

for it was a question of discovering the authors of the common malady, and of remedying the evil. "Speak, then, frankly," said he, "and let no one conceal what he knows to be the truth." Thereupon the Master of the solemn feast of the Dead,¹ who is the chief of council for the whole country, began to speak, and exaggerated the deplorable condition of his nation. He concluded his discourse by taxing us with being persons who for a long time had had some knowledge of it. He spoke so indistinctly that we lost many of his words; hence, after Our Father Superior had represented that, since the matter concerned us, it was fitting that we should correctly understand all that was said, that we might be able to answer it, [17] we went farther up, and took our places next to those who had the most bloody weapons to produce against us.

I do not know that I have ever seen anything more lugubrious than this assembly. In the beginning, they looked at one another like corpses, or rather like men who already feel the terrors of death; they spoke only in sighs, each one undertaking the enumeration of the dead and sick of his family. All that was only to incite them to vomit more bitterly upon us the venom which they concealed within. There was no one present who openly undertook our defense, and certain ones thought they were doing us a great favor by remaining altogether silent. They were all like so many accusers who keenly urged on the Decree for our condemnation, doing all they could by their words and their repetitions to take the Father unawares in some of his utterances. Two old men especially attacked us, for the others did nothing but eagerly repeat over and over what