création d'une école laïque dans une ville de l'Ouest (1896; unpublished) [A. D. Côtes-Nord. T: unclassified.]

¹⁶ Interview with H.L., Nantes, May 15, 1970; see also, the description of the instituteur Tafardel in Gabriel Chevallier, Clochemerle (Paris, 1934), p. 9; and photographs of teachers in Jacques Ozouf, Nous les maîtres d'école and Mona Ozouf, L'École l'Église et la République (Paris, 1963). A film mad on the basis of Alain-Fournier's Le Grand Meaulnes, and with the same title, skilfully depicted teachers of the Belle Époque.

¹⁷ Émile Bocquillon, La Crise du patriotisme à l'école (Paris, 1905). The book has a preface by René Goblet, a Minister of Education during the Ferry era.

¹⁸ See Mona Ozouf, École Église République, pp. 221-29.

¹⁹ Poem in dossier of M. Le N...at Pouldavid [A. D. Fin. T: Instituteurs--1901-1919].

²⁰ A. D. Loire-At. sTil78: Doss. inds.....instituteurs et institutrices. Given in adjunct's letter to prim., insp., Nantes, May 7, 1913.

²¹ Georges Duveau, Les Instituteurs (Paris, 1966), p. 155.

²² A. D. Loire-At. sTil78. Doss. inds. . . instituteurs et institutrices. Letter from captain to wife of teacher, August 9, 1916.

²³ See Jacques Alègre, "Les Instituteurs", Europe, nos. 421-22 (1964), 32. The article is excellent on the role of teachers in the war.

²⁴ Speech sent by teacher to acad., June 18, 1917 in A. D. Loire-At. sTil47: Doss. inds . . . instituteurs et institutrices. This teacher, like many others, served as liaison man between French and English-speaking troops, translating and facilitating coordination. M. Le G...briefed Americans on various facets of trench warfare when they arrived in France in 1917. Interview, M. Le G..., Quimper, August 28, 1970.

²⁵ Letter to his wife, April 2, 1915, two months before he was completely blinded by German artillery. Aveugle et Maître d'école, p. 52.

²⁶ Interviews: L. L., Saint-Brieuc, February 24, 1970; Ogès, Quimper, August 9, 1970. A good fictional portrait of a Vendéan instituteur of the 1930's shows us a teacher rooted on the land, knowing every fishing stream or meadow of the region. Roger Guignard, L'Instituteur de campagne (Monte Carlo, 1966).

²⁷ Alfred Gernoux listed a half-dozen for the Loire-Atlantique in his "Le Progrès de l'enseignement aux XIX^e et XX^e siècles", Annales de Nantes, no. 106 (Easter, 1957), 13. Chalmel wrote several short books on the Saint-Malo region. A. D. Ill-Vil. Fl778: Doss. d'un instituteur.

²⁸ Célestin-Marie Godard, "La Crise de la vie rurale", Bulletin mensuel de la société nationale des conférences populaires (November, 1910), unpaginated.

²⁹ Interview, L. Ogès, Quimper, August 28, 1970. The volume is very well-done.

³⁰ Some of Pergaud's interesting war letters are found in the seventh edition of his Les Rustiques: Nouvelles villageoises (Paris, 1921). See also Jean Hugonnet, "Louis Pergaud, Instituteur", Europe, XXXVII (October, 1959), 30-46.

³¹ The best statement on the Breton culture and its significance to teachers was given by the F. T.'s in the interview at Saint-Anne le Palud, August 9, 1970. See also Morvan Lebesque, Comment peut-on être Breton (Paris, 1970), passim.

³² On the meaninglessness of political labels of the left c.f. Joseph Caillaux: "I have observed many times that radicalism was not a party, but a state of mind: . . . It may be that in the future it will change names--in the past it was indeed called liberalism, opportunism etc. . . ." Caillaux, Mes Mémoires (Paris, 1942), I, 215; Léon Blum, Souvenirs sur l'Affaire (Paris, 1935), p. 100 [my italics]; A. D. Loire-At. sTill3: Doss. inds . . . instituteurs et institutrices. Prim. insp., Paimboeuf, to acad., July 10, 1899; and Le Nouvelliste de l'Ouest, July 8, 1899. A. D. Ill-Vil. 2T: Mouvements-1904. Notaire, Dinard, to pref., December 30, 1904. Roger Thabault found little echo of the Affaire in Mazières (Deux-Sèvres). Mon Village (Paris, 1944), p. 231.

³³ M. W. Marie-Cardine, Les Sociétés de secours mutuels entre les instituteurs et les institutrices (Paris, 1889); E. Glay and H. Champeau, L'Instituteur (Paris, 1928), pp. 480-92; Bulletin de l'association professionnelle amicale des institutrices et instituteurs publics du Morbihan, no. 49 (September, 1909), p. 726. I have seen many other bulletins

such as Association amicale des anciens élèves-maîtres de l'école normale de Rennes: Bulletin annuel and Bulletin de instituteurs et institutrices de la Loire-Inférieure.

³⁴ A. D. Fin. T: Instituteurs--1901-1919. Letter dated January 6, 1911; Le Cri du peuple (Brest), January 28, February 11, 1911. On teachers' syndicalism before 1914 the standard--though confusing--work is Max Ferré, Histoire du mouvement syndicaliste révolutionnaire chez les instituteurs des origines à 1922 (Paris, 1955). Clearer but sometimes inaccurate is Jean Maxe, L'École primaire contemporaine: laïcisme et syndicalisme (Paris, 1911). See also Glay and Champcau, L'Instituteur, pp. 490-98 and the relevant pages of an illuminating article by Pierre Bonnoure, "L'Instituteur de la troisième", Europe, XXXVIII (April-May, 1960), 30-35.

³⁵ E. Spuller, "Circulaire du ministre de l'instruction publique aux préfets, le 20 septembre, 1887," Revue pédagogique (1887), pt. II, 306-14. For the atmosphere and effect of Chambéry see in addition to works cited, Georges Duveau, Les Instituteurs, pp. 145-49 and Lucien Leray and Jean Maitron, "Les Instituteurs, le mouvement ouvrier et la guerre 14-18", Crapouillot, no. 51 (January, 1961), pp. 31-32. This issue, as well as that of Europe for 1960, are entirely devoted to the instituteurs. For the debate and vote on the dissolution in the Chamber, see David E. Sumler, "Domestic Influences on the Nationalist Revival in France, 1909-1914", French Historical Studies, VI (Fall, 1970), 530-31.

³⁶ A. D. Morb. T1937: Inst. pub: Syndicat des instituteurs 1912. Roth to Minister of Interior, August 26, 1912. The dossier is very thick with his letters to the higher authorities on the syndicat. There are also numerous clippings from L'Humanité and many other newspapers. Roth was named prefect of the Morbihan by Clemenceau at the then-astounding age of thirty in 1909. He was killed in the war in 1916. Pierre-Henry, Histoire des préfets: Cent cinquante ans d'administration provinciale 1880-1950 (Paris, 1950), p. 257. Other information given here was derived from Georges Duveau, Les Instituteurs, pp. 139-42.

³⁷ Interviews: H. L., May 27, 1970, A. Gernoux, June 3, 1970, at Nantes.

³⁸ Interview H. L., Nantes, May 15, 1970.

³⁹ From A. N. F¹⁷ 10635: État de situation des écoles primaires publiques et libres et des écoles maternelles 1885-1886.

⁴⁰ A. D. Ill-Vil. 1T: École normale d'institutrices--Quimper--1886-1899. Insp. acad., Finistère, to Rector of the academy, Rennes, August 8, 1885.

⁴¹ Antoine Prost, Histoire de l'enseignement en France 1800-1967 (Paris, 1968), p. 379. I do not yet have statistical evidence to corroborate my hypothesis.

⁴² For this section on the école normale, the following interviews have been most useful: H. L., Nantes, May 27, 1970; L. L., Saint-Brieuc, February 14, 1970; Alfred Gernoux, Nantes, June 3, 1970; L. Ogès, Quimper, August 28, 1970; M. Le G., Quimper, August 28, 1970; and F. T.'s, Saint-Anne la Palud, August 9, 1970. See also, F. E. Farrington's excellent work, The Public Primary School System of France (New York, 1906), chapter VIII.

⁴³ Examinations in Bulletin pédagogique des instituteurs et des institutrices du Finistère no. 98 (1905), pp. 360-63. Examinations at other normal schools are found in F. E. Farrington, Public School System of France, pp. 276-80.

⁴⁴ A. D. Ill-Vil. 1T: École normale de Rennes-Institutrices--1886-1899. Directrice to acad., December 31, 1892, April 10, 1895.

⁴⁵ L. L. and other interviews as given in footnote 42.

⁴⁶ Chevallier, Clochemerle, p. 9, p. 32.

⁴⁷ Charles Péguy, Notre Jeunesse (Gallimard; Paris, 1957), p. 35.

⁴⁸ A. D. Fin. T: Instituteurs--1800-1899. Prim. insp., Quimper, to acad., October 10, 1896; Anatole France, Le Livre de mon ami (110th ed., Calmann-Lévy; Paris, n.d.), p. 115.

⁴⁹ A. D. Loire-At. sTil74: Doss. inds . . . instituteurs et institutrices. Dictations in dossier of teacher at Soulvache. Inspector of Nantes, report of December 21, 1896.

⁵⁰ A. D. Loire-At. sTil04: Doss. inds . . . instituteurs et institutrices. Prim. insp., Ancenis, to acad., October 21, 1889 and actual testimonies of children interviews.

⁵¹ A. D. Fin. T: Institutrices--1800-1899. Prim. insp., Brest, report of December 5, 1892; prim. insp., Morlaix, report on teacher at Quelern-Plourin; October 19, 1894.

⁵² For example, a teacher at Vergéal (Ille-et-Vilaine), who labored hard despite progressive deafness. A. D. Ill-Vil. T: Instituteurs. Doss. inds. The report of the primary inspector of Vitré, May 23, 1894, on this teacher, noted "the great moral authority" he exercised on his pupils.

53 A. D. Ill-Vil. T: Instituteurs. Doss. inds. Prim. insp., Redon, report of February 14, 1906. Excellent schoolteachers were honored with bronze, silver, and gold medals.

54 Interview with Mme C. L., Châteaugiron, January 31, 1970. H. L., in a frank discussion of contestation (Nantes, June 4, 1970), and M. and Mme Ogès (Quimper, August 28, 1970) were very critical of student unrest.

55 F. T. (Saint-Anne la Palud, August 9, 1970) and all the other teachers whom I interviewed considered the war to be an important dividing-line inducing change in the instituteurs' thinking.

56 Henri Chatreix, Au-delà du Laïcisme ou la paix scolaire (Paris, 1946), pp. 70-76 and Jacques Alègres, "Les instituteurs", 36.

57 C. D., "La Lutte contre la guerre", Bulletin mensuel du Syndicat de l'enseignement laïque du Finistère, no. 7 (May, 1933), 204-205. I do not claim that all teachers became pacifists after the war and am aware that much more research remains to be done on the problem; but it is certain that a significant shift in their ideology took place.

⁵⁸ Donald N. Baker, "The Politics of Socialist Protest in France: The Left-Wing of the Socialist Party, 1921-39", Journal of Modern History, XLIII (March, 1971), 28, 32.

⁵⁹ Quoted in John C. Cairns, "Along the Road Back to France 1940", American Historical Review, LXIV (April, 1959), 586-87.

⁶⁰ I cannot cite these forms as I saw them without permission.

⁶¹ André Glossinde, Je suis instituteur (Paris, 1954), pp. 112-113.

⁶² This is the view of the then Senator Antoine Borrel in Les Villages qui meurent (Paris, 1932), p. 14 and passim, also of Roger Guignard in L'Instituteur de campagne, pp. 176-78.

⁶³ Albert Thibaudet, La République des professeurs (Paris, 1927), p. 227.

APPENDIX

- A - An anonymous letter written about an instituteur, probably by a peasant.
- B - An anonymous letter written to an institutrice, probably by a curé.
- C - A petition sent in 1883 to the prefect by villagers demanding a laic schoolmaster instead of a frère.
- D - A deputy's letter of recommendation for a certain teacher with prefect's and academy's notations at the top of the page.
- E - A sub-prefect's testimony on an ex-teacher requesting financial aid.
- F - The instituteur caricatured as an ass in a clerical newspaper (Le Courrier Breton) of 1910.
- G - Map of Brittany

A

ST 13 : Montbert le 1 août 1898

Monsieur le préfet ..

Je prendrais la liberté
de vous dire ce que je
sais de droit et je pense
que vous serez de mon
avis. Je ne puis composer
de rien individuel
communal, soit le dames
vigilance des bonnes sœurs
de des compagnies
d'assurance et des par
ticuliers. Et notre
monieur Luvit est
tout cela car il se
charge de faire les
affaires des congrégations
des bonnes sœurs, il
est chargé de faire

B

Le vicairé dit
 que sous peu vous
 partirez il va
 faire effort pour
 cela. Les Des
 autorités c'est
 scandaleux dit-il
 ne doit instruire
 la jeunesse par
 une fille qui
 a 2 ou 3 maris
 a couvrir le
 monde

AFI 102.

Commune de Pleshan

Demande d'un Instituteur Laïque

Nous Conseillers et pères de familles de la Commune de Pleshan, vu le peu d'Instruction que l'Instituteur actuel, donne à nos enfants, ce qui nous oblige de les envoyer dans les Communes voisines, nous Demandons un Instituteur Laïque

Signature de pères de famille

Pleshan le 2 Octobre 1878

Gouret Louis
Louis Lesné

Lohier guillaume
Duchon Hubert

Briens François
Duchois Eugène
Gjoudy
Hébert Eugène
Guinlin

Geston
+ croix faite par
pères de familles
ne sachant pas écrire

Signature des Conseillers

Jean Moricange
Moussans
Lesné guillaume

+ croix faite par trois conseillers
ne sachant pas écrire
Gouret Mathurin
+ Cardiel Jeanne
+ Pichonnet Pierre

D

M. Malard *1911* *que demande*
 CHAMBRE
 DES DÉPUTÉS *Campan*
 le 19 Janvier 1911
de la part de M. Malard
à M. le Préfet
à la date du 19/1/11
Campan

Note remise à Monsieur le Préfet.

J'appelle d'une façon toute à fait pressante votre attention sur la situation absolument intolérable qui est faite à nos amis républicains de la commune de Berné, qui se plaignent de l'attitude nettement hostile de l'inspecteur M. Campan, au point de vue politique.

M. Campan est un excellent instituteur auquel je ne voudrais pas, par conséquent, que mon intervention pût nuire le moins du monde; mais je vous serais vivement reconnaissant de vous entendre avec l'Inspecteur d'Académie pour lui donner un avancement très mérité et pour débarrasser ainsi mes amis dont les efforts sont contrebalancés par l'influence réactionnaire que ce fonctionnaire a su habilement acquérir.

Qu'il soit bien entendu que mon intervention devra être considérée comme nulle et non avenue si elle doit lui nuire dans son avancement.

A. Brand

E
PRÉFECTURE
D'ILLE-ET-VILAINE

CABINET
DU PRÉFET

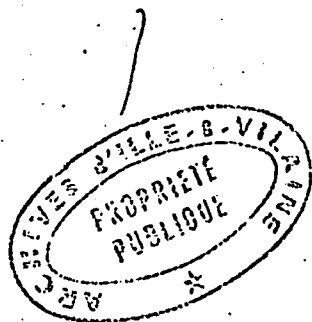
CONFIDENTIELLE

DEMANDE

Rennes, le 10 février 1890.

Monsieur le Sous-Préfet,

J'ai l'honneur de vous prier de vouloir bien me transmettre, le plus tôt possible, des renseignements confidentiels sur les antécédents, la conduite, la situation, la moralité et l'attitude politique de M. Lemaître, ancien instituteur demeurant à Liguac, qui est proposé pour un secours



Agréoz, Monsieur le Sous-Préfet, l'assurance de ma considération la plus distinguée.

Le Préfet d'Ille-et-Vilaine,

Monsieur le Sous-Préfet de Redon

Monsieur le Préfet d'Ille-et-Vilaine

RÉPONSE

A Redon le 15 février 1890.

Monsieur le Préfet

Il résulte de mes informations que la conduite et la moralité du Sieur Lemaître ne laissent rien à désirer, que sa position de famille est bonne, et que sous le rapport politique il est entièrement dévoué à la République.

Je vous prie, Monsieur le Préfet, d'assurer de mon respectueux dévouement
Le Préfet de Redon

Et Breton toujours!

F

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LA LUTTE SCOLAIRE

DESSIN INÉDIT DE W. HELY.



W. HELY

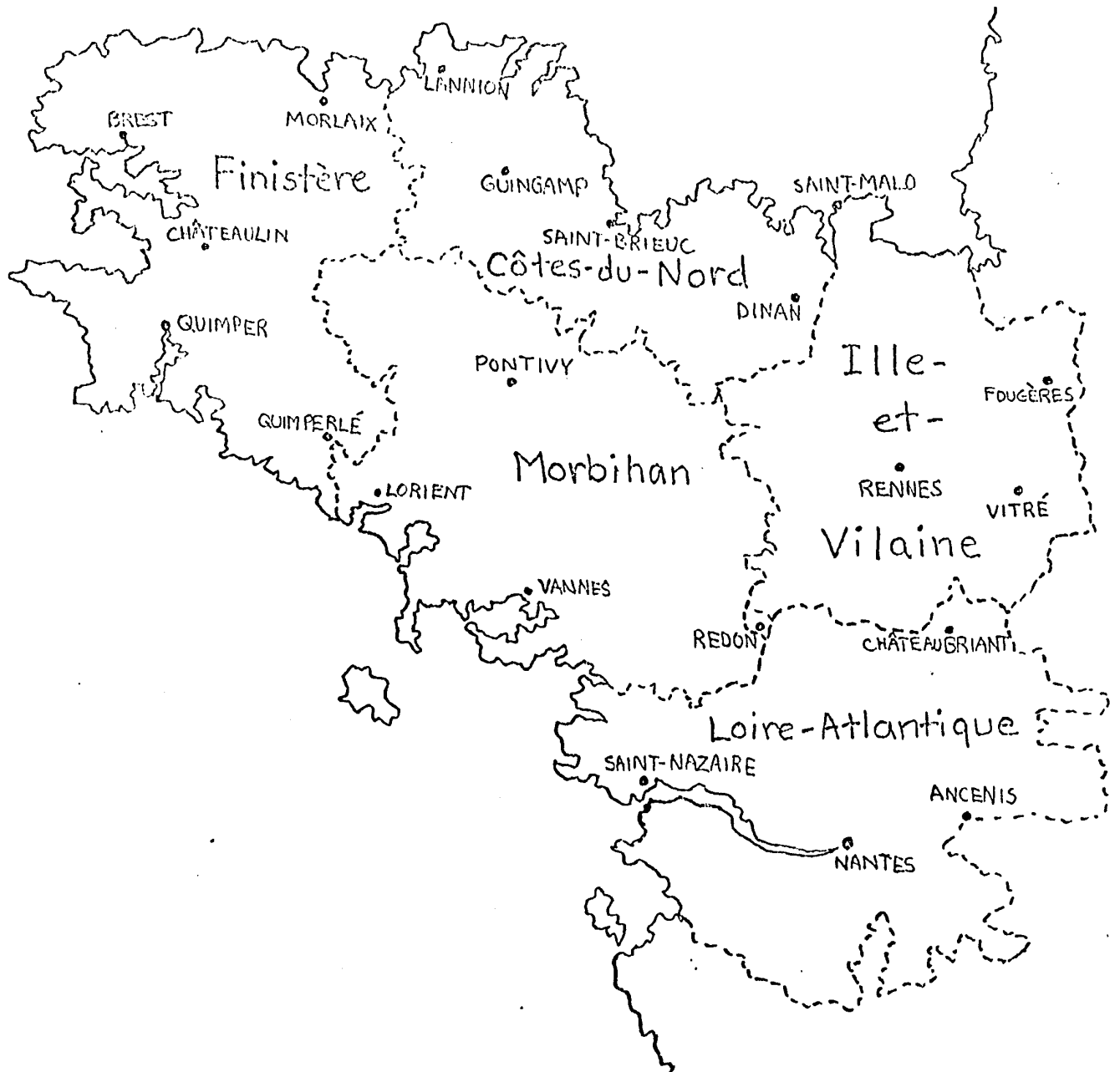
L'aliboron : C'est en vain que la secte noire s'efforce d'accaparer le gouvernail de l'École; nous saurons tenir haut et ferme les rênes du flambeau de vérité sociale et par la science émancipatrice arracher dès l'œuf de l'enfance la conscience prolétarienne du bourgeois à courtes vues où la tient si profondément enfoncée la main aveugle de l'obscurantisme! (Tonnerre d'applaudissements.)

chours! Non, seulement dans ses cours d'eau de moulon ; 37, 40, 600 litres de veau ; la traite et le saumon y frémissent comme

Le Courrier Breton 28 Aug. 1910 (Lenne)

G

BRITTANY



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