The degradation took place Saturday, the 5th of January. I underwent the horrible torture without weakness.

Before the ceremony, I waited for an hour in the hall of the garrison adjutant at the École Militaire, guarded by the captain of gendarmes, Lebrun-Renault. During these long minutes I gathered up all the forces of my being. The memory of the dreadful months which I had just passed came back to me, and in broken sentences I recalled to the captain the last visit which Commandant du Paty de Clam had made me in my prison. I protested against the vile accusation which had been brought against me; I recalled that I had written again to the Minister to tell him of my innocence. . . .

After this I was marched to the center of the square, under a guard of four men and a corporal.

Nine o'clock struck. General Darras, commanding the parade, gave the order to carry arms.

I suffered agonizingly, but held myself erect with all my strength. To sustain me I called up the memory of my wife and children.

As soon as the sentence had been read out, I cried aloud, addressing myself to the troops:

“Soldiers, they are degrading an innocent man. Soldiers, they are dishonoring an innocent man. Vive la France, vive l'armée!”

A sergeant of the Republican Guard came up to me. He tore off rapidly buttons, trousers-stripes, the signs of my rank from cap and sleeves, and then broke my sword across his knee. I saw all these material emblems of my honor fall at my feet. My grief bowed me down.

At the Central Prison, in my torn and stripped uniform, I was dragged from hall to hall, searched, photographed, and measured. At last, toward noon, I was taken to the Santé Prison and shut up in a convict's cell.

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**Discussion Questions**

**Determining Main Ideas**

1. What happened to Dreyfus during the degradation ceremony?
2. How did Dreyfus react to the degradation?
3. **Making Predictions** Do you think Dreyfus was able to convince the crowd of his innocence as he was paraded through the square? Give specific reasons to support your answer.