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THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

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The  
French Revolution

BY

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LONDON

JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET

1893

70 . VIII  
ALPHABETIC

DC 148  
M18

Oxford

HORACE HART, PRINTER TO THE UNIVERSITY

HENRY MORSE STEPHENS



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# THE FRENCH REVOLUTION

## INTRODUCTORY

I HAVE not attempted in this small volume to write a history of the French Revolution. The events of that dramatic narrative have been sketched by many hands and are to be found in a hundred histories. They hardly need retelling now. I have rather endeavoured, while taking for granted some knowledge of the story, to supply what handbooks generally have not space to give, and to collect in a convenient form some of the information, the suggestions and ideas which are to be found in larger books of comment and enquiry. Works like those of M. de Tocqueville, M. Taine, M. Michelet, M. Louis Blanc, and Professor Von Sybel are not always easily obtained. Their cost and their length alike render them inaccessible to those whom time and necessity compel to be superficial students. I have therefore tried to summarise to a certain extent what these and other writers tell us ; to dwell on some economic and political aspects

of French society before the Revolution ; to explain the more obvious reasons why the Revolution came ; to show why the men who made it, failed, in spite of all their fine enthusiasm, to attain the liberty which they so ardently desired, or to found the new order which they hoped to see in France ; to describe how, by what arts and accidents, and owing to what deeper causes, an inconspicuous minority gradually grew into a victorious party, and assumed the direction of events ; to point out in what way external circumstances kept the revolutionary fever up, and forced the Revolution forward, when the necessity for its advance seemed to many to be over, and its own authors wished it to pause ; and to make clearer, if I could, to others, what has always been to me the mystery of the time, the real character and aims of the men who grasped the supreme power in 1793-4, who held it with such a combination of energy and folly, of heroism and crime, and who proceeded, through anarchy and terror, to experiment how social misery could be extinguished and universal felicity attained, by drastic philosophic remedies, applied by despots and enforced by death. History offers no problem of more surpassing interest, and none more perplexing or obscure.

I am not conscious of approaching the subject with a bias in favour of any party. I have no cause to plead for or against any individual or group of men. I have tried to read all sides, and to allow for those deep-rooted

prejudices which seem to make most Frenchmen incapable of judging the event. But when, on the information before me, the facts seem clear, I have not hesitated to praise, or censure, or condemn. I will only add that I have considered very carefully the judgments which I have expressed, though I cannot hope that they will recommend themselves to all alike.

Books of this kind cannot well lay claim to much originality, and I do not pretend to have kept pace with the constantly accumulating literature, which the French press produces on this question every year. I have used freely the works of such modern writers as M. de Tocqueville, Mr. John Morley, Mr. Morse Stephens, and others, and my obligations to them are plain. On M. Taine's great work, too, I have drawn largely, and while allowing for bias in the author, and while fully admitting that M. Taine's method tends to destroy one's sense of proportion, and in some degree to give a blurred and exaggerated impression of the facts, still I cannot question the weight and value of the mass of information which he has collected, and no one can fairly overlook the lessons which it tells. Besides these books, I think I may say that I have read and consulted most of the materials in histories, memoirs, biographies, and elsewhere, which the many well-known French writers on the subject have supplied, and I have paid particular attention to the voluminous histories of M. Louis Blanc and of M. Mortimer-Ternaux, to the

correspondence of Mirabeau and La Marck, to the memoirs and writings of Bailly, Ferrières, Mallet du Pan, Madame Roland, and M. de Pontécoulant, to the biographies of the great Jacobin leaders, especially those by M. Hamel and M. Robinet, and to the valuable and important works of M. Sorel, of Professor Schmidt, and of Professor Von Sybel. This list is not complete or comprehensive ; but I hope it is enough to justify the opinions which I have formed.

At the end, I have given, in a short appendix, a list of well-known books upon the period, which may perhaps be of use to students, who wish to go more fully into the subject for themselves.

## CHAPTER I.

### THE CONDITION OF FRANCE IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY.

HISTORIANS have not yet determined where the French Revolution properly begins. But even warring schools agree that the object of that great movement, apart from its accidents and disappointed dreams, was to destroy the ancient society of Europe, which feudalism had founded and which time had warped, and to replace it by a more simple social system, based, as far as possible, on equality of rights. And therefore time can hardly be misspent in endeavouring to retrace some of the chief features of the old monarchy of France, at the moment when the feudal edifice was crumbling, and when the storm was gathering which was to sweep it away.

It was the pride of the later Bourbon kings to have accomplished the design, which Louis XI bequeathed to Richelieu, and Richelieu interpreted for Louis' successors, the substitution of a closely centralised despotism, for feudal and aristocratic institutions on the one hand, and for local and national liberties upon the other. By the middle of the eighteenth century the triumph of this policy was complete. The relics of the older system, indeed, remained. A multitude of officials and authorities,

with various and conflicting claims, still covered the country, recalling in their origin sometimes the customs of the Middle Ages, sometimes the necessities of the Crown, sometimes the earlier traditions of freedom. Many of the feudal seigneurs still claimed rights of jurisdiction and police. Cities and towns still boasted and obeyed their own municipal constitutions. The peasants of the country side were still summoned to the church-porch by the village-bell, to take part in the election of parish officials. A few noblemen still bore the name of governors of provinces. Independent authorities with ancient titles still pretended to deal with roads and with finance. The local Parlements, with their hereditary and independent judges, maintained their dignity as sovereign courts of justice, preserved the right of debating the edicts of the King, adopted an attitude of jealous watchfulness towards the Government and the Church, and exercised considerable administrative powers. In a few outlying provinces, termed the Pays d'État, and comprising, with some smaller districts, the ancient fiefs of Languedoc, Burgundy, Brittany, Artois and Béarn, annual assemblies, representing the nobles, clergy, and commons of the province, still displayed the theory of self-government and retained large taxative and administrative rights. The Church, with its vast resources and strong, corporate feeling, still, in many matters, asserted its independence of the State, administered its own affairs, fixed its own taxes, and claimed to monopolise public education and to guard public morals and their expression in the Press.

But amid the ruins of older institutions and the con-

fusion of innumerable conflicting rights, a new system of administration had gradually grown up and had usurped all real authority in France. At its head stood the King's Council, with its centre at Versailles. The Council represented in all departments the monopoly of the State. It was a supreme court of justice, for it had power to over-rule the judgments of all ordinary courts. It was a supreme legislature, for the States-General, the ancient representative Parliament of France, had not been summoned since the early years of the seventeenth century, and the local judicial Parlements, though they could discuss the edicts of the Council, could not in the last resort resist them. It was supreme in all matters of administration and finance. It governed the country. It raised and assessed the taxes. In it one over-burdened minister, the Comptroller-General, assumed responsibility for all home affairs.

Under the Council, and responsible to it alone, there was stationed in each of the thirty-two provinces or 'generalities' of the kingdom one all-powerful agent called the Intendant. The Intendant was drawn, not from the nobility, but from the professional class. He superintended the collection and apportionment of all taxes which were not farmed out by the Council to financial companies. He decided in individual cases what remissions of taxes should be allowed. He was responsible under the Council for constructing highways and for all great public works<sup>1</sup>. He enforced the hated

<sup>1</sup> It will be understood that in the Pays d'État, the powers of the Intendants, as regarded taxation and public works, were limited and controlled by the rights of the local assemblies.

duty of the militia service. He maintained order with the help of the *Maréchaussée* or mounted police. He carried out the police regulations of the local authorities and the more imperious and comprehensive regulations issued from time to time by the Council. He possessed in exceptional cases large judicial powers. As the ordinary judges were independent of the Crown, the Council multiplied extraordinary tribunals and reserved for their consideration all suits in which the rights of the Crown were even remotely concerned. In such cases the Intendant acted as judge both in civil and in criminal matters, and from his judgment an appeal lay to the Council alone. This practice, once established, was of course extended and often abused in the interests of power, for the principles of the ordinary courts, the Intendants confessed, could 'never be reconciled with those of the Government.'

Besides this, the Intendant was a benefactor too. He repressed mendicity and arrested vagabonds. He distributed the funds, which, in the absence of any legal provision for the poor, and in the abandonment by the seigneurs of the old feudal duty of providing for their destitute dependents, the Council annually apportioned for the purpose. He controlled the charitable workshops which the Council annually set up. In times of scarcity it was he who must find food for the people, or, if food were not forthcoming, suppress the riots which the want of it provoked. In the country districts the Intendant dispensed his lofty patronage to farmers and encouraged agricultural improvements. In the villages, though the force of ancient custom still drew the inhabitants to



village-meetings, these meetings could not be held without the Intendant's leave; they retained only the academic privilege of debate; and when they elected their syndic and collector, they often elected merely the Intendant's nominees. Even in the towns which possessed municipal freedom, the Intendant constantly interfered in all matters of importance and in many little matters of detail, and the burghers protested their eager submission to 'all the commands of his Greatness.' In each of the provinces of France the Intendant represented the omnipotence and wielded the authority of Government; the commands which he received from the Comptroller-General he dictated in turn to a staff of agents termed Sub-Delegates, and dependent on him; and these Sub-Delegates, distributed through the different cantons of the province, carried out their Intendant's orders, assisted his designs, and were responsible only to their superior, as he was responsible to the Council at Versailles.

It is not difficult to see the evils of such a system. The excessive centralisation of the Government and the vast scope of its powers threw upon the Comptroller-General and his agents a heavy burden of detail. Reports and documents multiplied. The waste of time and effort was profuse. 'The administrative formalities,' declared the Council in one of its minutes, 'lead to infinite delays.' Any little local matter—the building of a shelter for the poor, the repairing of a corner of the village church—must be considered by the Minister at Versailles. No action could be taken until the Sub-Delegate had reported to the Intendant, the Intendant had reported to the Comptroller-General, and that

harassed official—combining in his single person all the duties and perplexities which in England are distributed between the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the Home Secretary, the Minister of Agriculture, the President of the Board of Trade; the President of the Local Government Board and the Chief Commissioner of Works—had personally attended to the matter, and had transmitted his decision through the Intendant to the Sub-Delegate again. Moreover, apart from its vexatious delays, the system was very liable to abuse. The power of the Government's agents was as extended as the power of the Government itself. Arrest and imprisonment were counted among their ordinary weapons. Armed with all the authority of the State, it was no wonder if they sometimes imitated its arbitrary ways, and failed to separate their private inclinations and their private grudges from the public needs.

Yet the action of the central Government in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries seems to have been often hesitating and rarely deliberately harsh. The letter of the law was often barbarous and rigid, where its administration was easy and lax. To criticism the Government was not indisposed to listen. Its intentions were amiable and were recognised as such. Any man above the rank of the lowest class could protest, if treated unjustly, and he could generally make his protest heard. The shadow of an older liberty had not quite departed from the face of France. It was only the lowest and most miserable class, which needed the means of resistance most, which had no means of resisting except by force. But beneficent as were the

aims of the all-pervading State, its influence was blighting. Leaning always upon their Government, and taught to look to it for initiative, encouragement, protection in every department of life, the people of France forgot both the practices of public freedom and the value of private independence; and as the Bourbon despotism directly paved the way for revolution by levelling many of those inequalities which save a State, so it left the vast majority of Frenchmen devoid both of the political understanding and of the sense of personal responsibility, which the habit of self-government alone creates.

More fatal, however, to national prosperity, were the deep divisions which separated classes—divisions maintained and emphasized by privileges obviously unjust. The nobility, the clergy, the middle class, each formed a distinct order in the State, with its own defined rank and prerogatives. The nobles, who have been roughly estimated at about one hundred and forty thousand persons, formed a separate caste. All born noble remained noble, and not even younger sons descended into the ranks of the commons. The nobles owned perhaps a fifth part of the soil, and they retained the ancient rights attached to it, which had once been the reward of their feudal obligations, but which survived when those obligations had long ceased to be obeyed. Fines and dues, tolls and charges, the sole right of hunting, of shooting, of fishing, of keeping pigeons and doves, the privilege of maintaining the seigneurial mill and wine-press, the seigneurial slaughter-house and oven—helped to support the noble's dignity and to swell his

income. The more his actual power departed, the more he clung to his hereditary rights. When the Government usurped his place as local ruler, he only entrenched himself more jealously in his feudal position. He never met his neighbours, for there were no public concerns to unite them, and all business was in the Government's hands. He lost all interest in local affairs. If he were rich, he went to live in Paris or Versailles. If he were poor, he shut himself up in his country-house, and consoled himself with the contemplation of his pride. But in return for the powers of which it stripped him, the Government conferred on the nobleman privileges which completed his isolation from those around him. He and he alone could be the companion of his Sovereign. He and he alone could rise to high place in the Army or the Church. He and his dependents were exempted from oppressive duties like serving in the militia or working on the roads. He knew nothing of the terrible burden of taxation which crippled and oppressed the poor. He was generally exempted from paying the *Taille*, the most grievous of all the taxes; and even those imposts—the Poll-tax and the *Vingtièmes*—to which he was subject, were collected from him in a specially indulgent manner. The greater a man's wealth or station, the better was his chance of securing easy terms. The Government's agents felt bound to act 'with marked consideration' in collecting the taxes of people of rank. 'I settle matters with the Intendants,' said the Duke of Orleans, the richest man in France, 'and pay just what I please.'

Yet within this privileged order the differences of life

were marked. Before the end of the eighteenth century many of the old families were ruined, and lived in the narrowest circumstances, upon incomes of a hundred, of fifty, even of twenty-five pounds a year, rigidly clinging to the titles and immunities which alone distinguished them from the poor, driven by necessity to exact from the peasants all that custom allowed them, and subsisting chiefly on the sinister pomp of caste. In striking contrast to the ruined nobles of the provinces was the much smaller and more brilliant body which composed the Court. No nobleman lived in the country, who could afford to live at Paris or Versailles. Not to be seen at Court was equivalent to obscurity or disgrace. The nobles of La Vendée incurred the Government's displeasure by their obstinate adherence to their country homes and their lamentable unwillingness to perform their duties about the person of the King. Yet the nobles of La Vendée were the only part of the French aristocracy, which in the days of the Revolution died fighting for the Crown.

At Court the leaders of society set the wild example of extravagance. It is difficult to exaggerate the pomp and profusion of Versailles. Every prince and princess had a separate establishment with its dependents multiplied in proportion to its owner's rank. The Queen's household numbered all but five hundred persons, the Comte d'Artois' almost seven hundred, the King's a thousand in the civil department alone<sup>1</sup>. It was the distinction of the Grand Seigneurs in those days—

<sup>1</sup> The expenses of the royal table amounted to nearly three hundred thousand pounds a year.

common minds imagine that it distinguishes their imitators now—to ignore the value of money. In this respect the King outshone all the Grand Seigneurs of his Court. Louis XIV spent thirty millions sterling on a single palace. His successor squandered three millions on a single mistress. Pensions, sinecures, allowances, were scattered with a lavish hand. When Necker first took office, the charges on the pension-list exceeded two millions and a quarter. The Duke of Orleans, with an income of a quarter of a million, received a large pension from the Crown, and died nearly six millions in debt. The art of spending money was one secret of the art of pleasing, and nowhere was the art of pleasing studied with more finish or success. In the charmed circle of that dazzling, polished Court, pleasure marched with a stately and unflagging step. Courtesy ordained that everyone should be agreeable, witty, light-hearted and well-bred. But the unceasing chase of pleasure, though attended by excellent graces, banishes all thought of others while it veils egotism with delight, and the fortunate who entered there naturally forgot the misery which reigned among the unfortunate outside<sup>1</sup>.

Beside the privileged order of nobility stood the privileged corporation of the Church. Like the nobles, the Church owned vast landed estates, which covered about a fifth part of France, and which in many cases

<sup>1</sup> I have taken all these figures from M. Taine's *Ancien Régime*, and have reduced them roughly to their equivalents in English money of our own day. I have, however, throughout calculated the *livre* at 10*s.*, although Arthur Young puts it as high as 10½*s.*; so that the amounts in the text are, if anything, understated.

were managed well. Like the nobles, the dignitaries of the Church retained the ancient feudal rights which had survived from the days when they governed the country, besides a variety of dues and charges, and their special prerogative—the tithe. Like the nobles, they evaded the weight of taxation. The assembly of the clergy, meeting every five years, negotiated with the Crown its own contributions to the Exchequer, and obtained numberless concessions from the local authorities, wherever its interests were touched. Moreover, the Church still enjoyed political power. No one in France had a legal right to live outside its pale. It controlled the schools; it kept the parish registers, on which a man's title to his property and his name depended; for the sake of Catholic truth it burned its adversaries; and, through its censorship of the Press, it silenced all assailing tongues.

Then too, like the nobility, the Church offered many contrasts of condition. The great prelates who lived at Court maintained with all the lavishness of laymen the well-bred profusion of the place. Their wealth rivalled that of princes. The Archbishop of Cambrai was the feudal suzerain of seventy-five thousand people, lord of the town of Cambrai, patron of two great abbeys, and a Duke and Count to boot. The ecclesiastical income enjoyed by M. de Brienne, Archbishop of Toulouse, besides his ministerial salary and pension, is stated to have exceeded, according to a modern standard, fifty-four thousand pounds. The Archbishop of Rouen, apart from his episcopal revenues, drew from his abbeys twenty thousand pounds a year. The Bishop of Troyes received penitents in confessionals

lined with white satin. M. de Rohan, hereditary Bishop of Strasbourg, held a splendid Court in his great palace at Saverne, and exalted the dignity of a prince of the Church by having all his saucepans made of silver. When one contrasts with this delicate existence the condition of the vast majority of parish priests, whose plebeian birth shut on them the door to preferment, who lived, often in ruined and neglected parsonages, in the abandoned country districts, with no educated friends about them, dispensing the meagre charities of the august superiors who could not leave the Court to visit them, and supporting the lofty pretensions of the Catholic Church on incomes of forty, of twenty, and of sixteen pounds a year, one ceases to wonder that the priests abhorred a lot, which 'made even the stones and beams of their miserable dwellings cry aloud,' and that, when the day of retribution came, they welcomed the destroyer, and refused to lift a finger to defend the existing system in the Church of France.

Apart, however, from the advantages of rank, the middle class had its privileges and exemptions too. Some enjoyed immunities as servants of the Government; others, as members of powerful corporations; others, again, of a lower grade, driven from the country districts by the exactions of the Government and by the demands of the seigneurs, who insisted on their tribute while they disdained their company, took refuge in the towns, and there formed a caste of their own. In early times, most of the important towns in France had possessed two governing assemblies, one composed of magistrates and officials, who owed their offices originally



to popular election and afterwards to purchase from the Crown, the other composed originally of all the townspeople and afterwards of local 'notables' representing the different companies and guilds. By the end of the eighteenth century, however, the popular spirit, which had once given life to all these institutions, had long died out. The municipal officers bought their places from the Government, and handed them down from father to son. The representative assembly had ceased to represent any but the substantial burghers of the town. What had once been public honours conferred by the voices of free citizens had everywhere crystallised into private rights, the prerogative of one class or of a few important families.

Accordingly, the possessors of these rights were bribed to uphold the existing order by a thousand little dignities and exemptions, in which relief from taxation played a large part, and they maintained the pride of their position by drawing a jealous line between themselves and the unrepresented artisans below. The guilds, originally created to foster, still survived to fetter the commerce of the towns. But in process of time these guilds had been multiplied for every branch of trade; the privilege of managing them had been in most cases usurped or bought by a narrow group of members; and the fees and rules which they imposed tended readily to further class-interests and class-divisions. All artisans who were not the sons of masters, went by the name of 'strangers,' and found innumerable barriers placed in the way of their advancement. The passion for place, which to some observers seems inherent in the French

middle class, was sedulously encouraged by Ministers, who, by multiplying small posts and dignities, filled the Exchequer, appeased complaints, and won supporters. Each of these little places carried its special perquisites and distinctions; and thus, in the minds of thousands, the aspiration to possess some petty advantage over their neighbours tended to oust the larger aspirations which might have led to public freedom. In one small town the notables were divided into thirty-six distinct bodies, with different rights and degrees. Every tradesman delighted in a special mark of rank. The owner of a shop sat on a higher seat than his assistants. The tailor could wear only one buckle to his wig, while the proud apothecary might boast of three. On one occasion the periwig-makers of La Flèche ceased working in a body, in order to show their 'well-founded grief occasioned by the precedence granted to the bakers.' The evils begotten of caste and privilege could hardly be carried to more ludicrous extremes.

But while each of the educated classes thus possessed its distinguishing marks to arm revolution and to point hatred, one class, the lowest, had nothing but the privileges of its superiors to mark its position in the State. In the towns the great majority of the labouring community were excluded by the guild monopolies from any prospect except that of perpetual subjection. Their wages, both in town and country, were but little more than half of what they earn to-day, while the purchasing power which those wages represented was very much less. And if the outlook in the towns was gloomy, their situation in the country was infinitely worse. It was

there that the people felt most nearly the relentless assiduity of life. Everyone knows La Bruyère's picture of the wild-looking peasantry of France, their faces blackened by want and toil and sun, the slaves of the soil, at which they laboured with such unconquerable patience, who 'seemed just capable of speech, and when they stood erect displayed the lineaments of men.' Their dwellings were often windowless cabins, their clothing a rough woollen covering, their food buckwheat and chestnuts and the coarsest bread. And yet these unfortunate beings were in many cases the owners of the soil they tilled. The passionate love of the land, which distinguishes the French peasant of our own day, was not taught him by the Revolution. For generations before it his one object of ambition, the only aim which made it worth his while to live, had been the hope of acquiring a portion of the land he worked upon. Living wretchedly, he yet kept that object steadily in view. For that end he hoarded and toiled and starved. The impoverished gentry came easily to terms; and thus an immense number of small holdings sprang up almost imperceptibly in France, estimated by the genial, observant eyes of Arthur Young to cover as much as 'one-third of the kingdom.'

By the side of these small properties, which tended to grow smaller under a process of incessant subdivision, lay the large estates of the nobles, the clergy, the magistrates and financiers. In some cases these estates were farmed on a large scale by tenants holding leases at a money-rent, and in the North these farms were numerous and answered well. But the back-

wardness and the want of capital, which blighted all French agriculture in the eighteenth century, helped to render farm-leases unpopular, and most large proprietors fell back on the system of *Métayage*, or farming at half profits, under which the landlord supplied and stocked the land, while the labourer gave his labour, and the profits were shared between the two. In Anjou, where the landlords resided on their estates, knew their *Métayers* personally, and supervised their labours, this system prospered. But in much the greater part of France the *Métayers* were left to themselves by the landlords, and struggled on in the greatest distress, without enterprise, without capital, often deeply in debt, hardly making enough to yield them the bare means of subsistence, and loath to exert themselves to swell the profits, which they had to divide with a master, who neither knew nor cared for them. 'The *Métayer*,' says a compassionate seigneur, 'is kept in an abject state by men who are not at all inhuman, but whose prejudices . . . lead them to regard him as a different species of being.' Before the outbreak of the Revolution, serfdom, except in some outlying districts, had been extinguished in France; but the condition of the *Métayer* materially was little above the serf's. In some cases, it is true, he had managed to purchase, independently of his *Métairie*, a little plot of land of his own, which he cultivated with minute and arduous attention; and in certain districts these plots of ground repaid the toil spent on them, and taught their owners the self-respect of ownership and the dignity which independence gives. But, generally speaking, even these small allotments, numerous as they were,

were wretchedly unproductive, and the *Métayers* and day-labourers who owned them shared the common depression of their class.

Apart, however, from his bad farming and the poverty of his land, the French peasant had worse troubles to encounter. The shadow of feudalism still lay heavily across his path. Even where he was the owner of the soil, he held it subject to innumerable dues and charges, from which he could not escape and which he could not redeem. Whenever the peasant's property changed hands, the seigneur stepped in to claim his fine. On the roads and at the bridges the seigneur claimed his tolls. At markets and fairs the seigneur claimed his dues, and sold to the peasant the right to sell to others the produce of his farm. Occasionally the seigneur still claimed the peasant's time and labour for nothing. Everywhere the rights of the seigneur compelled him to grind his wheat only at the feudal mill and to crush his grapes only in the feudal wine-press. And even worse than these claims was the scourge of the game-laws. The seigneur alone could fish in the stream which flowed through the peasant's farm. The seigneur alone could shoot the game which ruined the peasant's crops. The seigneur alone could hunt over the peasant's land. In the vast *Capitaineries*, which covered some four hundred square leagues of territory in France, the deer and big game, preserved for the sport of princes, wandered unchecked, devouring the fields and vineyards of the inhabitants, and woe be to the peasant who dared to interfere with their freedom! Every summer the villagers in the neighbourhood of Fontainebleau, where

the Capitaineries stretched far, were compelled to organise watch companies and to watch all night for six months in the year, in order to save their vines and harvests from destruction. If the peasant dared to dispute any of these rights, there were the seigneur's courts to overawe him, to weary him out with incessant litigation, and to teach him that, though he had ceased to be a serf, the seigneur was his master still. Sometimes all these claims were sold by an impoverished seigneur to a group of speculators, and the pity of speculators is necessarily limited by considerations of gain. When the seigneur had done with the peasant, the emissaries of the Church stepped in, to take their tithe for spiritual purposes, and to remind him how much he owed to them for the development of his intellect and the guardianship of his soul.

But the Crown itself took a prominent part in the spoliation of the poor. Adopting for public purposes the old feudal institution of the *Corvée*, the Government summoned the peasants at certain seasons of the year to leave their fields, without compensation, in order to make and repair the highways; and by a peculiar irony, although the great thoroughfares were thus maintained solely at the peasants' expense, the roads which the peasants really needed, the cross-roads in agricultural districts, were left to ruin and neglect. More odious still were the demands of the militia service. Every unmarried man up to forty years of age could be called upon for this oppressive duty. No substitution was allowed. Although for the wealthy the exemptions were innumerable, for the poorest class no exemption was

permitted. Improvident marriages offered the only means of escape. The approach of the Government's agent was the signal for panic and disorder, and the miserable villagers fled for concealment to the woods.

Even more grievous than the *Corvée* and the militia were the abuses which pervaded the whole system of taxation. The heaviest of all the taxes was the terrible burden of the *Taille*, a direct tax levied sometimes on property and sometimes on income, falling almost entirely on the poor—alike on the struggling landowner and on the landless labourer—assessed without order or method, constantly varying and constantly increased. Every year in the rural districts some unfortunate villager was selected to act as collector of the *Taille*. He alone had to decide how much each of his neighbours was worth, and how much he must extort from them to satisfy the Government, and if his efforts or his calculations failed, his own property and person were responsible for the amount. The opportunities for abuse in such a system, for the satisfaction of personal jealousies and grudges, are as obvious as its unfairness towards those on whom the office was inflicted. 'The office of collector,' cried Turgot, 'drives to despair and frequently to ruin all those on whom it is imposed.' In order to escape the *Taille*, the peasant strenuously concealed his savings. If, in spite of his Government, he prospered, he dared do nothing to give an air of comfort to his home. We find him in one case entreating his landlord not to tile the roof of his cottage, because such a sign of prosperity would mean for him an increase of taxation. It was the object of every man

to seem desperately poor. Then besides the Taille, the peasant had to pay the accessory taxes, which in process of time had been assimilated with it; the Poll-tax and the Vingtièmes, imposts imposed by Louis XIV on all alike, but the weight of which the powerful classes had contrived to shift on to the shoulders of the weak; the road-tax, when the Corvées were abolished; the tax of the franc-fief, whenever he happened to own lands which had once been the lands of nobles; and always, apart from the demands of the Exchequer, his seigneur's dues and his pastor's tithe. Statistics may sometimes be misleading, but an able statistician has calculated, upon evidence which it is difficult to deny, that, allowing for all these direct charges, the peasant in many parts of France paid away four-fifths of his income to the Treasury, the seigneur, and the Church, and out of every hundred francs he earned, retained little more than eighteen francs himself<sup>1</sup>.

But the record of his troubles did not end there. The Gabelle, perhaps the most exasperating impost ever

<sup>1</sup> One part of the *taille*, that which fell upon the cultivator, reached the privileged orders indirectly through their farmers, but even then there were certain exemptions in their favour. The franc-fief was the tax of one year's revenue levied every twenty years on non-noble holders of noble lands. The calculation of income given here I take from the note on the subject contained in the appendix to M. Taine's volume on the *Ancien Régime*, which is founded on the *procès-verbaux* of the provincial assemblies. On an income of 100 francs, he estimates the *taille* (with its accessories), the poll-tax, and the road-tax together, at 42 fr. 15 c.; the two *vingtièmes* at 11 fr., the tithe at 14 fr. 28 c., and the feudal dues at 14 fr. 28 c.; total 81 fr. 71 c.



devised by an empty Exchequer, compelled all citizens over seven years of age to purchase yearly seven pounds of salt from the agents of the State. But this salt was reserved for cooking and eating alone, and if salt for any other purpose were needed, the agents of the State had the right to make its subjects purchase more. The whole system of indirect taxation was conceived in the same spirit as this monument of fiscal folly. The face of the country was covered by barriers and custom-houses, occupied by an army of revenue officers, who purchased from the Government the right of collecting the customs and excise. Twelve hundred leagues of artificial frontiers separated the various provinces of France, impeded trade, and played havoc with prices. The small vine-growers were almost ruined by the excise levied upon wine, which even in those days was conspicuous for its severity and for the inquisitorial practices of those who enforced it. Calonne declared that the salt tax alone produced every year nearly four thousand sentences, of imprisonment, flogging, exile and the galleys. Under such auspices smuggling multiplied, and the Government retorted by heavy punishments. Bodies of armed banditti were organised in disturbed districts, and carried on for years together a guerilla war against the forces of the Crown. Unemployed labourers and ruined peasants found a livelihood in swelling the ranks of disaffection, and in the absence of any poor-law administration, mendicancy and vagabondage rapidly increased.

The records of the last years of the Ancien Régime are consequently full of evidence of alarming and growing disorder. Townspeople complained that the

beggars, driven from the country, flocked into the cities for shelter. The Intendants reported to the Council that the chief highways of the kingdom were infested with dangerous vagrants. In vain the Government multiplied its corn-laws and arrests, and endeavoured to stifle the clamours of indigence by feeding some and by punishing others. In 1767, fifty thousand beggars were arrested; but in 1777, the numbers of that unfortunate class had risen to nearly a million and a quarter. In Paris the census of 1791 declared that out of a population of six hundred and fifty thousand, over one hundred and eighteen thousand were without the means of regular subsistence. It is easy to understand how, pressed by hunger, and pursued by a rigorous penal code, many of these wandering mendicants crossed the thin line which separates extreme want from crime, and how, when the Old Monarchy suddenly collapsed, and when in the search for freedom law was for the moment lost, this large group of miserable beings, armed with brief power and long-accumulated hatred, exacted a terrible revenge for the wrongs of the labouring community in France, from whose ranks they and their ancestors had been driven by a system politically and socially unjust.

Such, in the eighteenth century, were some of the conditions of life in France. Each class lived apart, entrenched in its own chilling traditions. 'Nobody,' cried Turgot, 'cares for any interest but his own.' Local patriotism, common intercourse, friendly feeling, no longer drew men of different ranks together. The sense of citizenship had generally died out. Below the others the peasant stood alone. His poverty clung to him as

a garment of shame. His commonest impulses were want and fear. His love of legend made him superstitious. His ignorance made him credulous, bigoted, suspicious, easily persuaded to believe in evil. Isolated from the world, conscious of belonging to an inferior caste, encountering on all sides the privileges of his masters, and yet with no superior to care for him and no wise counsellor to guide him, blunted in feeling by long endurance, gentle, submissive, often gay, but more often brooding on the indignities which he suffered, and resenting the injustice even more than the hardship of his lot, he heard and welcomed with passionate illusion the new doctrine of human dominion, which proclaimed that men were equal, whatever their station, whatever their distress, and from that moment the attainment of equality, so easy to imagine, so hard to approach, became the commanding ideal of the poor.

## CHAPTER II.

### THE LAST YEARS OF THE ANCIEN RÉGIME.

THE decay of the old society was accompanied in France by a decay of the ideas which were inseparably associated with it, and which, long kept alive by authoritative sanctions, had exacted, not always without violence, the reverence of men. As the State had usurped the control of every department of action, so the Roman Catholic Church had usurped the control of every department of thought. Resting serenely upon authority and dogma, it had dictated and circumscribed the knowledge of its subjects, had directed their intellectual interests, and had aimed at supplying not only a religion to govern their conduct, but also a complete theory to govern their lives. Against this monopoly, and the conceptions on which it was established, the best minds of the eighteenth century rose in revolt, and their revolt was celebrated by an outbreak of active and intrepid thought. Beginning in the mysterious domain of physical science, with great discoveries in astronomy, chemistry, physics, geology and mathematics, the new spirit of enquiry spread like a flame to illumine other topics. Its votaries, rejecting ancient tradition and immemorial habit, turned with sudden enthusiasm to

observation and analysis, and built up for themselves step by step new systems of knowledge, based, not on what their teachers taught them, but on positive facts which they had ascertained and tested for themselves. The vivid curiosity thus aroused woke in them distrust of all preconceived notions, banished the reverent awe which had restrained earlier generations, and broke down the old barriers of belief.

Before long the passion for investigation passed beyond the limits of physical science, and ranging far afield, entered the domain of theology, of economics, of politics and social laws. In all fields alike there appeared the same disposition to repudiate opinions previously held, to examine afresh, under no restrictions, the principles which lay at the root of religion and government, the general laws which regulated human institutions, the origin of existing conceptions of society and property, of justice and right. Tradition was dethroned, and reason was set up in its seat, as the only test by which opinions could be determined, without regard to the subordinate place which reason fills in the conduct of men. The classical spirit, with its finish, its artificiality, its limitations, already dominant in France, set its stamp upon the new philosophy, and afforded the vehicle for conveying it to the world. In successive generations of polished intercourse, the French language had acquired extreme nicety and clearness of expression; it was admirably fitted for criticism, analysis, argument, definition; and it thus rendered the new ideas at once popular and lucid. A passion for philosophical discussion took hold of the educated world, and carried them past the facts which

they ought to have noticed, to theories which seemed more distant and consequently more profound. All alike began to speculate, to generalise, to enquire into the meaning of many things, the current interpretation of which they had determined no longer to accept; while the necessity, from which all Frenchmen suffer, of never being dull, encouraged superficiality in the new search for truth, and checked the close study of history, which alone could have avoided error.

As the secrets of the universe unfolded, and as men learned how clear and simple were the laws of physical nature, they determined that there must be other laws of nature, equally clear and simple, to explain society and politics; and finding this theory lamentably contradicted by the confusion of institutions and abuses round them, they began to assail those institutions and abuses with the audacity which science gives. Law and religion in their actual forms were so corrupt that the shocked imagination of these dreamers fell back upon ideals of natural religion and natural law. Far aloof themselves from actual politics, untrained by that wisdom of many voices which free political discussion bestows, dissatisfied with their own political customs, but disdainful to study thoroughly the political customs of others and the origin of all, they proceeded to formulate, by the aid of pure reason, theories which would satisfy their newly roused emotions, and fit in with some apparently more simple and scientific formula of life. All those for whom politics in practice were a sealed book, took refuge in these politics of the imagination, and the political world in France found itself presently divided into two camps,

one consisting of those who governed, the other of those who discoursed, the latter perpetually establishing principles, which the former perpetually broke. A society devoted to letters and to conversation embraced and disseminated the speculative literature of the age, and thus the great literary men of the eighteenth century became in France what politicians sometimes strive to be in happier lands, the fountains of political inspiration, and the real leaders of public thought.

Among the pioneers of the new doctrines two men stand out conspicuously in each half of the century,—Montesquieu and Voltaire in the first half, Diderot and Rousseau in the second. Montesquieu, the earliest of the philosophers, was a polished and eminent lawyer, well versed in history, serious, acute, a profound student of human institutions, and the master of a terse and pointed style. His writings, generally speaking, were no mere flights of pert fancy, but the result of systematised and careful thought, weighty, luminous, moderate in tone, and scientifically sane. It was Montesquieu, who, in his *Lettres Persanes*, initiated the philosophic movement, and unmasked the batteries of criticism and satire, which for two generations were to play so effectively upon the foundations of the old monarchy in France. It was Montesquieu, who, twenty-seven years later, when he produced the great work of his life, the *Esprit des Loix*, analysed with clear and wide sagacity the laws which regulate human governments and customs, and thus destroyed the mysterious prestige which had never till then been stripped from the ancient institutions of France. It was Montesquieu, who first exposed those institutions

to a ruthless analysis which they could not stand. But the slow and careful method, which was Montesquieu's distinction, was less popular with his successors. It involved too much trouble. It ran the risk, except in a master's hands, of being dull. The classical spirit, the French temperament, the love of amusement combined to guide criticism into an easier groove, and the philosophic movement, without altogether deserting the studious atmosphere of facts, adopted a more becoming garment in the exquisite raillery of Voltaire.

Voltaire's life extended long past the middle of the century, and its closing years were the years of its greatest triumphs. But he yet belongs to the generation of Montesquieu rather than to that of Rousseau. Under him, the tone of the new movement altered. It became lighter, and bolder too. Its reserve vanished. Its intrepidity increased. It entered every field. It illumined every subject. In verse, in prose, in history, in drama, in romance, Voltaire assailed traditions, beliefs, abuses, exposing mercilessly their shortcomings and shifts, laughing aloud over their absurdities, denying the pretensions which they boasted, denouncing the iniquities to which they led. Voltaire's rare and versatile wit, his light touch, his unabashed scepticism, his brilliant common-sense, appealed irresistibly to the minds of his countrymen. He made the philosophic movement popular. He identified it with many errors, and with the gravest faults of taste. But with it all he taught men to despise many follies and to impeach many wrongs.

It was Voltaire who gave to the literary movement that decisive tone of irreligion, which it so long re-



tained. The Church stood in the van of the opponents whom the philosophers had to encounter, and to attack the Church, her practice and her creeds, was to Voltaire an intellectual delight. More than any other institution the Church in France represented the spirit of tradition, of authority, of submission to formulas, of reverence for the past. As such, she was certain to view with alarm the new spirit of independent enquiry. Of all forms of political power, the political power of the Church was the most unpopular. She stepped in to support with mysterious sanctions the civil institutions which many felt were unjust. As the censor of the Press, she represented the Government at the very point where the Government and the philosophers came into conflict. Of all the supports of the old order, she was in many ways the most open to attack. Consequently, the philosophic movement from the first brought its forces to bear upon the Church, and Voltaire led the onslaught with the irreverent vivacity of his nature, and the rich splendour of his information and literary resource.

In the middle of the eighteenth century, however, the conduct of the philosophic movement passed to a large extent into younger hands. In 1751, the first volume of the celebrated Encyclopaedia concentrated public attention on a group of writers of no common range and understanding, all inspired with the new spirit, and combined to carry it into every field of economic, political, and social action. The Encyclopaedists numbered among them many distinguished men. On the roll of their contributors we find the names of

Turgot, Rousseau, Buffon, Marmontel. D'Alembert, the accomplished mathematician, brought to the work his trained abilities, his admirable style, and the wisdom acquired by a student during a life spent in frugality and independence. But the greatest of the staff, the most original in genius, the most reckless in expression, and the most intense and imaginative in thought, was the brilliant, perverse, impetuous Diderot, with his extraordinary, magnetic conversation, his indomitable perseverance, his genuine consciousness of his own shortcomings, his ardent desire for the improvement of mankind. It is significant that nearly all the prominent members of the Encyclopaedic party had been brought up as pupils of the Jesuits, and unquestionably, as a party, they associated themselves with a pronounced attack upon the chief tenets of the Catholic Church. But it is difficult and not very profitable to attempt to assign definite names of obloquy to the varieties of disbelief within their ranks, and it is a grave mistake to regard that aspect of their writings as the most characteristic or important. What gave to the enterprise its force and success was the fact that it travelled far beyond the barren conflicts of theology, and brought the new ideas, the new habit of enquiry and analysis, the new fearlessness of social comment, and the new humanitarian zeal, to investigating political and economic phenomena, to preparing the way for practical reform. The glory of the Encyclopaedists lies not in their contempt for things holy, but in their hatred of things unjust, in their denunciation of the trade in slaves, of the inequalities of taxation, of the corruption of

justice, of the wastefulness of wars, in their dreams of social progress, in their sympathy with the rising empire of industry, which was beginning to transform the world.

Posterity is more familiar with the defects than with the virtues of this strange episode in human thought. Its ideals were disfigured by many faults—by unreality, political ignorance, dangerous license, violent extremes. In its anxiety to escape from conventions, it relaxed necessary codes. It made impiety obstreperous. It hastily adopted a belief in the perfectibility of man, to fill the niche where once had rested a belief in the perfection of God. In place of the traditions and systems which it uprooted, it taught its followers to look for guidance to their own instincts, and to vague aspirations after imaginary systems of natural law. It planted in the French people an inextinguishable desire to abolish everything which reminded it of the past, however much they might suffer in the attempt. Its teaching seemed to discourage the impulses of virtue, and to offer no satisfaction for the spiritual needs of man. Helvetius' famous treatise *De l'Esprit* laid down, amid much shallow commonplace, the depressing doctrine that self-interest dictates both the conduct and the views of men, and that the attainment of pleasure is their only final aim. Holbach's not less famous *Système de la Nature* touched the climax of a century of philosophical commotion, in its passionate indictment of the vices of kings and the slavery of men, in its direct demand for revolution, in its remorseless rejection of every form of faith, in its insistence upon atheism and materialism as the only true philosophy of life. 'Religious and political errors,'

cried Holbach, 'have changed the universe into a valley of tears.'

Beside the contributors to the Encyclopaedia, and sometimes among them, were men of different schools of thought, allied with them in advocating change. Quesnai and Turgot were conspicuous in the ranks of an eminent sect termed by some Economists, by others Physiocrats. The Economists shared with Diderot and his colleagues the zeal for reform, the contempt for the past, the democratic temper of the times. They were prepared to enforce equality even at the cost of despotism. They insisted on the subordination of all private rights to the public interest. They preached the necessity of national education as the first essential of national prosperity, and urged that the burden of taxation should be thrown upon the land, which they regarded as the sole source of wealth. They advocated free trade, free agriculture, free industry, while they cared little for freedom itself. Others like Morelly, the author of the *Code de la Nature*, accepted the Economist theory of the omnipotence of the State, but added other theories of their own. Morelly proposed to establish community of goods and uniformity of all conditions. He denounced the institution of private property, and he shadowed forth in their earliest shape many of those suggestions for the readjustment of the world, which have since assumed the name of Socialism and acquired the dimensions of a spectre in minds intolerant of change.

But far above the sound of other voices rose the lofty tones and the sonorous rhetoric of Rousseau. Rousseau disdained the study and analysis of the past, in which

Montesquieu had sought laborious wisdom. He cared nothing for the diffusion of knowledge and art, of which Voltaire was the brilliant representative. He hardly understood the wide, ambitious projects, by which Diderot and Turgot hoped to benefit humanity. He resented the utilitarian theories of Helvetius. He hotly denied the material philosophy of the school of Holbach. To Rousseau's angry discontent with life, study, knowledge, cultivation, seemed to be only steps in the degradation of man. To his inflamed vision all society was artificial, all accepted forms of political organisation were tyranny and abuse. Man, he protested, was naturally good and just and loving, created by a just and loving God, until art, the bane of life, invaded his simplicity, tainted his virtue, and brought him face to face with suffering and sin. Sweep away therefore, he exhorted his hearers, all the false fabric of society, the world of ugly want and insolent riches miscalled civilization, the oppression miscalled order, the error miscalled knowledge! Level its inequalities, repudiate its learning, break its conventions, shatter its chains! Let men return to the simplicity of ancient days, to the idyllic state, when uncorrupted instinct only ruled them, and there once again, innocent and ignorant, as Nature made them, and guided only by the 'immortal and celestial voice' of reason, seek the high paths of felicity of life.

In a generation full of privilege and hardship, and weary of its own artificial ways, such teaching as this struck a resounding chord. It did not matter that the teacher reconciled a rather sordid practice with a gorgeous

theory, and was himself too often morbid, egotistical, unmanly, mean. The disciples, who drank in his doctrines, did not enquire critically into his motives. They did not ask—and possibly we have not the right to speculate—whether he assailed society, because he failed to shine in it, or whether he inveighed against riches, because he lacked the patient industry to earn them for himself. They did not know or care whether his quarrel with the world, his indictment of its usages and laws, his eloquent defence of human instinct, and his sensuous love for Nature, were or were not dictated by the feverish longing which possessed the man to follow every impulse of his mind, and to submit his impulses to no control. They did not see that the example of a master, who, whatever shameful faults he might commit, could still maintain that civilization, and not he, deserved the blame, and could still gravely describe himself to his friends as one of the best men that he had ever known, was only too well calculated to enable his disciples to persuade themselves that they were instruments of virtue, purity and justice, while they were permitting iniquity and palliating crime. They knew that his denunciation of oppression coincided with the bitter lessons which their experience taught. They found that his eloquent words renewed their self-respect, and raised their ideal of the dignity of man. They felt that he pleaded the cause of the unfortunate in tones and with a genius which made the fortunate attend, and that he brought to that exalted service the widest compassion, the readiest sympathy, and the most majestic language which the eighteenth century had heard.

In 1762, Rousseau published one of the most famous, and, in its consequences, probably one of the most important books ever written. 'Man was born free,' ran the prologue to the *Contrat Social*,—'man was born free, and is everywhere in chains.' In the *Contrat Social* Rousseau rejected altogether the historic method—that wise process of political philosophy, which patiently studies the circumstances of the past, in order, by the experience so obtained, to modify and to improve the present. Relying on the unsafe methods of abstract, *a priori* speculation, he proceeded to develop, out of his ardent and imaginative brain, an ideal theory of society, which should establish by logical and conclusive argument the opinions which his sentiments had already espoused. The result of the enterprise was the celebrated doctrine of the Sovereignty of Peoples. The origin of every human society, argued Rousseau, was this:—At some remote epoch in the dawn of days, men, living in a state of nature, virtuous, rational, equal and free, had resolved to enter into an association to defend the persons and property of all, while every individual in it remained free. Accordingly, they had formed a Social Compact, under which each individual had submitted himself to the direction of the general will, and had been received as an inseparable part of the whole. The body formed by this Social Compact was the Sovereign. All citizens who belonged to it—and all did—had an equal share in the common sovereignty, and were bound to one another by a fraternal tie. Its sovereignty consisted in the exercise of the general will, and that sovereignty could not be alienated to any individual or group, nor

could it be divided up into different parts and distributed among different officials. The will of the sovereign body was expressed in laws, and every member of it must take his part personally, and not by delegation, in the making of those laws. If he delegated that right to representatives, he surrendered his share of sovereign power. For the sake of convenience, the sovereign body might delegate to governments certain executive powers for a limited time ; but the sovereign body still retained the right of resuming or modifying those powers at will, and must from time to time assemble, in order to enforce its right. When the whole sovereign people was thus assembled, the power of governments ceased, and all executive authority was suspended. If any government usurped the sovereignty, the Social Compact was thereby broken ; all citizens resumed their liberty to act, and might rise in rebellion to assert it. Lastly, in religion, the sovereign body was entitled to impose a civil profession of faith, and to compel all its citizens, under penalties of banishment and death, to believe in the existence of a beneficent God, in an immortal life, in the reward of the just and the chastisement of the wicked, in the obligation of the Social Contract and of the laws.

It is easy in these days to criticise the *Contrat Social*. The mistaken idea of compact as the basis of society ; the rejection of representative legislatures, and the insistence on a principle which could only apply in a miniature State—the personal participation of every citizen in the making of the laws ; the sanction given to the right of insurrection, when the imaginary compact was broken ;



the absence of any method of ascertaining whether the compact were broken or not;—these are flaws in its argument which will readily occur. It is easy also to point to certain characteristics which disfigure it throughout—to its disregard of facts, to its sophistry and inconsistencies, to the narrow intolerance of its sentimental theology, to its aloofness from the region of practice, to its reliance on dogma and on the logic of words. But it is not so easy to appreciate the extraordinary impression which in those days it produced, or the enthusiasm aroused in all who looked for liberty, by the fearless splendour of its phrases, by the fused argument and passion of its style, by its generous democratic temper, by the spiritual earnestness which inspired it, by its fine exaltation of patriotism and freedom. The *Contrat Social* supplied the text and lit the fire of revolution. It became the gospel of the Jacobin party, and of that party Robespierre constituted himself high-priest.

The seed sown by these remarkable writers fell upon fruitful soil. The years which immediately preceded the outbreak of the Revolution in France were years of vague but widespread agitation. An enthusiasm for the natural greatness of man, and a boundless contempt for the age and society in which he lived, pervaded the thought of the time. In almost every European country, observers noticed the same presentiment of impending change, and of a change which, on behalf of humanity, most people were prepared to welcome. Thinkers and talkers alike were full of illusions, full of curiosity, full of unselfishness, full of hope. Outside France, as within it, everyone plunged into philosophical debate. In the

trading cities of Germany, merchants and manufacturers would gather, after the day's work, to discuss the condition of the human race. Sovereigns like Frederick, Catherine, and Joseph affected the secure radicalism of despots. In Spain, in Portugal, in Tuscany, as well as in England and France, statesmen echoed the new humanitarian maxims. Aranda, Pombal and Manfredini exhibited the spirit, and emulated the reforms, of Turgot and Necker, of Fox and Pitt. The outbreak of the American Revolution roused the deepest interest in Europe. Volunteers from France poured over to America, to fight for the political ideals, about which they had for so long been dreaming, and the realisation of which in the New World seemed to bring home conviction to the Old. The tidings of the triumph of the American colonists were received with acclamation in the roadsteads of Elsinore. Strangely enough, the feverish unrest of the time produced, in an age which professed to have undertaken a war against superstition, a revival of the mysticism of an earlier day. On the eve of the French Revolution, the best educated classes in Europe were engrossed by secret societies and brotherhoods, like the Illuminati, the Swedenborgians, the Mesmerists, the Rosicrucians, dabbling on all sides in necromancy and occult science, and frequently the dupes of ridiculous impostors, who, catching the temper of the times, proposed to effect by charlatanism the regeneration of the world.

This vague perturbation of spirit did not, it is true, penetrate to the lowest or unlettered class. But in all above that rank it was conspicuous. The years of the

reign of Louis XVI were in France, as in nearly all parts of Europe, years of national expansion. The trade of the country was advancing by leaps and bounds, and the commerce of Bordeaux already exceeded, in the sober judgment of Arthur Young, that of any English port save London. At the same time the wealth of the middle classes was increasing with similar rapidity. Year after year they lent more money to the Government; and year after year, as they saw the Government wasting it with reckless profusion, and falling steadily deeper into debt, they ranged themselves more decidedly in the ranks of opposition, and became more emphatic in their discontent. The gross mismanagement of the finances became a matter in which they felt they had a right to interfere. Their stake in the game of politics made them politicians, and not only that—it made them reformers too. And thus the growing wealth of the country tended indirectly to multiply the enemies of the Court, and to throw on to the side of revolution that important financial interest, which is generally a stable, sometimes an obstructive, element in a State.

In other ways also, by the end of the century, in their style of living, in their education, in their enlightenment, the middle classes had become the equals of the nobles. They had imbibed the same philosophy; they had cultivated the same tastes; they contemplated with the same sublime ignorance of history and politics the philanthropic ideas of the age; and they resented, even more bitterly than before, the exclusive and exacting privileges of caste. At the same time, the nobles, on their side, were losing, under the benign influence of

philosophy, a great deal of the apathetic insolence, which had made their privileges hateful. The Court of Louis XVI was very different from that of his predecessors. It was less pompous, less artificial. The rules of etiquette were relaxed. A better tone prevailed in its society. The haughtiest nobles opened their doors freely to low-born genius. They debated republican theories in their drawing-rooms. They applauded republican sentiments in the theatres. They began dimly to realise their public duties, and in a tentative way to perform them. They awoke to the distress of the poor about them, and endeavoured to alleviate it with a generous hand. Some of the nobility proposed to surrender their immunity from taxation. Others, headed by the King, emancipated the serfs who still remained on their estates. The Marquis de Mirabeau established a gratuitous office for the settlement of law-suits. The Duchesse de Bourbon rose early in the morning, to visit with alms the garrets of the poor. The Queen laid out a village at the Trianon, where, attired in a muslin gown and a straw hat, she could fish in the lake and see her cows milked. The King multiplied his private charities, and, one severe winter, commanded that all the poor, who came, should be fed daily in the royal kitchens. On all sides, among the upper classes of society, the same symptoms showed themselves. Extravagant but kindhearted sensibility became the main-spring of their actions; reform was their passion, limitless, radiant hope their creed. 'With no regret for the past,' says one of their number, looking back from the sere contemplation of later years on that entrancing morning of his life,—'with no regret for the past and no

apprehensions for the future, we danced gaily along a carpet of flowers stretched over an abyss.'

The same spirit animated the Government of the time. In spite of his want of strength, his lamentable irresolution, and his well-intentioned lethargy of mind, Louis XVI possessed not a few of the qualities in which good kings excel—a high standard of morality and duty, a large fund of quiet simplicity and courage, a readiness to listen to the advice of wiser men, a marked sensitiveness to public opinion, and a genuine desire to serve his people. Louis had not been long upon the throne before he gave proof of his benevolent intentions by appointing to the office of Comptroller-General the greatest practical reformer of the day. Under Turgot the new spirit penetrated rapidly into every department. The extravagances of the Court were cut down. Useful changes were introduced into the system of farming and collecting the taxes. The *Corvées* were converted into a regular impost, from which the privileged classes were not exempt. The guilds, which monopolised and fettered trade, were suppressed. Fresh encouragement was offered to agriculture and commerce. Free trade in corn was established within the kingdom. The minister talked of commuting feudal dues, and dreamed of abolishing the inequalities of taxation. A spirit of gentleness and consideration came over the administration. The Government not only introduced reforms ; it condescended to recommend them to the public, to point out their necessity, to explain their intention. 'The burden of this charge,' said the Royal edict which abolished the *Corvées*, 'falls solely upon those who possess nothing but the right to toil.'

‘The right to work,’ ran the preamble to the edict which suppressed the guilds, ‘is the most sacred of all possessions, and every institution which infringes it, violates the natural rights of man.’

In the same way, Necker, when he succeeded Turgot, appealed for support to public opinion. He recognised the ‘invisible power which commanded obedience even in the King’s palace,’ and endeavoured to justify his policy by publishing an account of the state of the finances. In the same way, though Turgot and Necker fell, and their schemes perished with them, the reforming spirit continued to affect the Government all through Louis’ reign. Change after change, experiment after experiment, attested the readiness of the Crown to bend before the forces of the time. The measures taken, first of all to suppress, and afterwards partly to restore the guilds, destroyed the old relations between employers and workmen, while they did little to establish a more complete or satisfactory system in their place. And thus, when the Revolution came, there reigned generally among the artisans of the great towns a sense of uncertainty and discontent, which rendered discipline impossible and mischief easy.

Again, only a year before the Revolution, one royal decree transformed the administration of justice in France; while a year earlier, in 1787, another bold and memorable measure completed the reform begun as an experiment some years before, and established provincial assemblies in all the Pays d’Élection. The importance of this step, which has been sometimes overlooked among the graver changes of a later day, can hardly be exagger-

rated ; for it introduced, almost without warning, a new principle into the government of the country. By the side of the autocratic Intendants, new provincial assemblies were created, which stripped the Intendants of most of their powers, or, if they resisted, entered into active competition with them. By the side of the autocratic Sub-Delegates, new district assemblies were formed, to pursue a similar course of action in a smaller sphere. In place of the ancient parochial assemblies, and in the midst of the inequalities and privileges, of which French villages were the familiar scene, and which in themselves remained unaltered, new, elective, municipal bodies sprang up to assert democratic methods, among conditions wholly irreconcilable with democratic ideas. When one considers the scope of these important changes, their novelty, their inconsistencies, and the suddenness with which they were made, one realises something of the confusion and paralysis which they must have produced in the public service, and one begins to understand why the agents of the Government proved so powerless, in spite of their prestige, when they had to face the crisis in 1789. On the very eve of the Revolution, Louis and his advisers, forgetful of the salutary maxim that the most dangerous moment for a bad Government is the moment when it meddles with reform, had deliberately destroyed the old, despotic, administrative system, which, at the end of the eighteenth century, formed the only certain mainstay of the throne.

It is not necessary to linger here over the episodes of Louis' reign. Turgot and Necker fell in turn ; but Necker carried with him from office a reputation for

sound finance, for disinterestedness, and for honest liberality of opinion, which won for him a name out of all proportion to his powers. He left behind him a problem of ever-increasing difficulty, and a deficit alarmingly enlarged by the intervention of France in the American war. For a time, after the overthrow of Necker, reactionary influences had their way. The wastefulness of the Treasury continued. The spectre of reform was for the moment laid. And at the head of that splendid and light-hearted Court, which combined the profuse traditions of the Grand Monarque with the gay philanthropy that was the fashion of the day, and resented all economies as mean, and radical innovations as thoroughly ill-bred, there stood, conspicuous in brilliancy and beauty, the figure of the Queen. Wilful and proud, unthinking and extravagant, intolerant of disagreeable facts, because she was wholly ignorant of their truth, already widely calumniated and misjudged, but destined to face far worse calumnies, which partisanship, in the mask of history, has repeated since, Marie Antoinette has never ceased to command the interest and attention of posterity, as her tragic story, and the fall to which her errors partly led, have never ceased to move its pity and respect. In 1783, Calonne took office as Comptroller-General, and for four years, encouraged by the favour of the Queen and Court, and helped by his own surprising agility and resource, Calonne maintained his place. Money was found at ruinous expense to supply the necessities of the Government and the rapacious claims of courtiers. Every day bankruptcy came more distinctly into view. At last Calonne, unable to carry on his system any longer, fell



back upon a desperate expedient. He summoned, in February, 1787, an extraordinary assembly of Notables, consisting of nobles, bishops, magistrates and officials, laid before them frankly the situation of affairs, and gaily informed them that within the last ten years the Government had borrowed no less than fifty millions sterling.

It is curious to notice the attitude of this assembly, and the way in which its action was received by the country. As might be expected, the Notables, consisting almost entirely of members of the privileged orders, were not prepared to make large personal sacrifices to save the state. When Calonne audaciously proposed to them the abolition of privileges and exemptions, and asked them to submit to a heavy tax, he fell, amid a storm of reproaches from the courtiers, who regarded him as a deserter from their ranks. But instead of carrying popular sympathy with him, Calonne found that his opponents, although they were resisting reform, had usurped the popularity of reformers. The Notables adroitly shifted the ground of attack to the conduct of the Government. They demanded the public accounts. They censured the acts of the Administration. And simply because they assailed the Government, and ventured to criticise and oppose the Crown, they suddenly found themselves, to their own surprise, transformed into popular heroes, and their conduct and courage applauded all over the kingdom. The same thing happened after Calonne's fall. Loménie de Brienne, the Archbishop of Toulouse, succeeded to Calonne's office, and found himself compelled to take up many of Calonne's plans. Thereupon the Parlement of Paris stepped to the front, and following the example

of the Notables, accepted some of the Minister's reforms, and particularly the edict for the establishment of provincial assemblies, while they rejected the new taxes, which were an inseparable part of the Government's scheme. In vain the King threatened and punished the members of the Parlement. The Parlement, borrowing the language of the times, and forgetting that they themselves were only a privileged and exclusive corporation, posed as the representatives of the nation, and demanded that the States-General should be summoned to express the national will.

The Government attempted to carry its schemes through with a high hand. All over the kingdom, the local Parlements, the judicial magistracy of France, took up the cause of the exiled Parlement of Paris, echoed its tones, and even threatened dangerous rebellion. In Dauphiné, in particular, the clergy, nobles, and commons of the province, gathering at Vizille, and led by the courageous eloquence of Mounier, protested against the policy of the Minister, and defied the Crown. The nation, caring little for the rights or wrongs of the quarrel, but delighted to see the all-powerful Government baffled and assailed, welcomed the Parlements as national deliverers, and proclaimed them the champions of popular freedom. For a moment the strange spectacle offered of the privileged orders in France defending their privileges, with the enthusiastic support of the nation, against the Government, which wished to destroy them in the interests of all. In face of this extraordinary union, the Government recoiled. Alarmed by the increase of riots and disorder, by the high price of food, by the disaffection in the army, by the

Ministry's total loss of credit, and by the prospect of bankruptcy in the immediate future, the King decided to consult the nation. He announced that the States-General, the ancient, representative Parliament of France, would again, after the lapse of a century and three-quarters, assemble to debate the destinies of the kingdom. Then the popularity of the privileged bodies died as suddenly as it had begun. In August, 1788, Necker was recalled to office, and a general outburst of rejoicing celebrated the astonishing surrender of the Crown.

A wise minister would have endeavoured by prompt and decisive action to allay the vague excitement of the time. Every day the feeling of restlessness was spreading in the country. Paris had become a great debating club. The tension in the public mind was already extreme. Instead, however, of hurrying on the elections, instead of showing a resolution to face the crisis with enlightenment and calmness, the Government hesitated, procrastinated, wavered, and allowed all the world to see that it had formed no policy, and hardly knew what its intentions were. The meeting of the States-General was delayed until the following spring, and in the meantime the Government stimulated the fever of opinion. All through the winter of 1788-9, France was flooded with political addresses and with democratic pamphlets—among which the audacious pamphlet of the Abbé Sieyès excited general remark—calculated to raise as high as possible the hopes and pride of the Tiers-État. To add to the war of words, the Government invited all classes to draw up Cahiers or petitions of grievances, to be laid before the States-General, when they met, and thus, by

its own action, it focussed the attention of its subjects on the many abuses which had been borne silently so long.

Moreover, when the important question of the constitution of the new States-General arose, the Government found it impossible to make up its mind. In the electoral arrangements, as might be expected from the innumerable local and personal rights still existing in the country, there was very great complexity and confusion. But the general principle, at any rate in the Pays d'Élection, was this. The nobles and clergy of each Bailliage, as a rule, elected their representatives directly, though the rule was subject to a good many exceptions. In the election of the commons, on the other hand, the voting was in no case direct, but had two, or even three or four degrees. All Frenchmen over twenty-five, who had paid even the smallest amount of direct taxes, had votes. They might vote for any representatives they pleased, for there was no property qualification for candidates. But they could not vote for them directly. The electoral assembly of each Bailliage thus consisted of the nobles and clergy of the Bailliage, and of a number of representatives of the commons, who had been previously elected by primary assemblies of voters in the different towns and villages of the Bailliage. When the electoral assembly of the Bailliage had been formed, the nobles, the clergy, and the electors of the Tiers-État, who composed it, separated into three distinct bodies<sup>1</sup>, and each

<sup>1</sup> In three cases only, in Langres, Péronne, and Montfort l'Amaury, the three orders sat and voted together in the electoral assembly.

order chose a certain number of deputies to represent it in the States-General at Versailles. The number of deputies allowed to each Bailliage varied according to circumstances, but was mainly determined by its population and wealth.

It was arranged without opposition that the nobles and the clergy in the States-General should have, according to usage, three hundred representatives each; but then the difficult question arose, how many deputies were the Tiers-État to elect. The advocates of democracy urged, amid enthusiastic applause from the public, that the commons infinitely out-numbered the other two orders, and ought therefore to have at least double the number of representatives. On this point Louis and Necker alike wavered undecided, besieged by the importunities of the democratic feeling which they had let loose in France. In vain Necker, in November, 1788, gathered another assembly of Notables, and tried to shift his responsibility on to them. The Government at last made up its mind to concession, and announced that the commons were to have 'the double representation'—six hundred representatives in the new Parliament. But the genius of irresolution still dogged its steps. It could not even then bring itself to decide whether the three orders should sit and vote in separate Houses, or whether they should all sit in one Chamber and vote together. The timidest intelligence must have perceived that, unless the three orders were to vote in one body, the numerical superiority which the commons had obtained would be without significance, and the Government's concession to popular feeling would be merely a

delusion. And yet to the last this important question was left undecided by the Crown, as a fruitful source of quarrel out of which the troubles of the Revolution might begin. So, with a Government perplexed by fears, with a local administration paralysed by a variety of recent changes, with signs of disorder multiplying upon every side, with innumerable difficulties requiring settlement, and with the fixed spirit of old traditions vainly attempting to assimilate the new, the monarchy prepared to meet the representatives of the nation, who, already flushed with triumph, and intoxicated with self-confidence and hope, advanced to realise their long-delayed millennium, and with the aid of freedom and philosophy to readjust the destinies of France.

## CHAPTER III.

### THE EARLY DAYS OF THE REVOLUTION.

ON the 5th May, 1789, the States-General were opened by Louis at Versailles. From the first the Government betrayed its helplessness, and its total inability to appreciate the situation. The Commons' deputies had come to Versailles for the most part with the largest expectations. They were fully alive to existing evils. They were full of schemes and ideals of reform. They foresaw, and were willing to foresee, no obstacles. They were prepared to transform the country; and they confidently expected, under the guidance of a benevolent King and of a liberal and experienced Minister, to begin without delay the work of national regeneration. But from the outset they encountered a series of checks and disillusionments, which increased in gravity as time went on. They found that the Government, instead of taking the lead with vigour, met them with no definite proposals for reform, and with little but vague philanthropic intentions over and above its desire to restore the finances. They found that the King and his advisers had not even made up their minds as to the constitution

of the new Parliament, and could not bring themselves to decide whether the three orders were to sit and vote together or apart. They found themselves in an atmosphere new to most of them, set to do work new to all, conscious in their own minds that a new era had begun and that they must assert themselves to mark it, but yet accustomed from immemorial habit to regard the nobles as their superiors, the King as their master, and the Government as irresistibly strong.

Accordingly, at first, the attitude of the Commons was one of great embarrassment. They had as yet no recognised leaders of their own, and the Ministers, to whom they looked for leadership, were silent and appeared to be as much perplexed as themselves. On one point only they were clearly resolved and determined to yield to no pressure. They insisted that the deputies of the nobles and clergy should join them, and should form one chamber with themselves. On their side, the nobles and clergy refused to listen to this innovation. The Commons steadily rejected a compromise, and on that point the deadlock arose. Instead of the States-General setting to work to repair the finances and to carry reforms, six weeks went by, occupied only with this preliminary quarrel, while all the time the excitement in Paris and in the country deepened, the conflict of class interests became more apparent and acute, and the reactionary courtiers rejoiced at the fiasco and used their influence to widen the breach. The Commons, growing more confident as they felt their strength, and as they realised the power of the forces behind them, held their ground, disregarded the pressure



and the innumerable, little, social slights, to which they were daily exposed at Versailles, and became more and more pronounced in their policy of self-assertion; and the Government revealed more strikingly than ever, alike to the States-General and to the public, its entire lack of purpose and resolve.

At last, after six weeks of waiting, the Commons took matters into their own hands, and from that moment events moved fast. On the 17th June, the deputies of the Tiers-État resolved on a momentous step, and on the motion of Sieyès, constituted themselves alone the National Assembly of France. The Government, alarmed at this usurpation of power, determined to reassert its authority and, while offering a large programme of reform, to insist on the separation of the three orders. On the 20th, the Commons found themselves excluded from their hall, and their sittings consequently interrupted; but they persevered in the policy which they had adopted, and adjourning simultaneously to the Tennis Court, swore solemnly never to separate till they had given a constitution to France. On the 23rd, the King came down in state to the Assembly Hall, and while offering large concessions, annulled the resolutions of the Commons. But the Commons, inspired by the courageous words of Mirabeau, rejected the programme which Louis had laid before them, adhered to their resolutions, and defied the Crown. Within a few days, the nobles and the clergy were requested by Louis to abandon the struggle, and the union of the three orders was complete.

But the Court party bitterly resented the usurpation of the Commons. The disorder in Paris was increasing fast.

Necker held ostentatiously aloof from his colleagues. The King, distressed and embarrassed, suffered himself to be persuaded by the haughtier spirits at Court, helped by the direct influence of the Queen, to make an attempt to recover the authority which he had allowed to slip from his grasp. The old Maréchal de Broglie, a veteran of the Seven Years' War, was summoned to the royal counsels. Great masses of troops, composed chiefly of Swiss and German regiments in the service of France, were concentrated, in spite of the protests of the Assembly, around Paris and Versailles. On the 11th July, Necker and three other Ministers were dismissed, and their places in the Government filled by decided adherents of the reactionary party. On the 12th, the news reached Paris, and the people, scared, famished and indignant, burst into revolt. On the 14th, that revolt culminated in the decisive movement which destroyed the Bastille, which shattered the plans of the Court party, and which completed the triumph of the Revolution and the humiliation of the Crown.

'With the 14th July,' said a wise and enlightened witness of the time, 'the terror began.' The rising in Paris was the signal for the first general outbreak of violent disorder in France, which proved that the distressed classes had taken the law into their own hands, and that the Government was utterly unable to cope with or control them. The strongest motive for disorder was unquestionably material want. For many years past, the condition of the poorer peasants and labourers, both in the towns and in the country side, had been almost intolerable, and in 1789, the chronic distress of this large

class reached an acute stage. In 1788, a severe drought had been followed, on the eve of the harvest, by a hail-storm of extraordinary violence and extent, which had destroyed the crops for sixty leagues round Paris. That, in turn, had been followed by the severest winter known for eighty years, which had completed the ruin which the drought and the storm had begun. The consequence was that, in the spring and summer of 1789, the price of bread rose as in a siege, and on all sides the cry of famine spread. From all parts of France, in the spring of 1789, came the same alarming rumours of scarcity and distress. From all parts of France, in the months preceding the capture of the Bastille, came the same reports of disturbances and riots occasioned by the want of food. Discontented peasants, unemployed labourers, rapidly reduced to criminals by hunger, passed from patient misery to despair, and broke out into resistance. Compromised or defeated in the country, they took refuge in the towns; and thus, in April and May, observers noticed that 'frightful numbers of ill-clad men of sinister appearance,' many of them foreigners, all more or less destitute and dangerous, were pouring into Paris, where already bread was exorbitantly dear, and where already the number of unemployed and paupers bore a dangerous proportion to the population of the city.

The trouble caused by the scarcity of food was stimulated by another motive second to it only in importance—the feverish excitement of political hope. Depressed and ignorant as they were, the labouring class in France had, nevertheless, grasped the idea that in some vague way the meeting of the States-General

marked an era in their lives, and was somehow or other destined to ease the intolerable burden of their lot. With them political freedom and constitutional reform took the immediate shape of food, work, and relief from feudalism and taxation. Once the idea had been implanted in them, their restless anticipations rapidly increased. Every week of delay rendered them less manageable. Every check experienced by the Assembly was a spur to their impatience. Every step taken by the Government to assert its authority or to overawe the reformers filled them with indignation, suspicion and panic. In the poorer districts of Paris, and especially in the gardens of the Palais Royal—the headquarters of Bohemians, idlers, mischief-makers, crowds—the political excitement of the time found expression in perpetual demonstrations, not unmingled with rioting and outbreaks. The regular authorities of the city, unused to the spectacle, looked on, unable to control it. The police force of Paris under the Ancien Régime was so small as to be practically useless. The garrison, formed of the Gardes Françaises, who were responsible for the maintenance of order, sympathised with the citizens, who spared no hospitality or flatteries to gain them, and finally, mutinying against their officers, went over to the popular side. The other regiments in the neighbourhood showed a marked inclination to follow the example of the Gardes Françaises. The Government, deserted by its own agents, drew back; and the spirit of disorder, produced by the desire for food and the desire for freedom, obtained the mastery of Paris, and took command of the Revolution too.

The example set by Paris was immediately followed in the provinces. At Strasbourg, Lyons, Dijon, Troyes, Besançon, Rouen, Caen, all over the country, spontaneous risings occurred, directed against the authorities or practices of the Ancien Régime, and often accompanied by violence and bloodshed. The people, stimulated by the pressure of famine and by the feverish excitement of the time, and believing that the hour of their deliverance had come, determined to deliver themselves. In different places the outbreak took a hundred different forms. In garrison cities the people, imitating the Parisians, attacked the nearest fortress or castle, and, as in Paris, the troops generally fraternised with the assailants. In some quarters popular indignation was directed against the tax-offices and custom-houses, in some against the local magistrates, in some against the tithes, in some against the newly-introduced machinery, in some against the Jews, in most against corn-dealers and all concerned in trafficking in grain. In the towns the distressed workmen rose against the bourgeois, and against the unjust economic system, which had long rendered their condition unbearable. In the country districts the peasants rose against the iniquities of feudalism, and burned the monasteries and châteaux, where the court-rolls, the records of their hated liabilities, were kept. No doubt, with the desire to redress abuses there mingled, in the minds of an ignorant and embittered peasantry, a great deal of ferocity and crime. In many places indiscriminate war was declared against all kinds of property, and the outbreak took the form of a struggle between rich and poor. But the most notable

features of the revolutionary movement were, first, its universality, and secondly, the powerlessness of the authorities to confront or to suppress it. Everywhere the agents of the administration collapsed. The Intendants, the law-courts, the police, completely paralysed, abdicated or disappeared, and the inhabitants of town and country alike, recognising the helplessness of the Government, gave way to an inevitable panic.

The consequence was that the months of July and August were signalled by a sense of insecurity amounting to terror. The wildest rumours pervaded the country, and the most extraordinary instances are found of places where the people, panic-stricken by some vague, unfounded report of the approach of brigands, who had no existence out of their imagination, rushed to arms or fled into concealment to protect themselves against their own alarm. One result of the 'great fear' was that volunteer forces of citizens, interested in restoring order, sprang up on all sides, in imitation of the National Guard just organised in Paris, to which they were destined before long to be assimilated; and these volunteer forces, though sometimes used by the bourgeois to repress the movements and to maintain the subjection of the labouring class, were still invaluable in restoring peace. Moreover, in place of the authorities of the Ancien Régime, there sprang up, to exercise the duties of administration, informal municipal committees composed of electors, which, usurping the powers abdicated by the Government, rapidly organised themselves, secured the obedience of their fellow-citizens, and set to work, as best they could, to reconstruct the administration of the

country. The rapidity and skill with which these municipal committees and their volunteer forces organised themselves, clearly illustrate the readiness of the provinces to act on their own initiative and to take over the responsibilities of the Revolution, and show how completely the people of France at first kept pace with, if they did not outstrip, their leaders in Paris and Versailles.

The most obvious and the wisest course for the National Assembly to adopt, would have been to legalise as rapidly as possible the changes so suddenly effected, and to set to work without delay to organise the new administrative system. After the 14th July, the King had completely surrendered, and the Assembly had only to act in order to be obeyed. The task before it was, it is true, difficult and almost endless. It was imperatively necessary to restore order. But it was also imperatively necessary—and this the Assembly did not see—to construct, as quickly as it could be done, some form of local government, to replace the old order which had disappeared. It was imperative to provide by some means for the necessities of the revenue, until a permanent financial system could be organised, in place of the old taxes which people would no longer pay. It was imperative to take steps to convince, not only the bourgeois and the peasants, but the distressed artisans in the towns as well, that the Assembly was alive to the urgent necessities of the moment, had a real grasp of the situation of affairs, and would do all that could be done to protect their interests, and to save them from the starvation which they imminently feared. These were the measures which Mirabeau urged upon his colleagues, but unfortunately, there were few

men in the Assembly who possessed the gift of practical statesmanship, which genius, lit by experience, had conferred on Mirabeau.

The character of that famous Assembly, read in its own day by the critical but far-seeing eyes of Burke, has excited the wonder of posterity. Its most notable feature was its want of practical experience. Among the upper clergy and the nobles, there were, it is true, certain deputies, who from their position had obtained some knowledge of affairs, but these men were liable to be distrusted by their colleagues, because the moderation which their experience taught them, obviously coincided with their interests. Among the Commons there were not a dozen men who had held important administrative posts. There was only one deputy, Malouet, who had held the great office of Intendant, and was in consequence really familiar with the working of the old administrative system. The great majority of the deputies of the Commons consisted of lawyers of little celebrity, who brought to the Assembly all the facility of expression, but little of the utilitarian caution, which in England is associated with their profession. The place of experience, in the case of most members of the Assembly, was taken by a large imagination, a boundless optimism, a vast store of philosophic tags and democratic phrases, a fatal fluency of speech, a fine belief in logic, an academic disregard of the rude facts of practical existence. Never was any body of men so much inspired by hope and confidence, so full of honourable enthusiasm, so convinced of its own ability, or so fixed in its honest desire, to regenerate the world.



Accordingly, the early history of the Assembly is marked by a series of strange scenes, only possible in a nation with whom extreme versatility of temperament takes the place of humour, illustrating the susceptibility, the emotion, the feverish excitement, the liability of the whole body to act on the impulse of the moment, regardless of what the consequences might be. A happy phrase, a witty saying, a burst of declamation, would carry it off its feet, and settle the fate of a division. The prodigious quantity of written rhetoric declaimed from the tribune wasted a prodigious quantity of time, but there was always an audience ready to applaud it. The debates were conducted with very little order. The entire absence of method in the Chamber often frustrated the business-like work done by its committees. In vain Mirabeau urged his colleagues to adopt the procedure of the English House of Commons. The French people, newly emancipated, disdained the example of any other nation. In the great halls at Paris and Versailles, where the Assembly successively sat, the process of legislation continued to be attended by a constant clatter of talk and movement, interrupted by noisy shouts and gestures, by obstruction and personal abuse, and aggravated by the presence in the galleries of large numbers of strangers, whom at first the Assembly welcomed, and whose turbulence it afterwards vainly attempted to control. The noisy demonstrations in the Strangers' Gallery encouraged extreme speeches and proposals, shouted down unpopular orators, and gradually organised a species of mob-rule. The occupants of the galleries ultimately became one of the greatest dangers and defects of the Assembly. By the

intimidation which they practised, not only inside its walls, but outside in the streets as well, they daunted and terrorised even brave men; and before long they forced into silence or flight many politicians, whose influence would have been valuable to the cause of moderation and good sense.

These facts ought not to be forgotten when one is considering the action of the Assembly, for they help to explain the slowness of its procedure, and illustrate the inexperience which was its besetting, but inevitable, fault. Moreover, during the months of July and August, the Assembly was probably still amazed at its own success, and had scarcely realised its own omnipotence. Most of the deputies of the majority, although anxious for reform, had no very definite opinions, and as yet the machinery of political parties and political principles did not exist among them. The consequence was that instead of acting with vigour and precision, they gave themselves up to general discussions. They imagined that men already in rebellion, clamouring for food and for a fair opportunity to earn it, would be satisfied by reiterated assurances that they were equal, sovereign, free; and proceeded to debate, for weeks together, the Declaration of the Rights of Man. From that subject they passed at length to consider the bases of the new constitution, and in the month of September two important constitutional questions were decided. The Assembly rejected by an overwhelming majority the proposal for dividing the future Parliament into two Houses on the English model, and resolved that there should be only one Chamber in the constitution which they were

beginning to create. Secondly, jealous of the royal authority, and misled by unstatesmanlike counsels, the Assembly determined, against the wiser voice of Mirabeau, that the King should have, not an absolute, but only a suspensive veto on the laws passed by the future Parliament; in other words, that he should not be able to reject any measure which the Chamber approved, but might refuse his sanction to it until time or agitation compelled him to yield. Once only, in these early weeks, did the Assembly come near to the questions which were really agitating France, when, on the night of the 4th August, horrified by the report of its own committee, it gave way to the impulse of the moment, and abolished in a series of reckless resolutions all feudal survivals, serfdom, tithes, all exemptions from taxes, and every other exclusive privilege existing in the kingdom. And yet, unwise as the Assembly's conduct seems to us, and incapable as it unquestionably proved, nothing can be clearer than the uprightness of intention, which governed it as a whole in these early days, and the earnest enthusiasm for humanity and justice, which dictated its policy and distended its debates.

But while the Assembly debated, Paris starved. The victory of the 14th July had done little for the Parisians, and the disorder which had accompanied it, and which had broken out afresh, a week later, in the murder of the detested Intendant Foulon, had not by any means ceased. Three days after the fall of the Bastille, the King had come to Paris, to be publicly reconciled with his subjects, and Bailly and Lafayette had been informally elected, the one Mayor of Paris, the other

Commander-in-chief of the new National Guard. Lafayette at once set to work to form the National Guard of Paris into a civic army of thirty thousand men, and incorporated the Gardes Françaises with them as a paid battalion. He spared no pains to attach the force to his own person; and it seems clear that he designed to use it, not only to maintain order in the interests of the middle class, and to keep down the large discontented element which swarmed in the city, but also as a political instrument, to direct the Revolution in accordance with his own views. But even with this force behind him, Lafayette found that order was exceedingly difficult to keep; while Bailly, for his part, was overwhelmed with anxiety, working day and night with troublesome subordinates to supply the capital with bread, which daily became dearer and harder to obtain.

Meantime the causes which led to disturbance were steadily increasing rather than diminishing. The emigration of the aristocrats had begun. Paris, always a city of luxury, and depending largely on the sale of luxuries for her support, found herself deserted by the Court, the rich, the travelling public, by the great spending class to whose expensive wants she ministered, and whom the disorders of July had driven away. Thousands of journeymen tailors, shoe-makers and hair-dressers, thrown out of work, thousands of domestic servants, thrown out of places, thousands of makers of lace and fans, of carriages and upholstery, of jewellery and nick-nacks, thrown out of employment by the cessation of their trades, began to gather and demonstrate in different quarters of the city. Beggars from the country and deserters from the army

continued to pour in, to fraternise with the people, to join in the exciting politics of the Palais Royal, to add to the pressure upon the food supply. In vain the new municipal authorities opened relief works at Montmartre, and sold grain to the bakers at a heavy loss. The discontent became more general and threatening. The oratory of the Palais Royal, which followed with intense keenness the debates of the Assembly, and which was almost ready to take arms on behalf of the suspensive veto, increased in vehemence. The suspiciousness and distrust of the Court—suggested, it may be, by emissaries of the Duke of Orleans—which had so largely contributed to the outbreak in July, revived in full force as September went by. The Parisians knew or suspected that one party at Court was constantly urging the King to retire further from Paris. They believed that their troubles would never end until they had the King and the Assembly in their midst. And when, at the end of September, the Government, acting probably in the interests of order, brought up the Flanders regiment to Versailles, and the courtiers made the arrival of the troops the occasion for a great royalist demonstration, the excitement in the capital broke bounds again, and the extraordinary march of the women to Versailles effected the capture of the King.

The events of the 5th and 6th October need no description. Their origin is a mystery still. But their result was most important. The royal family and the National Assembly were removed to Paris, and were thenceforward kept in Paris, as hostages in the hands of the strongest party. The fortunes of Paris became

decisive of the fortunes of the Revolution in France. But the democratic forces, which had won the day, did not reap the fruits of the victory. The advantage of the movement fell entirely to the party which represented the views and formed the following of Lafayette, the party of middle class reformers, who, by securing the person of the King, finally baffled the forces of reaction, and obtained the control of the Revolution themselves. It was this party which had organised the National Guard. Now that it was triumphant, it honestly wished to consolidate, in its own fashion, liberty and order. But, unfortunately, the charge is with some justice made against it, that, consciously or unconsciously, it did not care for the interests of the class below it, by whose assistance it had achieved its triumph, and by whom it was destined in its turn to be overthrown. The leader of this party was Lafayette; and the more the records of those two days are examined, the more difficult is it to resist the conclusion that Lafayette's action all through them was calculated to promote his own advantage, and that his intention was to use the forces of revolution just enough to frighten the King into submission, then to appear upon the scene as his deliverer, and to turn the King's submission to account. In that intention Lafayette succeeded, and the events of the 5th and 6th October made his views and his authority for a time the dominant influence in the State.

## CHAPTER IV.

### THE LABOURS OF THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY.

AFTER its arrival in Paris, the Assembly continued, amid many interruptions, the work of constructing the new constitution, and the same blind attachment to captivating theories, which had wasted so many weeks in barren discussion at Versailles, pervaded its debates and its decrees in Paris. The great bulk of the members of the Assembly were determined to carry into practice the idea of the sovereignty of the people, and to observe, as far as logic could, the natural rights of man. If facts or experience conflicted with these theories, facts and experience must go to the wall. The circumstances, needs or traditions of nations seemed to them to be of little importance in comparison with the eternal principles which philosophy had laid down for the government of the world. In pursuance of these views, the slaves in the French colony of St. Domingo were immediately emancipated, without regard to the difficulties involved in so summary a proceeding, or the disaster certain to ensue. 'Let the colonies perish,' cried a member of the Assembly, 'rather than sacrifice a principle.' In pursuance also of these views, all titles of nobility were abolished, as being 'repugnant to reason and to true liberty.' It became an

offence and subsequently a crime for a nobleman to sign his name in the old style. The Assembly taught the people to regard rank as something wrong; and the people, taking up the idea, and colouring it with their own fears and ancient hatreds, soon came to look on all possessors of rank as evil-doers, who had no right to fair treatment or protection from the law, and for whom the proper destiny was the guillotine. On the same vague theories the constitution was built up. The desire to place sovereignty in the hands of the people led the Assembly to impose many complicated political duties upon the great mass of citizens, who had never as yet exercised any political functions at all. At the same time they curtailed as far as possible, and hampered by a system of elaborate checks, the power which they left to those at the head of affairs, who had long been accustomed to political duties, and who had certainly fulfilled them very ill. The result was a complete paralysis in the Government, and a constitution foredoomed to fail.

The best hope for the Revolution lay in the speedy establishment of a strong Government, composed of men thoroughly in harmony with the majority in the Assembly, possessed of power sufficient to ensure order, and of popularity sufficient to command support. The establishment of such a Government was from the first Mirabeau's object; but the Assembly soon proceeded to render it impossible. The great majority of deputies, who had accepted the proposition that all power ought to proceed from the people, regarded it as the corollary of that proposition, that executive government, which



nominally proceeded from the King, was opposed to the people's interests, and that all executive agents were inimical to freedom. To their minds, naturally enough, executive power was associated with the old monarchy and the Court, and the old monarchy and the Court they justly regarded as antagonistic to the principles of liberty. The proper remedy was to render the Executive thoroughly dependent on the popular will, and to unite it with the Assembly so closely that the policy and interests of both must be the same. Instead of that, the Assembly set a barrier between itself and the Executive, which rendered cordial co-operation impossible, and early in November, 1789, it passed a most unfortunate decree, rendering all members of the House ineligible for places in the Government.

It may or it may not be fair to attribute the decree of the 7th November to the influence of Necker and Lafayette, and to their jealous fear of Mirabeau's ambition. But of all the measures of the Assembly, there was probably none which was more disastrous in its effects upon the Revolution. Only a strong Government could have coped with the rising anarchy in France; but from that day forward a strong Government became impossible, until the legislature, to escape from the difficulty which it had created, invested its own committees with dictatorial powers. From that day forward, the breach between the Assembly and the Crown inevitably widened. The members of the Assembly lost all chance of learning from the responsibilities of office the experience and stability which they so much required. Their jealousy and distrust of the Executive deepened. As they did not

choose or trust the Ministers, they determined narrowly to circumscribe their powers, and limited and embarrassed them at every turn. The King, the head of this dangerous Executive, was as far as possible stripped of power. He was not allowed to veto—except for a limited time—the measures of the Assembly. He was not allowed to convoke, to adjourn or to dissolve it. It was only after a determined struggle, and owing to the extraordinary influence of Mirabeau, that the King and his Ministers were permitted to retain the initiative upon questions of war and peace. They were deprived of almost all authority over their own agents in the Government and the law. They had no power to appoint, to control, to reward, or to punish the official subordinates who nominally carried out their commands. The Assembly held them responsible for the safety of the country. It watched them with jealous carefulness. It threatened them with overwhelming penalties if they transgressed. It deliberately refused to be associated with them, or to share their responsibilities in any way. It treated them from the first as suspected persons, and reduced them to mere figure-heads, at which to point the calumnies which its own fears composed. One of the first steps taken by the Assembly towards constructing its new constitution, was thus to make the business of government an almost impossible task in France.

Hardly less mischievous than its dread of executive power was the passion for electoral contrivances which possessed the Assembly. It was to some extent this passion which had guided it in its rejection of an Upper Chamber, but the depth of the feeling was more strongly

illustrated by the new system of local government, which it adopted in the winter of 1789-1790. Under this system all existing divisions and provincial distinctions were swept away, and the country was as nearly as possible symmetrically divided into 83 departments. These departments were further subdivided into 574 districts, into 4,730 cantons, and lastly into 44,000 communes or municipalities<sup>1</sup>. Of these four divisions the cantons possessed no administrative importance, being only invented for purposes of symmetry and to facilitate the electoral operations. But each of the others, each department, district, and municipality, had its own little constitution, based upon popular election, but with many varieties and complexities of form. Every department, district, and municipality had its own council or deliberative body, and its own executive officers too. The officials of the municipalities were elected directly by the citizens within them. But the higher officials of the districts and departments were, like the deputies to the National Assembly, elected by a double system of election. The primary assemblies of the cantons—that is all the ‘active’ citizens in each department—chose first a body of electors, and these electors then elected the officials of their own department, the officials of the districts which lay within that department, and lastly the deputies who were to represent the department in the National Assembly at Paris. The right of voting for all these officials was restricted to

<sup>1</sup> Different authorities give different figures. But these seem to be the most correct.

'active' citizens, that is to all citizens over twenty-five years of age, who paid in direct taxes to the State a sum equal in amount to three days' wages. The right of standing for any of the offices was further restricted to those who paid direct taxes equal in amount to a mark of silver. All active citizens were required to serve in the National Guard, of which each municipality had its own battalion. The National Guards chose their own commanders, and were under the direct control of the municipal authorities, with whom the chief responsibility for the maintenance of order lay.

It would not have been easy to create a system more complicated or difficult to work. The object of establishing these numerous bodies with their innumerable officials was that they might balance and control each other. The result was the paralysis of all. The immense number of the new officials rendered impossible rapidity of work. The cost of their salaries, though individually low, was cumulatively very high. The strangeness of their functions, which were very numerous, and which included the assessment and collection of the taxes, the maintenance of religion, of education, and of public works, the control of streets and highways, of sanitation, of the poor law, of prisons and of police, would in any case have been embarrassing enough; but it became far more so, when no one could tell where his own functions ended and another man's began. Half of the new officials found the other half from the first inclined to question their authority, to dispute their commands, and to accuse them of over-stepping their rights. The higher among them had no power of en-

forcing obedience from their subordinates, who argued against orders which they disliked, and acted on them or not, as they pleased. In the confusion of the time the habits of discipline and obedience were naturally lax, and refractory underlings could plead with some force that they were just as well qualified as their superiors to interpret the principles of the Rights of Man.

Accordingly, it soon became apparent that the real authority under the new system lay not in the high officials of the departments, or in the helpless Ministers at Paris, but in the forty-four thousand communes, which in many respects were independent of their superiors, and which managed their own affairs. To the communal authorities was entrusted the task of repressing riots and disorder, and the control for that purpose of military force. On them was thrown an immense amount of executive work, and the duty of carrying out in detail all the great social and political reforms, by which, month after month, the decrees of the National Assembly were changing the face of France. In many places the communal or municipal officials were ignorant and uneducated men, for in the country parishes there were often no bourgeois, the local priests were ineligible for office, and the local gentry were fugitives or 'suspects.' In twenty thousand of the new municipalities, it was stated in the Assembly, the officials elected could not read or write. Men of this description—men indeed of any description—overwhelmed with work, surrounded by novelties and disorder, and perplexed by the multitude of their duties and coadjutors, were certain to find their task beyond them, and speedily to fall into confusion and arrears.

No sooner had the new system been established, than its servants began unwillingly to discover how impossible it was to work it with success.

One of the most prominent features of the new order was the demand which it made upon people's time. Under it, it was estimated, one out of every thirty-four men in the country held office. But even for those who escaped the troubles of office, no small burden of citizenship remained. Every active citizen was an elector and a member of the National Guard. As riots were perpetual, his service in the National Guard soon became burdensome. As elections multiplied, as every place in the municipality, in the district, in the department, in the legislature, and before long in the various branches of the law and of the Church was filled by election, and as each election presupposed meetings, committees, canvassing, and a large expenditure of time, his duties as an elector gradually became intolerable. The history of the innumerable elections held in France after the outbreak of the Revolution shows clearly that busy, working people found it impossible, after a time, to perform all the duties imposed on them by the State; and, immersed in the calls of business, drew away from politics, when their first enthusiasm had worn off, and gave up coming to the polls. Politics steadily fell more and more into the hands of those who were prepared to make their living out of them. Only the unoccupied and the ambitious were willing to give the time required to speeches, to meetings, to party organising, to all the arts of many different shades, by which minute democracies are won, and which are essential to political success, where every

office in the service in the State is made the prize of the electioneer.

It is curious, however, to notice in the new constitution two points, on which the devotion of the Assembly to theoretic rights gave way to its devotion to other considerations. The two decrees, which limited the franchise, and which imposed a property qualification for office, were clearly incompatible with the high doctrines of the Rights of Man. The importance of them was specially felt in Paris, where they affected a large number of energetic politicians, including a great many journalists and workmen in irregular employment. They were at once made the subject of strong protest in the democratic Press, and the more advanced leaders seized the opportunity to point out with unanswerable force the disposition which the Assembly showed to promote the interests and influence of the bourgeois at the expense of the working-class. Nothing probably among the earlier measures of the Assembly did so much as these two decrees to give colour to that idea, and to deepen the feeling of antagonism towards the middle class, which was already perceptible among the working people in the towns.

The same prepossession for electoral devices appeared in the Assembly's judicial reforms. No part of its work was better conceived or, thanks to the influence of the great lawyers in the House, carried out in a better spirit than this. The old courts and Parlements, with their abuses and delays, and their objectionable system of payment by fees, were swept away. The power of arbitrary imprisonment, the practice of torture, the prose-

cutions for heresy, the inequalities in the administration of justice, and the disproportionate punishments for trivial offences, which then disgraced the penal codes of nearly every European country, were exchanged for a new and more equitable system. Trial by jury was made the rule in criminal cases. Counsel were permitted to be employed for the defence of the accused. Complete publicity was introduced into the proceedings of the law courts. A simple system was established for the administration of justice. A civil court was created in each district, a criminal court in each department, a final court of appeal at Paris; and, besides these tribunals, small courts of summary jurisdiction, under *Juges de Paix*, all over the country, and a special High Court at Orleans to try cases of treason against the nation. But, admirable in many respects as the new system was, and brightly as it contrasts with the dark practices of the *Ancien Régime*, there ran through it all one grave defect, which went far to diminish its value. With few exceptions, the judges and officers of the law courts were appointed by popular election for short periods of time, and were thus liable to be deprived of their posts, if their sentences and conduct did not coincide with popular feeling. Such a provision has been wisely held to be a serious danger to justice, even among a tranquil and reasonable people. It was infinitely more dangerous in a time of revolution, when reason was far less potent than suspicion, and political passion ran exceptionally high.

The Assembly carried even into military matters its dread of authority and its fondness for abstract theories



and electoral schemes. Both army and navy were in a thoroughly unsatisfactory condition. The spirit of political insubordination had spread far in both services, and had produced mutiny and disaffection. The state of the army, especially, had for some time past given cause for alarm. Nowhere was the system of class distinction more jealously kept up. All the higher offices in the army were open to men of rank alone, and even in the reign of Louis XVI fresh regulations had been imposed to guard and enforce this class distinction. The pay of the upper officers was sometimes very high, and the number of generals was ridiculously large. On the other hand, the pay of the men was extremely low, and it was notorious that even the allowances made to them by the State were often curtailed by the officers through whose hands they passed. The barracks, the beds, and the food supplied for the men were, as a rule, bad and insufficient. Recruits were drawn from the lowest class in the country. The prestige and tone of the service had suffered during recent years, and the attempt made under Louis XVI to introduce a more rigid and harassing system of drills had widely increased the spirit of discontent. On an army already disaffected the doctrines of the Rights of Man, and the expectations of universal change and relief from oppression, which accompanied the Revolution, had their natural effect. On all sides signs of mutiny appeared. The men refused to obey their officers, formed committees and held meetings of their own, sent up petitions to the National Assembly, and demanded more pay and the management of their regimental chests. Desertions

rapidly increased. Men and officers alike disregarded the rules of discipline, and set their superiors at defiance. On all sides the rank and file of the army showed an inclination to fraternise with the people, and refused to serve in putting down disorder. At last, in August, 1790, a serious mutiny at Nancy opened the eyes of the Assembly to the danger of the situation; and the great majority of its members concurred in the vigorous and exemplary severity, by which Bouillé, with the support of the National Guards of the district, reduced the mutinous regiments to order.

No dangers, however, could make the majority of the Assembly understand that, if an army and navy were to be maintained at all, soldiers and sailors must be subjected to stringent discipline and governed by exceptional laws, without regard to the abstract Rights of Man. They set to work, it is true, to reorganise both services. They abolished the hated militia. They refused to sanction conscription in the army, although they permitted it within certain limits for the navy. They raised the pay of the men. They threw open promotion in both services to all ranks and conditions alike. They abolished the superfluity of highly paid offices, and laid down some other reasonable regulations for both departments. They abstained, in spite of their proclivities, from making all military and naval offices elective. But they jealously restricted the King's power of appointing officers. They could not be brought to see the necessity of enforcing discipline at any cost, and endeavoured to limit, by such provisions as they could invent, the authority of the officers over their men. They gave the soldiers the

right of appealing to the nearest civil magistrate against their own commander. They placed the control of the military chest in the hands of a board elected by the regiment. They permitted the men to form clubs and associations, and to petition the Assembly for the protection of their rights. They insisted on regarding the soldier as a citizen still; and although for purely military offences they left him subject to the jurisdiction of the military courts, they took special steps even in those courts to assert the rights of the accused, and to diminish the influence of the military authorities. The result of all these regulations was that the Government could no longer rely upon its forces, and that discipline in both services remained thoroughly relaxed, until the approach of national disaster taught Frenchmen the necessity which no theories could avert, and until the rigid discipline of danger drilled these disorderly and mutinous battalions into the most magnificent army which the world had seen.

But graver than its errors in regard to judicial and military reform were the Assembly's errors in regard to the Church. The attack upon the Church has been viewed in many quarters as the most conspicuous example of its unwisdom. The lower ranks of the French clergy had shared to a very large extent the enthusiasm of Frenchmen for the Revolution. Some of them were among the most enlightened members of the Assembly, and were prepared to co-operate heartily in the work of reform. But the financial difficulties of the State were never absent from the minds of the Assembly, and the great possessions of the Church seemed to offer a way

out of those difficulties too tempting to be overlooked. It was on this side that the attack began. As early as the 4th August, 1789, tithes had been summarily abolished, and a portion of the income of the Church had thus been cut away, without, as Sieyès vainly pointed out, relieving anyone except the proprietors of land. In the following autumn, Mirabeau carried through the Assembly a decree declaring the possessions of the Church to be the property of the nation, and early in the new year the work of reconstitution began. In February, 1790, the monasteries and religious houses were suppressed, and their property appropriated. In April it was proposed to vote a budget for the maintenance of the clergy. In June, going further still, the Assembly undertook to re-organise the whole ecclesiastical system, and after long and animated debates the Civil Constitution of the clergy was adopted in the month of July. In August the Assembly formally took over the management of the property of the Church.

The new constitution of the clergy was simplicity itself. Monasteries, chapters, canons, dioceses, all impediments to uniformity, were abolished. One bishop was appointed for each department, and one priest for every parish. Incomes, ranging from about fifty thousand francs for the wealthiest bishops to about six thousand francs for the poorest priests—incomes in themselves thoroughly equitable and a marked improvement upon the mingled poverty and extravagance of the older system—were voted for the maintenance of the new hierarchy. The fondness of the Assembly for deliberative bodies was satisfied by giving the bishops eccle-

siastical councils to advise them, and its attachment to elective principles was shown by the astonishing decree, which declared that in future both bishops and priests were to be elected by the votes of their flocks. It was inevitable that so sweeping a change should excite opposition and result in failure. Even on the financial side, which on paper showed a very large saving to the State, difficulties speedily arose. The Assembly, fully intending to act fairly, undertook to pension the numerous ecclesiastics whose interests suffered vitally from the reforms. But money was scarce, and the charges undertaken by the State were very heavy. The dispossessed ecclesiastics, the monks and nuns, soon began to feel the meaning of the change, and their history soon began to exhibit many pitiful cases of want and distress. With the disestablishment of the monastic foundations, the institutions which they had maintained declined, and their schools and asylums languished. The destruction of so ancient and widespread a system could not, however necessary it might be, be carried through, in a time of revolution, without a good deal of suffering and injustice. But the methods of the Assembly aggravated the violence of the change. They had the power, and probably the right, to disestablish and to disendow the old Church. But they had neither the right nor the power to force men's consciences to accept their substitute for it, whether they would or not. Moreover, they did not understand that the new constitution of the clergy was absolutely repugnant to the spirit of Roman Catholicism, and involved ideas which that spirit could not possibly accept. They

believed that all authority and government ought to begin with the people, to come from below; and in accordance with that view they framed the new system of their Church. But if there was one principle which the Roman Church held dear, and which it had clung to even more closely than to its dogmas, ever since it established its ascendancy in Europe, it was the principle that all authority in the Church proceeded from above. To every faithful Catholic the Pope held a spiritual power derived from Heaven; without the Pope's consent no share of that spiritual power could pass to bishop or to priest; and without such sanctions and authority from above, no man, whatever civil force might lie behind him, could administer with God's approval the services and sacraments of the Church. Beliefs of that kind, founded on conscience, and fixed in immemorial habit, could not be uprooted by any decrees. Even had the Assembly secured the Pope's consent, it seems doubtful whether its scheme would have been finally accepted in the country. Instead of that, it took no steps to conciliate the Papacy, but ostentatiously held itself aloof from Rome, and by various provocative measures showed its intention to set the Pope's authority at defiance.

The consequences were immediate and disastrous. The clergy as a whole fought the new scheme at every stage. The Assembly, conscious of the strength of their resistance, endeavoured to overcome it by compelling them all to take an oath to observe the new Civil Constitution. When the clergy procrastinated and refused, the Assembly found itself driven into more stringent measures, and at the end of 1790, obliged either to

abandon its position or to take a more aggressive line, it demanded the King's consent to a decree enforcing compliance under penalties of dismissal and prosecution. From that time forward, the Revolution declared war upon the Church, and upon all the devout Catholics who adopted the cause of their pastors. From that time forward, the King, though he yielded to the pressure of the Assembly, gave up all hope of reconciling himself with the principles of the Revolution. From that time forward the Church in France was divided into two camps, the one consisting of those who took the oath and accepted the new system, and including, among a very few prelates and a large number of dispossessed monks, perhaps half of the old clergy of France, the other consisting of those who refused it, and including nearly all the prelates, all the most distinguished names, and most of the secular clergy of the ancient Church. On the one side were the sanctions of the law, the support of the State, and the assistance of all the new civil authorities. On the other side were the commands of the Pope, the sympathies of the great majority of pious Catholics, and the strength derived from conscientious opposition to severity and persecution. Both sides inevitably had their partisans in many towns and villages in France; and the virulence of religious partisanship before long produced, in the South and West, trouble, rebellions and civil war, and still further embittered the divisions, and aggravated the general confusion, which accompanied the Assembly's endeavours to reform and regenerate France.

Closely connected with the attack upon the Church was the embarrassing question of finance. No man, on

the outbreak of the Revolution, enjoyed so high a reputation for finance as Necker, and no man probably misused that reputation more. Everyone knew that the financial embarrassments of the country were the real cause of the summoning of the States-General. Everyone knew that there was, first, an enormous annual deficit amounting to at least 120 or 130 million francs, and rising for the year 1789 to a much higher figure, and, secondly, a very heavy floating debt. The natural course, and the only wise one, would have been for the Minister to have laid bare at once all the embarrassments of the State, and to have used his great popularity and credit for facing the difficulty boldly, and for setting matters on a satisfactory footing for the future. Instead of that, Necker, either for mistaken political reasons, or for more personal and less worthy causes, from the first minimised the financial difficulty, represented the deficit as much less than it was, described the work of restoring order in the finances as 'mere child's play,' and concealed the worst features of the situation from the public to whom he appealed for support. Necker's system of finance had been to proceed by raising loans on favourable terms—a system for which his financial reputation and connections gave him peculiar facilities. During the summer of 1789, he continued to carry on this system, and the State lived, for a time, upon the money which Necker raised by loan or borrowed from the Caisse d'Escompte, and upon the patriotic contributions which enthusiastic ladies and gentlemen poured into the Exchequer. But by the autumn, it had become clear, even to Necker, that this system would not do for ever, that the credit of the



State was not improving, that loans could no longer be raised with success, and that the condition of the finances generally was far worse than it had been five months before. Thereupon, at the end of September, Necker came forward with a heroic remedy, and thanks to the support of Mirabeau, he induced the Assembly to consent to an extraordinary tax of one quarter of all incomes in the country, to be paid within the next three years.

But even this drastic expedient failed. The method of assessing the tax, and the time over which the period of payment was spread, contributed to frustrate its results. The embarrassments of the State increased. The debt steadily mounted ; for, after the outbreak of the Revolution, people on all sides refused to pay taxes, and the Government was compelled to use for current purposes any money on which it could lay hands. Then too, the extraordinary expenses of the year, occasioned by the circumstances of the Revolution, were exceptionally heavy, and the cost of keeping Paris quiet was heavier still. In two months alone of the winter of 1789-90, the State paid over to the Parisian authorities seventeen million francs for the purchase of corn, and it is estimated that in the year which followed, it advanced to the various municipalities in the departments no less than sixteen hundred millions, in order to cheapen the price of bread. Besides that, it was soon called on by the Parisian authorities—and the calls of Paris were rarely refused—to pay over many millions more, for keeping up relief-works for the unemployed workmen of the capital, for maintaining and equipping its National Guard, for defraying the expenses of destroying the Bastille, and even for lighting

and paving its streets. Under these circumstances matters grew steadily worse, and Mirabeau fell back on the idea of appropriating the property of the Church, and of using the credit and resources so obtained in order to issue paper money to pay the pressing creditors of the State. By that means he hoped to gain a breathing-space, until a strong Government could be formed to grapple thoroughly with the whole question. The idea, once formed, was soon put into execution. Early in November, 1789, the Assembly declared that the lands and property of the Church were at the disposal of the State. In December, it directed a part of this property, to the value of four hundred millions of francs, to be sold for the national benefit. In the following March, as the land did not sell quickly, it was determined to make it over to the various municipalities, to sell at a handsome profit to themselves, and in the meantime to issue paper money, also to the extent of four hundred millions, to increase the currency and to act as bank notes. Thus, in April, 1790, there came into existence the Assignats.

It is worth while to follow for a little the history of the Assignats, for they afterwards became one of the most characteristic and disastrous features of Revolutionary finance. The intention of their authors had been to use the Assignats as a temporary convenience, to tide over the many pressing difficulties of the moment, until the State could find time to face and to settle the question of its finances. In that idea, had it been rigidly adhered to, there was nothing economically wrong. But from the first, the plan proved disappointing. The sale of the Church lands brought in comparatively little. The muni-

icipalities naturally considered their own interests first, and did not always sell the lands in the manner most profitable to the State. They permitted the buyer to take possession on payment of a very small instalment of the price ; and in many cases speculators, taking advantage of this system, bought Church land largely, then cut down the timber and pulled down the houses on it, and having made what profit they could, decamped before the second instalment became due. In the existing state of the administration, it was not difficult to play tricks with the law. Moreover, purchasers of these lands were permitted to pay for them in Assignats, the idea being that all the paper money issued would thus return into the Exchequer, and pass out of circulation as the Church lands were sold off. The fact, however, that the Assignats were accepted by the municipalities at their nominal value made it the object of speculators to depreciate them, and thus from the first a powerful motive was at work to depreciate the new currency. The consequence was, that within a few months of the first issue of Assignats, the embarrassments of the State were as pressing as ever. The Assignats already issued had been spent, and the Assembly, as far as ever from financial order, could only suggest the issuing of more. Then again Mirabeau, aware of the dangers of his course, but still struggling to avert bankruptcy, and hoping for a change of Ministry which might ultimately set matters right, threw his influence into the same scale. In September, 1790, he induced the Assembly to sanction a final issue of eight hundred millions more, towards the liquidation of the National Debt ; to enact that more than twelve hundred millions should

never be put into circulation, and to provide that all Assignats paid into the Treasury thenceforward should be burned.

But once the Assembly had entered on the downward course, it found it impossible to stop. The strong Government and the financial readjustment, which Mirabeau had hoped for, never came. The eight hundred millions went, as the four hundred millions had gone before them, and still there seemed to be no prospect of the debt ever being redeemed, or of a balance ever being established between the income and the expenditure of the State. Again and again the Government found that it must either face bankruptcy, or else get over its difficulties for the moment by fresh issues of paper money, and again and again, when the alternative had to be faced, it naturally chose the latter course. By June, 1791, the issue of the previous September had been exhausted, and casting its own prudent limitations to the winds, the Assembly issued six hundred millions more. From that time forward the depreciation of the paper money steadily and rapidly advanced. The Treasury, departing from the original proposal, had already begun to issue Assignats of quite small value. Paper money soon became the regular currency in which wages were paid; and even the poorest classes thus learned to feel the effects of its variations, and to make such profit out of those variations as they could. With the depreciation of the Assignats and the disappearance of specie, the rage for speculation, naturally stimulated by the rapidity of political change, took hold of the public mind, and the spirit of gambling increased in all classes the unrest and fever of the time.

The Assembly, it is true, did at length endeavour to face the whole financial position, and to establish at any rate its current finances on a firm and permanent footing. But the manner in which it made the attempt was sufficient to ensure its failure. The expenses of the Revolution had necessarily been very large. The Assembly had, no doubt, cut down the expenses of the Court, of the army, and of the Church; but it had at the same time undertaken new and very heavy burdens. The cost of the new system of local government and of the new system of administering justice involved a large increase in the annual expenditure. The cost of compensating the officers suppressed in the Law, the Church, and the public services, of pensioning off the dispossessed ecclesiastics, and of buying out the innumerable vested interests at which the reforms of the Assembly had struck, alone amounted to an enormous sum. There were all the debts of the Ancien Régime to be taken over, and besides that all the deficits in the current accounts, which steadily accumulated, month after month, down to the end of 1790. The property of the Church, which was at first regarded as an inexhaustible treasure, and estimated at much beyond its real value, disappointed the expectations of its new possessors, as they saw it frittered away in issues of Assignats. The abolition of tithes, though a great benefit to the proprietors of land, had in no way enriched the Exchequer. The abolition of feudal dues, though a heavy loss to their old possessors and an infinite gain to the nation at large, had brought nothing into the coffers of the State. The cessation of the hated

Gabelle and of many other indirect taxes, which the people had refused any longer to pay, and which the Assembly, making a virtue of necessity, had accordingly abolished, had cut away one large source of revenue. It remained to find the means of making good the deficiency and of providing for the charges which the Revolution had imposed.

It is in the steps taken to balance the accounts of the nation that one sees perhaps most clearly the fatal optimism of the Assembly, and its rooted and culpable unwillingness to face disagreeable facts. There was no doubt that the Revolution had been extremely costly. Its advantages, the reforms which it had instituted, and the facilities for attaining prosperity which it had opened up to Frenchmen, were obvious and clear. It was equally obvious that those advantages and reforms must entail considerable expenditure, and must be paid for by those who enjoyed them. Instead, however, of taking that line, as in duty it was bound to do, the Assembly seems to have determined that, whatever its needs and difficulties might be, it would so frame its budget, that no one should be able to say that the Revolution had increased the taxation of the people. Accordingly it proceeded to draw up a list of its expenses, which was from beginning to end fallacious. The financiers of the Assembly fixed the votes for each department at a figure which could not possibly cover the expenses, and set down the total expenditure at many millions below its real cost. They then proceeded to reckon up the revenue, over-estimating each item here, as they had under-estimated each item on the other side. They set

down as a part of the revenue two or three large items of a purely temporary and exceptional kind. They made no allowance whatever for extraordinary expenses, which they had already estimated at seventy-six millions of francs. They sacrificed to democratic feeling many of those indirect taxes which democracies always resent,—the taxes on salt, tobacco, wine and spirits, and other commodities of less importance. They remodelled the whole system of internal tariffs and swept away its objectionable features. They took some steps in the direction of free trade, and abolished the guilds and the restrictions upon labour. But they by no means entirely abandoned the protective system, and they maintained all indirect taxes which escaped notice, and against which no popular outcry was raised. It is significant of the overwhelming influence which Paris exercised on the deliberations of the Assembly, that the octrois of the city of Paris remained undiminished and untouched, in spite of the general attack made upon the system of indirect taxation. The reason was that the municipality of Paris could not afford to dispense with these duties, and the Assembly dared not abolish what the municipality of Paris wished to maintain. It was not until the working classes of Paris compelled the municipality to suggest the abolition of the impost, that the octrois of Paris were swept away.

Having thus lost a great deal of the revenue raised by indirect taxation, the Assembly proceeded to make up the deficit by imposing two direct taxes, a Poll-tax which was inconsiderable and light, and a tax upon land which was overwhelmingly heavy. The burden of the

new land-tax was in itself disproportionate and probably unjust ; it was aggravated by a perverse system of rating ; and the ignorance of the new civil authorities, who were entrusted with the assessment and collection of the taxes, tended further to defeat the expectations of the Exchequer. As the political fever increased, the system of taxation became an engine by which the party in power in any locality could annoy and oppress its political opponents ; and there is no doubt that it led in many cases to partiality and wrong. For this result the circumstances of the times rather than the financiers of the Assembly were to blame. But the Assembly cannot avoid censure for the weakness and unwisdom which it displayed, for its refusal to recognise clearly the liabilities which it had incurred, for its determination to make a show of economy, however delusive that economy might prove, and for the moral cowardice which made it shut its eyes to facts involving unpopularity for those who faced them. Its attempts to redeem or diminish the national debt by loans, by confiscation, and by issuing paper money, failed completely. Its attempt to balance its receipts and expenses for the future ensured failure as complete, from the manner in which it was undertaken. Even if the new taxes had been regularly paid—and they never were—the Assembly's policy could only have resulted in still further increasing the debt, in forcing the Government into fresh issues of Assignats or into other equally desperate expedients, and in destroying the national credit. No doubt allowances, many and ample, should be made for the difficulties of the National Assembly, for its inevitable inexperience, and



for its generally excellent intentions. But still it is as practical reformers that the members of that Assembly must be judged ; and the record of their labours, though in many respects deserving of sympathy and praise, still goes far to vindicate the maxim, that high-pitched theories and philanthropic aims are after all only as dust in the balance, compared with the many sober qualities of wisdom required for the effective administration of a State.

## CHAPTER V.

### PARTIES AND POLITICIANS UNDER THE CONSTITUENT ASSEMBLY.

IT was one of the misfortunes of the Constituent Assembly that it never learned the arts of party government. When the preliminary struggle between the Commons and the privileged orders was over, and the three estates were finally united in one chamber, the Assembly broke up into many different groups; and although these groups in process of time shaped themselves roughly into parties, yet they so far retained their independence, that it was rarely possible to say on any particular question on which side the majority would be, or what groups and politicians might or might not combine together. At first the only distinction was between those who were opposed to the Revolution and those who were its supporters. Gradually, however, as the friends of the new movement insensibly divided, the representatives of the nobles and upper clergy, who had regarded the King's policy as dangerous from the first, found themselves reinforced by wiser politicians, and expanded into a respectable party occupying the benches on the Right. One section of this party—the extreme section—was, it is true, only a noisy and obstructive faction, with reactionary views and with

interests largely selfish, which signalised itself, as class-politicians are wont to do, by frequent violence of expression, and by behaviour neither orderly nor well-bred. Among their leaders were the well-known lawyer, d'Eprémesnil, who, as one of the heroes of the Parlement of Paris, had enjoyed in 1788 an astonishing but brief popularity, and the Vicomte de Mirabeau, the conspicuous but too convivial brother of the great statesman who directed the Commons. A more important section of the party was formed by the phalanx of dignitaries of the Church, who followed the lead of the Archbishops of Rouen and Aix. As the attack upon the Church proceeded, these prelates drew after them a large number of the lower clergy, whose sympathies had at first leaned to the popular side. But the most prominent figures upon the benches of the Right were two men, whose remarkable abilities became better known as time went on—Maury, the versatile, witty, dissolute ecclesiastic, who, assisted by his rare power as a debater, rose to the front rank among the leaders of his party, and Cazalés, the indolent, unambitious soldier, whose clear head made it apparent to him, as it was to Maury, that the old order could never be entirely replaced, but who devoted his great oratorical gifts, whenever his lack of energy permitted him to use them, to defending the monarchy, and to denouncing mob-rule.

At first the politicians of the Right, though some were decidedly more liberal-minded than others, consisted principally of men attached to privilege upon grounds of interest, and utterly out of sympathy with the reforming spirit. But events moved fast; and before long the

Right was reinforced by a group of deputies of higher capacity, who had welcomed the reforming movement, but whom the measures of the Assembly, after July, 1789, gradually drove into combination with the enemies of change. Among the members whom this group included were a few noblemen of Liberal opinions, in keen sympathy with constitutional reform — the Comte de Clermont-Tonnerre, the Comte de Lally-Tollendal, whose romantic story and generous eloquence more than once, in the first days of the Revolution, roused the interest and enthusiasm of the Assembly, and the Duc de Rochefoucauld-Liancourt, the friend of Turgot and of Arthur Young, and the finest type which those days offer, of what a Grand Seigneur might have been, but rarely was, under the Ancien Régime. The real leaders of this group in the Assembly were two conspicuous members of the Tiers-Etat, Mounier and Malouet. No deputies of the Commons had come to Versailles with a higher reputation than these two men. Mounier had been the head and front of the movement in Dauphiné in 1788, which had led to the famous Assembly of Vizille, and which had contributed as much as anything else to the summoning of the States-General. When Mounier arrived at Versailles, many people expected that he would become the recognised leader of the Commons. Malouet too had obtained, in Auvergne, a very great reputation during the elections. His fame also had preceded him to Versailles, and had marked him out for future celebrity. These men were no lovers of the Ancien Régime, no lovers of privilege or of unjust distinction. They had, many of them, studied English

politics and had a great admiration for the English constitution. They wished to see something like it established in France. They hoped for a Parliament of two Houses, and for a State which would use and employ its leisured class. One of them, Malouet, had had, at home and in the colonies, considerable experience of affairs. They were all fully alive to the advisability of proceeding, with caution, to the wisdom, when possible, of following precedent, to the immediate necessity of enforcing and maintaining order. But it may be that some of them lacked the force, and it seems that Mounier especially lacked the self-command and insight, essential to a leader. For when, in October 1789, difficulties accumulated round them, some of them lost heart and temper, resigned their seats, and gave up the struggle. They had comparatively little sympathy with the vague philosophic and democratic theories in which the majority of their colleagues delighted. They had no sympathy whatever with the Assembly's hesitation to establish a strong Executive, with its passion for equality, or with its suspicious dread of Kings and Ministers and nobles. Studying their views to-day, in the calm light of our own system, it is difficult to refuse to this group of men the praise which is due to great enlightenment and moderation; but it is not difficult to understand, how, in those stormy times, when precedent and experience went for nothing, their grave and measured counsels fell unheeded, and how, outstripped by the pace of Revolution, they fell back into the ranks of the party of reaction.

Opposite to the politicians of the Right sat the great bulk of the Commons deputies, with a few nobles and a

good many clergy among them. This, with its many groups and interests, was, in general terms, the party of Reform, the party which had made the Revolution, which embodied its virtues, its doctrines, its follies, its faults, and with which the responsibility for the policy of the Constituent Assembly rests. In the ranks of this great, heterogeneous party were to be found most of the well-known names of the early period of the Revolution. Among them was Bailly, the cultivated and distinguished man of science, with his high character, his gentle demeanour, his convinced optimism, his tender heart, his pardonable vanity, and his obvious limitations, perhaps the best type of the enthusiastic philanthropists who adopted with ardour the popular cause. Bailly played for a few months a conspicuous and honourable part. He received the high compliment of being appointed successively first President of the National Assembly and first Mayor of Paris ; and then, losing heart and reputation among the embarrassments of the great office which he had not sought, he learned the fickleness of popular favour, and was sacrificed to the resentment of the people. Among them too was Sieyès, the democratic priest, the calm logician, the happiest maker of phrases in a nation of happy phrase-makers, the readiest of any to frame reports, to cast resolutions, to draw up plans, the imperturbable builder of constitutions which never endured, sublime in the assurance of his theories, and important owing to the influence which his cool head and ready tongue obtained. Among them was Talleyrand, the Bishop of Autun, the only distinguished Churchman of the time who took a leading part in the attack upon the Church, witty, supple,

dissolute, extraordinarily able, and already beginning to display the rare dexterity in understanding men and in ranging his abilities upon the winning side, which afterwards made him the most powerful subject in Europe. Among them were Lafayette, who soon discovered in the great office conferred on him by the Parisians a larger scope for his restless ambition than he could have obtained in Parliamentary tactics, and Mirabeau, leader of no groups, but cynosure of all, the greatest statesman and orator of modern France. Among them were a number of eminent lawyers, Target and Thouret, second only to Sieyès in the influence which they exercised upon the form of the new constitution, with Lanjuinais and Tronchet, and many another celebrated advocate and jurist. Among them were Camus, the grave and determined leader of the Jansenists, who have been aptly named the Puritans of the Roman Catholic Church in France ; Rabaut de St. Etienne, the leader of the Protestants, a brave, high-minded man, who had already, before the Revolution, won from the King the recognition of the rights of his co-religionists to citizenship ; Dom Gerle, the singular Jacobin monk, whose earnestness was stronger than his reason ; and Grégoire, the eloquent priest, with his fine dream of a purified national Church, one of the best of the many enthusiasts who contributed their high-minded errors to the work of national reform. Among them was Garat, the accomplished professor of history, whose facile and excitable convictions always moved with the tide, and who, in spite of his excellent intentions, was perhaps more responsible than any other man for the ruin of the brilliant party with which he came to be asso-

ciated at a later time. Among them, lastly, was the fortunate Barère, in turn advocate, journalist and politician, at the beginning of the extraordinary career, in which, by dint of never having fixed opinions, he was to rise to the highest place in France.

But the most remarkable, and on the whole the most influential, of the many different groups in the party of Reform, was that which followed the lead of Duport, Barnave and Lameth. These men formed a close triumvirate of political allies. They collected about them the nucleus of a powerful party, and they generally controlled the policy of the Left. This group possessed in Duport a party organiser of elastic principles, but of considerable tact and ability; in Barnave an orator inferior in capacity to very few men in the history of the Revolution; and in the Comte Charles de Lameth one of the most popular and gifted of the young, liberal-minded nobles. Led by the triumvirate, and managed by Duport, it attached to itself many brilliant, well-bred and ambitious Radicals, including the Comte Alexandre de Lameth, the Duc d'Aiguillon and the Vicomte de Noailles, and it commanded a majority which on many occasions effectually decided the policy of the Assembly.

Finally, apart from the great majority of the deputies of the Left, there sat a small group of extreme politicians, destined to become very famous as a party. They were democrats of an acerb and uncompromising type. They were often violent in their speeches, exceedingly dogmatic in their views, finely contemptuous of experience and of facts, morbidly jealous of government and



authority. But they unceasingly put forward, regardless of what the Assembly thought, the doctrines of theoretic democracy, in which they passionately believed, and they steadily won favour with the multitude, which, caring little for their dogmatic errors, appreciated their real devotion to its cause. Among the speakers of this remarkable group, the Assembly gradually learned to listen to the far-strained, interminable rhetoric of Robespierre, and to recognise the growing importance of Pétion, Merlin, Rewbell, Vadier, and Buzot.

If the popular party was the stronger in the Assembly, it was infinitely the stronger out of doors. The politicians of the galleries, of the cafés, of the district assemblies of Paris—notably of the district of the Cordeliers, where the well-known lawyer Danton was already building up his great reputation—began to exercise upon the course of events an influence which increased every day. The politicians of the streets and the elements of disorder were mostly upon the democratic side, and the consequence was that prominent members of the Right were repeatedly exposed to insults and persecution, which made their lives unsafe and almost intolerable. Some of them unwisely responded by challenging their opponents to duels, and the increase of political duels led more than once to outbreaks of excitement. In the matter of political clubs also the superiority of the popular party was marked. The little group of Breton deputies, which had expanded into a club of advanced reformers at Versailles, still further expanded when its members came to Paris. It took up its abode in the library of the old Jacobin convent in the Rue St. Honoré. It threw open its doors

to all ardent supporters of the Revolution, whether they were members of the Assembly or not. It became the head-quarters of those members of the Left who followed the lead of Duport and Barnave, and before long also of those sterner politicians who recognised the leadership of Robespierre and Pétion. On their side, the moderate members of the Right maintained for some time the 'Club des Impartiaux,' which afterwards became the 'Club Monarchique ;' and the more moderate members of the Left, including among others Mirabeau, Lafayette, Talleyrand and Bailly, founded, in May, 1790, the 'Club of 1789,' to counterbalance the influence of the Jacobins. But neither of these enterprises succeeded in forming a strong political connection, and the advantages of elaborate organisation remained at the disposal of the Jacobins alone.

The predominance, however, of the advanced politicians was most noticeable in the press. The French Revolution is the age which marks the accession of the Press to power, as a principal force in the government of States. Up to within a few years of the Revolution, French readers had been satisfied with such information as they could gather from the ancient *Gazette de France*, which dated from the days of Richelieu, or from the highly-respected *Mercure*, the chief journal of the days of Louis XIV. The first daily paper published in France, the *Journal de Paris*, dated from 1777, and was only an unpretending sheet filled with odds and ends of literature and news. But from 1780 onwards a new period of activity began. Enterprising publishers like Panckoucke and Prudhomme found their opportunities suddenly increase.

Brilliant writers like Linguet, Brissot, and Mallet du Pan, publishing their opinions, under many difficulties, in London, Brussels, Geneva and Paris, began to make their mark in ephemeral literature. As the Revolution approached, a flood of pamphlets and broadsheets appeared. Volney in Brittany roused the democratic enthusiasm of his province with the bold doctrines of the *Sentinelle du Peuple*. Panckoucke, already the owner of both the *Mercure* and the *Gazette de France*, planned the publication of the *Moniteur*. Prudhomme, with a stronger belief in democratic principles, brought out, two days before the capture of the Bastille, the first number of the *Révolutions de Paris*.

But with the meeting of the States-General, the glories of journalism really began, and the most conspicuous member of the Assembly was the first to appeal against the policy of the Court to the independent judgment of the Press. On the 2nd May, Mirabeau issued the first number of the *Journal des États-Généraux*, and when his sharp criticism of Necker provoked the Government to suppress the paper, he proceeded to fill its place with the series of *Letters* addressed to his constituents, which, after the capture of the Bastille, took the form of a regular journal and the title of the *Courrier de Provence*. Mirabeau's object was to inform his constituents of the proceedings and policy of the Assembly, and in so doing to promulgate his own views. The *Courrier de Provence*, which he ceased to edit, but to which he continued to contribute to the end of his life, often rose above a chronicle of affairs to a very high level of political discussion, and remained of great importance as the chief

exponent of his views. Mirabeau's example was soon followed by one of his colleagues. In the middle of June, Barère began his journalistic career with the publication of the *Point du Jour*, a daily journal at first moderate in tone, and chiefly remarkable for its accounts of the proceedings of the Assembly. The reporting of debates rapidly developed into a distinct branch of journalism. Out of it arose the *Journal des Débats*, which still exists. And the most famous reporter of the day, the author, from the beginning of 1790, of the celebrated reports in the *Moniteur*, was the young Maret, whom a strange experience was afterwards to make Duc de Bassano and director of the foreign policy of France.

Outside the National Assembly were four journalists on the democratic side, whose writings, among many other newspapers the names of which cannot be chronicled here, enjoyed conspicuous popularity, and three of whom were destined before long to play conspicuous parts as politicians. Brissot, once a fellow-clerk with Robespierre in a lawyer's office, had, in the vicissitudes of a singular career, in which his private character had not escaped reproach, acquired a reputation as a pamphleteer of advanced and cosmopolitan views. In the summer of 1789, he became the editor of the *Patriote Français*, and he made that paper the organ of those theoretic and philanthropic sentiments which the Girondists afterwards combined with advanced republican opinions. Another noted journalist, Loustallot, the youngest and most brilliant of the democratic writers, became, until his death in September, 1790, the chief contributor to the *Révolutions de Paris*, and his fervent

enthusiasm, his great ability, his bold and stirring phrases, sometimes falling into violence, his fine, emotional, ill-governed belief in the splendour of freedom and in the virtue of the people, secured for the paper with which he was connected an astonishing circulation and success. By the side of Loustallot in the ranks of journalism there stands a figure equally attractive, but intended for a greater part. Camille Desmoulins was one of the many young advocates who, at the outset of the Revolution, forsook for dreams of literature and politics the barren realities of law, and in return for the doubtful sacrifice found themselves suddenly a power in the State. Raised to fame on the 12th July by his memorable harangue in the Palais Royal, Camille Desmoulins determined to dedicate to journalism the gaiety, the light touch, the mocking eloquence and careless wit, which veiled his unconsidered views and his genuine love of freedom, and in the autumn of 1789 he brought out the *Révolutions de France et de Brabant*. Lastly, in September, 1789, there appeared the first number of a newspaper, which, under the title of the *Ami du Peuple*, was soon to acquire a sinister fame, and which, by the violence of its language, and the wild, suspicious indignation of its tone, represented more truly than any other journal the temper, the fears, the bitterness, the passions, which animated the most ignorant and necessitous class.

Marat, the editor of this celebrated paper, had already had a remarkable career, and his ascendancy in the Revolution is one of the phenomena of the time. From his childhood upwards he seems to have been of a morbidly nervous and sensitive disposition, keenly intelligent and

alert, ambitious of knowledge and rapid in acquiring it, fond of science, and at the same time devoted to speculative enquiry, endowed with an extraordinary belief in his own powers and a jealous distrust of the abilities of others, strongly pronounced in his own opinions, and unrestrained in attacking those who differed from him. In later life it is probable that his constitutional, morbid irritability impaired his reason, but there is no ground for denying that his abilities were really considerable, although they were often vitiated by a perverse singularity of view. Early in life Marat made a reputation as a physician and man of science, and for several years he resided in England, where he seems at one time to have enjoyed a practice in Soho. His writings on all sorts of topics made him well known, and he signalised himself by attacking Newton and Locke, and by engaging in controversy with Helvetius and Voltaire. From science and philosophy Marat plunged into politics. He became connected with some of the popular societies in England, which were then busily agitating for reform, and his democratic opinions made him keenly alive to the defects of the English Parliamentary system in the eighteenth century. On returning to France, he received an appointment on the establishment of the Comte d'Artois, and obtained some experience of life at Court. His scientific work continued to win him reputation, but it appears that his views, or more probably his manner of expressing them, made him unpopular in his profession, and the coldness with which he was treated still further embittered his irritable nature. The approach of the Revolution at last gave him an opportunity to display the

devotion to democratic ideals, which was perhaps the most genuine passion of his mind ; and his real love for what he thought was freedom, his unceasing insistence on the needs and sufferings of the multitude, his fearless attacks upon the powerful and great, his jealous hatred of superiority, whether of wealth, of wisdom, or of station, struck a chord in the hearts of the poor, and won for Marat the enthusiastic attachment of thousands, who could feel panic and hunger, although they could not think. From the first, the *Ami du Peuple* preached the doctrine of suspicion. It attacked, often with reckless and cruel libels, all who were in power. It spared no invective. It hesitated at no calumny. It was always urging the people to action, always warning them to guard against the traitors in the Court, in the army, in the Assembly, and in the clubs. It claimed for itself the utmost license, and boldly threw upon those whom it denounced the burden of proving their innocence to the people. In vain the authorities attempted to restrain it, and threatened its editor with prosecution and punishment. In vain Lafayette exerted his influence to crush the dauntless advocate of the needy, the dauntless minister of sedition and spite. Persecution only made Marat more bitter in his warnings, and endeared him more to those who half believed his warnings to be true.

But while the democratic Press claimed the largest indulgence for itself, the people who accepted its teaching would permit no indulgence to their opponents. From the reactionary Press they had not much to fear. Three newspapers of some importance were subsidised by the Court, the *Actes des Apôtres*, the *Ami du Roi*, and

the *Journal général de la Cour et de la Ville*, popularly known as *Petit Gautier*. But none of these productions showed any real literary or political merit, and for the most part the contributors to them, of whom the Vicomte de Mirabeau is a not unfair type, contented themselves with ridicule and obscenity, with witty personalities or vulgar abuse. Only one journal of the first rank, the *Mercure*, continued to brave unpopularity by a steady defence of liberty and order, and under the guidance of Mallet du Pan, supported with eloquence and staunch moderation the views which Malouet vainly endeavoured to recommend to the Assembly. But again and again self-constituted critics, deputations from the Palais Royal, representatives of the mob, and even the agents of the local authorities, denounced, remonstrated and interfered with the writer, and plainly threatened with violence and death any one who dared to use the freedom of the Press to defend unpopular, though liberal, opinions. Under such conditions, and having regard to the disorganisation and unwisdom of the royalists, and to the energy and enthusiasm which pervaded the popular party, it is not surprising that the power of the Press came to be enlisted almost entirely upon the democratic side, and helped to render irresistible the victorious advocates of the Revolution.

Among the politicians of this early period, there were a few men whose importance raised them above others, and whose attitude demands special attention. When the States-General met at Versailles, the two most popular men in France were probably Necker and the Duke of Orleans. Philippe of Orleans was a cousin of the King.



His lax principles and enormous fortune had won him celebrity as a leader of fashion, and his dislike of Louis, increased by the scanty favour shown him at Court, and stimulated by his own ambition and the advice of interested friends, induced him to espouse the popular cause. Before the outbreak of the Revolution, the Duke had displayed his liberal opinions by taking a conspicuous part in the opposition which the Parlement of Paris offered to Brienne. His money was of the greatest service in circulating popular pamphlets. His rank and the political position which he assumed, secured him the honour of a triple election to the States-General. The gardens of his residence in the Palais-Royal, already thrown open by the Duke to the public, became the headquarters of the revolutionary party in Paris. His agents, not, apparently, without his sanction, deliberately encouraged disorder in the capital, and hoped, by rendering Louis' position untenable, to secure for their master high political position, and possibly the title of Constitutional King. The Duke himself, though unprincipled and mischievous, was rather a man of pleasure than a skilful politician, and his influence was due less to his abilities than to his rank and fortune, and to the energy of his supporters. His wealth and prospects procured him the services of Duport, one of the ablest tacticians in the Assembly, until Duport found that nothing was to be made of so disappointing a leader. They gained him the support of the licentious but clever Laclos, who proved himself a most useful auxiliary at the Jacobin Club, and of St. Hurugues, a worthless, brawling nobleman, who headed all the important riots in Paris during

the early years of the Revolution. How far the Duke's money and influence were used to stimulate panic and insurrection, and to spread false rumours in the capital, it is not possible accurately to say. But it is certain that his name played a large part in the riot which ended in the capture of the Bastille, and it is certain that the rising of the 5th October was encouraged, if not originated, by his agents, in the expectation that the violence of the rioters might clear the way for Orleans to the throne. On that occasion, however, the Duke was out-matched by his watchful rival Lafayette, and soon afterwards he allowed himself to be driven by Lafayette's menacing attitude into the polite exile of a mission to London. His banishment, and the tameness with which he submitted to it, disgusted his adherents and shattered his party; and although, on his return, he still remained for some time longer influential for mischief, and from the resources which he commanded, a dangerous enemy to the Court and to Lafayette, the Duke's opportunity was really over, and he gradually descended into the contempt which he deserved.

Necker, too, lived to learn the bitterness of being found out. At the beginning of May, 1789, he was the only man high in the counsels of the Government believed to be a friend to freedom, and as such he enjoyed a popularity somewhat undeserved. For a few months that popularity lingered. His disappointing speech on the meeting of the States-General, and the vacillating policy which followed it, very soon opened the eyes of those who came into contact with him; but his dismissal in July saved his reputation for the moment, and made him, until

his return, the popular hero. From the day of his return, however, his popularity declined. His unsatisfactory finance and his inability or unwillingness to face the economic situation, rapidly destroyed his fame as a financier. His indecisive views, his jealousy of rivals, his determination not to admit Mirabeau to power, and the indirect support which he consequently gave to the disastrous decree of the 7th November, 1789, his entire want of statesmanship, if statesmanship implies insight and resource, and his helplessness on all occasions when people turned to him for help, rapidly made him a non-entity. 'M. Necker,' said Mirabeau, with bitter truth, 'has no idea of what he wants, of what he ought, or of what he is able to do.' In September, 1790, thoroughly alienated from the revolutionary leaders, vexed by the decline of his popularity, and harassed by the vagaries of an Assembly which he was powerless to control, Necker at last resigned his post, and carried another lost reputation into exile.

Another politician of high place, but of less importance, was the King's eldest brother, Monsieur, le Comte de Provence. From the first, this prince had been the persistent enemy of the Queen, and had busily intrigued against her influence and reputation. His exact hopes are not easy to discover, for his conduct was not always consistent or clear; but it seems that he cherished the idea of supplanting Louis on the throne, and waited with quiet, deliberate selfishness, to see if the Revolution would bring the opportunity of doing so in his way. He did not, like Orleans, throw himself headlong into the arms of the revolutionary party, nor did he, like his

younger brother, the Comte d'Artois, put himself at the head of the reactionary royalists. He refrained from committing himself to either side, and continued to exercise a great deal of influence over the mind of the King. The part which he took in bringing Mirabeau into relation with the Court seems to indicate some degree of political wisdom ; but whether in so doing he intended to serve the King, or only wished to preserve the interests of a crown which he hoped to secure for himself, it is impossible to say. The intrigues and manœuvres of the Comte de Provence ought not to be viewed in the same light as the more guilty ones of the Duke of Orleans, and his character is less entitled to contempt. But he cannot be regarded as loyal or friendly to his brother, and his attitude emphatically illustrates the precarious isolation of the King.

Two men, however, Lafayette and Mirabeau, during the first two years of the Revolution, surpassed all competitors in influence and power. Of these two, in actual authority Lafayette stood first, and in the middle of the year 1790 he was by far the most powerful man in France. Lafayette's disposition was not without elements of nobleness. He was a brave and high-principled man, very capable of fine feeling and enthusiasm, and by no means devoid of generosity or honour. He was strongly attached to his own idea of freedom, and he believed it to be his peculiar destiny to secure it for his country. His rank and fortune, the wide reputation which his enterprising voyage to America had won him, his well-known advanced opinions, and above all the fortunate chance which made him Commander of the National

Guard of Paris, and thus controller of the armed force of the Revolution, combined to raise him to an extraordinary position. Had he only known how to use it, Lafayette might have made himself master of the destinies of France. Never again, till the days of Brumaire, did such an opportunity fall to the lot of a French politician.

In some respects Lafayette is a character to whom it is difficult to be just. His opportunities were so great. His limitations were so obvious. His failure was so complete. But it is possible that his failure inclines us to judge him too harshly. It is not fair to condemn a man because he could not understand a portent, to censure a politician who could not cope with the French Revolution. Had Lafayette been a worse man, he might have fared better than he did. Had he been a less conspicuous man, he would have borne a higher reputation to-day. He was certainly ambitious. He was certainly vain. He had little breadth of judgment or of vision. He was too much the slave of his own formulas. He was too ready to echo democratic phrases, without considering whether they applied or not. He was too ready to destroy the authority of the Crown, to reduce the ministers to puppets, to encourage the rash schemes of the Assembly. He was too ready to spend time and pains in winning popularity from the bourgeois of Paris. He was too ready to countenance dubious acts of policy and intrigue. He had not sufficient statesmanship to see the dangers of the time and the imperative necessity of combined and well-considered action. His stiff propriety would not permit him to associate with Mirabeau, even for public ends. But still, in a day when

the character of many public men was low, Lafayette's motives were neither sordid nor corrupt, and all through his long career he displayed a staunch loyalty to his honest, if limited, ideals. Unwavering consistency, although the virtue of weak men, often lends dignity to conduct, and that dignity Lafayette possessed. The worst charge which can be brought against him in the early days of the Revolution is that his policy mingled too largely with ideas of personal aggrandisement. From the 5th and 6th October, when his doubtful behaviour secured him the first power in the State, Lafayette's chief object seems to have been so to organise the National Guard, as to maintain his own dictatorship, to assert the predominance of the middle classes, with whose views he cordially agreed, and to repress all attempts from the Court, from Mirabeau, from the multitude, or from any other quarter, to lead the political movement into courses which would take its direction out of his hands.

But where all other politicians failed, one man, Mirabeau, displayed in the general confusion the high capacities of a statesman. Mirabeau brought to the States-General at Versailles the reputation of great abilities and even greater vices, and the fame of a man who, in the vagaries of an astonishing career, had almost exhausted the resources of politics, of literature and of dissipation. He found himself thoroughly distrusted by the Court, by the Government, by the nobility, by the vast majority of respectable people. He was received with murmurs in the Assembly itself. But before a month had gone by, he had won the ear of the Assembly, and after his great speech of the 23rd June, 1789, he

became, whenever he chose to speak, its leader. To Mirabeau's mind the first thing to be done in France was to destroy the despotism which paralysed alike freedom, ambition, thought, trade, industry and labour, to sweep away the foundations of privilege and oppression upon which it rested, and to build up in its place a system which should offer liberty to all. For that end he was prepared to encounter any hazard and, if need were, to face all the risks of revolution. But, could that object be effectually attained, he had no wish to destroy more than was necessary to gain it, and he was anxious to carry through the change with as little loss and ruin as might be.

Almost alone in his generation, Mirabeau had noticed what his contemporaries had missed. He had caught, as they had, the spirit of the time. He had welcomed, as they had, the idea of reform. He had learned, as they had, the doctrines of the day. He had conceived, as they had, a passionate hatred of tyranny and misrule and a hot desire for liberty and justice. But, instead of skimming the surface of democracy, and of filling his brain with theories which could not fit with facts, Mirabeau had tried to understand the new science, and had realised that it was the task of a statesman not to advertise theories, but to apply them. Politics were not to him merely a stage for strayed enthusiasms, but rather the business of conducting government, so as to redress the wrongs from which the men around him suffered, and to give them the opportunity of living in future with satisfaction and self-respect. Almost alone among his contemporaries he brought to the task of

reform no fixed preconceptions or systems, but only a desire to appreciate the circumstances round him, to foresee and meet the difficulties which were certain to arise, to use such instruments as might be necessary to his purpose, whether he liked them personally or not, and to draw out of the confusion, at whatever sacrifice of his own predilections, a constitution which, by guaranteeing freedom, should meet the wishes of reasonable men. Mirabeau steadily refused to waste time in talking about abstract equality, or to contemplate millenniums which he could not advance. He had no wish to pull down the throne which Frenchmen had loved for ages, to level the old order, to sweep away the ancient traditions of the land. He did not covet change for its own sake. Unjust privilege, caste distinction, Court extravagance, bigoted intolerance, partial justice, personal insecurity, burdensome taxation, false economic laws,—these things he was determined to abolish, and he looked to the experience of other nations to help him in establishing a working system in their place. Almost alone among his contemporaries, he set himself loyally to discover what France needed, and what at the least cost of suffering she could gain.

One consequence of this attitude was that from the first Mirabeau took the lead in assailing the abuses of the old system. Another consequence was that, as soon as he saw that the Revolution had unquestionably won—and his penetration enabled him to see this before most people found it out, and when other minds were still engrossed with apprehensions of an impossible reaction—he devoted his energies to giving a practical shape to the



policy of the Reformers. As a practical statesman, he looked with contempt on the 'orgy' of the 4th August, on Lafayette's voluminous Declaration of the Rights of Man, and on the agitation in favour of the suspensive veto. As a practical statesman, in October, 1789, when his adversaries were trying to make him responsible for the march of the Parisian mob to Versailles, Mirabeau was endeavouring, through his connection with La Marck, a brilliant young Flemish nobleman, who was both a member of the States-General and a devoted friend of the Queen, to induce the Government to face the crisis and to adopt a definite policy for the future. His acquaintance with La Marck had opened to Mirabeau a channel by which his advice could penetrate to the Comte de Provence, and so to the King. Even at this time he is found urging the King to withdraw from Paris to Rouen or to some other town in the interior, where his freedom would not be threatened, to put himself at the head of the reforming party, and to surround himself with a strong Ministry of well-known and popular leaders. This aim, the establishment of a Government powerful enough to act with vigour, and popular enough to secure support, Mirabeau never ceased to pursue. The coldness of Lafayette, the jealous egotism of Necker, and the distrust which he personally inspired at Court, defeated his project, and the fatal decree of the 7th November destroyed that prospect for a time. Still Mirabeau did not despair of reconciling the King with the Revolution, and of securing for the support of constitutional monarchy the services of the chief revolutionary leaders. He made repeated efforts to break down Lafayette's

stubborn aloofness, and to induce him to co-operate in his plans. 'Lafayette,' he writes to him, 'we must unite, I cannot act without you.' In vain he warns him against the 'little men,' who were endeavouring to keep them apart. 'You have many followers and agents,' he writes again, 'but only a few real friends and servants among them, and none of ability. You and I need one another. Why refuse to act with me?' But to all these overtures Lafayette returned steadily the same chilling refusal, and after June, 1790, Mirabeau gave up trying to win him, and contented himself with watching the General, and with defeating his manœuvres, whenever he could.

Meanwhile, in the Assembly, Mirabeau's ascendancy increased every day. On all questions, in all difficulties, his wide knowledge and practical ability contrasted conspicuously with the vagaries of his colleagues, and made him inevitably, except when intrigues or theories carried the day against him, the leader of the House. His speeches on financial questions showed him to be by far the ablest financier there, and more than once decided the Assembly's policy in that department. In foreign affairs he undertook the entire management of the policy of France, and with the assistance of Montmorin in the Ministry, and of his own surpassing knowledge and eloquence in the House, steered the King's tottering administration safely through diplomatic troubles till his death. On the question of giving to the Executive or to the Assembly the initiative in matters of peace and war, Mirabeau fearlessly risked his popularity in order to secure that essentially executive function to the Crown. On the questions of enforcing order, of forbidding

emigration, of re-organising the army and navy, of strengthening the administration, Mirabeau alone showed in a high degree the instinct of a sound and practical statesman; and if eloquence, enthusiasm, courage and understanding could have made his views prevail, the labours of the Assembly might have taken a happier direction and might have had happier results. On one point only, the question of the Church, did Mirabeau fail to display his wonted wisdom. The violence of his language and advice upon this point is in marked contrast with his usual sagacity, and is, it may be, largely responsible for the errors into which the Church policy of the Assembly fell. It is possible that his action in urging the House to take extreme measures against the non-juring clergy, was part of the Machiavellian scheme which he had formed for discrediting the Assembly by driving it into reckless courses. But even that explanation, if it be true, is very far from relieving him from censure, and it seems more probable that his language on Church questions was the genuine expression of his feelings. Apart from that, and apart from other faults of judgment and of temper which he sometimes showed, but which, considering his ceaseless activity and the innumerable subjects with which he had to deal, were singularly few and rare, Mirabeau's conduct in the Constituent Assembly reveals him as one of the most extraordinary statesmen whom a great crisis ever produced.

From March, 1790, when La Marck, after some months of absence, returned to Paris, Mirabeau's relations with the Court assumed a more definite character, and in the following summer his notes for the Court

regularly began. In his first letter to Louis, Mirabeau denounced all schemes of counter-revolution as 'dangerous, criminal and chimerical,' and made it plain that to his mind the only hope of saving the Monarchy lay in frankly accepting the Revolution, and in placing the King in cordial co-operation with the large and loyal party of reform. In the memoranda which he forwarded to the Court in rapid succession all through the summer and autumn, he laid stress upon the dangers to be feared,—the increasing disorder, the untrustworthiness of Lafayette, the mistakes of the Assembly, the intrigues in Paris, in the provinces, in the army, the terrible risks of bankruptcy and of winter. He urged unceasingly the necessity of facing these dangers, and pointed out the steps to be taken and the means to be employed in order to escape them. On the 14th October, 1790, in a note of great thoroughness and insight, he recapitulated the whole political position, and laid down what must be accepted as the bases of the constitution for the future. He again exhorted the Court to recognise the new departure and to abandon for ever all reactionary ideas. He again urged the desirability of securing the repeal of the decree of the 7th November. With singular breadth of view he suggested the formation of a Ministry, in which the Jacobin leaders were to be included, in order to teach them moderation and the responsibilities of power. And he sketched out the plan, which he afterwards matured, of sending out recognised agents into the provinces, to instruct the people upon politics, to begin an agitation against the action of the Assembly, and to prepare the way for recovering the influence of the Crown.

As time went on, Mirabeau became more and more impatient with the behaviour of the Assembly, and less confident of the feeling of the departments. He foresaw, and was prepared to face, the possibility of civil war. He found that the Queen was listening to other advisers, and would not put herself unreservedly into his hands. 'They are more anxious,' he bitterly confessed, 'to hear my advice than to take it.' Still he persisted in his labours. When one scheme had to be abandoned, he soon had another ready to take its place, and the increase of his difficulties only rendered his plans and precautions more elaborate. At the end of December, 1790, he presented to the Court the most complete and weighty of all his memoranda. In it he pointed out the dangers arising from the King's indecision, from the Queen's unpopularity, and from the 'frenzied demagogism of Paris.' He urged the necessity of taking measures to re-organise the National Guard, and to diminish Lafayette's influence over them. He advised the Government to take advantage of the mistakes of the Assembly, to encourage it in its most foolish and least popular measures, and by forming a party in it and winning over its important members, to induce it to consent to its own dissolution. He urged the Government to bring all its forces to bear upon organising public opinion in the provinces in favour of the restoration of order and of the modification of the constitution. Then he hoped that, if a dissolution were secured, the Government would be able to assert itself in the interval, while the elections were going on, and that the departments, tired of disorder, recognising the King's honest intentions, and

learning experience from the errors of the past, would return a body of representatives friendly to freedom but friendly to the Monarchy as well, who would revise the constitution in a reasonable spirit and on moderate lines. In order to further these objects, Mirabeau drew up an elaborate plan, the supervision of which was to be entrusted to Montmorin, who was to be in daily communication with Mirabeau himself. One part of the plan consisted in persuading able and popular deputies to support in the Assembly the views of the Government. Mirabeau hoped to secure in this manner the co-operation not only of members of the Right, but of some of the wire-pullers of the Left also, who were discontented with Lafayette, and even of politicians like Barnave and Thouret, who were beginning to think that on some points the Assembly had gone too far. Another part of the plan, the most important, was the scheme for organising support in the provinces. For this end Mirabeau proposed that a number of agents, in correspondence with Montmorin alone, should be sent out, to influence local opinion against the Assembly and in favour of the King, to prepare the way for a dissolution, to mix intimately with all classes, and to report minutely upon the inhabitants and the opinions of the districts through which they passed. Besides that a smaller body of agents was to be appointed, under the direction of Clermont-Tonnerre, principally to furnish and circulate political literature in the interests of Mirabeau's ideas. A third part of the plan consisted in the establishment of a secret police organisation in Paris, under the direction of Talon and Sémonville, two former agents of Lafayette,

who possessed considerable ability for intrigue, to watch carefully the movements of the capital, and to do what they could to win supporters among the journalists, the National Guard, the clergy, the administrative bodies, the cafés, and the clubs. In this plan no stress was laid on the necessity of the King's leaving Paris; but that idea Mirabeau continued steadily to entertain.

It is idle to enquire whether this or any of Mirabeau's busy schemes could have succeeded, and whether even his ability could have driven into one groove of public advantage the Revolution and the Court. It is equally idle to pretend, that, because he laboured to save the Monarchy, he must have been a traitor to freedom, or to rail, as some have railed, against the democrat bought over by the King. Mirabeau never labelled himself with names of uncertain meaning, and he was never bought. He exerted himself to make the Revolution triumphant, because he believed in freedom. When the battle of freedom was won, he exerted himself to save the Monarchy, because he believed in that as well. Other men may differ from his views, but it is not necessary on that account to assail his motives. It is perfectly true that the Court paid 200,000 francs to free him from his debts, and while he wrote memoranda for them, a salary of 2,000 francs a month. But the money was not paid to win his services, for the Monarchy had those already. It was not paid to change his opinions, but because the Court wished to be kept informed of what his opinions were. The constitution did not permit him, while he was a deputy, to take office openly, and obvious reasons made it desirable to keep his connection with the Government secret;

but Mirabeau always regarded himself as an unrecognised Minister in the service of the Crown. Of course a relation of that kind is rightly open to censure and suspicion. Mirabeau's standard was not always a high one. He bears no pure and no unsullied name. The record of his early life never ceased to injure and embarrass him. He could be impetuous and capricious. He could stoop to acts of intrigue and to tactical devices which a serener statesmanship would scorn. To a certain extent, although not corruptible, he was corrupt. But when that is admitted, the worst is said. The greatness of his character, the range and variety of his powers, the breadth of his keen and vigorous wisdom, his absolute freedom from littleness and meanness, his unsparing labour for the public cause, his splendid gifts of eloquence and genius, and the infinite charm which made men work for him and love him with an enthusiasm which even friendship rarely shows, overwhelmingly decide our judgment in his favour, and make his career one of the most absorbing pages in the absorbing history of the time. Mirabeau did not live to see his hopes accomplished. On the 2nd April, 1791, worn out by work and illness, the great statesman died, and with him died any hope that still existed of reconciling the Revolution with the Crown.



## CHAPTER VI.

### THE RISE OF THE JACOBIN PARTY.

THE French Revolution can be divided into many periods, and several parties directed it in turn. But, broadly speaking, besides its minor phases, it contained two movements, successive and distinct. The first movement began in 1789, and lost its force in 1791. The second movement came to the front in 1791, when the earlier one was dying out; helped by external circumstances, it quickly swept everything before it; and it carried on the Revolution, by new methods and for different objects, until 1794. The first movement was chiefly political in form, and although social questions entered deeply into it and gave it its irresistible force, still to the end its social aspects were subordinate. Its leaders were politicians. Its object was the creation of a new political order. Its attention was fixed upon political change. The second movement had its political aspects too, and political issues mingled largely with it. But it sprang primarily from social causes. Its leaders succeeded because they claimed to be social reformers. Its favourite objects were the transference of property, the extinction of poverty and riches, the creation of a new social state. The one movement of course was inextricably bound up

with the other, and no exact dates marked their beginnings or their ends. But the rise of the new principles, and their triumph over the old, was the chief characteristic of the later Revolution, and was the reason why, after 1791, the Revolution went forward and developed afresh.

There is no doubt that in 1791 there were many signs of a pause and a reaction. The Revolution was clearly victorious. The worst features of the old system—its despotism, its privilege, its inequality, its corrupt Court, its antiquated law-courts, its favoured aristocracy and Church—had been swept away. The widest freedom in politics, in industry, in discussion, had been established, though it was not always observed on the popular side. The blight of feudalism and the intolerable burdens of taxation had disappeared. The majority of Frenchmen felt that their wishes were satisfied and their aims attained. Accordingly, the fever and enthusiasm of the earlier days naturally abated. Men began to long for a period of quiet, after the stormy triumphs and excitement of the past two years, and to fall back out of the turmoil of politics into the routine of daily life. Such a movement was both natural and inevitable, and in 1791 it involved no serious danger to the cause of progress. The consequence was that the great mass of citizens gradually withdrew from politics. The numbers at the polls steadily fell. In 1790 and in 1791, all over the country, the elections showed an increasing number of absentees. In many places only a third or a fourth of the electorate voted. In others only a tenth or a twelfth appeared. In Paris less than one-tenth of the number of voters continued to take part in the elections, and

even that proportion steadily tended to decline. The duties of voting imposed by the new Constitution were so cumbrous that they demanded a great sacrifice of time. Politics had become both laborious and disorderly; and most men would only consent to the sacrifice and discomfort which they involved, under the influence of strong excitement. Thus, when the excitement began to lessen, the part which busy people played in politics declined, and the control of the elections, and the power which it carried, fell to those who had no pressing occupations and whose enthusiasm had not waned.

But while the majority thus passed out of politics, an active and dissatisfied minority remained. All over France, and especially in Paris and in the great provincial cities, there were many, in 1791, to whom the policy of the leaders of the Revolution, and the action of the great party which ranged itself behind Lafayette and the Lameths, had caused increasing discontent. To them the Revolution, so satisfactory to many, had brought only disappointment. Their vague but ardent anticipations of a new social state seemed as far as ever from realisation. The leaders of the Assembly were beginning to speak of the Revolution as accomplished, and yet all over France there were unmistakable evidences of disorder and distress. It is true that trade had been largely stimulated by the issue of the Assignats; but the credit of the Assignats did not last long, and the improvement was consequently temporary and fictitious. The condition of the labouring class was still unsettled. The pressure of hunger, in spite of the abundant harvest of 1790, was still in many places keen.

The middle classes, both in the towns and in the country, had clearly been great gainers by the Revolution. They had broken down the insolent ascendancy of the class above them. They had secured for themselves the chief authority in the State. They were enjoying to the full the sense of their new importance—the sense that from a position of utter insignificance they had risen to be the actual rulers of the land. Thus the tradesmen, the lawyers, the prosperous artisans, the ‘active citizens’ of the towns, proud of their rights and places in the new Constitution, in the municipalities, in the National Guard, rejoiced in the success of the Revolution, and only regretted that it gave them so much to do; while the farmers and proprietors in the country districts, set free from the yoke of feudalism, shared the satisfaction of the bourgeois in the towns. But below these classes came another, which had no such cause for self-congratulation. The *Métayers* and smallest land-owners, the holders of an acre or half an acre of land, the labourers who had no land at all, had gained far less than their superiors. They had indeed escaped from the cruel burden of the old taxes, from the personal tyranny of their seigneurs, from the militia-service, from the necessity of forced labour. But they looked for more than that. They had not yet seen opened to them any path towards prosperity. The wealthy neighbours, who added to their earnings, had been scared or swept away by the Revolution. Wages were even more difficult to obtain than before. The prospect of living without hunger seemed to their troubled minds to be as distant and remote. Men who had no capital could not profit by the sale of the Church lands.

Even some of those who, having a little capital, had hurried to invest it in the purchase, found too late that the bargain was a bad one, for the lands had been so much neglected that they required fresh capital to work them up. The consequence was that, although the sale of Church lands must in very many cases have been of advantage to the peasants, yet in some cases the small buyers, who had expended all their savings in the purchase, were ruined by the rash investment, and joined the great army of the needy poor.

The causes which led to disquiet in the country were reproduced still more strongly in the towns. To Paris and the great provincial cities flocked many of those who could not find subsistence in the country. There work might be more easily forthcoming. There, at any rate, it was easier to make their voices heard. But in Paris the same dislocation of industry prevailed. The National Assembly had abolished the guilds and the old restrictions upon trade, and had established complete freedom of labour. But a change so large, however beneficial it might be—and there were not wanting politicians in Paris, among whose voices Marat's diatribes rose most shrilly, to criticise the Assembly's action—could not be accomplished without much confusion. Moreover, the influx from the provinces tended to make employment scarcer, and the influence of political excitement did not help towards tranquillity. The consequence was that the general destitution did not disappear. In vain the State came forward to appease it by opening public workshops in Paris. The regular work and the high wages offered, which were actually

equal to the highest day-wages then to be obtained in France, drew applicants from all quarters, but only increased the difficulties of the problem. The great towns in the departments followed the example of the authorities in Paris. Toulouse and Amiens, Besançon and Lyons, and many other places speedily found that they had thousands of applicants for work which nobody required to have done, and which was generally neglected by those who undertook to do it. In Paris the numbers employed by the municipality rose to twenty and then to thirty thousand, but still the outlook remained as unsatisfactory as ever, and the discontent of the poorest classes unallayed.

There were thus, by the summer of 1791, large numbers of people, both in town and country, who would not tolerate the idea that the Revolution was over, and who still hoped for a share in the spoils of freedom. To meet and govern their wishes, to remove the causes of their trouble, to convert them into fairly contented citizens, was no easy task. The greatest statesmen might well have failed in the endeavour, for social perplexities are wont to tax the wisdom of the most experienced politicians. Unfortunately, the politicians then at the head of affairs in France were neither experienced nor wise. They were not alive to the dangers which threatened. They did not attempt to understand their cause. Satisfied that they had regenerated France, they did not fully believe in the existence of the grievances put forward, and they had no notion of what they ought to do to meet them.

The truth is that the dominant party in 1791, the

party represented by Lafayette and Bailly, by Barnave and the Lameths, were in an impossible position. They were pledged to support the King and the new Constitution. They were pledged to resist republicanism. Their instincts led them to sympathise with the idea of a well-ordered freedom, based on property and on the predominance of the middle-class. But such a system was difficult to reconcile with the theory which they preached. For two years past they had been proclaiming the absolute equality of men, the sovereignty of the whole people, the pure democracy of Rousseau's dream. For two years past they had been busy stripping the Crown of its attributes, denouncing its agents, limiting its power. Thus, when they endeavoured to pause, when they began to insist upon the necessity of maintaining the monarchical system, when they plainly showed their intention not to admit the poorest class to power, that class retorted by echoing the theories which they had taught them, and by resenting the consequences which they deduced. Logically, the position of the Constitutional party was untenable, and to fail in logic was then a crime in France. Morally and materially their position was untenable too. For their action could not be reconciled with the dogmas on which they professed that all government was based.

Accordingly, as the Revolution went forward, the moderate majority found itself growing unpopular with the poor. The decrees which imposed a property qualification for all the rights of active citizenship, for electors and elected alike, were bitterly resented by those whom they excluded from power, and were clearly inconsistent

with the philosophic formulas to which their authors habitually appealed. The manner in which the municipal authorities and the National Guards used the force at their disposal to support the new order and to suppress all who seemed inclined to resist it, was sometimes irritating and oppressive. The uncertainty on each occasion whether the party in power would applaud and sanction a popular outbreak, or would take fright and endeavour to punish it, deprived their action of its moral weight. The policy which first abolished the old industrial system to clear the way for free combination, and which then, in June 1791, taking alarm at the unions which sprang up among the workmen, interfered to prohibit all combinations for the future, was not likely to ensure respect. The policy which first induced the State to seek popularity by an enormous extension of public workshops, and which then, in the summer of 1791, frightened at the results of its folly and at the number of strangers flocking to Paris, drew back and suddenly dissolved the workshops, and bade the strangers return to their homes, was certain to lead to distress and disappointment. Had the party in power been consistently firm, had it shown its determination at all costs to keep order and never to yield to threatening agitation, it might have been wrong, but it might have been respected. As it was, it was never strong enough to be feared. It was only strong enough to become disliked.

Thus, with the large discontented element in France, with the people who were most miserable and needy, and who were specially numerous in Paris, there was, in



1791, a growing sense that the Revolution had so far been a failure, that it had not corresponded to its own promises or to their passionate hopes, that it had not in any way materially benefited them, and that a new Revolution was needed, to do for the poor what the earlier movement had done only for the comparatively rich. The strength of this feeling it is difficult to estimate, but there seems no doubt that it was widely spread. With it there went a deep conviction that the new movement would never come from the party in power, and that new leaders and principles were wanted to carry the democratic theory logically out.

It was on these grounds, and supported by this sentiment, that the Jacobin party rose. The root of the Jacobin theory was that all power and right resided in the people, and that when the people acted, law and government must give way before them. The people were sovereign and could not do wrong. Consequently, it was the business of the people to watch their rulers very closely, to supervise their conduct jealously, to remind them that they were only agents and puppets of a sovereign always suspicious and alert. If the sovereign chose to come forward, no Ministers or rulers must interfere to thwart it. They must obey, whatever it might command. Obviously, according to this theory, popular movements, whatever their character might be, were merely the highest expression of the law. Even if attended by violence and murder, they were still the action of the sovereign. Those who obstructed them were traitors and usurpers. Those who punished them were guilty of a crime. It is possible to understand how this

theory, which is no travesty of the Jacobin creed, planted deeply in mediocre minds, where the baldest logic took the place of reason, might lead those who believed in it to anarchy, while they believed they were on the road to freedom.

Another direct result of the doctrine was the dogmatism and self-assertion which it bred. The people having become the sovereign, every man in his own estimation, however ignorant of politics before, became a responsible ruler too. The Jacobin was filled with a sense of vast responsibility, puffed up with pride in his new importance. The Government, the Law, the Church, the public functionaries, had suddenly become his nominees, and he must personally see that they did their duty. A curious inflation accordingly appeared in his tone. His language became that of a dictator. His belief in himself mounted to an extraordinary level of conceit. The self-confidence which goes with youth perhaps helped to throw him off his balance, for it is interesting to notice how largely the doctrine found recruits among the young. Not only individuals, but public bodies, seemed to catch the spirit of self-assertion. Even small municipalities began to insist on acting as independent sovereigns, refused to listen to any superiors, and placed their own laws above the laws of the Assembly. An extreme instance was afforded by the little town of Issy l'Evêque, where the priest, an enterprising politician, acting apparently as leader of the parish, assumed a brief but magnificent dictatorship, issued a complete code for the government and administration of the town, imposed taxes, imprisoned his opponents, seized upon grain, confiscated

and partitioned the land in the neighbourhood, and exercised undisputed the prerogatives of a sovereign prince. When the people were admittedly sovereign, it followed, in the view of the enthusiast, that any proportion of the people could be sovereigns too, and, provided that he were a patriot, every man might be a law unto himself.

When these deep-rooted ideas showed themselves in action, the results were inevitably disastrous. The labouring population, possessed with the belief that supreme power had been transferred to them, naturally wished to use it, as their superiors had used it in the past, in order to enrich themselves. A general resistance began to rent, tithes, taxes, and money-claims of any kind. While abolishing feudal sovereignty and privilege, the Assembly had endeavoured to confirm all those rights which the feudal seigneur enjoyed as contractor and lessor; but this distinction the peasant naturally did not understand. While abolishing many odious imposts, the State had of course been compelled to substitute some taxes for them. But the peasant, who had only grasped the idea that the Revolution was in some way to set him free from all irksome demands, resented the new taxes as an encroachment on his rights. In many cases he proceeded to help himself to any property of the State which came within his reach. Squatters settled upon the confiscated Church estates. Bodies of men assembled and cut down the timber upon the public lands. Mobs stormed the custom-houses and drove out the clerks. Armed associations prevented the collection of taxes. The idea, originating in minds easily confused, tended to

become a passion, and when it was resisted, violence was the result.

It was in this way that the Jacobin theory, deduced from philosophy, welcomed by young enthusiasts, scarcely understood by the mass of the people, who applauded it because it opened the way to the satisfaction of their wants, spurred on by opposition, embittered by panic, suspicion, persecution, and translated into action by physical distress, gradually took root in the minds of the poor. But it was by violence that the theory triumphed. It is exceedingly difficult to form a just impression of the part which force played in politics in France in the years 1790 and 1791. On the one side, writers pass over the incidents of disorder. On the other side, they amass them without analysis or explanation, and thereby produce an impression which is probably in some measure false. Historians seem on this point to imagine that facts are a matter of political opinion. There were undoubtedly, in 1790 and 1791, tranquillising influences at work. The decisive triumph of the party of reform, the satisfaction ensuing on the sale of the Church lands and on the issue of the Assignats, the establishment of the new Constitutional authorities, the activity of the bourgeois guards, who went so far as to organise combinations between National Guards in different districts for the common object of suppressing anarchy, the natural instinct of every nation to secure as soon as possible the reign of order—all these causes made for peace, and produced periods of general tranquillity. But still the records of those years are full of signs of deep-seated confusion, of riots, murders and

acts of pillage, which were perhaps to be expected, but which cannot be ignored.

The spirit of disorder appeared in many forms. In some cases the outbreaks were due to fear and hatred of 'aristocrats.' In some they were a recrudescence of the peasant war against the châteaux. In some they arose from the conflict between the priesthood of the old ecclesiastical system and the decrees of the National Assembly, and these religious controversies, heated by passion and embittered by ancient rancours, produced, especially at Nîmes and Montauban and over the whole of the South of France, a terrible agitation almost amounting to civil war. In some cases they were due to purely local and personal reasons. In many cases they were caused by the fear of starvation, and their object was the seizure of grain. In others, especially at Lyons and Marseilles, they were due to the excessive severity displayed by the National Guards in maintaining order, and to the bitter conflict that was beginning between the bourgeois and the labouring population. Elsewhere, as at Avignon, they originated in a political revolution, and called to the front the large ruffianly element which, under the lax rule of the Popes, had for long been allowed to harbour in that city. In other cases, again, there is little doubt that criminals took advantage of the disorder of the time to make politics the pretext for private plunder. All sorts of opportunities for disorder offered, and in the midst of such vast changes it was inevitable that those opportunities should be sometimes abused.

The most serious feature of these outbreaks was that,

instead of their becoming rare and abortive as time went on, the tendency of events, especially after 1791, was in the opposite direction. Their political influence increased. Instead of the law becoming stronger, and the disorderly element falling under the ban of the respectable majority, the law appeared to grow steadily weaker, and the resistance of the respectable majority declined. The disorderly element organised itself, won elections, proclaimed its principles, and seated itself in the seat of power. The National Assembly decided to 'veil the statue of the law.' Mob-leaders were enthroned as law-givers in the towns where their violence had made them supreme. Their opponents, royalists, priests or bourgeois, became their prey, for outrages committed on those who were unpopular were almost certain to go unpunished. It was not the number of people killed which made the riots serious. It was the fact that they could be killed with impunity, the fact that there was no certain protection against violence for anyone who by creed or opinion or report was obnoxious to the mob. It was this general insecurity which brought the Jacobins to the front. For, wherever the law is paralysed, the most violent are the most powerful, and the French bourgeois, brave enough in the pursuit of glory, seems to lack moral courage for resistance, when intimidation and outrage threaten him within his gates.

Another very noticeable point in the history of the Jacobin triumph is the completeness of the party organisation. It is the first modern example of what organisation in politics can do. Although the club-lists afterwards included a great variety of names, the number

of genuine Jacobin politicians, apart from the vague crowds whom they directed, seems never to have been very large. So far as one can judge by the polls, the Jacobins in Paris, even at the height of their power, appear not to have exceeded ten or eleven thousand. Two good judges, Malouet and Grégoire, who had many opportunities of observation, and who belonged to totally different parties, agreed later in reckoning all the Jacobins in the country at about three hundred thousand, and the highest estimate only gives them one hundred thousand more. The leaders of the new party belonged chiefly to the middle class. Lawyers and small professional men, clerks and journalists, men accustomed to take the lead in practical affairs, ready with tongue or pen, anxious to make their way in life, with sufficient knowledge to be self-confident and insufficient knowledge to be wise, played the largest part among them. From this class came most of the conspicuous leaders, Danton and Robespierre, Desmoulins and Fréron, Hébert and Chaumette. A few others were writers and professors, students like St. Just, actors like Collot d'Herbois, priests like Grégoire, Jean Bon St. André, Chabot and Lebon, gloomy visionaries like Marat, or foreigners like the amazing Anacharsis Clootz, who assured the Legislative Assembly that his heart was French, though his soul was 'sans-culotte.' Later on the quality deteriorated, and a lower and worse element enveloped the rest. But the important Jacobin leaders were men of education, although they often condescended in pursuit of popularity to adopt worse manners than their own.

It was through their success in organisation that these

men attained to power. From the first the Jacobin Society in Paris, with its many great names and high prestige, had attained an exceptional position, and that position it immensely strengthened by establishing branch societies all over France. In the autumn of 1790, the Club in Paris founded a newspaper to circulate among its members, and entrusted the task of editing it to Lacos. Before the end of the year, it was able to publish a list of over a hundred and twenty provincial clubs, all affiliated to the Society in Paris, in constant correspondence with it, taking their views from its leaders and directing their policy by theirs. To these clubs flocked the energetic young Radicals of the provincial towns. They became centres of advanced revolutionary feeling. Their members had faith, enthusiasm, recklessness, ambition; they organised local politics, suggested or connived at political riots, and every day claimed a larger part in the direction of local affairs. In some large cities the authorised Jacobin Club had an unauthorised club or combination behind it, composed of less respectable and responsible politicians, who popularised the doctrines of the superior body, and supplemented them, when necessary, by force. As the year 1791 advanced, the number of affiliated clubs steadily increased. In August, it had risen to nearly four hundred. In the autumn and winter, it rose more rapidly still. In June, 1792, it had reached twelve hundred; and by the end of August in that year, one fairly competent observer reckons that there were twenty-six thousand Jacobin clubs in France. The value of this wide-spread organisation in giving to the party strength



and cohesion cannot be placed too high. When it is remembered that this was the only federation in existence—for all attempts made by other parties to found similar organisations were broken up by force—it is more easy to realise the influence which the Jacobins wielded upon politics, and to understand how the Club in Paris, even when distrusted and unpopular, was able to face its enemies and to hold its own.

Meanwhile another organisation, destined to give the Jacobins command of the capital, had been growing up in Paris. The Revolution had restored to Paris the local freedom of which the monarchy had stripped her, and one of the first objects of Parisian politicians had been to establish a municipality in the capital. After the taking of the Bastille, the informal Assembly of Parisian electors, which, in the collapse of the old system, had temporarily usurped administrative power, was replaced by a more regular body, entitled 'The Three Hundred,' elected by the various districts, and charged with the task of preparing a permanent constitution for the city. It was this body—The Three Hundred—which, with Bailly at its head, had governed Paris during the year that followed, and which by its somewhat irritating action had earned unpopularity with the poor. But on the whole, in spite of many mistakes, and in the face of many difficulties, it did useful and necessary work. However, in the early autumn of 1790, this body was replaced by a new system which remained the responsible government of Paris until the reaction after the Terror. Under it, the city was divided into forty-eight Sections. The Sections elected a number of

representatives, who formed the municipal council, and some of whom formed the municipal executive<sup>1</sup>. At the head of the whole organisation was the Mayor, elected by the votes of the citizens of Paris. The Mayor, as the head of this great organisation, became an official of the first importance. The National Guard was under his orders. The resources of the capital were at his command. He and his council controlled the politics of Paris, and the politics of Paris governed France. Besides that, each of the forty-eight Sections had its own elected authority, a permanent committee of sixteen members, to carry out the orders of the municipal body, invested with some powers of administration and police. The Jacobins, in accordance with their theory, argued that all the Sectional Assemblies ought to sit permanently, that the active citizens ought to meet every day, and that the municipality ought daily to take their opinions on current questions. The sovereign people, they declared, could not properly delegate their authority to representatives. The more practical theory, however, of representative government carried the day. But the Jacobins carried a clause which provided that the voters of any Section should assemble, whenever fifty active citizens in that Section demanded it, and that all the forty-eight Sections should assemble,

<sup>1</sup> The 144 representatives of the Sections formed the General Council of the Commune; 48 of these formed the municipal body; and 16 of these were the actual Administrators, distributed among five departments, of 'subsistence,' 'police,' 'finance,' 'public establishments,' and 'public works.' See Mortimer-Ternaux's *Histoire de la Terreur*, vol. i. Appendix III, where the whole subject is thoroughly discussed.

if eight of them simultaneously presented a request. The result was that, in quarters where Jacobin views prevailed, and especially in the poorer Sections of Paris, the Sectional Assemblies were constantly meeting, and urging their opinions on the municipal body. When the majority in the quieter Sections ceased to take an active part in politics, the revolutionary Sections were able, by persistent pressure and by resorting to violence and riot, to manipulate the municipal elections, to dictate to the municipal body, and ultimately to control that great organisation and to use its forces for the furtherance of their views.

The death of Mirabeau prepared the way for the accession of the Jacobin leaders to power. Even before that, Robespierre was a familiar figure in the Assembly, but during the summer months of 1791, his influence and importance in it steadily increased. From the first, he had been the most conspicuous advocate of Rousseau's theory, the most deeply convinced exponent of the Jacobin belief. His principles were to his mind absolutely clear. To gain complete equality for men, to protest in the name of justice against any law which permitted considerations of circumstance or necessity to interfere with abstract rights, to establish in the world the reign of sentimental logic, based on the philosophy of the *Contrat Social*, this was his unwavering creed. It governed his hopes, his policy, his life. He loved to expound its principles, to revel in its phrases, to declaim about its fine desires. He never tired of speaking, and this, in one shape or another, always was his theme. The Assembly might laugh or chatter, audiences might

come and go, but nothing checked the rhetoric of Robespierre. His self-complacency was as intense as his faith. He was the chosen minister of Virtue, to preach its gospel to the regenerated world. That seems to have been his profound conviction, and that was unquestionably the foundation of his strength.

There is little doubt that in this respect the man was honest. His weak sentiment was real. His love of order and of decency was genuine. His incorruptibility was known and rare. His conceit was phenomenal. His power of self-deception was unbounded. On the whole, Robespierre was faithful to his theories. He was capable, as he showed on more than one occasion, of attacking popular proposals, if they seemed to him opposed to principle. He did not, it is true, denounce the lawlessness and outrage which he naturally detested; but his reticence was probably due, less to the calculations of a subtle policy, than to his singular faculty of persuading himself, whenever riots or massacres occurred, that it was only the people executing justice, and that the justice of the people must be right. Robespierre never took the lead at critical moments, when decisive action was needed. He was constitutionally nervous and undecided. He had none of the audacity which made Danton great. Fearless in sophistry, he was timid in action. On certain occasions it is very difficult to free him from the charge of cowardice, and yet it is possible that his hesitation arose chiefly from the necessity, which he always felt, of reconciling his action with his theory, before he could act with a clear conscience. In disguising crime in the panoply of virtue, so satisfactorily

as to deceive himself, Robespierre had no peer. The Jacobin theory set above the law the action of the sovereign people. That action showed itself in riots. Those riots involved terrorism and loss of life. If consequences of that kind followed, they could not be prevented. Only the depravity of human nature, which rendered them necessary, must be deplored. Thus Robespierre, the high-priest of the doctrine, was always the readiest to defend it, to throw over every lawless action the mask of verbal sentiment and virtue. And thus he became the leader of his party. His policy was ultimately the most deadly, because its desperate logic was the outcome of a theory which could do no wrong. If statesmanship be the compromise of theories with facts, Robespierre was essentially no statesman, for to his fatal and narrow idealism any compromise with the realities round him was unknown.

The summer of 1791 is the critical period in the fortunes of the rival parties. When the majority lost in Mirabeau their strongest leader, Robespierre, the chief of the new party, came to the front. It is difficult to resist the conclusion that at this time the future was still undecided, and the Jacobin triumph by no means secured. Had the party in power possessed a few men of practical vigour and wisdom, it seems just possible that the Revolution might have paused, and might have been guided into the path of ordered freedom. But they had no organisation. They did not see their danger. They had no experience to help them, and Mirabeau was dead. The King's unfortunate flight to Varennes in June, and the manifesto in which he set forth his

grave complaints against the Revolution, played into the hands of the advanced party. It greatly increased the difficulties of the majority, who desired to keep Louis on the throne. It was followed by an outbreak of Jacobin activity, which, however, displayed many varieties of view. Danton and the Cordeliers, Brissot and Desmoulins boldly demanded the establishment of a republic, but their opinions were not shared by all their party. Marat proposed the appointment of a Dictator to put all his enemies to death. The partisans of the Duke of Orleans declared for Louis' deposition, with the object of securing the throne for the Duke. But the declarations of the Jacobin Club were curiously uncertain. They demanded Louis' deposition, but they hesitated to propose the abolition of the throne. On the 1st of July, at a session of the Club, Billaud-Varennes was not allowed even to speak on behalf of a republic. Some days later, on the evening of the 13th, influenced possibly by the reaction in the Assembly, Robespierre came forward and declared that he personally was not a republican, and that 'the word republic did not signify any particular form of government'; while even Danton avoided the question and confined himself to attacks upon the inviolability of the king.

The majority in the Assembly took advantage of the divisions among their opponents to assert their views. Barnave and the Lameths, and the party which they directed, rallied to the support of the new Constitution. In vain the Republicans protested. Deserted by the Jacobin Club, ill-supported by their leaders, closely

watched by Lafayette, they attempted to keep alive the agitation by a demonstration, on the 17th July, in the Champ de Mars. The object was to secure signatures for a monster petition demanding the dethronement of the king. It does not appear that the objects of the gathering were sinister or dangerous; but the disorder of the time, the furious language in which Marat, Desmoulins and other advanced leaders incited the people to violence, and the difficulties of their own position, naturally alarmed the Constitutional party. The municipality, taking its cue from the Assembly, determined to put the demonstration down; and, owing to blunders which cannot well be explained, but which can easily be imagined, the result was a fierce and sanguinary disturbance, ending in serious loss of life. How far Lafayette and Bailly were to blame for their conduct, or whether it is fair to impute blame to them at all, will always be matter for discussion. But it is most instructive to notice the effects which the 'massacre of the Champ de Mars' produced. It was the one occasion in the history of the Revolution when the party of order, rightly or wrongly, decisively asserted themselves, and it shows convincingly how strong they were, had they realised their strength and known how to use it. For the moment their triumph was complete. The Republican agitation collapsed. The leaders who inspired it, but who had kept in the background, suddenly disappeared from politics. Danton, under threats of prosecution, retired to the country. Robespierre summarily changed his lodgings. Marat hid himself and prepared to escape to England. Desmoulins suspended the issue of his

paper. The Constitutional party opened a new club called the Feuillants, and many of the Jacobins joined it at once. Of the three hundred deputies who were members of the Jacobin Club, all but seven retired. And Louis was successfully re-established on the throne. Had the majority possessed any vigour or cohesion, they might conceivably have stamped out the Jacobin movement, and have secured the freedom which they fancied they had won.

Instead of that, they threw away their victory. Barnave, Malouet and a few other members of the majority did make an attempt to organise their party, and some idea of an effectual revision of the Constitution was entertained. But it ended in nothing. The fatal want of union and of practical ability which characterised the party, their lack of definiteness and insight, their fondness for glib talk and theory, frustrated the idea. Slowly but steadily, Robespierre's influence re-asserted itself in the Assembly. The Jacobin leaders returned to public life, and resumed their tactics unimpeded. The only permanent results of the 17th July were to widen the breach between the party in power and the party which was still excluded, and to leave in the minds of those who had suffered, and in the great mass of the poor who sympathised with them, abidingly bitter memories of injustice calling for expiation and revenge.

The reviving influence of the Jacobins was clearly seen in September and October, 1791. Helped by the blind fatuity of the royalists, they were able to carry a resolution rendering members of the existing legislature ineli-



gible for election to the next, and thus driving their most active opponents, for a time at any rate, out of power. The revision of the Constitution told slightly against them, but it came to very little, and all its worst faults were retained. When the Constituent Assembly separated at the end of September, Robespierre and Pétion, not Lafayette or Barnave, were its heroes with the populace of Paris. And in the months which followed, the power of their party increased. In spite of the motion which the majority of the Assembly had passed just before its dissolution, forbidding the affiliation of popular clubs and their interference in the general election, the Jacobin clubs rapidly multiplied, and threw all their energies into the electoral contest. The abolition of the property qualification for deputies had already been secured by the persistence of Robespierre. The retirement of Lafayette from the chief command of the National Guard, and the abolition of that post as a permanent office, considerably weakened the Constitutional party. The growing sense of weariness with politics, and the desire to rest from agitation felt by the bulk of the people, began to show itself more distinctly. The renewal of the whole of the legislature and of one-half of all the local officials, afforded an opportunity for many moderate and experienced men to retire, and for more pushing and ambitious politicians to fill their places. The number of elections, and the fact that they were held so near together, prevented many voters from recording their votes. The necessity of taking the oath to observe the new ecclesiastical system disfranchised a large number of scrupulous Catholics. The intimidation

practised by the Jacobins against all reactionary voters, of which there are clear examples but the effects of which it is difficult to estimate, must have kept many quiet people away. All over France the proportion of voters who came forward to vote was very small. The result showed, in the new Assembly, a considerable increase in the advanced party, and many new-comers who hurried at once to join the Jacobin Club. But it showed also that the majority of voters loyally adhered to the new Constitution, were fully prepared to give it a trial, and were well represented even in Paris itself.

Unhappily, however, for France, the majority never found the time to rally. From the end of 1791, the shadow of war began to darken the political horizon. At the critical moment, when the nation had to choose between the majority, which wished to consolidate the new system, and the minority, which wanted to destroy it for something else, the alarm of invasion redoubled the panic and disorder, paralysed any possible reaction, and threw Frenchmen off their balance again. The war with Europe meant a struggle both for freedom and for national existence. In the tumult of that struggle all other considerations were flung to the winds. And the men who could best save the Revolution and maintain the honour of the country became the heroes and the tyrants of France.

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE INFLUENCE OF THE WAR UPON THE REVOLUTION.

It is a mistake to imagine that the European Powers attacked the Revolution in France. It was the Revolution which attacked them. The diplomatists of the eighteenth century viewed at first with cynical indifference the meeting of the States-General at Versailles. They were naturally blind to its significance. It did not occur to them, until some years had passed, that the outbreak in France was anything more than a temporary political disturbance, which by weakening a redoubtable rival, would redound to the advantage of the other Powers. The new cosmopolitan spirit, the new idea of enthusiasm for humanity, which, together with the influence of Rousseau, were beginning to be deeply felt in Europe, did not affect the diplomatic mind. Many a sharp lesson was needed to convince the cabinets of Europe that events in France were not the result of any ordinary political commotion, but part of a movement as far-reaching as it was profound, abstract in its aims and maxims, universal in its scope, irresistible in its advance, and inspired by the propagandist enthusiasm which in earlier ages had produced the great Crusades and the religious wars.

Accordingly, the attitude of the European Powers was at first one of complacent egotism. They viewed the disorders in France with the suave but moderate concern which nations, if not men, display towards the misfortunes of their friends. Moreover, in 1789, most of the Powers were occupied with matters of far greater urgency at home. On the throne of Russia sat the most brilliant sovereign of the age, the sovereign to whom Diderot attributed the 'soul of Brutus' and 'the form of Cleopatra,' steeped in all the vices with which the imagination of her enemies credited Theodora, excelling in all the accomplishments with which the enthusiasm of her subjects clothed Elizabeth, unsurpassed in ambition and ability, equally unwearied in war and diplomacy, in literature and love, a singularly sagacious ruler, an extraordinary woman and a most successful queen. By the side of Catherine there reigned in the North another able and attractive prince, Gustavus III of Sweden, who combined with restless vanity and philosophic maxims a real capacity for government and the spirit of 'a Saladin in quest of a crusade.' In Austria, the Emperor Joseph, the madcap crowned philosopher of Europe, had thrown his dominions into confusion by his reforms, and threatened to convulse the East with his ambition. In Prussia, Frederick William II, with his fine aspirations and his fantastic failings, permitted favourites and charlatans to help him in maintaining the great traditions of his predecessor. In Spain, the declining Bourbon dynasty vainly looked to France to save it from losing its once proud position in the world. In England, Pitt, at the height of his power, was ready to

offer France an alliance which she was too suspicious to accept from Chatham's son, and while anxiously watching the troubles in Turkey, and successfully asserting his influence in Holland, fixed his hopes on the wide humanitarian projects which he saw opening out before him, to which his genius and his inclination called him, and which he hoped to consummate in peace.

The two points which occupied the attention of Europe in 1789 were the condition of Poland and the troubles in the East. The ambitious designs of Catherine and the assistance lent to them by Joseph threatened the existence of the Turkish Empire, irritated the Prussian Court, and awakened English apprehensions, always sensitive about the safety of Stamboul. Poland, the battle-field of cynical diplomacy, torn by long dissensions and ruined by a miserable constitution, was vainly endeavouring, under the jealous eyes of her great neighbours, to avert the doom impending, and to reassert her ancient claim to a place among the nations of the world. But Russia had long since determined that Poland must be a vassal State to her or cease to be a State at all, while Prussia, driven to face a hard necessity, realised that a strong Poland and a strong Prussia could not exist together, and that if Poland ever rose again to power, Prussia must bid good-bye to unity and greatness. These two questions to the States involved seemed to be of far more moment than any political reform in France, and engrossed the diplomatists of Europe until the summer of 1791.

In February, 1790, a new influence was introduced into European politics by the death of the Emperor

Joseph and the accession of his brother, Leopold II. Leopold was a man of remarkable ability, no enthusiast and no dreamer, thoroughly versed in the selfish traditions of Austrian policy and in some of the subtleties of Italian statecraft, discerning, temperate, resolute and clear-headed, quietly determined to have his own way, and generally skilful enough to secure it. Leopold found his new dominions in a state of the utmost confusion, with war and rebellion threatening him on every side. He speedily set about restoring order. He repealed the unpopular decrees of Joseph. He conciliated or repressed his discontented subjects. He gradually re-established the authority of the Crown. He had no sympathy with Joseph's Eastern schemes, and he dreaded the advance of Russia. He was resolved that Prussia should no longer assume the right to intervene decisively in European politics, but should return to her old position as a dependent ally of Austria. He hoped by steady and persistent diplomacy to secure a reform of the Polish constitution, and to build up in Poland once again a State in close alliance with himself, strong enough to hold in check Russia and Prussia alike. He was not blind to the gravity of the events happening in France, and his sympathy for his sister's misfortunes was sincere. But he saw more clearly than most men the very great difficulties involved in any intervention in French affairs, and although he showed his feelings and was ready to discuss proposals for bringing the influence of the Powers to bear upon French politics, he was far from wishing to commit himself to any irremediable breach with France.

Accordingly, the first eighteen months of Leopold's reign were occupied with his own immediate interests, and at the end of that time his success was marked. Catherine's vast schemes in Turkey had been checked. War had been averted. Poland had been strengthened by internal changes. Prussia had been conciliated and out-manceuvred, and her influence had been impaired. At last, at the end of August, 1791, the Emperor was free to face the French problem, and he set out for the Castle of Pillnitz to meet the King of Prussia and the Emigrant leaders at the Saxon Elector's Court.

For some time past the restlessness of the French Emigrants had been causing great perplexity in Europe. Received with open arms by the ecclesiastical princes of the Rhine, by the Electors of Mayence and Trèves, they proceeded to agitate busily for their own restoration. They brought with them into banishment all the worst characteristics of their class. They treated their hosts with cool impertinence, indulged in the most complacent forecasts, and exhibited that profound contempt for anything except their own advantage, which had made them so justly detested in France. In the view of the Emigrants their cause was the cause of feudal Europe. Just as the revolutionists regarded all nobles as enemies, so the Emigrants regarded all princes and aristocrats as companions in arms. Deeply and serenely selfish, they would hear of nothing but their own reinstatement in the full privileges of the Ancien Régime; and all compromise with constitutional freedom, all moderation in counsel or in language, all respect for the wishes of the King was treated with disdain. Rarely has any class of men

displayed in a more conspicuous manner its lack of patriotism, sagacity and temper, and its utter indifference to any interest but its own.

The object of the Emigrants was to bring pressure to bear at the European Courts, with the view of inducing the Powers to intervene actively in their behalf. The Comte d'Artois and his Prime Minister, Calonne, flitted from capital to capital, to plead the cause of the oppressed aristocracy of France. At Vienna they exposed themselves to unmistakable rebuffs, but in other quarters they met with kinder treatment. Prussia assured them of her sympathy, but regretted that she could take no action without the Emperor's concurrence. Sardinia and Spain were friendly, and talked frequently of war. Catherine of Russia, who cordially hated the doctrines of the Revolution, but who under-rated the importance of a movement which was too far off to touch her people, exchanged delightful compliments with the descendants of Henri Quatre, and protested her enthusiasm for their cause. But the prudent Empress showed no inclination to risk the life of a single Cossack in propping up the Bourbon throne. Gustavus of Sweden, appearing at Aix-la-Chapelle, enlisted with ardour in the Emigrants' service. He proposed to transport a joint army of Swedes and Russians to the coast of Normandy, and marching up the Seine to Paris, to assert the rights of kings. But when Gustavus applied to Catherine to assist him in carrying out his crusade, he discovered, to his bitter disappointment, that no assistance was to be obtained.

Nevertheless the lofty tone of the French princes did



not alter. After his escape from France, in June, 1790, the Comte de Provence established his Court at Coblenz, where he was joined by his brother the Comte d'Artois, and where, on the plea that Louis was a prisoner, he claimed the title of Regent, and assumed the authority of King. The Court of the two French princes at Coblenz represented faithfully the faults and follies of the Emigrant party. But a more satisfactory spectacle was offered by the camp at Worms, where Condé was bravely trying to organise an army to fight against the Revolution in France. To Condé's standard flocked the more patriotic Emigrants, who disliked the idea of foreign intervention and hoped to recover their position for themselves. Condé had no difficulty in finding officers, but privates and troopers were more difficult to raise. Nevertheless he persevered in his enterprise, and gradually collected a considerable force<sup>1</sup>. In the winter of 1791-92, a plot for the capture of Strasbourg was discovered, which greatly alarmed the French Assembly. But the German Princes in the neighbourhood looked with disfavour on the Emigrant army. It caused confusion in their dominions, and it drew down on them the hostility of the French Government. The Emperor joined them in protesting against it. In February, 1792, Condé's army was compelled to abandon its camp at Worms, and to retire further into Germany.

The Emperor was well aware of the reckless selfish-

<sup>1</sup> Some contemporary writers estimate the numbers of Condé's army very low, at not more than 3000 or 4000. M. Sorel, who is always a valuable authority, reckons them at 10,000 in October, 1791. Mr. Morse Stephens gives a much higher figure.

ness of the Emigrant princes. He had as little sympathy with them as his sister. He did not intend to listen to their demands. If he interfered in France at all, it would only be in a cautious and tentative manner, and in order to save Marie Antoinette and her husband. Certainly he would not undertake a war for the restoration of the Ancien Régime. The real inclinations of Leopold, with which Marie Antoinette generally concurred, pointed towards the summoning of a European Conference, to bring pressure to bear on the French Government, to strengthen the hands of the moderate parties in Paris, and to prevent any outrage on the King and Queen. Accordingly, the interviews at Pillnitz came to nothing. The Emperor and the King of Prussia did indeed enter into a treaty, binding them in certain events to make war together upon France. But the conditions of that alliance, which involved the joint action of all the European Powers, and in particular the co-operation of England which was known to be opposed to any form of intervention, rendered the treaty an empty form. Leopold himself assured his Chancellor that the Conference of Pillnitz had bound him to nothing, and the whole proceeding has been rightly described as one of the 'august comedies' of history. As time went on, the Emperor's determination to avoid war deepened. When, in September 1791, Louis accepted the new Constitution, Leopold took advantage of that event to make his position unmistakably clear. On the 1st November, he addressed a circular letter to the Powers, pointing out to them that Louis' action rendered any further interference impossible, and in spite of the angry protests

of the Emigrants, the danger of war seemed to have disappeared.

Such was the attitude of Europe when the Legislative Assembly met. Numerically, the majority of the new Assembly were favourable to the Constitution, and honestly wished to maintain the throne. Outside the House they were supported by Lafayette and Barnave, two strong, representative figures, although Lafayette could not be depended on to act consistently with any colleagues. But in the House they had no leaders of great influence, and no sense of party discipline. Their policy was negative and undecided, and they could not always be relied on to vote together. Opposite to them there sat, on the left of the Assembly, a body of deputies less strong in numbers, but far more able and united, full of eloquence and enthusiasm, eager, brilliant, reckless and impetuous, with a clear policy and bold, ambitious views. It consisted of men who despised the Constitution as an unsatisfactory makeshift, who had no reverence for the throne, who wished for no compromise with the old order, but who, conceiving themselves inspired with the spirit of the heroes of Greece and Rome, were resolved to sweep away kings and tyrants, to undertake a crusade in the name of liberty, and to establish triumphantly their republican ideal in France. To this body the Jacobin deputies attached themselves, because for the present their aims were the same. But the greater part of it was composed of men who, though in temporary alliance with the Jacobins and ardent recruits of the Jacobin Club, were soon destined to become their rivals, and who are distinguished as the Girondist party, because

their chief leaders came from the department of the Gironde.

The Republican minority in the Legislative Assembly, supported by the Jacobins and directed by the Girondist leaders, easily out-manœuvred their Constitutional opponents. Their object was to discredit the Monarchy and so to prepare the way for a Republic. From the first, the Girondists were strong partisans of war, partly because their reckless patriotism wished to make all 'tyrants tremble on their thrones of clay,' but also because they had a just conviction that a policy of war would play into their hands, would render the king's position desperate, and would promote confusion in which they would win. Vergniaud, Guadet, Gensonné and others clothed the Girondist sentiments in language which, if sometimes bombastic, was sometimes superb. A House full of inexperienced theorists, all impulsive and nearly all young, echoed the fine enthusiasm which the Girondist orators expressed. Brissot, a journalist of many strange experiences, but with a very shallow knowledge of affairs, took the lead of the advanced party, and guided their views upon diplomatic questions. Madame Roland appealed to their emotions with generous rhetoric and hospitality. Sieyès, moving mysteriously in the background, and pulling the strings of innumerable intrigues, drew up their plans and assisted at their counsels. Under these circumstances the Girondist minority, with its vigour, its ambition, and its somewhat unscrupulous designs, seized the control of events, and committed the halting, uncertain majority to measures from which they could not afterwards retreat.

The autumn and winter of 1791-92 were occupied by schemes and counter-schemes of every kind. The whole atmosphere was charged with intrigue. The records of each week were full of evidences of disorder, to which those in power seemed to pay little heed. The condition of Europe was already alarming, and the Girondists, in search of their 'second and greater Revolution,' resolved to turn it to account. The Assembly knew nothing of diplomacy, nothing of Leopold's peaceful views, nothing of the Queen's reluctance to face the risks of war. They saw the sovereigns of Europe combining together. They saw the Emigrants gathering outside the frontier, and the majority of the old priesthood stirring up discontent within. They believed, or the Republicans among them believed, that the King was urging on the Powers to war, and that the Queen presided over a secret 'Austrian Committee,' which, meeting in the Tuileries, conspired against the liberties of France. Accordingly, they proceeded to denounce these dangers and to demand energetic measures against them. In October and November, decrees were passed, calling on Monsieur and the Emigrants to return, commanding the refractory priests to accept the Constitution, and imposing heavy penalties for disobedience. The decree directed against his own brother Louis confirmed, but the other two decrees he vetoed; and of course the application of the veto still further increased his unpopularity in Paris.

As the winter went on, the gravity of the situation deepened. Bailly retired from the mayoralty of Paris, and Pétion, the nominee of the Republican party, was elected in his place over the head of Lafayette, by a large

majority on a very small poll. Montmorin, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, resigned, and was succeeded by De Lessart, a man of indifferent capacity, much under the influence of Barnave and the Lameths. Other ministerial changes followed. Bertrand de Molleville, a strong supporter of the Crown, was appointed Minister of Marine; and early in December, Narbonne, a brilliant young man of fashion and ability, lifted into power by the aid of Lafayette and by the intrigues of Madame de Staël, became for a short time Minister of War. But these changes did nothing to strengthen the Government. While De Lessart and the Lameths dreaded war, and hoped that the Powers would exert some pressure in favour of the moderate party in France, Narbonne threw himself heartily into the military preparations. He believed that war would strengthen the Crown, and he determined to make a bid for popular favour on the King's behalf by identifying Louis with the patriotic feeling. Meanwhile Lafayette, with characteristic indiscretion, blind to the warnings of the wiser Constitutional leaders, possessed by his favourite idea of carrying American freedom over Europe, and tempted perhaps by the great prospect which war would open to his own ambition, supported Narbonne in his warlike designs, and steadily encouraged the war-party in the Assembly.

To the surprise of the Girondists, the Jacobin leaders took a totally different line. Fearing that the declaration of war would increase the power of the Government and would strengthen the hands of the hated Lafayette, the Jacobins began to sever themselves from the Gironde, and to oppose the idea of a campaign. No doubt, their

opposition was partly due to the fact that on principle many of them were averse to war, although in the days of the Jacobin triumph, this principle, like others, was to be cast to the winds. But in so far as their opposition was due to tactical and party reasons, it shows a strange lack of political discernment, for of all parties then existing the Jacobins were the most certain to profit by the outbreak of hostilities. Brissot and the Girondists saw this clearly, and vainly endeavoured to convince their allies. From that time forward the rivalry between Robespierre and Brissot became bitter and acute. But the Jacobin politicians allowed their fear of the Executive to carry them away. Anything which made rulers powerful must, they thought, be dangerous to freedom. Danton, Robespierre, Marat and Billaud-Varennes, all adopted the same language, and the Jacobin Club protested loudly against the demand for war.

But the Girondists carried the day. Lafayette's manœuvres, their own enthusiasm, and the militant temper of the nation, all helped their designs. Narbonne's schemes indeed collapsed, and early in March, 1792, he was dismissed from a Ministry with most of which he disagreed. But the war-party revenged Narbonne's dismissal by driving his colleagues from office. Louis, yielding to the storm, and endeavouring once again, as he had sometimes endeavoured before, to identify himself with the Assembly, selected a new Ministry from the popular party. Roland was appointed Minister of the Interior, and Dumouriez took the portfolio of Foreign Affairs. Dumouriez, who owed his appointment to the Girondists, for whom, nevertheless, he had a rich con-

tempt, was the only person of note in the Government, but he possessed ability enough to compensate for all the deficiencies of his colleagues. Lax in morality and principle, he was a man of infinite resource, bold, ambitious and consummately adroit. He welcomed the idea of a conflict with Austria. He hoped, as Narbonne had done, to secure the neutrality or alliance of England, and, if possible, the friendship of Prussia, but he was prepared to take the chances of a struggle with the rest of Europe. The appointment of the new Ministry gave the Girondists the command of the political situation, and from that moment France drifted rapidly into war.

Events abroad made a rupture easy. In spite of the provocations offered to him by the French Assembly, Leopold had clung steadily to peace. His sagacity saw that the one chance for the Monarchy in France lay in the desire of the Constitutional party to re-establish order. He was determined to strengthen their hands, if he could, and for that purpose to limit the interference of the Powers to joint diplomatic pressure in their behalf. But early in March, 1792, Leopold suddenly died. His heir Francis, unrestrained by his father's tact and moderation, assumed a different tone and showed less patience. The chances of any effective pressure from the Powers declined, as the prospect of war rose on the horizon. Francis' language was sufficiently sharp to give the Assembly the pretext which it longed for, and on the 20th April, Louis, amid general enthusiasm, came down to the Assembly and declared war against Austria. The effects of that momentous step no comment can exagger-



ate. It ruined the best hopes of the Revolution, and prepared the way for a military despotism in the future. All who hesitated, all who felt that mistakes had been committed but who still hoped that they might be repaired, all who believed that the Revolution might yet vindicate itself by combining liberty with order, saw themselves forced to choose, no longer between order and disorder, but between the old system and the new, between the ancient Monarchy and freedom, between the cause of their country and the cause of the invaders. Had there been no war with Europe, the astonishing episode of the Jacobin triumph, the worst excesses of the later Revolution, and all the crimes and glories of the Terror, could never have taken place in France.

It should be clearly understood that, even after the declaration of war, the friends of the Monarchy, who wished the Revolution to pause, were in a great majority both in Paris and in France. But they were disorganised and often lukewarm, divided into numberless different groups, jealous and distrustful of one another, largely governed by personal motives, with no clear policy before them, incapable of acting loyally together, and without the ability to act wisely, even if they could unite. Barnave and the Lameths distrusted Lafayette. Lafayette distrusted Dumouriez. The stronger royalists distrusted Barnave. The King distrusted all alike. On the other side was a smaller but more active party, full of enthusiasm and audacity, not, it is true, without enmities and divisions of its own, but still better organised than its opponents, prepared to embark on a policy of danger, and to hope that the future would turn to its account.

In that situation of affairs the war broke out, and its effects were soon apparent. It rendered Louis' dethronement almost certain. It drew a sharp line between those who were on the side of France and of the Revolution, and those who were on the side of the Emigrants and invaders, a line which placed the King upon one side and the vast majority of his subjects on the other. It rallied all patriots to the party which undertook the national defence. It made the Jacobins, whom the enemy denounced, the heroes of the popular resistance. It forced into helpless inaction all those who wanted order and a king, but who could not lift voice or hand for Louis, if by doing so they weakened the unity of France. It rendered possible, though it did not necessitate, the Terror, for it converted all opponents of the Revolution into traitors. It led at once to national peril, and through peril to panic and confusion. In the confusion the elements of disorder, already rife in France and taught impunity by the experience of the past two years, rose uncontrolled in insurrection, and patriotism became identified with crime.

The movement of events was rapid. At the end of April, the campaign opened with an attempted invasion of Belgium. But the French troops were disorganised; their commanders were timid and incapable; two French divisions were shamefully defeated, and the general of one was murdered by his men. 'You marched out like madmen,' wrote Dumouriez bitterly, 'and you returned like fools.' The bad news from the front intensified the excitement in Paris. Another Ministerial crisis resulted in the appointment of Servan, a stern Republican, as

Minister of War. The attacks upon the Queen redoubled. The lawlessness of the politicians of the streets increased. The Girondists, determined to weaken the Monarchy, abolished the King's constitutional guard, voted the banishment of all refractory priests, and decreed that a camp of twenty thousand men from the departments should be formed in the immediate neighbourhood of the capital. Since the winter, the Parisian mobs had been armed with pikes ; and it seems that the Girondists, knowing that the influence of the Jacobin leaders with the populace of Paris was greater than their own, desired to have at hand a strong force of ardent revolutionists, distinct from the Parisians, on whom they could rely. The King, however, disliking these proposals, and wearied by the studied rudeness of his Ministers, refused to sanction the formation of the camp and the persecution of the refractory priests. Then Madame Roland, in her husband's name, attacked him in a foolish and impertinent letter, and Louis, roused to unusual irritation, dismissed his Girondist advisers on the 12th June. For a moment Dumouriez remained at the head of affairs ; but finding that he could not induce Louis to accept his views, he too resigned a few days later, and accepted a command in the army. Lafayette took advantage of the occasion to make a violent attack upon Dumouriez, thus converting into an enemy a man whom he might have found an invaluable ally. Louis fell back on a new Ministry of personal friends of Lafayette, and the General wrote to the Assembly denouncing and threatening the Jacobin party. Thereupon the mob forces of Paris, equally alarmed by the dismissal of the Girondists and by the

tone of Lafayette, broke into insurrection and invaded the Tuileries on the 20th June.

The insurrection of the 20th June, which had been for some time preparing, was not the work of the Republican leaders. The Girondists held aloof, and Danton and Robespierre discouraged the proposal. It was entirely the action of the subalterns of the party, led by Santerre. Almost to the last, the responsible men held back. Even on the 10th August, the Girondist leaders, who had been working for months to upset the throne, hesitated, when the victory was within their grasp. They had grown afraid of their Jacobin allies, while the Jacobins knew the smallness of their own forces, and still feared the strength of their opponents. The abortive riot of the 20th of June was followed by a brief reaction in the King's favour. Lafayette came up to Paris, denounced the rioters at the bar of the Assembly, proposed to shut the Jacobin club, and offered to carry the King out of Paris. The National Guards and the Parisian bourgeois, shocked by the insult offered to the Sovereign, showed themselves ready to rally round Lafayette. One of the new ministers, Terrier de Monciel, was a man of considerable energy and insight. He urged the King to place himself in the hands of the Constitutional party, and with their help to escape from Paris and appeal to France. But Louis, even in his desperate situation, could not be prevailed on to act cordially with Lafayette. He preferred to trust to the chapter of accidents and to wait for the Allies to deliver him. The General's offers were coldly received. The favourable moment was allowed to pass. Lafayette, naturally offended, and

always incapable of decisive action, returned humiliated to his army. Monciel's schemes were rejected, and, early in July, he and his colleagues resigned. The Court had deliberately thrown away its last chance of safety.

All through the month of July the agitation in Paris increased. On the 11th, the National Assembly declared that the country was in danger, and issued a stirring appeal for volunteers. The Republicans began to rally again, and the arrival of the Fédérés from the departments, to celebrate the festival of the fall of the Bastille, although partly checked by the vigorous action of Monciel, supplied them with the force which they required. The troops of the line remaining in the capital were ordered to the front. The leaders of the insurrection of the 20th June, acting with the Fédérés from the provinces, and encouraged this time by the Jacobin leaders, set to work to organise a rising in the revolutionary Sections of Paris. The denunciations of the King and of Lafayette, and the intimidation of the deputies in the streets redoubled. The reactionary party heightened the excitement by prophesying the speedy vengeance of the invaders. The allied forces at last began to show signs of activity, and at the end of July, the Duke of Brunswick, their commander-in-chief, issued a manifesto to the French people.

The idea of a manifesto had originated with Louis himself. Before the end of May, acting on the advice of Malouet and Montmorin, he had sent Mallet du Pan with a confidential message to the Allied Sovereigns at Frankfort. In this communication he entreated the Powers to adhere to Leopold's policy, to make it plain

that their object was not to dismember France or to restore the proscribed classes, but only to set the King free, so that he might suppress the Jacobins, and readjust the Constitution in the interests of order and liberty combined. Louis' objects were not unworthy, but the policy by which he sought to achieve them was hopelessly unsound. Even had the Allies taken his advice, no arguments could have made the invasion palatable to Frenchmen. And, once war was declared, there was little chance that his advice would be heeded. Since the outbreak of hostilities the influence of the Emigrants had increased abroad. They paid no attention to the warnings of Louis. They indignantly discarded the moderate language suggested to them by Mallet du Pan, and imparted their own spirit to the Duke of Brunswick's manifesto. The result was that the manifesto, with its violent and irrational menaces, caused the wildest indignation in France, roused the whole people to protest against it, and immediately facilitated the deposition of the King.

At last, early in August, the crisis came. The manifesto of the Allies, the arrival of a body of zealous Republican *Fédérés* from Marseilles, and the final breach between the King and the Gironde, precipitated the insurrection. The municipal authorities distributed cartridges freely in the Faubourg St. Antoine, while they refused ammunition to the National Guard. The insurrectionary leaders in the Sections completed their organisation, and arranged matters with the officials of the Commune. It is curious to notice that, almost at the end, the Girondists, frightened by the success of the Jacobins, tried to avert a rising and

to compromise with the King. Had Louis been willing to replace them in office and to accept their terms unreservedly, it seems almost certain that they would at the last moment have broken with the Jacobins, and, in spite of their vaunted republicanism, have ranged themselves on the King's side. But Louis would listen to no overtures, and so they left him to his fate. It is also curious to notice how small—even at this time of keen excitement and revolutionary triumph—the insurrectionary battalions were, how few voters supported them in the Sections, how the heads of the party trembled for the result, and how difficult they found it to raise an adequate and imposing force. Had the defenders of the Tuileries had a leader to inspire them, had Louis for once laid sentiment aside and displayed a flash of determined courage, the rising might have been defeated and the mob dispersed. Napoleon, who watched the whole scene from a window, and who afterwards declared in St. Helena that the spectacle in the Tuileries gardens at nightfall was more horrible than any of his battlefields, believed that, had Louis used his opportunities, he might easily have won the day. But the irresolution, which had been his ruin, dogged the King's footsteps to the last, and the 10th August ended in the capture of the Tuileries and the destruction of the throne.

The six weeks which followed the victorious insurrection were weeks of intense excitement in Paris. The two sections of Republicans divided the spoil. Roland and his colleagues returned to office, and Danton was appointed Minister of Justice. For the moment Danton became the most conspicuous man in France. The

young lawyer had thrown himself into the revolutionary movement with characteristic intrepidity and ardour. Reckless, cynical, unscrupulous as he was, Danton bore the stamp of greatness. He was a king fit for the turbulent, ambitious spirits, whom Robespierre was too timid a theorist, and Marat too gloomy a fanatic to inspire. His physical vigour, his stentorian voice, his eloquent fancy, his fierce contempt for little men and little measures, the rough but genuine kindness of his nature, and his real enthusiasm for his country and for freedom, appealed irresistibly to the imagination of his followers. Wherever he had appeared, whether at the Cordeliers Club, in the early days of the Revolution, or, later, among the officials of the Department of the Seine, or, later still, in the Commune of Paris, he had made a profound impression, and after the 10th August he naturally took the lead. Unquestionably Danton had grave faults. He had too few principles or scruples, little elevation of character, no refinement of mind. But yet there is a certain air of grandeur round him. His patriotism and courage cannot be doubted. His insight and capacity for statesmanship stand in marked contrast to the incapacity of his associates. No man learned more or more quickly from experience. And of his surpassing force and influence there are a hundred proofs.

In preparing the insurrection of the 10th August Danton had taken a prominent part. He was rewarded by a high post in the Government, and his action during the crisis which ensued is characteristic of the man. He threw himself, heart and soul, into the national defence. He felt that the one pressing necessity was to hold



Paris against the invaders. He knew that his party were a small minority, and that Paris and France alike were full of men who would be ready enough to turn against them and to compromise with the Allies. If France were to be saved and the Revolution vindicated, he believed that violent measures might be needed, and those violent measures he was prepared to face. 'We must make,' he cried, 'the Royalists afraid.' All the Jacobin leaders agreed in this. They saw that their only chance of safety lay in paralysing their enemies by terror. But some of them naturally hesitated as to the means. As the days went on, the danger increased. On the 20th August, Lafayette, after a vain attempt to induce his army to march on Paris, fled across the frontier. The Allies rapidly advanced. On the 23rd August, Longwy, one of the great frontier fortresses, surrendered with ignominious haste. On the 2nd September, Verdun surrendered too, and the road to Paris lay open to the invaders.

In that time of terrible excitement, Danton and his colleagues carried all before them. A special tribunal to try traitors was established on Robespierre's demand. The property of the Emigrants was confiscated. The refractory priests were condemned to transportation. Urgent measures were taken to raise troops, and all citizens, whether active or passive, were admitted to the National Guard. Under the auspices of the Insurrectionary Commune, houses were searched, arms seized, and suspected persons thrown into prison. While the tocsin in the city sounded, Danton roused the spirit of the Assembly. 'The alarm bell you hear rings no

signal of danger. It sounds the charge against the enemies of your country. To conquer them, you must dare and dare and dare again, till France be saved.' The Insurrectionary Commune, which still wielded the powers which it had usurped on the 10th August, assumed dictatorial authority, overawed the Ministers and the Assembly, and translated Danton's warning into action. A frenzy of panic swept over Paris, and the answer to the shameful surrender of Verdun was the famous massacre in the prisons in September.

The exact responsibility for the massacre it is not easy to fix. Its immediate cause was unquestionably the panic into which Paris was thrown by the advance of the Allies. The terror of the moment produced a civil war between those who felt that they were fighting for their lives, and those who were supposed to be the friends of the invaders. In that war the more desperate conquered, and the weaker party fell. No doubt, the conquest was achieved by the aid of ruffians. A crisis of extreme peril, when rumour is busy and suspicion rife, brings to the surface many elements of disorder. The Ancien Régime had left in Paris ample material for crime. It had taught the poor to be ignorant and brutal. It had created a class of men to whom pity and prosperity were equally unknown. Historians have long disputed whether the Insurrectionary Commune was responsible, or whether the movement was spontaneous. No doubt, the leaders of the Commune, Panis, Sergent, Hébert, Billaud-Varennes, and their guide and coadjutor Marat, gave it at least encouragement and approval. It was Marat's policy triumphing at last. But the truth is, Paris must share

the responsibility, for during those days of bloodshed, although the number of murderers was very small, no one interfered. The Legislative Assembly looked on, no doubt with grave compunction, but for all effective purposes with indifference. The volunteers, the National Guards, the great body of Parisian citizens stood by, apathetic or cowed. Robespierre may have found it difficult to reconcile the massacre with his sentimental love of virtue; but, though he was then a member of the Commune, he did nothing to arrest its course. He could always persuade himself in the last resort that murder was the justice of the people. Danton, with sterner logic and audacity, believed it to be necessary to paralyse the Royalists, and deliberately declined to interfere. Some of the Girondists were horrified, and made honest attempts to check the bloodshed, but attempts of an ineffectual kind. Others of the Girondists seem to have regarded it as inevitable, if the Republic were to be secured. Roland afterwards weakly tried to palliate it. Pétion offered the murderers refreshment. The fact is that the Girondist leaders were themselves exposed to the suspicious hostility of the Commune, and were powerless or disinclined to act<sup>1</sup>.

The outbreak in Paris was followed by similar outbreaks elsewhere. But the sequel of the massacre showed the Jacobin leaders in a better light. Under the

<sup>1</sup> It cannot be proved decisively that the Insurrectionary Commune organised or paid for the massacre, but several facts seem to point in that direction. The subject is fully discussed in M. Mortimer-Ternaux's *Histoire de la Terreur*, vol. iii. Appendix XVIII, and by M. Louis Blanc, in the note to the second chapter of the eighth book of his history.

guidance of Danton, a new spirit was infused into the Government. Thousands of recruits poured into the French camp, and the Assembly appointed to the chief command a soldier of genius in the person of Dumouriez. The rapid success of the invaders had been largely delusive. The fall of the French fortresses was due less to the prowess of the enemy than to treachery among the defenders. The Allied Powers were by no means at one upon all points. Their generals and counsellors had neither brilliancy nor dash. The Duke of Brunswick was already weary of the campaign. Distinguished as he was, he belonged to an old school of soldiers, and he had never wished to march direct on Paris, leaving his communications unprotected. He had little sympathy with the Emigrants. He was in bad health and half-hearted in the war. The Austrians had not supported him as strongly as they had promised to do. His troops had suffered severely from illness and bad weather. Even after the fall of Verdun, he was disinclined to persevere. Accordingly, when Dumouriez gathered his forces at Valmy, and risking an engagement on the 20th September, succeeding in checking the enemy's advance, the Duke took the opportunity to retire, the campaign was abandoned, and Paris was saved.

From Valmy the tide of victory rolled on. Dumouriez followed up his success by the battle of Jemappes and the conquest of Belgium. But in the spring of 1793, fortune turned against him, and Dumouriez, like Lafayette, threw up his post and fled. Once again, in the summer of 1793, the Allies threatened to advance on Paris. Once again the fear of invasion strengthened the

hands of the Terrorist party. Once again a new general was discovered, and the vigour of the Jacobins carried the day. Once again the young Republic triumphed, and after the winter of 1793 all danger from the frontiers disappeared. The war assumed a new character. It became a war of propaganda, and swept over Europe. It found upon its borders an ancient society, already in a state of dissolution, which, devoid of patriotism, enthusiasm or popularity, fell to pieces before its attack. Then, forgetting its philanthropic principles, it returned to the practices of the past, and in its dealings with Europe, adopted the spirit of the system which it assailed. In the end, the French Revolutionary war did not abolish tyrants or unite the human race. It obliterated many old landmarks. It broke down many feudal barriers. It swept many little despotisms away. It drew more sharply the divisions between the different nations. It rallied them more closely round their sovereigns. It cleared the ground for modern Europe to grow up. Unconsciously, and cruelly, it laid the foundations of that united German Empire, which was one day to take a terrible revenge on France. But the old order, thus improved and altered, was too strong to die. Ultimately it subdued its conquerors, and the hero of the victorious Revolution married the niece of Marie Antoinette.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### THE FALL OF THE GIRONDE.

THE first sitting of the National Convention was held on the 21st September, 1792. The Parisian deputies, elected two or three weeks before, under the eyes of the Insurrectionary Commune, belonged almost entirely to the Jacobin party. Their election is a significant example of the methods of Jacobin organisation, and in that election Robespierre, always a vigilant wire-puller, had shown the adroitness of his tactics and had taken the most prominent part. The meeting of the electors took place on the 2nd September, the day when the prison massacres began. No sooner had the electors assembled, than they were transferred, by the directions of the Commune, from their ordinary meeting-place to the Jacobin Club. Some of the electors, who held moderate opinions, were then excluded by a preliminary vote. The system of secret voting was suspended, and all were obliged to vote openly before an audience loudly and watchfully alert. As one Jacobin speaker admitted, his party would have been 'beaten, even in Paris, in any election in which the voting had been secret.' The result was the victory of the extreme politicians. Robespierre, Danton, Marat and Collot d'Herbois were among

the best known deputies elected, and all the heroes of the Insurrectionary Commune were brought triumphantly into the Convention.

In the provinces, however, the Jacobins were less successful. There too the minority carried the day, and most of the electors stayed away from the polls. But still the minority in the provinces represented a considerable bulk of opinion. Everywhere the result of the elections was to confirm the *Coup d'état* of the 10th August. All who still took part in politics seemed to realise that the cause of the King was incompatible with the defence of the country, and preferred to put the interests of the country first. The consequence was that the Girondist party had a large following in the new Assembly. The Jacobins, it is true, were more compact and vigorous, and the great majority of members in the centre had no very definite views, and could not be depended on to vote consistently. But still the Girondist position was strong. They had the command of the Government. They had eloquent and effective speakers. They had several men of character and ability. They had behind them the weight of moderate opinion, which was shocked by the fearful disorders of September. The massacres had produced a reaction which tended, now that the danger of invasion was over, to strengthen the Girondist ranks. Had the Girondists possessed any organisation, any instincts of party management, or any leaders of authority and insight, they might have formed a powerful party, and have guided the Revolution yet.

But unfortunately the Girondist had none of these things. Vergniaud, their most splendid orator, had none

of the qualities needed for a leader. Guadet and Gensonné, the two brilliant advocates who accompanied him from Bordeaux, were no better able to guide a party. Pétion, the ex-mayor, had proved his incompetence already. Roland, with all his honesty and aspirations after order, had little real capacity or strength. Condorcet, the philosopher of the Gironde, brought to the pursuit of politics all the characteristic vices of the academic mind. Barbaroux, the hero of the Marseillais, was only distinguished by his beauty from the rest. Isnard and Louvet, Lanjuinais and Gorsas could not supply what was wanting in their colleagues. The party itself had no cohesion. Brissot, who had for some time been its leader, could not impose his ascendancy for long, and found his authority challenged by the rising reputation of Buzot. Gradually two sections of Brissotins and Buzotins grew up within the ranks of the Gironde, and rendered still remoter than before the prospects of united and decisive action on the part of the majority of the House.

Buzot owed to Madame Roland much of the influence which he enjoyed with his party. Her house was the chosen resort of the Gironde. Their policy was largely arranged in her drawing-room. Her husband was their chief representative in the Government, and her interest in her husband's policy was as well known as her attachment to Buzot. Madame Roland is known to us by the portrait which she herself has drawn, and that portrait shows us clearly her undoubted courage and ability, her enthusiasm for the philosophy which she had studied and for the ideals which her bright imagination loved. But



the memoirs show us also the self-conscious genius of the writer, her swift but rather shallow judgments, the strong personal element in her opinions, the ill-controlled, ambitious restlessness of her generous and ardent mind, and her incapacity for moderation, for being just towards opponents or tender towards fallen foes. What part Madame Roland played in politics it is impossible to say exactly. We know something of her words and actions upon a few occasions, and those, in spite of the charm and romance which surround her, are not always creditable to her head or heart. She died bravely, and posterity, recognising that, has perhaps been bountiful towards her virtues. But in so far as she inspired the Girondists, her political influence can only be regarded as disastrous, for there never was a party worse advised.

Other women, fair and unfair, lovely and unloveable, appear in the story of the French Revolution. There were the salons of the early days, where the Royalists gathered at the houses of Madame de Chambonas and Madame de Sabran, while the other side found more congenial company in the rooms of Mesdames de Beauharnais and Talma. There was the salon of Madame de Genlis with its traditions of Orleanist intrigue, the official society of Madame Necker's circle, and Madame de Broglie's coterie of young, well-bred reformers. Later on, there was the salon of Madame de Staël, where the accomplished hostess pushed the interests of Narbonne as devotedly as Madame Roland pushed the interests of Buzot, and the well-lit tables of Madame de Sainte-Amaranthe, who expected to profit by the guests whom she received. There were the quieter but happier

homes of Madame de Condorcet and Lucile Desmoulins. There were the not less happy women whom Danton, Robespierre and St. Just loved. There was the Queen, always gallant and unfortunate, but in her political influence most unfortunate of all; Charlotte Corday, the Girondist avenger, whose enthusiasm veiled from her the ugliness of murder; Theresa Tallien, who gave up her life and honour to a worthless man and used her power afterwards for purposes of mercy; Olympe de Gouges, the hapless dramatist and pamphleteer, who played her triple part as hostess, celebrity and victim in the Terror; and many another notable woman, of reputation high or low, of influence worthy or unworthy, such as the Demoiselles de Fernig, who served as aides-de-camp in Dumouriez' camp, Théroigne de Méricourt, known by all and loved by many, who, armed with a naked sabre, led the wild women in October to Versailles, Sophie Momoro, who headed the orgies on the Feast of Reason, and Rose Lacombe, the queen of the vile women who haunted the clubs and streets and galleries, disgraced the National Assembly, and knitted round the guillotine. It is strange, but it would seem to be indisputable, that, in many of the worst excesses of the Revolution, women of the worst character were specially conspicuous, and that when politics degenerated into savagery women without womanliness excelled the most.

The nine months which followed the meeting of the Convention were occupied by the struggle between the Jacobins and the Gironde. Even before the 10th August that struggle had begun. After the fall of Louis, it had

become acute; and as soon as the Convention met, the animosities of the rival parties blazed out afresh. The difference in principle between Girondists and Jacobins is not altogether easy to define. Many tenets they professed to share in common, and until the 10th August their aims had been in some respects the same. One noticeable difference, however, between them, lies in the character of the men. The Jacobins, as a whole, though the rule is subject to exceptions, were men of a rougher stamp, occasionally ill-educated, coarse and unscrupulous, in some cases cruel, in many cases corrupt, but practical, alert and intrepid politicians, prepared to run great risks, merciless to their enemies if they conquered, sometimes ready with gay desperation to suffer if they lost the game. The Girondists, as a whole, were men of higher intellectual calibre, of more education and refinement, of a better cast. They were honest and decent. Their intentions were pure. They were embarrassed by scruples in a struggle with opponents who had none. They were distinguished by a fine enthusiasm for their vague and delusive ideals, which, if it seems theatrical now, was genuine then, and to which, while lamenting its waste and its errors, one may pay the tribute of respect.

But when one comes to principles, the difference between the two parties is less clear. The truth is that in the French Revolution there was no place for the Gironde. Two parties, and only two, were possible. One was the party which, representing the great majority of French feeling, had made the Revolution, had swept away the Ancien Régime, had founded the first constitu-

tion and had taken its name from its creation, the party which had aimed at establishing political freedom and a new system based on that in France. This party cared for liberty and order but wished for little more, and its mistakes and the fortunes of the time gradually lost it the control of events. The other was the new party, which rose to power on its rival's faults, which cared little for liberty and less for order, but which hoped to use the forces of distress and discontent to grasp the power which its rival had monopolised, to found a new social and industrial system in which it would secure a fairer profit for itself, and to destroy without scruple or compassion all who impeded the realisation of its aims.

Between these two parties the Girondists stood. They belonged to neither, but they shared to some extent the views of both. Like the first, they had moderation, a sense of restraint and a love of order. Like the second, they repudiated any compromise with the past and hoped to establish their Utopia. But though they were strong enough to defeat the first, they were not strong enough to resist the second, and they could not fuse with either. They could not join with the Constitutional party, or rally the moderate majority round them, because, though they shared its feeling of propriety, they scorned its tenets and prejudices, its king and its religion. They could not throw themselves into the arms of the Jacobins, because, though they liked some of their democratic schemes, they could not countenance the Jacobin excesses or the Jacobin intrigues, the ruthless levelling of the Jacobin maxims, the Jacobin contempt for property and life.

Nor could the Girondists found a party of their own. Their ideas were not sufficiently definite for that, nor sufficiently different from those of others. The only principles which belonged distinctively to them were an enthusiasm for the forms of a republic, and an enthusiasm for the policy of war. The latter was partly an ill-considered emotion and partly a tactical device. The former was not a principle at all. The essence of republicanism, which is government by the people, had been accepted by all parties except the most reactionary, and was not peculiar to the Girondist belief. The forms of it, which, possessed by an extraordinary desire to emulate the Greeks and Romans, the Girondists esteemed so highly, were hardly worth a struggle to obtain. The fact that the Girondists should have cared for republican forms so much more than for anything else, is perhaps the clearest proof of their incompetence as practical politicians. For, as Robespierre had the sense to see, the term republic is an empty name, which the faith and heroism of men have sometimes associated with ideals of purity and freedom, but which has often been only a disguise for governments that were neither free nor pure.

As soon as the Convention opened, the Republic was proclaimed, and the struggle between the rival parties began. For the moment the Girondists were the stronger, and they were determined to use their power to suppress and, if they could, to punish the leaders of the Insurrectionary Commune. In that attempt they were partially successful. The steady persistence of Roland, supported by the majority of the Convention, succeeded at last in dissolving the Insurrectionary Commune. On the 30th

November, a moderate politician, Chambon, was elected Mayor by a large majority, after two other moderates, Pétion and d'Ormesson, had previously been elected and had refused to serve. The council and the other officials of the Commune were also renewed. On this occasion the voting was secret; and although the Jacobins spared no efforts, and succeeded in carrying Hébert and Chaumette, the smallness of the Jacobin vote and the abstention of the vast majority of voters showed how weak numerically were the forces which the minority could command.

But in other respects the Girondists were less successful. Their proposals for the formation of a guard for the Convention resulted only in bringing to Paris a small force of *Fédérés* from the departments. Their demand for the punishment of those concerned in the September massacres fell to the ground. Their attacks upon Robespierre, Marat and others produced only bitter personalities, which tended to weary the Assembly, and by giving Robespierre opportunities of dilating on his services to the Revolution, to increase his popularity in Paris. The Jacobins began to threaten their monopoly of office. In the middle of October, Pache, the newly appointed Minister of War, and till then an intimate friend of Roland, cast himself into the arms of the Jacobin party. Suddenly turning on his Girondist colleagues, Pache made the War Office the meeting-place of the politicians of the Commune, placed his influence and his funds at their disposal, and to the disgust of Dumouriez and Danton, threw the military arrangements into confusion.

The Girondists were further weakened by the trial of the King. The long debates upon that question, which began early in November, 1792, and which ended in Louis' execution on the 21st January, 1793, certainly damaged the reputation of the party. They showed in a clear light the stern logic of the Jacobin leaders and the weakness and disunion of their opponents. They gave fresh opportunities for excitement and disorder, which the Jacobins knew how to use. The vote which condemned the King to death was carried finally by a narrow majority, but it could not have been carried without wholesale intimidation. The violence of the agitation in the galleries, in the streets, in the Sections, which steadily rose as the debates went forward and as a feeling of sympathy for Louis appeared, produced so general a panic, that it is recorded that fourteen thousand people fled from Paris in the last week of the year, under the impression that the massacres of September were about to be repeated<sup>1</sup>. It is true that in the end the leading Girondists voted for death; but they voted openly in the presence of an armed and vociferating crowd, amply sufficient to decide the wavering and almost sufficient to terrorise the brave. Vergniaud, who voted with the majority when the critical moment came, had already pleaded for mercy in the finest speech which he ever delivered, and had declared the night before the verdict that it was an insult to suppose him capable of voting for Louis' death.

<sup>1</sup> The only authority for this statement that I know of is the *Chronique de Paris*, of Dec. 26, 1792, quoted and accepted by Von Sybel (Eng. Tr.), ii. 287. Whether entirely accurate or not, it serves to illustrate the undoubted panic in Paris.

With the trial of the King the demoralisation of politics increased. The Convention lost all dignity and decorum. The violence of the rival parties deepened. Deputies came down armed to the meetings of the House. The president, powerless to keep order, was frequently insulted in the chair. Abusive terms were shouted across the floor. The voices of the speakers were constantly drowned in the din from the galleries, where, according to Brissot, 'the brigands and bacchantes' ruled. The same demoralisation appeared in the public service. On the proclamation of the Republic, in September, 1792, all administrative and judicial officers were renewed. The Convention declared that a knowledge of the law should no longer be a necessary qualification for judicial appointments. Education was regarded as equally unnecessary, and a number of ignorant and incompetent officials were thus imported into the administration. The multiplication of offices and places, so profitable to those in power, rapidly increased as time went on, and with the spirit of plunder the spirit of corruption spread. Under Pache the War-Office became a centre of Jacobin intrigue, where the Minister and his associates could display with effect their bitter distrust of the Commander-in-Chief, undermine Dumouriez' authority in the army, and, regardless of his wishes and designs, promote their own theories and provide for their friends.

From the beginning of the new year the Girondists steadily lost ground. In January, Roland, their most active supporter in the Government, resigned his office. The control of the Ministry of the Interior, with all its



authority and resources, thereupon passed into the hands of Garat, a man of amiable intentions and moderate views, but entirely lacking in force or decision, and with none of Roland's devotion to the Gironde. Early in February, Pache, who had been compelled to retire from the War Office, to the delight of Dumouriez and Danton, was elected Mayor in Chambon's place, and in his person the Jacobins finally regained control of the Commune of Paris. About the same time Condorcet brought forward the Girondist proposals for a new constitution, proposals wildly unpractical in their nature, which gave satisfaction to no one at all, and which lent some colour to the charge, which the Jacobins pressed against the Gironde, that they wished to confer powers upon the departments which would make them almost independent States, to destroy the influence of the Government in Paris, and to break up the unity of the Republic. The Girondists, who had no large following in the capital, proceeded to alienate what following they had. They declared irreconcilable war upon the Commune. They denounced the disorder of the Parisian mobs, and their demands for exceptional legislation in their favour. They boasted unwisely of the devotion of the provinces to themselves. They threatened to punish heavily any attempt at intimidation by the Sections, but they took no steps to guard effectually against it. Finally, they made an attack upon Danton as ill-judged as it was unprovoked, and thus alienated the only man who had influence and ability enough to save them, and who, weary of factious animosities and earnestly desiring to found a Government strong enough to make itself respected, might with a

little tact have been induced to offer them his powerful support.

Moreover, the course of external politics once again assisted the Jacobin designs. The victory of Valmy had been followed by a series of successes on the Rhine, in Savoy and in Nice, by the defeat of the Austrians and the conquest of Belgium. But the reckless policy of the Convention, its disregard of treaties, and its determination to spread revolutionary principles at any cost, multiplied the enemies of France. The French Government's resolution to attack Holland offended and alarmed the English. The execution of Louis created deep and general indignation in Europe. Early in 1793, England, unheeding Pitt's pacific dreams, and roused by the warning tones of Burke's hot anger and imagination, plunged into the war. Spain, under its Bourbon princes, followed suit. The difficulties of the French troops increased as their spirit and discipline diminished. The allied armies resumed the offensive. At the beginning of March a succession of reverses overtook the French arms, and the invasion of Holland was abandoned. On the 18th, Dumouriez with the main army was defeated by the Austrians in the battle of Neerwinden, and Belgium was lost. Dumouriez, disappointed by the turn of events, long weary of the Jacobin ascendancy and meditating means to overthrow it, rejected Danton's friendly encouragement, talked openly of restoring the Constitutional throne, and determined to declare against the Convention. The Convention, aware of his designs, sent off commissioners to arrest him in his camp. On the 3rd

April, foiled at the last by his own irresolution and by the apathy of his troops, Dumouriez left his army and took refuge in the Austrian ranks. Once again the French commander had deserted in the face of disaster, and the danger of invasion reappeared.

The events on the frontier reacted immediately upon politics in Paris. Danton at last succeeded in convincing the Assembly of the absolute necessity of a strong Executive. In the end of March and the beginning of April, a series of decrees passed the Convention, establishing, for the first time since the outbreak of the Revolution, a powerful Government in France, and founding or reorganising at the same time the three chief instruments of the Terror. One decree created the Revolutionary Tribunal, a court with summary process and extraordinary powers, to try conspirators against the State; another, the famous Committee of General Security, to hunt down and punish political crime; and a third, the still more famous Committee of Public Safety, soon to become the most redoubtable despotism in the history of the world. With these decrees went other energetic measures—fresh powers for the commissioners, the ‘Representatives on Missions,’ sent into the provinces to execute the orders of the Convention; a fresh levy of 300,000 men for the campaign, to be raised, if necessary, by conscription; fresh decrees entailing penalties on Emigrants and non-juring priests, outlawing all enemies of the Revolution, and establishing in every Section of Paris a Committee of Supervision, armed with despotic powers, to watch, disarm, arrest, and tax all politicians on the other side. The national

danger once again called to the front the vigilant minority, which created a despotism to save the Revolution and dragged the reluctant majority behind.

How far in all these measures the Jacobins were acting from patriotic motives, and how far they were merely working for the advantage of their party, it is hardly possible to say. Danton's motives stand above dispute, and many others, it may be, deserve to be associated with him in their love of France. Probably the Jacobins, like other politicians, believed or could easily persuade themselves, that the cause of the country and their party interest were the same. But whatever the motive may have been, there is no doubt that the result of all these measures was to strengthen the Jacobins and to weaken their rivals, although in most of them the Gironde joined.

There were, however, other measures passed in the spring of 1793, which were little in harmony with Girondist ideas, and which owed their origin to the Jacobins alone. Economic causes were at work to increase the agitation in Paris. In spite of the sale of the Church lands and of the property of the Emigrants, the financial position of the Government was most unsatisfactory. The taxes were ill-paid. The credit of the State had sunk very low. The expenses of the war and of the administration were increasing every day. Specie was very difficult to obtain. The Government, in consequence, fell back upon fresh issues of Assignats, and the value of the Assignats steadily fell. At the same time prices rose with alarming rapidity. Trade, already dislocated by the confusion of the time, tended to

leave Paris, where the Assignats were most abundant. Speculation naturally increased. Large dealers, contractors and capitalists made considerable profits by laying in stores, by holding back commodities, and by turning the fluctuations of the market to account. It is true that, early in 1793, wages began to rise rapidly as well, because of the large drafts of men drawn from Paris to the seat of war. But the wages of the working class were paid not in money, but in depreciated Assignats; so that, while the poor felt the rise in prices and the scarcity of food, and while they resented the apparent prosperity of the dealers whose machinations their leaders denounced, they did not feel the full advantage of the rise in wages, and their angry discontent increased. The economics of the destitute are always blind. They were easily persuaded that the rich were profiting by a system which brought only suffering to them.

The result was an outcry in the poorer districts of the city against all speculators and capitalists. Demands were raised for the rigid regulation of trade, for cheap food, for the fixing of prices, and for imperative laws to keep up the value of the paper money. The Commune took up the popular cry, and demanded with success large grants from the Treasury, in order to provide the capital with bread. Marat, as usual, denounced his opponents and incited the people to help themselves; and at the end of February, Marat's encouragement produced a somewhat formidable riot, in which many tradesmen who were not Jacobins suffered serious loss. The leaders of the Mountain, that is the

leaders of the Jacobins in the Convention, who had little economic knowledge, and who, seeing distress and scarcity, believed it possible to end them by arbitrary laws, supported the demand for exceptional measures. The indifferent members of the Centre, whose acquaintance with economic laws was probably no wider than that of the Mountain, gave their consent to proposals which they hoped would quiet Paris and avert insurrection. Danton suggested that the price of bread should be regulated by the rate of wages. In April and May a series of summary decrees were passed by the Convention entailing the severest penalties on all who trafficked in the currency, establishing a Maximum price for grain, and imposing a heavy tax in the shape of a forced loan upon the rich.

These measures, again, damaged the Girondists in Paris. They had as a party a clearer conception than their opponents of the danger of arbitrary interference with prices and with trade. Some of their leaders opposed the proposals of the Commune, and even ventured to protest against the grants spent in providing cheap bread for the capital. But their protests only increased their unpopularity in Paris, and led to demands for their punishment and removal, to fresh threats and denunciations. On the 10th March, a fresh insurrection was set on foot in some of the Sections, with the object of marching on the Convention and getting rid of the Girondists by force. But it was discountenanced by the Jacobin leaders, and it ended in an ineffectual riot. The alarm, however, created by the bad news from the frontier tended to heighten the political fever, and

with that the risk of insurrection. In March and April the danger was increased by the serious rising in La Vendée, which, beginning in a series of isolated outbreaks occasioned by the conscription and by local causes, developed into a widespread political movement on behalf of monarchical ideas, and by its spirit and its successes seemed to threaten the safety of the Republic.

While the Girondists wavered and lost ground, the Jacobins were organised and were preparing for the battle. They had behind them all the authority of the Commune of Paris, the prestige of the well-known leaders of the Mountain, and the forces of the two great Clubs. They had, owing to the apathy of their opponents, obtained the control of most of the Sections. They had practically the military power too. After the 10th August, the National Guard had been organised afresh into forty-eight battalions, one for each Section. The artillery of the Guard had been separately organised, and the artillerymen, recruited from the poorest class, formed a body on whom the Jacobins could generally depend. The old bourgeois members no longer appeared, but paid Sansculottes to do their duty for them; and the nucleus of a fighting force was formed by the men of the 10th August and of the 2nd September, who could be relied on to act as the Commune required. Besides that, in the middle of May, the Commune ordered the enlistment of a special force of Sansculottes, which was organised later as the Revolutionary Army. Further, the Jacobins had the control of the police. Each Section had its elected

police-commissioners, acting under the direction of the Commune, and as a matter of fact police-commissioners became in many Sections insurrectionary leaders. Thus the forces which existed nominally to protect the friends of order, had become the active agents of the other side. The Committees of Supervision lately instituted by the Convention, and known before long as Revolutionary Committees, sat in every Section, denouncing, disarming, and fining their enemies, dealing out certificates of 'civism' to their allies, forming ready centres of Jacobin intrigue, and arranging plans for a general rising. If ever the Moderates dared to assert themselves in the Sections, the Jacobins could call in the authority of the police, and thus secure the arrest of their opponents. All that they wanted was time to organise their forces, so as to make the success of an insurrection certain.

To these preparations the Girondists had nothing to oppose. They too must have realised that the question had come to be one of force, and yet they took no steps to gather forces for themselves. They inspired no enthusiasm in the capital. There was no class in Paris on whom they could rely. The National Guard would not rise to defend them. They had no guard or organisation of their own. Neither the aristocrats nor the bourgeois recognised them as leaders, and they made few efforts to rally the partisans of order round them. The Girondists, it is true, had eloquence and parliamentary battalions, and they were probably right in believing that the majority of citizens preferred their policy and conduct to those of their opponents. But these advantages



were of little weight or value when physical force lay in the other scale.

At last, however, the Girondists began to recognise their danger. In April they attacked Marat, and sent him before the Revolutionary Tribunal. But Marat was triumphantly acquitted. They denounced the insurrectionary plots in the Sections. But the plots went merrily on. They refused to listen to Danton's overtures of conciliation. They obtained addresses of confidence from the departments. They proposed to appeal to the country against Paris. They suggested that the Convention should be moved to Versailles or Bourges. But all these proposals were without result. Later still, as their apprehensions increased, they boldly talked of dissolving the Commune, and on the 18th May they carried a motion appointing an extraordinary Commission of Twelve, to enquire into the conspiracies against the Convention. At the end, though they lacked unity, they did not lack vigour. The Commission intrepidly challenged the plotters, and struck at the chief by arresting Hébert. Hébert's arrest precipitated the crisis, and the alarm which it caused in the camp of the Commune showed that the Jacobins felt the gravity of the Girondist attack. But in order to make their attack effective, the Girondists must have had a force behind them, and this they had not the penetration to perceive or the power or resolution to create.

Yet it cannot be said that their leaders were unwarned. Garat, their principal representative in the Ministry, complacently shut his eyes to the danger, and to the last moment assured his colleagues that Paris was quiet and

that nothing need be feared. And yet Garat had at the time in his service a small staff of secret police, who were daily reporting to him on the condition of Paris, and among them one, Dutard, an observer of singular acuteness, whose reports the minister apparently laid on the shelf unread, but whose name and counsels deserve to be rescued from oblivion. In Dutard's reports we have striking evidence of the apathy of the great mass of the Parisians, of their indifference to Girondists and Jacobins alike. If Dutard's opinion is to be trusted, most of the small traders and working people, who had welcomed the Revolution with enthusiasm and who had acquiesced in the downfall of the throne, had since passed into the ranks of disaffection. The butchers, the tailors, the shoemakers, the wine-dealers, even the market-women and the better artisans had ceased to belong to the advanced party. The recruits of the Commune in May were drawn from a lower and more reckless class, from unemployed or idle workmen, from porters, hucksters, foreigners and domestic servants, reinforced by criminals and outcasts, and swelled by the social refuse of great cities, which no legislation or philanthropy has yet been able to remove. This ignorant and undisciplined body, easily led and easily misled, very sensitive to want and panic, not very sensitive to principle or order, formed a force on which the party of violence could depend, and the agents of the Commune were busily appealing to its interests, drilling it into battalions, and rousing it to act. But after all, compared with the population of Paris, this force was small. The great mass of Parisian citizens dreaded and disliked it. They hated its doctrines.

They shuddered at the recollection of its outbreak in September, and were cowed by the fear lest that outbreak should recur. The aristocrats held themselves aloof, provoked opposition and made mischief. The bourgeois declined all public duties, and shunned the assemblies of the Sections, the debates of the clubs, the gatherings and demonstrations in the streets, the political discussions in the cafés. They only wanted to be left alone, to amuse themselves, to gather in the Champs Elysées or in the Gardens of the dismantled Tuileries, to enjoy the sunshine and the summer breezes, to attend to their own small affairs, and to escape the bewildering and dangerous vicissitudes of public life. They had no union, no rallying-point, no leaders. Worst of all, they had for the most part little courage, and had not learned, as they learned later, that if they wished to be delivered they must assert themselves and act.

Yet at times there were traces of a better spirit among them. The first attempts made to raise the forced loan from the rich and to compel them to enlist for service in La Vendée seem to have stirred them to resistance, and in the course of May, Dutard reported signs of a rally of moderate politicians, and the reappearance of the majority in the Sections. Could the Girondists have taken advantage of this spirit, could they have used their influence in the Government and in the Convention to bring troops to Paris, to shut the clubs, to overawe the Commune, to enlist and draft off to La Vendée some of the destitute and unemployed, to appeal to the instincts of property and order which every civilized community retains, and to encourage those instincts to assert

themselves by an adequate display of force, they might yet have won the day. But the Girondists could not seize the opportunity. Very few of them saw as clearly as Garat's clever agent what was wanted. They had not the authority, the union or the promptitude to induce the Convention to take the necessary steps. So the majority relapsed into submission, and the minority, helped by force and terror, secured the lead again.

The arrest of Hébert, on the 24th May, marked the climax of the struggle. It startled the Commune and it forced them to act. Their plans had long been maturing, and in the days which followed they were rapidly completed. On the one hand the insurrectionary leaders organised their forces in the Section of the Evêché, and elected a variety of committees and commissioners to direct the operations of the insurgents. On the other hand the Convention and the Committee of Public Safety hesitated and trimmed between the rival parties, while the bolder spirits among the Gironde persevered in their attack. Some of the more desperate Jacobins proposed the murder of the unpopular deputies, but the responsible leaders insisted that the Girondists should be disposed of by more legitimate means. In the end, the tactics of the 10th August were closely followed. An insurrectionary municipal body, elected by the most extreme Sections, met at night on the 30th May, declared the regular authorities of the Commune superseded, appointed Hanriot Commander-in-Chief of the National Guard, ordered the tocsin to be rung, and proceeded to recruit the battalions which were to intimidate

the Convention into proscribing the Gironde. Even then the result was very doubtful. The insurrectionary leaders found it difficult to raise the force which they required. Some of the Sections and of the National Guards showed a disposition to take the other side. On Friday, the 31st May, and again on Saturday, the 1st June, the insurrectionary leaders failed to obtain their objects, and although they induced the Convention to cancel the Commission of Twelve, they were unable to secure the proscription of their opponents. It was not until the third attempt, on Sunday, the 2nd June, that Hanriot's Sansculottes, aided by the artillerymen of the National Guard and by a disorderly battalion of foreigners, which was then leaving Paris under orders for La Vendée, were able to muster in sufficient force to overawe the Convention, and to induce it to vote the arrest of the twenty-two leaders of the Gironde.

The fall of the Girondists was thus accomplished in Paris after a close and doubtful struggle, in which with energy and union they might very possibly have saved themselves. It produced a general outbreak in France. Lyons, Marseilles, Bordeaux, Toulon, Grenoble, Caen, many of the greatest cities in the country, declared against the Jacobin Government in Paris. The great majority of the departments prepared to raise the standard of revolt. On the Northern and Eastern frontiers the Allies took Condé, Valenciennes, Mayence, and again threatened to advance on Paris. In the South-West the Spaniards, in the South-East the Sardinians made way against the French. On the Loire the insurgents of La Vendée beat the troops of the Republic in battle after battle,

and threw themselves on Nantes. The English fleet blockaded the French ports. All the enemies of the Revolution hurried to enlist on the same side. Some of the Girondists escaped from Paris, and began to organise resistance in the North ; and Charlotte Corday, determined to avenge their injuries, travelled up alone from Caen, and assassinated the famous Jacobin leader who had made himself the apostle of assassination as a method of political advance.

In the midst of these perils the Jacobin Government displayed undaunted vigour and resource. The threatened resistance of the departments, which had little union or organisation, was averted by vigorous and prudent measures. The revolted cities were isolated and gradually reduced. New generals were found and new levies raised for the war. The appointment in turn of Houchard and Jourdan to the chief command resulted in victories at Hondschöten and Wattignies, and from the beginning of September onwards, the tide turned in favour of the French. The Allies, always divided and lethargic, gradually fell back before their enemies. After the autumn of 1793, all serious danger of invasion passed away. The French army began to learn the uses of discipline and the secrets of conquest, and under its great commanders entered on its irresistible career. In the West the Vendéans were at last defeated, and their heroic insurrection crushed. The Girondists in the provinces failed, as they had failed in Paris, to raise the forces essential to success, and one by one they were hunted down, or disappeared. Before the end of October, the Jacobins were everywhere triumphant, the Terror

was established, and the Revolutionary Tribunal was busily at work.

It is not necessary to linger here over the fate of the victims. The Girondist ideals will always command sympathy. Their eloquent hopes, their courage and disasters will always win respect. But when they are tried as statesmen, their lamentable incompetence stands clear, and their failure, though pitiable, seems scarcely undeserved. The triumph of the Jacobins was celebrated by the death of their opponents. They dealt their blows on all parties alike. Many of the Girondist leaders perished in the provinces, and in the autumn and winter of 1793, a long train of illustrious prisoners mounted the scaffold in Paris. Marie Antoinette, undaunted to the last, expiated her rank and ended her misfortunes. Madame Roland, with equal bravery, followed in the steps of the unhappy queen whom she had so unsparingly assailed. A few weeks later, the sinister irony of their judges sent to the guillotine another woman, who like them had for a brief time tried to rule the destinies of France, the once omnipotent Madame Dubarry. Vergniaud and Brissot, once the heroes of the Republic, Bailly, once the hero of the Parisians, Barnave, once the hero of the Assembly, Philippe Egalité, once the hero of the mob, Houchard, only a few weeks before the hero of the army, atoned by suffering the same indignity for the many different parts which they had played. But to the last the Girondist enthusiasts, with the tranquil courage of the Ancients whom they loved, bore witness to their republican ideals, and as they passed from their prison to the scaffold chanted the Marseillaise.

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE JACOBINS IN POWER.

THE first step taken by the Jacobins, after the defeat of their opponents in the Convention, to conciliate public opinion in France, was the proclamation of a new constitution. The 'Constitution of '93,' which was destined never to come into force, was prepared under the guidance of Héault de Séchelles, and was hurried through the Convention in the course of two or three weeks. More than any other of the revolutionary constitutions, it was conceived in the spirit of Rousseau, and embodied the Jacobin belief. In it the passion for electoral devices, the suspicious dread of executive power, the desire to refer every question to the immediate judgment of the people, already familiar to the Jacobin ideal, found their most positive expression. All rights, abstract and concrete, all arrangements, legislative and executive, administrative and judicial, military and financial, were restated and recast. All rulers, even the executive council of state, were to be nominated by popular election. All officials were limited to a very brief period of power. The qualification for the exercise of the suffrage was made as simple and as slight as possible, but by a somewhat curious exception to the theory of direct popular



control, the system of double election in the case of most administrative officers was retained. Further, the powers both of the Executive and of the legislature were jealously guarded by a series of provisions, which gave the nation a veto on all important measures, by directing that every question of moment should be submitted to the assembled people. Never did any Parliament labour with more misplaced ingenuity to reduce its governors to impotence and to make their task impossible. 'The law,' declared the new constitution, 'must protect public and private liberties against the oppression of those who govern. When the Government violates the people's rights, insurrection is for the people, and for each portion of the people, the most sacred of rights and the most indispensable of duties.'

It is instructive to notice what followed. No doubt, the new constitution was partly a tactical device invented to conciliate opinion. But it also genuinely set forth the doctrine which the Jacobins as followers of Rousseau held. It is one thing, however, to cherish a theory, and quite another thing to carry it out. At the moment when the Jacobins were proposing their extremely democratic system, which would have made a strong Government impossible, they found themselves confronted with a situation in which a strong Government was imperatively required. At the moment when they were proposing to the French people to annihilate all executive authority, they found themselves compelled to establish a despotic Executive, if they wished to save France and to preserve themselves. The conflict between Jacobin theory and the stern necessity of actual fact, could not have been

better pointed. Forced to choose between the two, the Jacobins cast their theory to the winds, and the men who had for years been preaching that the rights of the governed were everything and the rights of the governors nothing, set to work to found a system, in which the governors claimed a power never paralleled before, and in which the governed could not establish even their right to live. The constitution passed the Convention before the end of June. In the next few weeks, by dint of great pressure, and in the face of the usual apathy among the voters, its ratification by the primary assemblies was secured. It seems that many voters voted for it, hoping that its adoption would necessitate a general election, and thus end the faction fights in Paris, and oust the Jacobins from power. The delegates of the primary assemblies were then convoked to Paris, and induced by careful management to ask that the dissolution of the Convention should be postponed till the end of the war. The Convention accepted the invitation of the patriots. The delegates returned full of enthusiasm to their homes, to rouse all Frenchmen to serve for the Republic. The democratic constitution was suspended, and the despotism of the Committee of Public Safety began.

Nominally, the Convention was still the chief authority in the State. But after the summer of 1793, it abdicated most of its powers. Its committees still did a great deal of work. The influence of certain members, of Cambon on questions of finance, and of Dubois-Crancé on questions of military organisation, was always very considerable. The great scheme of public education, which the

Convention established on a generous scale, is a worthy monument of its labours. Its efforts to provide for the relief of the poor, to promote technical instruction, to develop science and art, to improve agriculture, to spread the knowledge of the French language, to found the telegraph system in France, to inaugurate the decimal system, and to establish uniformity of weights and measures, bear witness to the activity of the advanced party. Its bold attempt to reduce to order the chaos of French laws laid the foundations of the Civil Code. These points ought not to be forgotten in judging of the work of the Convention, for they show that there were zealous and useful reformers in its ranks. But still it must be admitted that the majority of members succumbed to the Terror as time went on. As far as possible they abstained from voting or from expressing any opinions at all. Their one endeavour was to escape notice, and to give a cordial acquiescence to any conditions which their masters imposed. Sieyès, once the busiest leader of the Assembly and inexhaustibly fertile in debate, lived by remaining obstinately mute. When an enemy denounced him at the Jacobin Club, his shoemaker saved his life by protesting that Sieyès never meddled with politics and did nothing but read his books. In the same way all other competitors for power were crushed. The administrative officials were rigorously sifted, and were deprived of political influence and of their more important functions. Municipal elections were suspended. The public service was filled with Sansculottes, and an immense number of new places were created for the supporters of the victorious party. The

existing authorities having been thus reduced, the Revolutionary Government was organised in their stead. In September, after some vicissitudes, the new system was completed, and Terror was decreed to be 'the order of the day.'

The form of the Revolutionary Government was simple. At its head stood the Committee of Public Safety, the twelve kings of France. The members of this Committee were supreme in all matters foreign or domestic. They used the ministers as clerks and subordinates. They resorted only as a matter of form to the Convention. They were superior to all existing authorities, with unlimited powers, above the law. Immediately subordinate to the Great Committee were the two chief engines of its power—the Committee of General Security, under Amar and Vadier, Panis and Rühl, which superintended the police work of the Government, filled the prisons of Paris, and chose the victims for the scaffold, and the Revolutionary Tribunal, organised afresh in September upon a larger scale, ruled by such men as Herman, Coffinhal and Fouquier-Tinville, and acting through the guillotine. Behind these three important bodies were the various other agencies of the Terror. First, in Paris, there was the redoubtable Commune, directed by Pache, Hébert and Chaumette; the battalions of the Sections, once the National Guard, but now represented chiefly by their cannoneers, and placed under the command of Hanriot; the new Revolutionary Army of Sansculottes, formed in September, 1793, and supplying an additional force of six or seven thousand men; the Revolutionary Committees of the

forty-eight Sections, carefully sifted, organised and paid; the Sectional meetings, now limited to two a week, and governed by a paid majority of Sansculottes; and the great organisation of the Jacobin Club. Then in the provinces, the Government was maintained by a similar system of close centralisation. Special Representatives on Mission were sent out armed with absolute powers to establish the terror in the great cities of France. Subordinate officers, organised later under the title of National Agents, were appointed to exercise similar powers in the less important towns. Revolutionary Committees, organised and paid, in every borough and considerable village, acted under the National Agents, and in close co-operation with the local clubs. And in some places revolutionary tribunals and revolutionary armies were formed on the model of those in Paris.

The heads of this extraordinary system were the Committee of Public Safety in Paris and the Representatives on Mission in the Departments. They were the men who created the Terror, and on them the chief responsibility rests. The Committee of Public Safety contained several different groups. Three of its most conspicuous members, who acted closely and consistently together, were Robespierre, Couthon and St. Just. These men were the idealists of the Committee, all fanatical disciples of Rousseau, all aiming at the regeneration of society and determined to secure the triumph of their principles by any means. Robespierre's wide popularity with the Jacobins, his character for respectability and virtue, and his position as the typical exponent of the party creed, made him an indispensable ally, although

the more practical among his colleagues regarded his administrative capacities with contempt. Couthon, with his sweet voice and crippled body, and St. Just, with his handsome face and stern demeanour, supported Robespierre's schemes, with the same singular mixture of cruelty and sentiment, of shallow pedantry and deep conviction. But though the triumvirate afterwards grasped at power, and though they all took part in shaping the principles and policy of the Terror, their influence at first was by no means predominant, but was surpassed by that of many of their colleagues. Allied with them in the political work of the Committee, but more effective than they in securing its triumph, were Billaud-Varenes and Collot d'Herbois, the real organisers of the Terror, and among the fiercest of the ruthless men whom that system raised to power. Beside them stood the impressionable Barère, in some respects the most important member of the Government, who represented the Committee in the Convention, where his fluent tongue and easy temper made him popular, and Héroult de Séchelles the least important of the twelve, pre-eminent in courtliness and breeding, but most pre-eminent in society and love. The other five members of the Committee were men whose names with one exception are little known to-day, Lindet and Prieur of the Marne, charged with the work of provisioning the country, Jean Bon St. André, the reorganiser of the navy, and Carnot and Prieur of the Côte-d'Or, the organisers of the great campaigns, which did so much to save the Committee's reputation, and which in the eyes of many Frenchmen have half excused its faults.

In judging of this celebrated despotism no one should be permitted to forget its arduous labours, its intrepid patriotism, its devotion and success. The members of the Committee did not spare themselves. Those who had special departments to attend to, like Carnot and the Prieurs, Jean Bon St. André and Lindet, gave themselves up heart and soul to business, worked day and night, lived in their offices, dined sometimes on bread and water, and, engrossed in their overwhelming duties, left to others the field of political intrigue. All their vigour and abilities were thrown into the public service. They accepted the Terror, as a system which it was hopeless to resist, from necessity rather than from desire. But still they signed whatever their colleagues put before them, and they must share the responsibility with the rest. All the members of the Government lived at terrible pressure. The sword hung constantly over their heads. Universal distrust was the Jacobin shibboleth, and the genius of suspicion ruled in their camp. Every man knew that he was watched by his colleagues. Every man knew that his own turn might come next. 'You had your neighbour guillotined,' said Barère afterwards, 'in order to prevent his guillotining you.'

Under the control of the Committee of Public Safety and the direct supervision of Billaud-Varennes and Collot d'Herbois, the Representatives on Mission carried the Terror over France. The system of sending out members of the Convention on special missions to the army and the provinces had been freely adopted after the 10th August, and was widely developed by Jacobin rule. The deputies received the widest instructions from the

Committee, which supported them through thick and thin. They had absolute power over life and property. They could remove and appoint officials, impose fines, levy taxes, imprison on suspicion, try, punish and execute their prisoners, and take any steps which they thought advisable to spread the Terror in the districts where they ruled. Such powers in the best hands would at all times be dangerously excessive; but confided, as they often were, to men without principle or moderation, at a time when political passion was furious, when suspicion was widespread and violence supreme, they were abused to an extent which even the authors of the system hardly contemplated, and which has rendered the annals of the Terror a black page in the history of mankind.

It is true that the character of their government was in some places milder than in others. Certain parts of France escaped. In several important towns there were no executions, though prisoners were sent up to be tried in Paris. In cities like Lyons, Marseilles and Toulon, which had raised the standard of revolt, there was a colourable pretext for severity. Some of the Commissioners, like Bô and Gouly, Lakanal and André Dumont, while indulging in ferocious language, contrived to mingle mercy with their bluster, and spared lives as often as they dared. Some, like Ysabeau, Lecarpentier and Albitte, were averse to wholesale executions, counted their victims by tens and not by hundreds, and were content in their excesses to be less sanguinary than absurd. Some, like Tallien, valued the dictatorship chiefly for the opportunities of spoil which it afforded. Some, like St. Just, were arbitrary only in



insisting on conformity to their political ideals, or like Couthon, mitigated the justice of the Terror with schemes of benevolent philanthropy. Many of them seemed to act in a delirium. They all ran the risk of denunciation and lived in fear of death.

But when all exceptions are admitted, there remain only too many examples of the license and brutality by which the commissioners rendered their power supreme. Some of them seemed to take pleasure in showing how detestable tyranny could be. Even the wholesale executions were not always the worst feature of their rule. Collot d'Herbois and Fouché in Lyons, Lebon at Arras, Javoges at St. Etienne, and Carrier at Nantes, acquired an infamous celebrity above the rest. Others, like Lacombe in Bordeaux, Barras and Fréron in Marseilles and Toulon, Reynaud and Guyardin in the department of the Haute-Loire, Maignet in the Vaucluse, Dartigoyle in the Gers and the Landes, Borie in the Gard, and Bernard de Saintes and Léonard Bourdon in the Côte-d'Or, fell in demerit only behind the worst. Their despotism was less prodigal of life; but in contempt for decency, humanity and justice, few of their colleagues surpassed them. The first fury of the Terror was directed against the suspected and the wealthy, against priests, capitalists and aristocrats. But it rapidly passed on to others; and tradesmen and farmers, working men and working women supplied their tale of victims for the guillotine. 'I will convert this people into patriots,' cried Baudot; 'either they or I must die.' 'We will make France a cemetery,' echoed Carrier, 'rather than not regenerate it in our own way.'

More interesting, however, than the iniquities of the proconsuls of the Terror, are the principles which those iniquities were intended to enforce. There were always differences of view among the Jacobins, and no very consistent rules governed their legislation. But still it is possible to point to certain maxims as influencing their conduct, maxims which, set in a different light and approached in a different spirit, have in other ages roused enthusiasm and won respect. These maxims found their strongest supporters in the politicians of the Commune. Their adoption was largely due to the municipality of Paris; and the ascendancy of that party, which reached its height in November, 1793, marks the climax of the Revolution and, as regards political doctrine, the furthest point of the democratic advance.

The chief point for which the Terrorists contended was the absolute supremacy of the State and the entire subordination to it of individual rights. The supremacy of the State, in the Jacobin theory, extended over life and property alike. It was the duty of every member of the State to work for it. It was the right of every member of the State to be supported by it. In pursuance of these ideas the Republic asserted its title not only to the estates of the Crown, of the Church, of the Emigrants and the suspected, but to corporate property of every kind, to the estates of hospitals, of scientific bodies, of educational and benevolent institutions. It resumed all lands alienated by the Crown during the past three hundred years. It claimed the right of appropriating for public purposes, under the name of requisition and at

such prices as it chose to fix, all the products of commerce, agriculture and manufacture. 'Whatever is essential to preserve life,' said Robespierre, 'is common property to Society at large.' 'When the public needs require it,' argued another deputy, 'all belongs to the people and nothing to individuals.' Thus every man between eighteen and twenty-five was required to serve in the armies of the Republic. Thus, in order to clothe and shoe the army, tailors and shoemakers were summoned to head-quarters and required to work for the servants of the State. In some districts all blue and green cloaks were confiscated to the service of the Republic. Thus, too, all millers, farmers and labourers, all who prepared food for the people, were required to labour at the command of the State. On one occasion the Government ordered that all the oats in the territories of the Republic should be deposited within a week at certain specified places and surrendered to the local authorities at the price fixed by the State. On other occasions the authorities ordered all specie and gold and silver articles to be surrendered for public purposes under penalty of death.

But these far-reaching claims involved very arbitrary measures. In order to secure obedience to its commands, the State must be able to rely upon its servants, and accordingly it imposed offices and duties, wherever it found convenient nominees. All whom it appointed were forced to accept, and no disclaimer was permitted. Further, the State undertook to supervise everyone who worked for the community, all manufacturers, cultivators and dealers. It discussed the feasibility of converting

its retail-traders into salaried servants. All those whom it required to work had to work, whether they liked or not, or else be denounced as 'Muscadins' and heavily punished and fined. The State undertook to provide them with work and to settle the rate of their wages. In certain districts the authorities were required to draw up lists of labourers out of employment and of farms in need of labour. The men were then supplied to the farmers, and their wages fixed by the State. If any labourer did not have his name put down, or asked for more than the wages fixed, he was sentenced to imprisonment in irons. Every man had to give his services when the State demanded it, or be punished as egoistic and refractory. If he were ruined by compliance it was his fault, for the State could do no wrong. The State compelled for good, and all men must obey.

In return for this implicit obedience to its calls, the State undertook to watch over the welfare of its subjects. 'Society,' cried Robespierre, 'must provide for the support of all its members.' A few enthusiasts, like St. Just and Babœuf, suggested the abolition of private property; but that view was not very widely accepted, and the general tendency of Jacobin legislation was to distribute property and not to forbid it. 'In a well-ordered republic,' said Barère, 'nobody should be without some property.' Accordingly, two broad rules were adopted, first, that no man must have too much, and secondly, that every man must have enough. In order to secure the first of these principles drastic measures were needed. The rich were taxed and proscribed. Fines of enormous amount were levied on

them, recklessly imposed by any authority which had the power to enforce payment. At the same time confiscations multiplied, and lands, houses, plate and art treasures were swept into the coffers of the Republic. A distinction was drawn between what was essential and what was surplus. The essential was fixed at forty pounds a year a head. Beyond that it was proposed that the wealthiest families should keep only an income of a hundred and eighty pounds. 'Opulence,' declared St. Just, 'is infamous.' 'The richest of Frenchmen,' cried Robespierre, 'ought not to have more than a hundred and twenty pounds a year.' To guard against inequalities of wealth in the future, freedom of bequest was abolished, and the rights of testators were strictly limited so that their property might be divided on their death. If a man had no children, the State encouraged him to adopt some, in order that his estate might be distributed amongst them. 'Equal rights,' said a deputy, 'could only be maintained by a persistent tendency to uniformity of fortunes.'

'But,' said Barère, 'it is not enough to bleed the rich and to pull down colossal fortunes. The slavery of poverty must be made to disappear from the soil of the Republic.' Accordingly, for those who had no means of subsistence the State provided in a variety of ways. It allotted to them confiscated lands. It enrolled them in the Revolutionary Army. It provided for them in the public service, or paid them to attend committees, meetings and clubs. Communes were required to draw up lists of all citizens who had no property of their own, in order that the State might come to their relief. A 'big

ledger of national beneficence' was instituted in each department for the old, the widowed and the infirm, so that they might receive pensions from the State. 'Every citizen,' wrote St. Just, one of the law-givers of the Terrorist Utopia, 'must have his own bread, his own roof, and all that is indispensable for life. He must live independently, respect himself, have a tidy wife and healthy and robust children.' But should he decline to conform to this ideal, the penalty was death.

But it was not enough to furnish incomes for all ; it was necessary to take further measures to provide that the prices of necessaries should be such that every man could buy them. Accordingly, by the Maximum laws the State proceeded to fix a limit for the price of bread ; and from that it rapidly passed on to limit the prices of other necessaries, of meat and vegetables, of soap and firewood, of butter, tobacco, sugar, beer, even of manufactured articles and of raw material as well. On the same grounds, in order to make things plentiful and cheap, the State watched jealously over all dealers and producers. Monopoly was made a capital crime. Manufacturers, agriculturists and tradesmen were freely denounced as public enemies. Capitalists and usurers were held up to public execration. The Bourse was closed. Financial associations were suppressed. Bankers, stock-brokers, and silver dealers were forbidden to exercise their calling. Heavy restrictions limited the import and export trade of the country, and the investment of capital abroad. Hébert declared that all tradesmen were 'essentially anti-revolutionists, and would sell their country for a few halfpence.' Other

Jacobins maintained that 'nearly all farmers were aristocrats,' and proscribed the butchers in particular as 'an intolerable aristocracy.' The more these arbitrary measures failed, the more implacably did their authors enforce them. Farmers were forbidden to sell their produce privately. Shopkeepers were compelled to offer to the public all that they had in their shops. Penalty of death was denounced against the manufacturer who did not make full use of his materials, penalty of death against the dealer who did not post up a list of all that he had in stock, penalty of death against the cultivator who did not bring his grain to market, penalty of death against any person who kept more bread on hand than he required for his own subsistence. Similar heavy penalties followed for all who infringed the Maximum laws, and who would not accept the prices that the State had fixed. Among the records of the punishments inflicted, the State is sometimes found resorting to ruthless acts of petty tyranny, condemning in one case to a fine of one thousand francs a woman who had ventured to sell a candle for fivepence, sentencing to a fine of forty thousand francs a bar-keeper who had charged tenpence for a glass of wine, and ordering a grocer who had sold sugar-candy at a lower rate than the authorities approved, to pay one hundred thousand francs as penalty, and to be imprisoned until the end of the war!

Of course these arbitrary measures defeated their own ends. Instead of making food and clothing plentiful, instead of keeping prices down, they destroyed credit, ruined enterprise, and resulted in scarcity and dearth.

In spite of all the efforts of the Government, the value of the Assignats steadily declined. Everyone was compelled to use them, and to accept them at their nominal value; but everyone knew that they were really worthless. For a time commercial prosperity disappeared. On all sides factories failed, and workmen fell out of employment. Arthur Young declared that the Revolution did more harm to manufactures than to any other branch of industry in France. The proscription of the rich wrought havoc with the industries of Paris and Lyons. The disturbances in the West Indies dealt a heavy blow at colonial trade. The war with England closed French ports and damaged French shipping. The war with the other Powers shut the Continent to French goods. Observers in Bordeaux, in Nantes and in Strasbourg, echoed the same complaints. 'Commerce here is annihilated,' wrote a Swiss banker from Paris in November, 1793.

And as it was with the capitalists, so it was with the tradesmen, the farmers and labourers too. No one would bow to regulations which cut at the profits of his calling. All sorts of devices were resorted to to evade them. Shopmen kept only a limited stock on hand, or disposed of their goods secretly to customers who would pay a handsome price. Smuggling steadily increased. Farmers and peasants refused to bring their grain to market for the prices fixed by the State. They sold it privately or hoarded it up. If defeated in these devices, they refused to work at all, and let their crops stand unharvested in the fields. 'The bakers,' wrote a Jacobin agent from Grenoble in the winter of 1793,



'have stopped baking altogether.' 'The fishermen,' wrote another from Marseilles, 'no longer go to sea.' Of course the State punished them severely for their contumacy, but they would rather go to prison than labour for no adequate reward. And so the working classes passed into the ranks of the suspected, and the 'aristocrats and fanatics' arrested consisted largely of shopkeepers and working men. One list of prisoners at Strasbourg, for instance, contained the names of a number of women whose husbands were tailors, upholsterers and chimney-sweeps, while in country districts the farmers and peasants took the place of the mechanics and tradesmen in the towns. In the summer of 1794, the prisons of France were so full of country people that the Convention became alarmed at the neglect of the land, and ordered the provisional release in view of the harvest of large numbers of labouring men.

The effect of the reckless action of the State and of the resistance which it provoked was to produce a general dearth. In 1792 and 1793 the harvests were by no means bad. But the utter depreciation of the currency, the insecurity of property, the frequent seizure of grain, and the attempts of the authorities, especially in Paris, to fix wages and to manipulate prices, all tended to lessen the supply and to check the free circulation of food. In the winter of 1793-94 the signs of distress became alarming. From Lyons and Marseilles, from Rouen and Bordeaux, there came nothing but reports of famine. 'In the district of Cadillac,' said Tallien in March, 1794, 'absolute dearth prevails; the citizens fight for the grass in the fields.' 'In many of the Indre

districts,' wrote another representative, 'food is entirely wanting.' In Paris, where so many indigent were gathered, the danger, in spite of the efforts of the municipality, was more noticeable still. Bread was bad and scanty. Meat was terribly scarce. Vegetables and groceries were exceedingly dear. The long *queues* of hungry men and women, which formed every night outside the provision-shops of Paris, waiting for the dawn, added a grim feature to Parisian life. 'If this lasts,' said the workmen, according to the testimony of one observer, 'we shall have to cut each other's throats, since there is nothing left to live on.' Beggars multiplied on every side. Those who knew the streets of Paris spoke of the crowds of famished faces, 'everywhere presenting an image of despair,'—into such misery had the all-governing State reduced them, the State which only wished to be omnipotent for the noble purpose of regenerating man.

But the State did not confine its interference to questions of property and labour. It undertook to regulate private conduct too. The old codes of faith and morality were swept aside. The old notions of family life were rejected. Robespierre protested against 'the domestic federalism which narrows the soul by keeping it isolated.' Marriages were made the loosest contracts. 'A man and woman who love each other are married,' cried St. Just. Paternal rights and duties were abolished. Patriots regarded it as contrary to liberty for a father to correct his child. The State undertook to educate its children on the most minute and rigid system, to see to their support, to carve out their inheritance, to dictate their morals, to form their opinions, to point out their

God. Under the influence of the materialistic school which ruled in the Commune of Paris, and in particular of Chaumette, Hébert and Cloutz, Christianity was proscribed. 'It will not be long,' cried an enthusiastic deputy, 'before the religion of Socrates, of Marcus Aurelius and Cicero will be the religion of the world.' With the sanction of the Convention, Reason was established as the faith of the Republic. On the 10th November, 1793, the Goddess of Reason was installed in the cathedral of Notre Dame. The churches were closed and plundered. Priests were compelled, on pain of persecution, to abdicate or to abjure their faith, and many scenes of license and disorder signalised the triumph of the rationalistic creed. The action of the Commune in Paris and of its representatives in the country districts created wide-spread indignation. 'The mischief is grave, and the wound deep,' wrote a Jacobin politician to Robespierre from Lyons. 'Stupor, grief and consternation are depicted upon every face. The dying man sends for the minister of religion to speak the words of peace and consolation, and the minister is threatened with the guillotine if he goes to perform this duty of humanity. Such is the reality of our freedom!'

Besides the Christian religion the Terrorists repudiated the Christian era. The new Calendar dated from the 22nd September, 1792, the day of the proclamation of the French Republic, which became the first day of the first year of Liberty. The old months, weeks and days were abolished. The year was divided into twelve new months, each consisting of thirty days,—Vendémiaire, Brumaire, Frimaire for the autumn; Nivôse,

Pluviôse, Ventôse for the winter; Germinal, Floréal, Prairial for the spring; and Messidor, Thermidor, Fructidor for the summer. Each month was divided into three decades, and the five days over at the end of the year were consecrated to public festivals. With the customs of the old world its manners disappeared. In order to enforce social equality, all classes were compelled to adopt the habits, dress and language of the Sansculottes. Red caps, sabots and rough clothing became essential signs of patriotism. The graces and courtesies of life were penal. 'It is not safe,' wrote a Parisian, as early as September, 1792, 'to walk the streets in decent clothes.' The old forms of address disappeared and gave place to fraternal greetings. The real aristocracy of nature and education shared the proscription of the accidental aristocracy of birth. 'The French people,' boasted Robespierre, 'have outstripped the rest of humanity by two thousand years. . . . In the rest of Europe a ploughman or artisan is an animal formed for the pleasures of the noble. In France the nobles are trying to transform themselves into ploughmen and artisans, but do not succeed in obtaining that honour.' Among other strange and trivial changes, the adoption of new names came into fashion, names borrowed often from the heroes of antiquity. Brutus, Anaxagoras and Scipio-Solon figured in the popular nomenclature of the day. On the staff of the Revolutionary Tribunal one member took the name of Tenth-of-August; another styled himself Mucius Scaevola; and a third became Sempronius Gracchus.

Apart from these absurdities, which are only worth

recording because they illustrate the extraordinary character of the times, the natural consequences attended the Terrorists' interference with the rules of private conduct. No nation can with impunity cast its prejudices and beliefs behind it. No nation can accept without suffering a brand new code of morality and ethics even at the hands of well-intentioned men. The result was moral disorder. When respect for conventions was proscribed, respect for discipline and self-restraint went with it. Parents lamented the insubordination of their children. Vice showed itself more often unashamed. Encouraged by the legislation of the Terror, the statistics of illegitimacy enormously increased. In the year VI of the Republic there were more divorces than marriages in France.

No doubt in many cases the action of the Terrorists was based upon honest conviction. Certain members of the Government, like St. Just and Robespierre, were idealists convinced that their tyranny was needed to secure the reign of virtue in the world. Even among the politicians of the Commune, from whom emanated most of the socialist experiments and most of the extreme measures of the Terror, and with whom many of its worst instruments were closely allied, there were, no doubt, some men who, like Chaumette, meditated projects of benevolent philanthropy for the reform of criminals, the alleviation of suffering and the suppression of vice. These men saw round about them grave inequalities and serious distress. They wished to render social wrong impossible, and to make all men happy, patriotic and enlightened on the spot. They wished to break down

conventions which sometimes worked hardship, and to banish what they regarded as the superstitions of the past. And thus, having seized on absolute power, they used it to found their dimly-seen ideal by desperate measures and in desperate haste.

But while making full allowance for the intentions of these men, and passing over for the moment their ruinous unwisdom, we cannot shut our eyes to the methods which they used. Political passion warps history to its uses, and writers who have sympathised with the Terrorist ideals, have too often refused to consider anything else. But after all, these men were a small minority, whose maxims their colleagues adopted, but whose scruples they pushed aside. It is not by the hopes of a few theorists, but by the actions and character of the practical agents of the Terror that that system must be judged. And it is on the ground of their actions and character that the Terrorists as a party stand condemned. The overwhelming evidence of their own statements, of official papers and of judicial reports cannot be rejected as idle slander. No doubt some of them acted in a delirium, under an imminent sense of peril and at the risk of death. No doubt they all suffered from that blunting of the moral sense, which the reckless excitement of the Revolution seems to have produced in many minds, which alone rendered the Terror possible, and which is so conspicuous in Napoleon, the Revolution's conqueror and child. But still, admitting all excuses, the record of the Terrorists is dark. Some of them, at the head, were dangerous zealots, and some were colourless or unwilling assistants. But many of

them, especially the subordinate agents and those who were ranked among the followers of Hébert, were ignorant and unprincipled, cruel and corrupt.

One characteristic of the party was the license which marked their speech and conduct. Coarseness of language was not uncommon among Jacobin politicians, and even the greatest of them, like Danton, shared it. In many cases the habit was not natural, but was deliberately affected for a political purpose, and cultivated as a sign of democracy and in order to win popularity with the mob. It was in men like Hébert and his allies that this contemptible fashion reached its climax. Hébert made his political reputation by it. His journal, the *Père Duchesne*, which raised him to notoriety and power, was started with the express intention of appealing to the obscene tastes of the multitude, and its scandalous impurity has probably never been surpassed. Of what calibre must the men have been who were driven to such methods of acquiring fame? Their language, however, would have mattered little, had it not been so often reflected in their conduct, and had they not possessed the power to abolish, with the aid of the guillotine, all those laws and decorums by which society protects itself. Hébert had no lack of imitators among the men whom the Terror raised to power. Guffroy, a member of the Committee of General Security, started a paper in the same style. Javogues and Dartigoyte, Vacheron, Laplanche and others preached and adopted in the departments the morality of *Père Duchesne*, and those below them in the hierarchy of the Terror rivalled or exceeded the example of their chiefs. Nor can one

overlook the ferocity which so many Terrorists displayed. The records of despotism contain few things which surpass the sanguinary rigour of Collot d'Herbois, Fréron and Lebon, the iniquities permitted by Ronsin, the hero of the Revolutionary Army, and by Fouquier-Tinville, the hero of the Revolutionary Tribunal, the cynical cruelty of a Fouché watching a massacre from a window, lorgnette in hand, the savagery of a Carrier, who declared that he had never laughed so much in his life as he did at the contortions of his victims, the pitiless fanaticism of a Robespierre, who, after ten months of the Terror, insisted on fresh legislation for simplifying trials and facilitating death, the terrible ingenuity of a Vadier, who invented the idea of getting up conspiracies in the prisons so as to furnish more victims for the scaffold, or the barbarity of a Government which, while endorsing this iniquitous device, proposed to shoot all its prisoners of war, and would have done so, had not its own officers refused to carry the order out.

But if some of the leading Terrorists were worthless, many of their subordinates were worse. The character of the men who carried out the system in the Sections of Paris and in the towns and villages of France, who governed the clubs, ruled the committees and composed the armed force, was generally unredeemed by any larger public motives. Not only were they very rough and ignorant, but they were necessarily men without scruples. No others would perform the duties of the Terror or execute the orders that came from above. Their powers being enormous, their opportunities for tyranny and plunder were unlimited, and those opportu-



nities were constantly abused. Money levied recklessly upon the rich never reached the coffers of the State. Salaries were multiplied to an extraordinary degree. Cambon, speaking for the Treasury, bore witness to the wholesale peculation. A hundred other witnesses have brought forward instances of corruption and excess, and even of debauchery and crime. The armed force on which the small minority of Terrorists relied to maintain their precarious authority, freely enlisted the most ruffianly recruits. Their own general described them as 'scoundrels and brigands,' and excused himself by pleading that 'honest men could not be found to undertake such work.' Such a class exists in every country, especially in countries that have been long mis-ruled; but civilised communities place it under strict restraint. The Jacobins, on the other hand, invited it to govern, and invested it with despotic powers. It is noticeable that many of the Jacobin agents were men who had failed in the ordinary walks of life, and who were consequently bitter against social laws. In their compassion for suffering and their contempt for the magic of wealth, the Jacobins fell into the opposite excess, professed to find magic in poverty, and regarded ignorance and destitution as entitled to honour in themselves. Recalling the doctrine of their master, that in a state of Nature men's instincts are good, they refused to recognise the frailty of humanity, and forgot that misfortune is sometimes due to fault. Strange as the truth appears, it would seem to be indisputably proved that under the Terror the Government of France fell largely into the hands of the unscrupulous and worthless, and that the doctrine of the

sovereignty of the people, once welcomed with such pure enthusiasm, came to mean the tyranny of the lowest of the people, not only of the lowest in wealth and station—that would not have mattered—but of the lowest in education and capacity, in nature and in morals too.

It is difficult to believe that Carnot and Lindet, or even Robespierre and St. Just, could have cordially approved of such a system. But that they sanctioned it is clear. Some, like Carnot, shut their eyes, feeling that it was no use to interfere. Others, like St. Just and Robespierre, took refuge in their resolutely blind fanaticism. ‘Patriots’ could not do wrong, and if their own friends brought them proof to the contrary, they refused, except in the grossest cases, to listen or believe. They had to use such weapons as they could find, and they comforted their consciences with general declarations. ‘The Jacobins,’ cried Collot d’Herbois, ‘are compassionate, humane and generous. These virtues, however, they reserve for patriots who are their brethren, and not for aristocrats.’ Most of them believed the Terror to be needed. ‘It is necessary,’ said Billaud, ‘that the people should be created anew.’ Even Jean Bon St. André insisted that, in order to establish the ideal Republic, half the population of France must be destroyed. ‘Our purpose,’ Robespierre steadily protested, ‘is to substitute morality for egotism, honesty for honour, principles for usages, . . . the empire of reason for the tyranny of fashion, . . . nobleness for vanity, love of glory for the love of gain,’ but in order to fulfil their virtuous purpose, the Terrorists called in the help of the depraved.

These considerations may serve to explain the cata-

strophe of the leaders of the Terror. So far as their experiments were honest and high-motived, they will always be of interest to the world. But even as reformers their failure was complete. The effects of their desperate action were disastrous. Their methods utterly discredited their cause, and occasioned an infinite amount of suffering to France. And while in part, no doubt, they failed through ignorance, they failed chiefly because so many of them were bad men. In the end, the Terrorists did little materially or morally to raise the level of life, little to advance the equality which they longed for, and to which men march through order, not through crime. Of all their work, strenuous and heroic as it often was, only one part, the war, entirely prospered. For under the Terror Frenchmen threw into the war the irresistible enthusiasm which the Revolution had created, and which they could no longer feel for politics at home. The Terror was never sanctioned by France, and it never will receive the sanction of posterity. To assume that it was necessary is only one among the many sophisms which weak and well-intentioned men advance for palliating wrong. Even the excuse of national peril was wanting, for the ease with which the Jacobins in Paris subdued their enemies in the summer of 1793, shows how powerful their position was, and in the winter of that year all serious danger of invasion disappeared. The Terror was necessary to keep the Terrorists in power, and to enable them to carry out their views. But it was necessary for no other purpose, and certainly not for the salvation of France.

## CHAPTER X.

### THE STRUGGLE OF PARTIES AND THE ASCENDENCY OF ROBESPIERRE.

IT was in November, 1793, and under the influence of the Commune of Paris, that the Revolution reached its climax. The party of the Commune was undoubtedly strong. It had behind it the elaborate organisation of the Parisian municipality. It had many supporters in the Jacobin Club. It had complete possession of the Cordeliers, once the scene of Danton's triumphs. It had friends on the Committee of General Security. It was countenanced by Pache, the Mayor, and by Bouchotte, the Minister of War. On the Committee of Public Safety it had a powerful champion in the person of Collot d'Herbois, and in Carrier, Fouché, and other proconsuls of the Terror it had agents on whom it could rely. Hébert, its most ambitious leader, enjoyed, as the editor of *Père Duchesne*, a commanding influence in the Press. Chaumette, a worthier disciple, held an important post in the Commune. Vincent, another of its representatives, held an important post in the Ministry of War. Ronsin, the commander of the Revolutionary Army, lent it the assistance of an effective force. Other politicians of less note, Cloutz

and Momoro, Desfieux and Proli, Maillard, Chabot and Bazire, were sometimes associated with it, and contributed to it their strange enthusiasm, their doubtful services, and their discreditable intrigues. Before long the objects of the Commune appeared without disguise—to destroy the power of the Convention, to usurp the place of the Government, and to make its own views and heroes the chief authority in the State.

The proclamation of the worship of Reason marked the ascendancy of this party, and from that moment its decline began. The orgies which accompanied its triumph, the tyranny which it had established in Paris, and the license and brutality which distinguished its representatives in the departments caused grave dissatisfaction in the Jacobin ranks. The majority of the Convention submitted, but they submitted with indignation and disgust, and though they had not the courage to rebel, they were prepared to welcome anyone who would give voice to the resentment which they felt. Under these circumstances a second party raised its head among the forces of the time. Philippeaux and Fabre d'Églantine, two well-known deputies of the Mountain believed to be on terms of intimacy with Danton, came forward to attack the proceedings of the Hébertists. Others, like Westermann and Bourdon de l'Oise, Legendre, Lecointre, Lacroix and many others, joined in the attack with more or less reserve. On the same side Camille Desmoulins threw himself into the battle with all his impetuous eloquence and ardour; and behind the attacking forces there rose, impressive and conspicuous as ever, the figure of the man whom all regarded as a leader, and

whom the rising opposition hoped to make the spokesman of their protest against the Commune and the Terror alike.

Danton, like so many of his contemporaries, had soon wearied of the system of the Terror. He watched with repugnance the ruin which it spread. He had no liking for political intrigue. He felt strongly the need of stability and order, if there were ever again to be a settled government in France. It is true that in the earlier days Danton had taken a chief part in securing the Jacobin triumph. In the heat of the revolutionary struggle, in the moment of national danger, no one had been readier to act. He had encouraged and organised the insurrection of the 10th August. He had grasped the helm of State during the perilous days which followed. Many of the characteristic Jacobin measures—the wholesale arrest of the suspected in September, the foundation of the Committee of Public Safety, the establishment of the Revolutionary Tribunal, of the Maximum and of the tax on the rich, the formation of the Revolutionary Army, the proclamation of the Terror, the conscription and the defence of France—had been largely due to his initiative or support. In common with the rest of his party, Danton had opposed the declaration of war, but as soon as the invaders appeared upon the frontier, he had thrown himself into the battle heart and soul. He cared little for party jangles; but he cared intensely for the honour and greatness of his country. Free alike from narrow theories, from absorbing jealousies and from morbid ambition, Danton had always viewed events with a statesman's eye. He had

seen Dumouriez' failings, but he had seen also his conspicuous ability, and he had supported him staunchly to the end. He had seen, as Mirabeau had seen before him, that the government of the country could never prosper until a strong Executive were formed, and accordingly, like Mirabeau, he had endeavoured to induce the Convention to give the Ministers seats in the House. Only when that scheme had failed, had he fallen back on the device of a powerful committee. He had realised much sooner than his colleagues the folly of the reckless decree by which, in November, 1792, the Convention had declared war on all the kings of Europe, and four months later he had secured its repeal. He had discerned the uses of diplomacy, had negotiated the withdrawal of Brunswick, had tried to detach Prussia from the coalition, had secured an alliance with Sweden, and had steadily laboured, in spite of the wild talk of his colleagues, to bring France back into the comity of nations. From the time of the king's death, Danton had done all that eloquent persuasion could do to heal divisions and to unite parties in the work of defending the Republic. He would gladly have worked with the Girondists, had they not driven him by their intemperate charges into the opposing camp. 'If we must shed blood,' he once pleaded nobly, 'let us shed the blood of the enemies of our country.'

But when the danger of invasion passed away, Danton's energies passed with it. When the Jacobins had conquered and the State was saved, he felt that he had no employment left. He had little sympathy with the Government of the Terror. He wearied of the long

tale of violence and outrage. Unscrupulous and hardened as he was, he turned disgusted from the methods of Carrier and Hébert. After his second marriage, in June, 1793, his young wife and the delights of home called him away to purer things than politics. He knew the limits of his own capacity, and that he could not bring to the work of political manœuvring the irresistible vigour and conviction by which he had roused the country and had swept his colleagues into power. Even to the last, when Philippeaux and Desmoulins forced him to the front, and made him the unwilling leader round whom the party of reaction gathered, he was inclined to urge them to put up their weapons, and to fall back on his old plea for unity. He hated personal animosities and was not made to be a faction chief. But he was too conspicuous and too honest to remain altogether in the background, when his comrades were risking their lives in a cause which he knew to be the cause of mercy, and believed to be the cause of France.

Between Hébert and his adherents in the Commune, and the party which gradually ranged itself behind Danton in opposition to the whole system of the Terror, there stood, as a third party, the Government of the day. The Government, that is the Committee of Public Safety, was not, it is true, entirely united. Some of its members, like Collot d'Herbois and in a lesser degree Billaud-Varenes, approved of the methods of the Commune, and were closely leagued with its chiefs. On the other hand, Robespierre detested the brutal license of many of the Communist party, and his feelings were



shared by Couthon and St. Just. Others, again, like Carnot, had little liking for either Robespierre or Hébert. Hérault de Séchelles was a friend of Danton and sympathised with his ideas. But, divided as they were, most of the members of the Committee felt that things were going too far. They were responsible for the government of the country, and they could not, therefore, view with unconcern the anarchy and public plunder which marked the course of the agents of the Commune. They were for the moment kings of France, and they had no intention of surrendering their throne to the ambitious municipality of Paris, or of permitting any reaction in the Convention which would deprive them of the power which it had suffered them to usurp.

Accordingly, in the month of November, when Collot d'Herbois was absent in Lyons, a decided movement against the Commune appeared. Robespierre, with his strong sense of decorum and his reverence for the sentimental theology of Rousseau, was shocked by the excesses of the materialist party, and encouraged by the signs of opposition in the Convention, he began to make his opinions felt. As usual, he proceeded with great caution, but by significant hints and phrases he showed his resentment at the conduct of Hébert. On the 17th November, in a long report upon the foreign policy of France, he took occasion to denounce both the 'cruel moderantism and the systematic exaggeration of false patriots.' Four days later, at the Jacobin Club, in answer to a challenge from Hébert, he delivered a singular speech on the religious question, and ended by proposing the purging of the Club. The grounds on

which Robespierre attacked his enemies were characteristically circuitous and astute. 'Atheism,' he argued, 'is aristocratic. The idea of a Supreme Being, who watches over oppressed innocence and punishes triumphant crime, is essentially the idea of the people.'

Cautious as Robespierre's action was, the majority quickly rallied round him. Danton returned to Paris and ranged himself at Robespierre's side. 'We did not destroy superstition,' he cried, 'in order to establish the rule of the atheist.' In the Convention he pleaded for milder measures, and urged that the sword of the Terror should be pointed only at those convicted of crime. As the scrutiny at the Jacobins proceeded, the victory of the opponents of the Commune became more distinct. The attacks made upon Danton and Desmoulins collapsed. Robespierre defended them with spirit and enthusiasm, and asked to be judged by Danton's side. On the 4th December, a new law was adopted by the Convention, consolidating the power of the Committee of Public Safety, bringing all constituted authorities more directly under its control, suppressing the revolutionary armies and the agents of the Commune in the departments, forbidding the raising of taxes except by decree of the Assembly, and extending the Government's supervision over the committees in the Sections of Paris. The effect of this decisive measure was largely to increase the authority of the Committee, and to diminish the influence of the Commune both in the provinces and in the capital itself.

The reaction against the Commune had unmistakably begun. On the day after the decree of the Convention the first number of the *Vieux Cordelier* appeared. The

Hébertists, defeated in the Jacobins, had made their head-quarters at the Cordeliers Club; and in order to emphasise the difference between the new doctrines and the spirit which had inspired the Cordeliers in their earlier days, Camille Desmoulins gave to his protest the title of the club, where his wit and Danton's eloquence had once held undisputed sway. Danton and his friends were known to sympathise with the opinions of the new journal. Robespierre corrected the first number in proof. Desmoulins began by denouncing the Hébertists, but as the tide of reaction rose and the friends of moderation gathered courage, he passed on to attack the whole system of the Terror, and in the famous third number of his paper he boldly arraigned its tyranny and crimes. Two days later, on the 17th December, the Convention, on the motion of Danton's adherents, decreed the arrest of three agents of the Commune, Vincent, Ronsin and Maillard. Proposals were freely put forward for renewing and remodelling the Government itself. Bodies of petitioners appeared at the bar of the Convention asking for mercy towards the suspects. Robespierre proposed the appointment of a commission to consider all cases of unjust arrest. Camille Desmoulins appealed to Robespierre and passionately urged the cause of mercy. 'The liberty I worship is no unknown God . . . It is happiness, reason, equality, justice . . . Robespierre, friend and comrade of my schooldays, whose eloquent words our children will read often, recall the history and philosophy that we learned. Remember that love is stronger and lives longer than fear, that reverence and religion spring from kindly treatment . . . and that no men can mount on blood-stained steps to heaven. Why,' cried the writer

bitterly, as he wound up his powerful appeal, 'why has compassion become a crime in France?'

To such a height had the reaction attained, when, on the 21st December, Collot d'Herbois suddenly arrived in Paris. He was welcomed by the Hébertists as a deliverer. 'The giant has arrived,' cried Hébert gladly, 'the faithful defender of the Sansculottes,' and Collot at once espoused the cause of his allies. Full of vigour and self-confidence, the executioner of Lyons entertained no scruples about the Terror. He denounced all ideas of moderation. His presence reanimated the Committee, cheered the party of the Commune, and abashed the hopes of the reaction. The capture of Toulon, which occurred about the same time, served to increase the prestige of the Government. Many who had welcomed Desmoulins' appeal began to feel that they had been too precipitate. The Commune, gathering courage, demanded and obtained the release of its imprisoned agents. The commission to enquire into cases of unjust arrest was cancelled. Collot d'Herbois quickly made his influence felt at the Jacobins and in the Committee, and all the waverers, as usual, rallied to the stronger side. Robespierre, alarmed at the turn events were taking, began to dissociate himself from his new allies, lamented the bitterness of party feeling, and declared that his object was 'to overwhelm factions, foreigners and moderates, but not to ruin patriots.' Even Danton took occasion to declare his loyalty to the Government, and endeavoured to restrain the incautious declarations of his friends.

All through January and February, 1794, the struggle of parties continued, and the fiercest animosities prevailed.

At the Jacobins, Desmoulins' colleagues renewed their onslaught on the followers of Hébert, but no longer with the same success. Robespierre laboured steadily by perpetual speeches to secure his ascendancy in the club, and studiously avoided committing himself to either side. But his position changed. He began to display undisguised hostility towards Philippeaux and Fabre d'Églantine, the most outspoken members of the moderate party. He assumed a tone of paternal reproach towards Camille Desmoulins, and proposed that the *Vieux Cordelier*, which he had once cordially welcomed, should be burned. Danton, disheartened, and embarrassed, relapsed into listless inactivity, and contented himself with deprecating personal attacks. The chances of a reaction against the Terror passed away, and the Government daily offered a stronger front to the enmity of Hébertists and Dantonists alike.

At last, after many weeks of struggle and intrigue, the crisis came. At the end of February, St. Just returned to Paris from a mission in the provinces, and brought a new influence to bear upon events. St. Just was the loyal disciple of Robespierre, but he possessed far more energy and decision than his chief. He shared Robespierre's dislike of Hébert, but he did not share his kindly feeling towards Danton. Desmoulins had ridiculed the stiff pomposity of the young Committee-man's demeanour, and to St. Just ridicule was an unpardonable wrong. While Robespierre pleaded indisposition and held aloof from the meetings of the Committee, St. Just declared himself without disguise. He proposed to enforce the authority of the Government by sacrificing Dantonists

and Hébertists alike. He denounced significantly 'the greatest criminals, who are only trying to destroy the scaffold because they dread the prospect of mounting it themselves.' His presence seems to have roused his colleagues, as the arrival of Collot had roused them before. The Commune was once more made to feel the weight of the Committee's authority. A decree of the Convention confiscated the property of the suspects in order to provide for destitute patriots, and by this great bribe diminished the influence which the Commune enjoyed with the needy poor. The Hébertists, now thoroughly alarmed, made a last effort to assert themselves. They held stormy meetings at the Cordeliers Club, and indulged in reckless schemes of insurrection. But even Collot d'Herbois seems to have felt that the leaders of the Commune had gone too far, and he gave his consent to the policy of the Committee. St. Just took the lead in the attack. On the night of the 13th March, Hébert and his principal colleagues were arrested. Next day, Robespierre reappeared in the Convention and resumed his place at the Jacobin Club. For the first time in the history of the Revolution the less extreme party, with legitimate authority behind it, had asserted itself against the forces of insurrection, had assumed the offensive and had won the day.

On the one side the enemies of the Government had fallen. It only remained for them to dispose of the rest. The extreme Terrorists had consented to allow their friends in the Commune to perish, but only on condition that the advocates of mercy should perish too. The moderate party had many supporters in the Convention,

and were a serious danger to the supremacy of the Committee. They counted on the support of Danton, and though Danton gave them little encouragement, they used his great name to forward their designs. 'Danton sleeps,' said Desmoulins, as he took up his pen again to attack the system and the agents of the Terror, 'Danton sleeps, but it is the sleep of a lion, and he will wake to defend us.' But Danton's power and energy seemed destined never to wake again. Heartily weary of conspiracies and factions, discerning plainly enough the danger which confronted him but unable to rouse himself to avert it, disdaining to take measures to defend himself or to fight his opponents with their own weapons of intrigue, Danton remained undecided and inert. He would not compass his enemies' destruction, and he did not believe that his enemies would dare to compass his. Perhaps he relied on Robespierre's friendship, and forgot that Robespierre was not the man to risk his own ascendancy in order to save another's life. At any rate when the crisis came, Robespierre swallowed any scruples that he felt, and consented to unite the Government by abandoning Danton to his opponents. On the night of the 30th March, Danton, Desmoulins and their colleagues were arrested, and next day Robespierre came forward and denounced the 'broken idol' in the Convention. Danton's bearing before the Revolutionary Tribunal was marked by his habitual scornful courage. 'My abode,' he said, in answer to the judge's questions, 'will soon be in eternity; my name you will find in the Pantheon of history.' He defended himself hotly and proudly against the ridiculous charges of royalist

conspiracy. His vigorous eloquence created so profound an impression that his accusers trembled for the consequences, and took exceptional measures to cut the trial short. On the 5th April, Danton was guillotined. 'I see now,' he said, 'that in times of Revolution, power falls ultimately to the greatest scoundrels' . . . Ah, better be a poor fisherman than meddle with the governing of men!'

The fall of Danton left Robespierre by far the most conspicuous man in France. For character and reputation he had no rival in the Committees, and it was largely on his popularity that the Government rested for support. In some points Robespierre compared favourably with his colleagues. His life was frugal, pure and decent. His dress was always neat. His sense of decorum never deserted him. His devotion to his principles and his hatred of license and irreverence were sincere. He represented admirably the complacent Philistinism of a certain type of French bourgeois. His language breathed of virtue and emotion. His long-winded, didactic generalities, his perpetual appeals to morality and conscience imposed on well-intentioned, narrow minds, and, no doubt, imposed upon his own. Robespierre's followers, women especially, with whom his influence was great, took him at his own valuation. They did not discover his amazing egotism. They did not resent the qualities which make him appear to us the typical prig of history. They liked the long abstract discourses, which were the fashion of his time and sect. They liked his plain respectability. They liked his war upon corruption. They liked his feeling for religion and his copious sentiment. They were charmed by his



high-sounding and unpractical ideals. They marvelled when he recited, as he never tired of doing, the tale of his own virtues. Robespierre was essentially a priest, and he exercised a priest's fascination, preaching unceasingly and claiming without scruple the admiration of his flock. 'I have never bowed,' he cried, 'beneath the yoke of baseness and corruption.' 'Surrounded by assassins, I have little to reconcile me to life except my love for my country and my thirst for justice.' 'I am a living martyr to the Republic, at once the victim and the enemy of crime.' 'If such truths must be dissembled, then bring me the hemlock.' He was for ever proclaiming himself the champion of morality, for ever protesting his readiness to die in its cause. He reiterated it so often, and he believed it so intensely, that he made his followers believe it too.

Moreover, Robespierre's sentiment was genuine. He had brought with him from Arras the reputation of a young provincial lawyer, upright, industrious and tender-hearted, fond of indifferent verse and of pet-birds. In his early days he had resigned an honourable office rather than condemn a man to death. He had from the first figured as the friend of humanity, as the defender of the unfortunate and the oppressed. If any question arose of suppressing disorder, he had always raised his voice against severity. He had pleaded for the abolition of the penalty of death. He had championed the cause of coloured men. He had more than once shown his sympathy for priests. Later on, he had defended the seventy-three members of the Convention, who were attacked for protesting against the arrest of the

Gironde. He was known to have resented the treatment of Madame Elizabeth and the insults offered by Hébert to the Queen. He had taken no part personally in the enormities of the proconsuls of the Terror. He had repudiated the immorality and materialism of the leaders of the Commune. He had helped to secure the recall of Carrier. Conscious cruelty had no place in his speeches or ideals.

But when one turns from Robespierre's speeches to his actions, a different tale is told. In vain his apologists recapitulate his language, and dwell on his protestations of virtue, on his ceaseless iteration of benevolent designs. His career stands out in flagrant contrast to his oft-repeated principles, and the record of his career no apologies can explain away. The most noticeable characteristics of Robespierre's public life were his lack of initiative, his disingenuous reserve, and his profound incompetence as a practical politician. There is hardly a single great measure of the Terror, except the development of the Revolutionary Tribunal, in which Robespierre took a leading part. His method was to combat every proposal and every party, but rarely to make a proposal himself. If a critical occasion came, Robespierre always waited to see the issue before he declared himself. He never threw off his nervous hesitation. He never committed himself to violent risks, or took the initiative in violent courses. These characteristics are illustrated at each stage of his career. In the difficult days of July, 1791, at the time of the 'Massacre of the Champ de Mars,' he conducted himself with exemplary caution. A year later, on the 10th August, he remained

in the background till the battle was decided, but he joined the Commune openly on the 11th, when the victory was won. Later still, though he detested the doctrines of the Hébertists, he did not venture to attack them straightforwardly. He only threw out hints against them until he saw which way the tide was running, and then he tried to discredit them by arguing that atheism was an aristocratic idea! He was absent, on the plea of illness, while their fate was being decided in the Committee, but he was well enough to re-appear in public the morning after their arrest. He encouraged Desmoulin cordially in his crusade against the Commune; but he changed his tone as soon as Collot d'Herbois' reappearance turned the scale against Desmoulin's views, and he finally threw over without a struggle the man who had been for years his warm admirer and friend. With equal treachery he sacrificed Danton as soon as it was evident that the strongest party was bent on Danton's destruction, and directly the arrest was made, he came forward to denounce a colleague, at whose side, only a few weeks before, he had proudly asked to stand. Of course it is possible that Robespierre was able, with his remarkable faculty of self-deception, to persuade his conscience in every case that he was acting as the interests of virtue required. But it is difficult by any sophisms to excuse such heartless opportunism, and to avoid the conviction that, whoever fell, Robespierre was determined to be upon the winning side.

Hardly less noticeable than his tortuous manœuvring was his incompetence in practical affairs. His speeches were treatises full of vague and abstract speculation, in

which the same forms and phrases constantly appeared, but singularly lacking in definiteness and meaning, with very little bearing upon facts, and generally without any practical conclusions or result. He seemed to talk for the sake of talking, but the listeners, who accepted his theory as their gospel, never seemed to tire of the voice of the priest. At the height of the struggle between the rival parties in January, 1794, Robespierre solemnly invited the Jacobins to consider 'the crimes of the English Government and the vices of the British Constitution.' At another time of stirring interest and activity, he busied himself with drawing up a lengthy indictment of the monarchs of the world. At another time, he contributed to a practical discussion some luminous remarks, in which he insisted that the outbreak of the Revolution had been largely due to the determination of 'the London Cabinet . . . to place the Duke of York on the throne of Louis XVI,' and that Pitt was 'an imbecile . . . who, abusing the influence acquired by him on an island placed haphazard in the ocean,' conceived plans only worthy of a madhouse. It is no wonder if his colleagues in the Government, who were nearly all of them vigorous men of action, came to regard him with something like contempt. All through the Revolution Robespierre's attitude was the same. He never displayed much practical ability. The overthrow of the monarchy, the establishment of the Republic, the defeat of the invaders, the triumph of the Revolutionary Government, the organisation of the national defence, owed little to him. On the Committee of Public Safety his services, apart from matters of police, were unimportant. He did

little useful work himself, and his jealous interference only hampered and embarrassed those who did. He never went on mission. The equipment of the army and navy, the management of the food supply, the control of the proconsuls, the administration of the country, the heroic labours of the terrible Committee, rested in other hands. Robespierre was only its tireless rhetorician, watching, manœuvring, expatiating incessantly on his ideals, his virtues and himself. Even after the fall of Danton, when he had ample scope for his designs, all that he contributed as a practical reformer to the Utopia which he had described a hundred times, was a masquerade to the discredit of religion and the most sanguinary police-law which the world has seen.

But wrapped as Robespierre was in self-complacency, he was always sufficiently awake to suspect and envy others. The doctrine of mistrust was a part of the Jacobin creed. The habit of suspecting others seemed to grow upon all those who professed the faith, and gradually to distort their views and to discolour their judgment. The Robespierre of 1794, the jealous, nervous, inflated fanatic, was a very different being from the earnest, narrow-minded lawyer, who had set out from Arras five years before to take his part in regenerating France. As Marat had developed, under the influence of the Jacobin theory and amid the desperate excitements of the time, from a soured idealist into the furious advocate of murder, so Robespierre had developed too. The mania of panic and suspicion had settled upon him. The peril which he and his colleagues encountered had convinced him that he was a martyr, and that all who did not

recognise his virtues were conspirators seeking for his death. 'Gazing on the multitude of vices which the torrent of the Revolution has rolled down,' he cried in his last great speech in the Convention, 'I have sometimes trembled lest I should be soiled by the impure neighbourhood of wicked men. . . . I know that it is easy for the leagued tyrants of the world to overwhelm a single individual; but I know also what is the duty of a man who can die in defence of humanity.' In the latter part of Robespierre's career it seemed that nothing was too innocent for him to mistrust or too improbable for him to suspect. 'I am not obliged to reflect,' he told Garat, 'I always rely on first impressions.' He believed that his instinct could not err, and his instinct always was to think the worst. 'Evidently,' he said one day to Garat, early in the spring of 1793, 'the Girondists are conspiring.' 'Where?' asked Garat. 'Everywhere,' answered Robespierre. He needed no facts to prove it. His virtue, the watchdog of the Republic, told him it was true. At one moment Lafayette was the traitor, at another Brissot, at another Dumouriez, at another Hébert. Servan, he insisted, was given a command in the Pyrenees, in order to hand over the keys of France to Spain. 'Is there no doubt of this in your mind?' asked Garat. 'None whatever,' replied the infallible pedant. Again and again Robespierre denounced mysterious conspiracies and treasons in Paris, in the departments, in the Commune, in the Convention. He had no doubt whatever that he was unmasking traitors, and traitors he could not scruple to send to the guillotine. In particular, the generals of the Republic were singled out by Robespierre as objects

of alarm. It was he who sent Custine to the scaffold, and scouted the suggestion that it was necessary to offer written proofs of his guilt. It was he who took the chief part in denouncing Houchard and in consigning him to a similar fate. It was he who first threw doubts on the good faith of Kellermann. It was he who, upon no evidence whatever, ordered the arrest of Hoche upon a charge of treason<sup>1</sup>.

The growth of this fever of suspicion, which was common to most of the Jacobin party, but which was specially marked in Marat and in Robespierre, enables one to understand how a man naturally neither cruel nor unprincipled became so largely responsible for the bloodshed of the Terror. Robespierre's apologists have vainly endeavoured to defend him against this reproach, and to maintain that he always wished to stop it. But even their defence of Robespierre contains conclusive evidence of his guilt. His position, after the fall of Danton, was unquestionably strong. In the two governing Committees, though he had enemies and critics, he was closely supported by Couthon and St. Just. His popularity in Paris was considerable. His reputation within his own party stood higher than that of any of his colleagues. The Jacobin Club was his stronghold. On the triumph of the Committee in March, 1794, the Commune had been reconstituted, and its new heads,

<sup>1</sup> Even M. Hamel admits this (*Hist. de Robespierre*, III. p. 499 *et seq.*), although he endeavours, in a manner that is not convincing, to throw the responsibility on to Carnot. Carnot claimed to have saved Hoche's life. He certainly joined in ordering his release from prison almost immediately after Robespierre's fall.

Fleuriot and Payan, were devoted to Robespierre's interest. The Revolutionary Army of the capital had been dissolved, but Hanriot, Robespierre's firm friend, retained his command in the National Guard, and was zealous in Robespierre's service. The ministries also had been suppressed. Twelve new commissions had been appointed to administer affairs in their place, and in the appointments to these commissions Robespierre's influence was naturally large. Had Robespierre really cared to use his power to mitigate the Terror, it is difficult to believe that he could not have done so with success. In the existing state of public opinion he could, for such an enterprise, have commanded overwhelming support. The great majority of the Convention, as their conduct both before and after proved, were only waiting for an opportunity to throw their weight into the scale of mercy.

But the fact is that Robespierre's influence was used throughout in the opposite direction. He detested, it is true, the disorderly excesses that had accompanied the Terror in the departments. He wished to centralise and regulate the system, to make it uniform, moral and decorous, to take the power of the sword out of the hands of men whom he distrusted and disliked. But he did not wish to end it. The police-law of April, 1794, which directed that all conspirators should be brought to Paris for trial, and the establishment of a new Bureau of police under the supervision of St. Just and of Robespierre himself, were designed to prevent the occurrence of enormities like those of Carrier in the provinces, and to deprive Robespierre's opponents in



the Committee of General Security of their monopoly in matters of police. But they were not measures of compassion. From the first, Robespierre had taken a prominent part in founding and developing the Revolutionary Tribunal. Again and again he had protested against its delays and its unnecessary forms. When he attained the climax of his power, he swept those forms away. In the Revolutionary Tribunal he had staunch adherents. His work in the Committee of Public Safety was always largely concerned with questions of police. The Terror was an essential part of his system. He honestly believed that his Utopia could not flourish until he had consumed the wicked, and against the wicked accordingly he sharpened the sword of death.

With this crusade against the enemies of his ideal he mingled schemes of arbitrary benevolence. Both St. Just and Robespierre were determined to found the State which Rousseau had conceived, wherein all should be equal, virtuous, enlightened, without poverty or riches, irreverence or sin. As a step towards it they determined to establish Rousseau's Church. On the 18th Floréal (7th May), Robespierre induced the Convention to decree its belief in a Supreme Being and in the immortality of the soul. On the 20th Prairial (8th June), he celebrated, in one of the strangest pageants of history, the festival of the new Deity in France. Arrayed in a brilliant uniform, and carrying a bouquet of flowers and corn sheaves, Robespierre marched at the head of a procession out to the Champ de Mars, burned the symbols of Atheism and Vice, and inaugurated the new religion. 'Here,' he cried, 'is the Universe assembled.

O Nature, how sublime, how exquisite, thy power! How tyrants will pale at the tidings of our feast.' And within two days of this ideal festival he set to work to reorganise the machinery of the guillotine. A few weeks before he had taken a chief part in establishing, on the demand of his adherent Maignet, an extraordinary tribunal at Orange in the South, and had drawn up with his own hand a paper of instructions, which laid it down that the conscience of the judges was to be the only test of the guilt of the accused. In the law of the 22nd Prairial this monstrous principle was carried further. The decree provided that the Revolutionary Tribunal should be divided into four sections to expedite its work, that prisoners should thenceforward be tried in batches, that they should no longer have counsel to defend them or be allowed to call witnesses for their defence, and that the question of their guilt should be left to the enlightened conscience of the jury! The results of this proposal were that, in the six or seven weeks which followed, the number of victims guillotined mounted to over thirteen hundred, a number considerably exceeding the total reached during the first fifteen months of the tribunal's existence. In face of this measure, which was unquestionably Robespierre's work, it is idle to pretend that he wished to check the Terror. No doubt he disliked its extravagance and license. No doubt he wished to strike some of the Terrorists. But apart from that there is no evidence that he attempted to stop it, and against him there is the whole tenour of his policy and the testimony of this nefarious decree.

But Robespierre's ascendancy was destined to be

brief. The majority of his colleagues had begun to dread him. They knew that he was jealous of their authority. After the 10th June he held himself more and more aloof<sup>1</sup>. He did not resign his place on the Committee; but finding that he could not make its members accept his ascendancy, he began to form schemes for purging the Government afresh, to dissociate himself from his colleagues, and to concentrate his forces in the Commune and at the Jacobin Club. At last, aware that a breach was inevitable, St. Just and others urged him to take vigorous measures against his opponents. But Robespierre, always incapable of decisive action, preferred to confine himself to speeches and to vague hints of conspiracy and treason. On the 8th Thermidor (26th July), in a long and mysterious speech, marked by his habitual and astonishing egotism, he denounced the plots against the Convention, and demanded the punishment of evil men. But he named no one, and his threats frightened all. That night the combination which had been gradually forming against him came to a head. Tallien, Billaud, Bourdon and others, Dantonists and Hébertists, all parties alike determined to unite, to save their lives. On the morrow, the 9th Thermidor, the crisis came, and the Convention, for

<sup>1</sup> Robespierre himself said, on the 8th Thermidor, that for the last six weeks he had 'absolutely abandoned his functions as a member of the Committee of Public Safety.' Louis Blanc argues that he was therefore not responsible for the Terror. But another of Robespierre's admirers, Hamel, has taken pains to prove that Robespierre was constantly present at the Committee's meetings up to the 9th Thermidor, and decides that his alleged retirement must consequently have been 'toute morale' (vol. III. pp. 594-601).

once acting with unanimity and vigour, rejected Robespierre's appeal and boldly ordered his arrest. For a few hours the issue of the struggle hung doubtful. The Commune rallied to Robespierre's defence. He was delivered from prison and carried to the Hôtel de Ville in triumph. Hanriot summoned his artillerymen to the rescue, and once again the Commune proposed to raise an insurrection. But the name of the Commune was no longer a watchword in the capital. The Convention held its ground with unusual courage. It outlawed all the chief conspirators. It took prompt measures to organise resistance, to rouse Paris, to summon the forces of the Sections to its aid. The prestige of the National Assembly, when united, was still redoubtable, and Hanriot's troops hesitated to attack it. Early in the dawn of the following day the Conventional forces assumed the offensive, and marched on the Hôtel de Ville. The insurrection collapsed, and Robespierre and his confederates died. At last the lawful authority in France, so long paralysed and broken, had dared to act decisively, and to use force to make itself obeyed. From the moment that its vigour revived its triumph was assured, and with its triumph the reaction began.

## CHAPTER XI.

### THE REACTION.

WITH the fall of Robespierre the Terror came to an end. The men who overthrew him were many of them worse men than he. They did not intend to repudiate his system. They had acted from personal motives, from a desire to save their lives and to maintain themselves in power. But without Robespierre the Terror could not continue. It was his reputation for moral earnestness and for disinterested conviction which alone had reconciled to it many honest, narrow-minded men, who accepted his theory, believed in his sincerity, and had not the capacity to criticise his actions. In him and his associates the principles of the Terror perished. There remained no one to throw over the system the veil of sentimental virtue, and without that veil its uglier aspects stood disclosed. Men who to the last had respected Robespierre could not respect Collot d'Herbois or Billaud-Varennes. The Convention which had revolted against Robespierre was not likely, when once it had tasted freedom, to replace on its neck the yoke of his colleagues. The Committee of Public Safety had appeared irresistible so long as it was undivided. But

when it broke up into parties and appealed to the Convention to protect it, its dictatorship necessarily expired.

Accordingly, in the weeks which followed the 9th Thermidor, a number of measures testified to the growing reaction. The Committee of Public Safety was remodelled, and a system was enforced under which three of its members retired, without the right of re-election, every month. The Convention and its Committees resumed the powers of government. The Revolutionary Tribunal was reconstituted and the law of the 22nd Prairial repealed. The redoubtable Commune was abolished, and for purposes of local government Paris was placed under the authority of the Department of the Seine. The staff of the National Guard was reorganised. The Revolutionary Committees in Paris and elsewhere were reduced in number and shorn of their powers. The meetings of the Sections were limited to three a month, and the decree which provided a payment of forty sous for all citizens who attended them was repealed. In the departments the officials of the Communes and of the Clubs were sifted and replaced. Everywhere the prison doors were opened and hundreds of prisoners were set free. Before the end of August, voices were raised in the Convention against the Terrorists who continued in the Government, and at the beginning of September, Billaud-Varennes, Collot d'Herbois and the remaining Terrorists retired.

As the autumn went on, the pace of the reaction increased. The Jacobins, it is true, were still numerous and active. Although the reputation of the leading Terrorists was shaken, the Mountain was still a force in the Convention. Besides the members of the old Com-

mittees, many deputies, like Romme and Soubrany, Goujon and Bourbotte, maintained without flinching extreme Jacobin views. Others, like Thuriot and Cambon, were not prepared to go too far with the reaction. The Jacobin Club, though weakened by the fall of Robespierre, had resumed its old activity, and, supported by some of its confederates in the provinces, determined not to surrender its power without a struggle. Billaud-Varennes declared passionately that the old lion was not dead. But the tide flowed heavily against the Mountain. The majority of the Convention was determined at all costs to break with the system of the Terror. The deputies of the Right and of the Centre recovered their voices under the courageous leadership of Boissy-d'Anglas and Thibeau. The Thermidorians, under Tallien and Fréron, rallied to the side of the moderate members, and gathered round them many old Dantonists and many old adherents of the Mountain, Legendre, Lecointre and Bourdon de l'Oise, Merlin of Thionville and Merlin of Douai, Cambacères, and André Dumont. Sieyès, released from the necessity of silence, brought to the same side his affectation of inscrutable wisdom. Encouraged by the divisions in the Assembly, public opinion expressed itself outside. The independence of the Press revived. Fréron's paper, the *Orateur du Peuple* boldly took the lead of the reactionary journals. The trial of the prisoners sent up from Nantes to be tried at Paris revealed for the first time to the public the worst iniquities of Carrier's rule, and in the weeks and months which followed, evidence began to pour in against the agents of the Terror. The indignation against the

Terrorists in Paris increased every day. Reactionary feeling showed itself overwhelmingly strong in the Sections, in the cafés, in the streets. Bodies of young men, some of them men of family and wealth, but most of them drawn from the ranks of tradesmen, clerks and artisans, representing the great majority of respectable people which had allowed itself to be tyrannised over so long, and which had shown its readiness to rise as early as May, 1793, gathering in the Palais Royal, once the headquarters of revolutionary agitation, organised themselves into an effective force, armed themselves with short and heavy sticks, and led by Lacretelle and encouraged by Fréron and Tallien, began to parade the streets, to suppress Jacobin speakers and meetings, to pour contempt on Jacobin opinions, and to wage war against Jacobinism in whatever shape it might be found. Extravagant and ridiculous in some respects the 'Jeunes Gens' were, and in later days it suited the Thermidorians to turn their affectation into ridicule, and to denounce them as 'Jeunesse Dorée,' as 'Elégants' and 'Muscadins.' But in their origin at any rate they represented a genuine popular movement, and up to April, 1795, they acted cordially with the moderate party, and rendered valuable service in destroying the terrorism which the Jacobins had established in Paris. With the new movement a new song came into fashion, and the Jeunes Gens, rejecting the Marseillaise, sang in the streets the 'Réveil du Peuple':—

'Quelle est cette lenteur barbare ?  
 Hâte-toi, peuple souverain,  
 De rendre aux monstres de Ténare  
 Tous ces buveurs de sang humain.'



The reaction in Paris soon made itself felt in the Assembly. The attacks upon the Terrorists and their supporters redoubled. In October a law was passed forbidding the federation of popular clubs. On the 12th November, the Committee of Public Safety announced that it had closed the Jacobin Club. In the same month Carrier was arrested. He was sent for trial before the Revolutionary Tribunal and a few weeks later to the scaffold. On the 8th December, the seventy-three deputies who had been imprisoned for protesting against the expulsion of the Gironde, were readmitted to their places in the Convention. At the end of that month the Assembly decided that there was ground for investigating the charges against Billaud-Vareannes, Collot d'Herbois, Vadier and Barère. As the winter went on, the members of the Right, reinforced by the seventy-three, and determined to undo the work of the Terror, demanded a reconsideration of the laws against Emigrants and priests, and the restoration in certain cases of property confiscated for political offences. In February, 1795, the Convention decreed the freedom of all forms of religious opinion; but at the same time it continued the penal enactments against non-juring priests, imposed a variety of restrictions on the exercise of public worship, and, while refusing to contribute towards the maintenance of any religion, retained its hold upon the buildings and property of the old Church. A further advance made in June towards the principles of complete toleration was afterwards repealed by the influence of the Left. On the 2nd March, Legendre carried a motion for the arrest of Billaud-Vareannes, Collot d'Herbois, Vadier and Barère.

On the 8th, the survivors of the Girondist leaders proscribed on the 31st May, including Isnard, Lanjuinais and Louvet, were recalled to their seats in the Assembly. The triumph of the reaction seemed to be assured.

But the Jacobins were not to fall without a struggle. They had more than once secured the victory by appealing to the physical necessities of the poor, and it was by that means that they endeavoured to conquer again. In the spring of 1795 the distress in Paris was exceptionally keen. With the political reaction an economic reaction had begun. After Thermidor it became evident that the economic system of the Terror could not stand. Its drastic laws were on all sides disregarded. No penalties or prohibitions could force men to observe laws which they were resolutely determined to infringe. The State might fix the price of food, but the producers would not produce it at that price, and when the guillotine had ceased to compel submission, the vain attempts of the State to fix prices broke down. Economic causes more powerful than any laws overthrew the Maximum, and at last, towards the end of December, the Convention recognised the fact and repealed the Maximum decrees. With the repeal of the Maximum the whole system of Terrorist finance collapsed. The practice of requisition was abandoned. The restrictions upon foreign trade and upon the exportation of specie were removed. In a short time the Bourse was reopened. The intrepid experiment by which the economists of the Terror had endeavoured to concentrate in the hands of the Government the whole commercial system of the country, fell to the ground, and the old methods of

monopoly and competition, which the Terrorists had so constantly denounced, and which they had so boldly but recklessly attacked, reasserted their sway and exacted their penalty. The financial system of the Terror was ruinously mistaken, but by its draconian methods it had to some extent checked the rise in prices, and had perhaps saved from extinction the vanishing credit of the Assignats. Yet even under the Terror the Assignats had deteriorated in value. In spite of the imperious demands of the Terrorist Exchequer, in spite of its forced loans and wholesale confiscations, in spite of the plunder which it drew from its victims and of the money which, as Barère boasted, it coined on the Place de la Révolution, the Jacobin Government had never been free from financial troubles. The non-payment of taxes, the speculation of local authorities, the failure of the forced loans to bring in anything like the sum expected, the depreciation in value of national property, the ignorance of economics which prevailed among the ruling party, and above all the enormous expenses of the war, of the administration, and of supplying Paris and the great towns with food, had created a perpetual deficit. 'The Revolution and the war,' said Cambon, the chief financier of the Terror, in a report of January, 1795, 'have cost in four years five thousand three hundred and fifty millions above the ordinary expenses;' and Cambon's estimate was probably much below the fact. In vain had Cambon by a partial bankruptcy put out of circulation fifteen hundred million francs of Assignats which bore the image of the King. In vain had the Convention, in August 1794, decreed, on Cambon's proposal, the Republicanisation

of the National Debt, ordered all the creditors of the State to send in their claims, entered their titles in a Great Ledger of the Public Debt, declared the capital borrowed by the State to be irrecoverable, and, regardless of all engagements entered into and of all promises of high interest previously made, informed them that in future the State would pay five per cent interest to all its creditors alike. This summary method of escaping liabilities had introduced, it is true, some order into the finances, but it had not improved the credit of the State. The chief resource of the Government had continued to be the Assignats, and not even the drastic legislation of the Terror had been able to keep their credit up.

The repeal of that drastic legislation and the financial policy of the Convention in the winter of 1794-95 accelerated their decline<sup>1</sup>. Prices, no longer fixed by law, rose rapidly, as the value of the paper money fell. The Government, no longer able to rely on the methods which the Terrorists had used to swell their income, and face to face with high prices and diminishing credit, could think of no better resource than to issue Assignats faster than before; and of course with every fresh issue the depreciation increased. At the end of 1794, some

<sup>1</sup> The Maximum laws were practically repealed by public opinion after Thermidor. It does not appear that their actual repeal at the end of December had any marked or immediate effect in depressing the value of the Assignats. It was rather the new issues which completed the Assignats' decline. That decline had been going on steadily since 1791, and was not stopped, though it may very probably have been delayed, by the legislation of the Terror.

seven thousand million francs of Assignats were in circulation. In May, 1795, these had risen to ten thousand millions, in the August following, to sixteen thousand millions, and in the October following that, to many thousand millions more. In proportion to these enormous issues, the value of the currency declined. At the end of the reign of Terror, Assignats had been worth 33 or 34 per cent of their nominal value. In December, 1794, they had fallen to 22 per cent. In the ensuing May they stood at 7 per cent, and in the months which followed they fell to 4, to 2, and even to less than 1 per cent. In vain different members of the Convention proposed schemes for diminishing the number. The Government had no other resource to look to, and its expenses seemed daily to increase, as claims for compensation poured in upon it from those who had suffered under the Terror. With the fall of the Assignats, prices rose to an alarming height. All wage-earners who could not raise their wages in proportion to the rapid rise in prices, all who lived upon fixed incomes, all who depended on the paper-money and whose small savings consisted of Assignats, suffered acutely from the economic crisis. A certain number of people, tenant farmers for instance, who paid their rent in Assignats, and who made it many times over by the high prices fetched by corn, debtors who could pay off long-standing debts in Assignats at their nominal value, and speculators, who sprang up on all sides to traffic in the fluctuations of the currency, made heavy profits and enriched themselves. But to the great majority of people the fall of the Assignats meant grave distress. The prices of bread, of meat, of fuel, of all the necessaries of life,

rose as in a siege. One reads of the most fantastic payments, of thousands of francs paid for a dinner, a cab-fare or a load of wood. The sense of the value of money vanished, when its purchasing power declined every day. But it was only those who had plenty of it who possessed the power to purchase at all.

There is overwhelming evidence of the general distress in the winter of 1794-95. From all sides complaints came in of the exorbitant dearness of food, and that trouble was aggravated by the intense cold. In Paris and many great cities the authorities bought up food at ruinous prices and distributed it in meagre rations to the poor. But as the year advanced, these rations constantly diminished. The country districts bitterly complained that they were starved in order that the big towns might be fed. 'Many families, entire communes,' wrote an official from Laon, in the summer of 1795, 'have been without bread two or three months and are living on bran or herbs.' Around Caen the peasants were living on unripe peas, beans and green barley. In Picardy 'the great majority of people' overran the woods for food. From all sides the same reports poured in upon the Government. 'Yesterday,' wrote the authorities of Montreuil-sur-Mer, 'more than two hundred of our citizens set out to beg in the country;' and those who could not get food in other ways took it by force. Nor, in spite of the efforts of the authorities, were the large towns better off. Lyons, in January, was without bread 'for five full days.' At Troyes, in March, the public distribution of bread fell to two ounces a day. At Amiens, a few months later, it ceased altogether. At Nancy a traveller noticed

a crowd of 'three thousand persons imploring in vain a few pounds of flour.' In Paris the police reported case after case of misery and starvation. 'Every day,' wrote a friend to Mallet du Pan, 'I see people of the poorer class dying of starvation in the streets. . . . Workmen generally have to work short time, owing to the weakness and exhaustion caused by want of food.'

It is no wonder if this acute distress resulted in an outbreak. Many of those who suffered the most had sympathised with the Jacobin party, and the arrest of the Terrorist leaders gave a certain political colour to the agitation which famine had produced. But in the main the insurrection which broke out on the 12th Germinal (1st April), which for a time threatened the safety of the Convention, and which joined to its demand for bread a demand for the Constitution of '93, was a spontaneous movement due to the pressure of starvation rather than to political intrigue. The leaders of the Mountain failed to turn it to account. The Jeunes Gens and the battalions of the Sections enabled the Government to win an easy victory, and the failure of the rising helped the reaction on. Motions were quickly passed for the transportation of Billaud-Varennes, Collot d'Herbois, Vadier and Barère, and for the arrest of Cambon, Thuriot, Amar, and other prominent members of the Mountain. Pichegru restored order in the streets. The Convention decreed the disarming of the Terrorists and the reorganisation of the National Guard. The officials of the Departments and of the Districts were restored to their old authority. The State, which had already undertaken to pay the debts of Emigrants whose possessions it had

confiscated, now resolved to restore to the families of the victims the property of all persons who had been executed for political offences since the 10th March, 1793. A commission of eleven members was appointed to consider the bases of a new constitution. Early in May, Fouquier-Tinville and several of his associates in the old Tribunal were sent to the guillotine.

But the Jacobins were not yet silenced. The rapid progress of the reaction disquieted many. The reappearance of Emigrants and of non-juring priests, the extravagance of the *Jeunes Gens*, the revival of Royalist opinions in Paris, the terrible excesses which began to stain the reaction in the South-East of France, and which, under the direction of the 'Compagnies de Jésus' and the 'Compagnies du Sol,' had already made Lyons the scene of murder and of civil war, alarmed the Thermidorians and many other members of the Convention. The majority oscillated from day to day between their fear of the Mountain and their fear of a Royalist reaction, and displayed to all the world the vacillation and weakness of the ruling powers in France. At the beginning of May, the Jacobins so far prevailed as to carry a decree for the immediate arrest of returned Emigrants and refractory priests, and for the prosecution of Royalist publications. The disarming of Terrorists practically ceased. The high prices of food and the distress which they occasioned became more serious every day, and Jacobin agents laboured persistently to rouse the workmen to another insurrection. On the 1st Prairial (20th May), their efforts succeeded. A second rising, more formidable and better organised than that



of Germinal, confronted the Government, and the Convention, after a sharp struggle, only saved itself by yielding to the demands of the insurrectionary leaders. Fair promises, however, gained the Assembly time to bring up troops for its defence. On the evening of the 22nd May, a strong force of cavalry and infantry arrived in Paris. The next day, the Faubourg St. Antoine was besieged and compelled to surrender at discretion. Numerous arrests were made. The disarming of the Terrorists was completed. All pikes were seized. The reorganisation of the National Guard was accomplished, and the right of serving in it was once more restricted to members of the bourgeois class. A temporary military commission was established to try those accused of complicity in the insurrection, and the Revolutionary Tribunal was abolished. Six prominent deputies of the Mountain, including Goujon, Romme, Soubrany and Bourbotte, were sent to the scaffold. Lebon, long since put under arrest, Panis, almost forgotten, Lindet, Jean Bon St. André, Guffroy and Rühl, all except three of the members of the two redoubtable Committees, Pache, Bouchotte, and several of their associates in the former Ministry of War, shared in the proscription of their party. The influence of the extreme Jacobins was finally destroyed, and once again the policy of the reaction triumphed.

The decisive success of the moderate party was not without its effect upon European politics. At the time of the insurrection of Prairial, the French arms were completely victorious and many had begun to hope for the cessation of the war. The history of the revolutionary armies is the finest part of the French Revolution. There

the spirit which the Revolution had inspired, and which had spent itself so fruitlessly in Paris, was seen at its best in the enthusiasm, the devotion and the gallantry of the troops. There too the high qualities of the Jacobin administrators appeared, their determined patriotism, their dauntless vigour and resource. There the Government which in Paris seemed to be only a Government of tyrants, revealed itself as a Government of heroes. There the politicians and intriguers of the Terror turned to the nobler work of national defence. Carnot and St. Just, Merlin of Thionville, Rewbell and Barras, Milhaud and Soubrany, Richard, Drouet, Cavaignac and Fabre d'Hérault are only some among the many brave men who, as Representatives on Mission with the armies, inspired the French troops with their own lofty courage, and both by precept and example taught them the impossibility of defeat. The enthusiasm which political intrigues had wasted found a deeper expression in the war, and the levelling freedom of the Republic threw open to all ranks alike the prospects of a great career. In the campaigns of 1793-94, Hoche, Pichegru and Jourdan had already reached the highest place, and Moreau and Kléber, Bernadotte, Ney, Davoût, Augereau and Victor, Sault, Masséna, Bonaparte were winning their way to notice and command. It is true that at the first the French levies were ill-organised and ill-disciplined, and that their earlier successes were due chiefly to the disunion or incapacity of their opponents. But the progress of the war and the vigorous measures of the Jacobin Government soon produced a remarkable change. There was no lack of material upon

which to draw. To the old royal army there had in turn been added the battalions of national guards, the volunteers raised in 1792, the *levée en masse* of the same year, which was, however, of very little use, the levy of 300,000 men formed, largely by conscription, in the spring of 1793, and the forces raised in the following summer by the imperious decrees of the Government, which claimed the services of all men between the ages of eighteen and twenty-five. On this material the Convention set to work, and the efforts of Dubois-Crancé and Carnot, seconded by their able advisers, and perfected by the strenuous action and wide powers of the great Committee, met with complete success. To Dubois-Crancé especially belongs the credit. It was he who, in the winter of 1793-94, at last carried through the Convention the great scheme for the reorganisation of the army which he had advocated so long, who committed the Government to the principle of conscription and to the amalgamation of the regulars with the volunteers, and who fused the two elements together by dividing the army into demi-brigades made up of one battalion of regulars and four of volunteers. The result of these measures appeared before long in the formation of a magnificent army, which for numbers, discipline and the spirit of its troops, was a match for the united forces of Europe.

The campaign of 1793, which at one time threatened France with serious danger, ended in complete success. The valuable victories of Houchard and of Jourdan on the North-Eastern frontier in September and October, drove the Allies back upon Belgium. The equally notable

successes of Hoche and Pichegru, which followed in Alsace, drove the victorious Austrians and Prussians again across the Rhine. The brave insurgents of La Vendée found themselves at last opposed by a powerful army under a general of high ability, and were defeated by Kléber at Chollet in October, and subsequently routed at Le Mans. By the end of the year France had ten armies for service in the field and an effective force of some six hundred thousand men. On the North-East, four armies, those of the Rhine, of the Moselle, of the Ardennes, and of the North, stretched from Strasbourg to the sea. Further to the South, the army of the Alps occupied Savoy, and the army of Italy, which had just reduced Toulon, waited for a new commander to launch it on an illustrious career. In the West, two more armies held the Pyrenees, and a third watched the insurgents of La Vendée; while on the Northern coast, the army of Normandy, not yet organised into a definite force, guarded the sea-board and dreamed vainly of invading England.

With these resources the Allies could not compete. But even had the troops been forthcoming, their disunion would have rendered victory impossible. In 1794, when France was preparing with the brightest prospects to reopen the campaign, the long-standing jealousy between Austria and Prussia reached its climax. Thugut, the Austrian minister, disliked his Prussian allies even more than his French enemies, and carrying to an extreme pitch the traditional selfishness of Austrian policy, intrigued on all sides for territorial aggrandisement, and meditated schemes for extending the Austrian

dominions in every quarter of Europe, in Flanders and Alsace, in Turkey and Poland, in Bavaria and Venice. In the North, Russia drew nearer every day to the completion of her long-prepared attack on Polish freedom, and Prussia, determined not to be left aside when her rivals shared the spoils of Poland, turned her attention and her energies towards the Vistula, when the sympathies of her king would gladly have turned towards the Rhine. In vain the English Government threw itself with fresh energy into the war, laboured to draw the coalition together, and promised generous supplies. In April, 1794, at the very moment when Malmesbury, the English envoy at the Hague, was pledging England, Holland and Prussia to renewed efforts in the war with France, the Polish revolt broke out at Warsaw, and Kosciusko's brave struggle for freedom diverted the attention of the Central Powers. It was evident that until the Polish question was settled, neither Prussia nor Austria would act with vigour against the French. Accordingly, the French armies on the North-Eastern frontier, now under the command of Pichegru and Jourdan, advanced against the divided Allies, defeated them at Turcoign and Fleurus, and entered Brussels on the 11th July. The conquest of Belgium and the invasion of Holland followed. While Suvórof stamped out the insurrection in Poland, and Austria and Russia drew up plans for the partition of that unhappy country, to which Prussia was afterwards compelled to accede, the French troops advanced into Holland, drove the Prince of Orange into flight and occupied the Hague and Amsterdam. At last Prussia, isolated and alarmed, consented to

open negotiations, and on the 5th April, she definitely separated herself from Austria, and made peace with France in the Treaty of Bâle.

There were many who hoped that the Treaty of Bâle might prove the beginning of a general peace, and so prepare the way for a Royalist restoration. The fresh disturbances among the peasants of La Vendée and their allies the Chouans of Brittany, which had been provoked in 1794 by the merciless policy of the Republic, by Turreau's 'Hellish Columns' and by Carrier's tyranny at Nantes, had been quieted, in the spring of 1795, by the conciliatory policy of the Republican generals, and the long struggle in the West seemed to be drawing to a close. In the Pyrenees the advance of the French brought the Spanish Government to terms, and a peace between France and Spain was concluded in July. In Paris the suppression of the insurrection of Prairial had raised very high the hopes of the Royalists. Many things seemed to point towards the restoration of the Constitution of '91. which at that time, as at an earlier date, would probably have satisfied the wishes of the majority of the nation. But events ordered otherwise. The high demands of the French Government, the vigour of English diplomacy, and the settlement of the Polish difficulty, which left the Emperor free to act, disappointed the expectations of a general peace. In the summer of 1795, England, Russia and Austria drew closer together and formed a fresh alliance for the prosecution of the war. Early in June, the unhappy little Dauphin died in prison, and his death dealt a heavy blow to the hopes of the Constitutional party. Many who would have

welcomed the son of Louis XVI as Constitutional King, could not reconcile themselves to the restoration of the Comte de Provence, the chief of the Emigrants in arms against France, the prince who, learning nothing from adversity, still condemned in the bitterest language all the changes which the Revolution had introduced, and still denounced as an enemy of the Bourbons every advocate of moderation or of liberal ideas. The French people had not made the Revolution in order to restore the Ancien Régime. The attempt of the Emigrants to renew the war in the West by an ill-timed descent upon Quiberon, although stamped out by Hoche in July, and punished with terrible severity by the Convention, revived the deep-seated hostility which all friends of the Revolution entertained towards the Emigrants. The fresh tidings which came in from the South of terrible excesses committed in the name of the reaction at Marseilles and Avignon, Tarascon and Aix, tended to check the flowing tide. The rapid advance of Royalist opinions in Paris, and the threatening demeanour of the Jeunes Gens and of the Sections at length alarmed the Thermidorians. The members of the Convention recalled to themselves that they were committed to the measures of the Revolution, and began to fear lest the march of events should carry them too far and involve them in a policy perilous to themselves.

Finally the Convention chose a middle course. The Constitution of 1795 retained the Republican form, and divided the supreme executive power among a Directory of five persons. The legislative power it committed to a Parliament consisting of two Houses, a Council of Five

Hundred, who must be over thirty years of age, and a Council of Ancients, who must be over forty. The Parliament was to elect the Directory, but the functions of each were strictly defined; the legislative and the executive powers were kept jealously distinct, and cordial cooperation between them was rendered almost impossible. The Convention had learned from the experience of the past the necessity of making the Executive strong, but it had not yet learned the folly of making the legislature and the Executive independent rivals instead of harmonious allies. The new Parliament was to last for three years, but one-third of its members were renewable yearly. Apart from these new regulations, the Convention, rejecting a series of fantastic proposals brought forward by Sieyès, adhered to the main lines of the Constitution of 1791. The system of double election was re-established. The franchise was limited by a slight property qualification. In the local administration the division into Departments and Communes was retained. But the Communes were strictly subordinated to the Departments, the Districts were abolished altogether, and the numbers and powers of the officials were so reduced, as to simplify the whole system, and to increase the authority of the central Government. Other articles established freedom of worship, the freedom of labour, and the freedom of the Press, prohibited political clubs and federations, and forbade the return of the Emigrants to France.

But although the majority of the Convention yielded to the demand for the establishment of a settled Government, they had no wish to extinguish themselves. They knew that in the existing temper of the nation they had



little chance of being returned to power, and they feared the lengths to which the reaction might run. Accordingly, they proceeded to apply at once the principles laid down by the new constitution for the renewal of the legislative body, and by the decrees of the 5th and 13th Fructidor (22nd and 30th August), they declared that two-thirds of the new Councils must be composed of members of the Convention, and that only the remaining third should be chosen from new men at the General Election. These decrees, which were ratified by the primary assemblies and confirmed by the Convention in September, aroused general indignation in Paris. The numerous partisans of the reaction, already long impatient, and bitterly resenting the device by which the Convention proposed to continue its power in defiance of the sentiment of the nation, burst into premature revolt. The Lepelletier Section took the lead of the movement, called out the National Guards, and summoned the other Sections to rise against the tyranny of the Convention. On the 13th Vendémiaire (5th October) the insurrection broke out. The insurgent forces marched upon the Assembly, to find themselves confronted by the troops of Barras and by the artillery of Napoleon Bonaparte, and the triumph of the Government was assured.

With the futile insurrection of Vendémiaire the history of the Revolution ends. The failure of the rising in the Sections dealt a sharp blow to the hopes of the reaction. It determined the character of the new Directory. It installed in power a Government of men chosen exclusively from the advanced Republicans, never

in harmony with their own Parliament, out of sympathy with the great mass of the nation, relying on violence to maintain their authority, trusted by few and respected by none. The Directory rested on the army for support. It taught the troops what the Jacobins had never admitted, that they could dispose of the fortunes of the State, and when the occasion and the leader offered, the troops responded by choosing a ruler of their own. That ruler all parties welcomed with relief. He accepted at once the position of head of the nation, for he knew that the nation wanted rest. 'Now,' said the peasantry of France, as they recounted the stirring adventures of the past, 'now we are quiet, thanks to God and to Bonaparte.'

The lessons of the French Revolution it is for others than historians to point. Even at this distance we are perhaps hardly qualified to read them. With all its errors and its disappointments, it marks an epoch in the advance of men, for it assailed and uprooted for ever a system of privilege and social wrong, based on intellectual bondage and on the pitiless degradation of the poor. It destroyed that system not in France alone, but in many parts and principalities of Europe. It gained for Frenchmen some approach towards equality. It would have gained them freedom, had they known what freedom was. None can deny that the Revolution, at its outset, was welcomed in France with unsurpassed enthusiasm, and that as a whole it has been ratified by every generation of French people since. But in face of the evidence before us, it is no longer possible to doubt that the conduct of its later phases fell into the hands of a well-organised minority,

who, although conspicuous in courage, were in character unworthy of the trust, whose methods Frenchmen never sanctioned, and whose crimes they never have condoned. No doubt, in that minority examples may be found of fine qualities and high desires, of firm if narrow principles, of pure enthusiasm for social reformation, of staunch devotion to the public service, of a love of country rarely matched. In summaries of history the exceptions are too often overlooked, and in classifying men together it is not easy to be just to all. It may be that some of the experiments of the Terror are even now destined to awaken the growing sympathy and interest of the world; and those experiments will not have been made in vain, if they bring home the inexorable maxim that no country can be regenerated by bad men, and that noble impulses are waste and fruitless without the reasoned sense of what is feasible and just, which nations honour and by which they live.



## APPENDIX.

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NOTE.—*The following list of books does not profess to be comprehensive. It is a selection of some of the most important for the use of students. Those marked with an asterisk ought alone to give a fairly accurate knowledge of the period.*

### I. Text-book.

\* Mrs. Gardiner's *French Revolution* (Longmans' Epoch Series, two shillings and sixpence) is decidedly the best and most useful text-book.

### II. Complete Histories.

\* Carlyle's *French Revolution* is still unapproached for the dramatic splendour of its narrative and the brilliant portraits which it contains.

Von Sybel's *History of the French Revolution* (4 vols. tr.) is perhaps the most valuable of the many large histories, but is severely critical, and sometimes unfair to the advanced Revolutionists. It is largely occupied with the history of Germany, Poland and other countries at the time.

Louis Blanc's *Histoire de la Révolution Française* (12 vols.) is a long and eloquent defence of the Revolution, and especially of Robespierre.

Michelet's *Histoire de la Révolution Française* (7 vols.) is a brilliant and sympathetic work, rather more critical than that of Louis Blanc.

\* Morse Stephens' *History of the French Revolution* (3 vols.

—the last as yet unpublished) is the latest English narrative of the period, and has much valuable biographical information. In tone it is favourable to the Jacobin party.

(The histories of Mignet, of Thiers, of Quinet, of the 'Deux Amis de la Liberté,' and of others are also of considerable value.)

### III. Critical and Illustrative Works.

\*Rousseau's *Contrat Social*; published at 25 centimes in the Bibliothèque Nationale.

Arthur Young's *Tour in France*.

\*De Tocqueville's *L'Ancien Régime* (tr. as *France before the Revolution*); of the greatest value in studying the condition of France in the eighteenth century.

\*Taine's *Les Origines de la France Contemporaine* (4 vols.); a brilliant work, long, diffuse, and severely critical in its judgments, but, in spite of its bias, full of valuable information, especially in the notes. The first volume deals with the 'Ancien Régime,' the next three with 'La Révolution.'

Burke's *Reflections on the French Revolution*.

Sorel's *L'Europe et la Révolution Française* (2 vols.); a very able and recent work on the foreign aspects of the Revolution.

Schmidt's *Tableaux de la Révolution Française* (3 vols.); a collection of papers relating largely to the secret police of Paris, some of which are of great value.

Mortimer-Ternaux's *Histoire de la Terreur* (8 vols.); a long and careful work, written with great minuteness, and very critical in tone towards the Revolutionary leaders.

### IV. Biographies, Memoirs and Correspondence.

Voltaire, Life, by John Morley.

Diderot, Life, by John Morley (2 vols.).

Rousseau, Life, by John Morley (2 vols.). The second

volume contains an admirable account of the Social Contract.

- \*Turgot, an Essay by John Morley (Miscellanies, vol. II).  
Bailly, *Mémoires* (3 vols.); the best original account of the first five months of the Revolution.
- \*Mirabeau, *Correspondance avec La Marck* (3 vols.); by far the most important book on Mirabeau's policy and views. Dumont's *Souvenirs sur Mirabeau* are personal and very interesting.
- Ferrières, *Mémoires* (3 vols.); a good account of events down to the 10th August, from the point of view of an independent Conservative.
- \*Madame Roland, *Mémoires*.  
Marat, Life, by Chèvremont.  
Danton, Lives, by Bougeart and Robinet.
- \*Robespierre, an Essay by John Morley (Miscellanies, vol. I). M. Hamel has published in three long volumes an elaborate *Histoire de Robespierre*, which contains an enthusiastic panegyric of his hero.
- St. Just, Life, by Hamel.
- Pontécoulant, *Souvenirs historiques et parlementaires* (4 vols.); valuable for the period after Robespierre's fall. (The Memoirs of Malouet, Bouillé, Dumouriez, Madame de Campan, Bertrand de Molleville, Mallet du Pan, Garat, Barère and very many others are all of interest and value.)





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